Chapter V

Theological Debates among the Muslim Groups of Malabar

5.1 Introduction

Having captured the larger debates around the ideas of being secular or non-secular in the previous chapter, the effort in this chapter is to focus attention on particular practices within Islam, namely qutba.444 This is followed by delineating the different ways Quran has been conceived and translated by different groups within Islam in Malabar. The historical trajectory of articulations within Malabar exhibits a tendency of multiplicity of interpretations of theology and practices. Each group has a public stand about what it considers as ‘true’ representation of the ideals of Islam. This chapter demonstrates these varieties of representation by elaborating on the practices of Qutba and the ways Quran has been translated by these groups. Apart from giving a glimpse of history, I would also bring to light various contesting views on whether the act of translation of Quran is feasible. To bring these diverse dimensions of representation, I take recourse to documentary sources as well as oral representation that were captured through active fieldwork.

In the following section the attempt would be to demonstrate the efforts on the part of each Muslim group to represent itself as ‘true’ Muslims. Indeed, the interesting dimension that accrues in these representations involves an active effort by each group to discount the authenticity of similar representations by other groups within the Islamic fold. The plurality of the opinions among Muslims in Malabar can although be attributed to nature of the Quran and hadiths, but should be pointed to the active efforts by each group to interpret these texts differently. The plurality of representation is not akin to Muslims of Kerala. The problem of interpretation has always existed since the time of demise of the Prophet.

The practice of the ritual of Qutba is considered as one of the important ways of ‘being’ a Muslim. The Kerala Muslims are no different in exhibiting this imagery in their social space. But, what is significant is the effort by the Muslim groups to

444 Special lecture in the Friday congregational prayer. Qutba serves as the primary formal occasion for public preaching in the Islamic tradition. The Qutba originates from the practice of the Prophet Mohammed, who used to deliver words of exhortation, instruction, or command at gatherings for worship in the mosque, which consisted of the courtyard of his house in Medina.
exhibit a multiplicity in the practice of Qutba. Moreover, the important dimension added to this multiplicity is the aspect of regional variations which in a way also influences the kind of qutba practiced in each set up. To understand these dynamics, I intend to focus on the profile of the Kerala Muslims with an emphasis on the diversities of ‘lived Islam’. I also trace the traditional way of practices and of modernisation of the contemporary Kerala Muslims regarding Friday sermon, its position, importance, rules, and effects. I ascertain that the text and ideology apart, the community has certain characteristics. These characteristics of the community are indeed the guiding forces which determine the varied contestation and interpretations that the texts and practices go through.

In my effort to bring this multiplicity, I would analyze the arguments put forth by ulama of different section about the feasibility of subjecting Qutba into Malayalam. The dictates of ulama in the matters of ritual practices in Islam is important as every section follow them with utmost reverence. The stand taken by ulama (both religious and political) represents the ideology and arguments of a group. It is prudent that the imagery of a group be captured through the articulation of the ulama. As part of the fieldwork I followed the ritual practices of different groups that were dictated by the ulama of those groups simultaneously taking account of the opinions of these ulama through personal interviews.

My intention is not to judge the veracity of the different theologies, but to bring out the multiplicity of the theologies that exist among Kerala Muslims. In capturing the multiplicity I am interested in mapping the organizing of the religious discourses and practices. Thus, the use of qutba, and translation of Quran controversy should be seen as seeking to draw humans to a divinely ordained life. According to this view, the question posed by the use of translation is not whether they are correct representations of Islam; it is whether, and if so how, they engage the right bodily and spiritual attitude. It possesses a quality that makes it more than the medium of a message. These remarks on Islam are intended as a warning that special ontology directly based on a specific theological claim is not useful for the comparative study of religion.
5.2 Variations in Friday Prayer

In Kerala, Muslims have a rich traditional culture and are unique in different aspects. However, they are varied in their practices. Historical texts say that Islam reached Kerala in the 6 century. Islam started as a monolithic practice but seem to have developed into multiple variants over centuries. Though one might witness different paths, the confusion arises in ascertaining the authentic path to true Islam. Nevertheless, each of these paths are considered a leeway to certain ways of being a Muslim. The identity of the community also rests on the path or ideology of practice. Since the path or ideology of practices are multiple one would witness many idiosyncratic identities emanating among Muslims in Kerala. These multiple identities find a convivial space to exist due to the interventions of schools of jurisprudence that demarcate practices among Muslims. This tendency of multiplicity is not new to present context as one would find these expressions evident in the practices of Islam since the early time. For instance, in words of Prophet Mohammed: ‘Difference of my friends is mercy for my followers’.

Islam comes as a practice that is not ossified which makes it simpler for its followers. This nature is evident in the ways Islam is practiced in general and in the particular context of Kerala. The Friday prayer or jumua salat is an important *ibadah* (obedience, submission to Allah) for each Muslim, because it is a weekly salah, and its purpose is to gather people for the prayer. It is a fard (required or mandatory) for a Muslim to attend jumua salat. It cannot be waived except for an acceptable excuse as ordained by the jurists. The significance of the Friday prayer stand in its nature of togetherness. This ‘state of the community’ is addressed by the Imam. The address generally is aimed at motivating, galvanizing, educating, propagating Islam and also creating a sense of community. Moreover, it makes them aware of the togetherness which is emphasized as an integral part of Islam. Quran declares ‘O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the day of assembly) hastens earnestly to the remembrance of Allah and leave off business (and traffic) that is best for you if you knew’ (Quran, (62):9-10).

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445 As we noted one could find a space in Islam for relaxation of rules. For instance, during the trip to hajj rules on ablutions are relaxed by the Muslims by undergoing a conversion from Shafi to Hanafi. In practice Hanafi relaxes the rules of touching the other, especially touching a women unintentionally.
5.3 Defining the practice of Qutba

To understand the importance of Qutba it is important to know the relevance of zuhr (noon) congregation prayer. While zuhr is practiced at the noon every day, jumua Qutba is considered a special noon prayer specific only to Friday. Qutba on Fridays are follow in two sections. The first is the lecture of the imam which is followed by the second section that contains the ritual prayer. The Qutba (in its two sections) starts with the imam greeting the congregation with ‘salam’ (Assalamu Alaikum). He would deliver a lecture on a topic selected by his higher authorities of the particular group. Following this the imam would call for Azan (prayer). The second section containing the ritual prayer would be followed. What is significant is that at least one ayat (verse) from the Quran and one hadith of the Prophet would find mention in both the sections. And finally, these two parts of the qutba would end with dua (asking forgiveness) and request for Allah's guidance to the followers.

A Muslim is required to attend the Qutba in its entirety (that includes the two sections). This is expressed in Arabic term Wajib (compulsory). The attendant of the prayer is expected to be present even before the starting of the prayer. The prayer is considered not complete if only one section of the qutba is attended. Special rules and guidelines distinguish it from the normal lectures and deliveries. The two special traits are the salah (prayer) and the qutba sermon.

It was only in the 20 century, for the first time in the 1400 year of Islamic history a majority of audience were unacquainted with Arabic language in the practice of the religion. An idea of developing qutba in their respective language was mooted. This turn to their specific language caused much debate and controversies among Muslims, especially in places like India, Pakistan, and few South Asian and European countries. These initiative for change within Islam were evident in the form of the emergence of new movements like Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami. These movements influenced the ideologies of pan-Islamism and Salafism. Through the leaders like Hasanul Bannah,  

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446 While Qutba is the regular Friday special prayer, there are two other important occasion on which prayers as special as qutba are followed. Those are Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azhah. Each of these occasion are celebrated once in a year.

447 It is important to mention here that the topic selected by imam to deliver the lecture is something decided by a common authority of the particular group. On Fridays all the centers of prayer of each particular group would have the same theme to be delivered as lecture by the different imams of the group.
Rashid Rida, Jamaludheen Afghani, and Ibn Abdul Wahab, they began their movements with an aim to purify what they termed the ‘corrupt practices’ in Islam. Their initiatives had already brought out many changes in the Muslim communities around the world. One of the important arguments of these groups were that an Islamic practice like Qutba cannot fully be practiced without understanding the complete meanings associated with the practice. This meant understanding the core practice in the language that is amenable to indigenous people. In addition, these revivalist believed that an approach to prayer through regional languages would bring people much closer as a community and also help in educating people in Islamic practices.

The following lines will illustrate the different characteristics of Qutba.

1) In the Islamic practice of Zuhr a Muslim has to follow four raka’ts every day. The specialty of the Friday prayer, i.e. Qutba is that a Muslim is required to follow only two raka’ts and the other two raka’ts are substituted by the delivery of the imam.

2) As mentioned earlier Qutba is considered wajib (mandatory) for every Muslim. The different schools of jurisprudence are unanimous on the idea that it is wajib and every Muslim has to be present even before the session of Qutba starts. The internal structure of the Qutba is such that a prayer of a Muslim is considered incomplete if he misses one session. The Qutba starts with dikr (pray to the God), after hearing the Azan (call for the prayer). So it is important for a Muslim to rush for dikr when the azan is made. Quran says, “when there is a call for prayer, rush for the dikr,”

3) The Friday lecture which is part of the qutba is considered significant because the lecture is considered not a mere delivery of the words from Quran but it is an act of ‘recitation of the Quran’.

5.4 Different approaches to Qutba

Islamic scholars are divided on the question of qutba. One opinion states that the qutba is a prerequisite for the soundness of the Friday prayer. That is, the Friday

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448 The Holy Quran, Al Jumua, verses 9.
prayer cannot be performed without it. Islamic scholar, Al-Nawawi states that this is the opinion of Malik, Hanbali, Shafi and the majority of the scholars. The second opinion states that the qutba is obligatory. If someone misses qutba, he has missed an obligatory act and therefore he is sinful. There are difference of opinion articulated on this issue. In general there are four broad schools of jurisprudence and these schools of jurisprudence differ in the idea concerning the necessary and obligatory parts of the qutba. Part of this difference of opinion, again, goes back to how they answer the question of whether the continual performance of an act by the Prophet is obligatory or not. The third opinion is that the qutba is simply sunnah or a recommended act and is neither obligatory nor a condition for the validity of the prayer. This is the opinion of Al-Hasan Al-Basari, Dawud al-Dhahiri, and Al-Shaukani.

1. Maliki schools of jurisprudence
This school of jurisprudence says that it is a mandatory a condition for the validity of the jumua that the qutba should be delivered in Arabic. Therefore the qutba delivered in other languages is void even though the people are not much aware about the Arabic language and are non-Arabs. And if there is nobody, who can perform the qutba in Arabic language, even the prayer of jumua is not obligatory or mandatory for them, and they can do the normal zuhr prayer. The qutba is an important part of salah, meaning prayer, it should be delivered aloud, even though the audience are non-Arabs or dumb.

2) Shafi schools of jurisprudence
This school of jurisprudence also has the same kind of opinion that it should be in Arabic language for to follow the ways of Sahaba and the descendants of the Prophet. To learn the Arabic language for the purpose of delivering qutba for the Friday prayer is fard (compulsory), therefore, at least one man has to learn it from each community.

450 Ibid, pp. 514.
451 The zuhr prayer is the prayer after midday It has been said that the name zuhr was given to this prayer because it falls halfway between two daily prayers, those being fajr and isha, beginning at dawn and the first instant of complete darkness correspondingly. This prayer has some difference from the Friday prayer. Friday noon prayer is a special Muslim congregational prayer that includes a short address called the Qutba.
But if no one learns it, all of them will be sinful and their jumua prayer will not be acceptable. According to shafi school of jurisprudence, it says that “if somebody raises the question as to what purpose can be served by the qutba when it is not understood by the people, our answer would be that the purpose is served when the people merely know that the qutba is being delivered, because it is expressly mentioned that if the audience listens to the qutba and does not understand its meaning, it is still a valid qutba”.452

3) Hanbali schools of jurisprudence

The Hanbali schools of jurisprudence are having little difference on this issue. They also stand for the Arabic for the delivery of Friday qutba. However, they say that if nobody is found who can deliver it in the Arabic language, then in that case only, the qutba may be delivered in some other language. So that qutba in any other language is valid, only if nobody is able to deliver it in Arabic. The recitation of the Quran as part of the qutba is not valid except in Arabic, so that it is obligatory to recite dikr instead of a verse from the Quran.453

4) Hanafi schools of jurisprudence

This school though agrees with the former two schools of jurisprudence on the terms of the prayer being in Arabic. But it does not also disagree on the latter school (Hanbali schools of jurisprudence) that the prayer can be delivered in regional language if the people are non-Arabic or if the people do not understand the prayer in Arabic.

The majority of Islamic propagators who came to Kerala were from the southern part of Arabian Peninsula, which is dominated by the shafi schools of jurisprudence. In Kerala majority of Muslim mosques follow shafi schools. As a result of this, majority of Kerala Muslims are also followers of shafi madhab. Though there are four major schools of practices all over the world, namely Shafi, Hanafi, Hanbali, and Maliki, only two of them, Shafi and hanafi are found in Kerala. Compared to the follower of shafis sect, the hanafis are very few in Kerala. This is different from the status of other states in India where hanafi Muslims dominate the population. In Kerala, while

452 Taqi Usmani, Mufti, Muhammad. 2000. The Language of the Friday Qutba. Pakistan: Darul Ma’arif, pp.18.
majority of Muslim mosques follow shafi schools, hanafi mosques and practices are seen only in limited areas like Idukki, Uppala of Kasargod district, Thodupuzha, Trivandrum and few other pockets in Kerala. Though there are slight differences in religious practices, the textual evidences are almost same for both.

As qutba in Kerala address direct religious needs, they start to take the character of an *ibadath* while for some others it may seem as a public lecture that invokes religious arguments and textual supports. Masjids in Kerala represent a vital institution in the lives of Kerala Muslims as they serve a variety of functions from adult and children’s education to helping the needy members of the community, in addition to holding congregational prayers and teaching the faith. Drawing inspiration from the new ideologies (Islamic brotherhood, pan-Islamism, Salafism etc.) all over the world, these movements started in Kerala too. Studying Muslims along with their *fiqh* orientations or assimilation-integration range is often more meaningful. This variation is seen in their day to day life too. As has been a topic of debate, jumua qutba of Kerala Muslims stands as a symbol of this division. The religious groups among the Muslims of Malabar, Kerala have varieties of practices. The variations in jumua and qutba that exist among Muslims in Malabar region of Kerala in terms of theory, practice, tradition, and language, where all claims for the credit that they belong to the section of true qutba.

5.5 The Practice of Qutba

Here I attempt to bring out the diverse theological stands taken by religious groups of Kerala regarding Friday prayers and qutba. As mentioned earlier, apart from theological stand, Malabar Muslims have a different style and tradition regarding qutba practice based on their ideological and organizational backgrounds. Here, we are bring to focus that local practices of Qutba by different groups in the field location that we selected for the study. The stories of the practices of Qutba and also the opinions of the imams about the practice of Qutba are captured in this section.

5.6 Sunni Muslims and the Qutba Practice

Among the religious groups of Kerala, Samastha Kerala Jamiyath-Ul-Ulama is more unique. Being the largest and one among all others, it stands as the voice of E.K.

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454 A vital part of ritual prayer.
Sunni Muslims of Kerala. The stands taken by both the Sunni Samastha i.e. Sunni E.K and Sunni A.P, are very much clear that the traditional ways of doing has been followed for decades. However, the problem lies in the issue of qutba language. The core difference between the new Salafi/Moududi movements and Sunni ulama concerns the use of regional language to practice Qutba. Sunnis are not interested in offering qutba in Malayalam or in any other vernacular languages, while Mujahids and Jamaat’s are promoting it. The contention over the use of Malayalam can be seen in the way Shamsul ulama and Abdul Azeez Moulavi⁴⁵⁵, put forth their stands. While Shamsul is ready to accept Malayalam as a medium of Prayer Abdual Azeez Moulavi insists the need to use Malayalam to mediate prayer. As per the jurisprudence texts there are two opinions, and the stronger opinion is that it should be completely in Arabic. Shamsul ulama represents this stand. He says “In religion there is no space for inventions and innovations and so nobody can decide things freely. In fact, qutba is not a speech, but worship, then the point that it should be in a language that can be easily understandable for the people is not worthy. It is like saying ‘fatiha’ (one chapter of the Quran) of salat should be in a manner in which its meaning should be understood by all people. Prophet Mohammed has said that, anybody has made anything new in the religion which has not existed yet, it is “mardood” (rejected). According to Sunni groups this is what the texts say and so Arabic qutba is the only choice for the validity of jumua prayer. However this stand is somewhat rigid and based on texts. The point that Sunnis are doing their practice following the traditional ways from the very early times is also remarkable⁴⁵⁶.

Sunnis, both E.K and A.P are following the same in qutba practices. Since both have the same origin, both follow the same stand theologically and practically. For Sunnis qutba is not a mere speech, it is an ‘ibadah’ (worship) and a part of ‘salat’. Where normal ‘zuhr’ prayer which has four ‘rakat’s is reduced to two ‘raka’t for Friday zuhr time. Actually the two qutba stand in the place of two rakat’s. Qutba is a ‘kalam’⁴⁵⁷, which starts with hamd (praise) and salat (namaz) and ends with Wasiyat dua (praying for the souls, families and other things). Sunni mosques follows the topics somewhat like the world; hereafter, heaven, hell, the award and punishment from God etc. A

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⁴⁵⁵ He was a Khazi of Cheruvadi/Kodiyathur area and he introduced Malayalam qutba in the mahal.
⁴⁵⁷ The term ‘kalam’ means speech or wording.
remarkable point is that most of the imams of Sunni masjids follow and read “Nabathiya qutba”. The factions among the Sunni Muslim communities, the A.P and E.K groups are having the same qutba and they are observing this almost in the same manner. Apart from the qutba practices, the groups are having some differences especially in the rituals as part of jumua. One among that kind of differences is the delivery of imam related with qutba. The E.K faction of Sunni Muslims has their imam’s delivery about the social and religious issues just before starting of qutba. But the A.P Sunni Muslims observe their imams delivery only after the jumua prayer. The strict religious concern towards the qutba kept the A.P group of Sunni Muslims for having the imam lecture only after the jumua prayer.

Normally, in Sunni mosques there will be two azans (call for prayer). One at the time of zuhr and the other one after imam has sat on ‘mimbar’ for qutba. It begins with ‘ma’shara’ by the mulla of masjid, holding a sword or stick in his hand, as its tip will touch the ground. Then the imam will come and step up the mimbar and he will greet people with the word “Assalamu Alaikum”, and will sit down. Meanwhile mulla will give the second adhan. After that, imam will start the first qutba holding a sword or stick in his left hand and the book in which qutba is written in his right hand (if it is needed). He will complete the first qutba as text says, i.e. with the primary condition of the qutba in shafi schools of jurisprudence. He will finish the qutba with a verse from Quran. Then he will sit on the mimbar for a while and will stand up for second qutba. In the second, topics will be the same, i.e. the format is same for each Friday qutba. It will end up with a ‘dua’ for all Muslims which is one of the primary conditions of qutba. Thereafter he will step down the mimbar and give the sword to mulla. Then the prayer will start and imam will lead the people. This is what a qutba in Sunni masjids. The particularity is that it will be only in Arabic. No other languages will interfere in between. Sunni qutba is more concerned with religious

458 It is written in Egypt in the 17 century. Most of the Sunni Mosques in Kerala as part of tradition and to make unity in practices follows this book to deliver Friday sermon.
459 Is a speakers’ stand in the Mosque where imam stands to deliver qutba.
460 “Ma’a’shara” is a call for Jumua salat, where the mulla will announce before Qutba, that ‘the prayer is going to be started. Jumua is the Hajj of poor men and festival of believers. Two Qutba stand in place of two rakats of Jumua Salat. Nobody can speak in between the Qutba, if anybody does, he will not get the award.
461 A Muslim trained in the doctrine and law of Islam.
462 It is an Arabic greetings to the fellow human beings. It means ‘peace be upon you’.
issues, advising people to be more conscious about ‘ibadah’ and more concerned about the world hereafter.

5.7 Mujahid and the Qutba Practice

Mujahids of Kerala are keen supporters of Malayalam Qutba. While the Sunnis are following Arabic Qutba, Mujahids are going ahead with the translated Qutba. Mujahids justify the new innovations of Qutba by saying that when an advice is given for the betterment of Muslim community, verily it should be in an understandable manner. So that it should be in Malayalam in the Kerala context. However, the Mujahids themselves say that in Kerala the first translated Malayalam Qutba was held in 1915, in Mattanchery Masjid of Kochi, which was built by Haji Abdulla Sait.\footnote{Sal-sabeel Monthly, 1927, Feb.-20, book-2, vol-09, p-9.}

Mujahid is in front to counter Sunni community, who promotes traditional Arabic Qutba. As the situation demands, they argue that it must be in local language. Unlike Sunnis, Mujahids’ Qutba is almost completely in Malayalam. After the first Azan there will be a small speech in Malayalam before the actual Qutba. The general format is almost like what we have described before. But they don’t have ‘Ma’shara’, and also the imam will not use any sword or stick except in second qutba. For Mujahids Qutba should be in Malayalam, since there is a problem of understanding the meaning in Arabic except for ‘farz’. Comparing with other groups, Mujahids are more expressive of their identity in the Qutba. Normally their topic for Qutba will be of giving inspiration in the areas of thouhid, shirk and related subjects.

As part of my fieldwork I visited Tirur town of Malappuram on 2 August 2013. I went to the Masjid-ul-dawaa mosque in the town. The mosque is situated in the heart of Tirur town with a commercial building for catering to the needs of mosques and related premises. The mosque is very famous for its controversy between the two groups of Mujahids. Based on the Tirur Judicial First class magistrate order the mosque and its related premise is now under the control of Mujahid A.P group. I reached the mosque after 12.30, then around 12.40, I entered the mosque. Since it is a commercial area, the mosque attracted many people from different places. The place was fully with people already occupying seats in the front rows. I found people reciting Quran loud and the interesting aspect of the prayer is that almost all were
found not using the cap or the towel in the head, which otherwise is an important ritual for a Muslim during prayer.

Around 1 P.M, the Moulavi came to the mimbar and said “asalamu alikum” to the people who were sitting in front of him and he started to talk about the relevance of tawhid (submission to God). It was the last week of Ramzan month, the moulavi started to explain about the relevance of giving zakat to the needy people. He further pointed to the Muslim community’s high profile in the trade and in the business. Touching on the larger issue around the world he insisted the congregation to pray for the poor of Africa and Somalia. This was followed by the talk about the Jasmine revolution. He started to criticize the Iqvanul Muslimun and he showed his happiness about the recent happenings in the Egypt where the military had captured the power. He started to talk about the tensions in Egypt and he criticized Mursi’s authority as suppressive without supporting the military. After the talk about the Jasmine revolution, Moulavi had taken a small chit and started to recite few Arabic words as part of Qutba. It was just a two minute recitation of few Quranic words, especially the arkans of qutba. The clergy body of the Salafi movement all around the world is following the commentary of Rabithathu Alam-il-Islamiyya of world clergy Islamic group funded by Saudi government. Just after the Qutba prayer, a follower again called for prayer without using the speaker. Then Moulavi started jumua prayer. Normally in Sunni mosques, after the namaz the Muslims will have a

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464 Zakat is the practice of charity giving by Muslims based on accumulated wealth, and is obligatory for all who are able to do so. It is considered to be a personal responsibility for Muslims to ease economic hardship for other Muslims and eliminate inequality within the followers of Islam.

465 Jasmine revolution and its win over the previous rulers became a great discussion among the Muslims groups in Kerala. From the first period of revolution onwards the organizations state publicly their position through their media. The Mujahids were opposed the Jasmine revolution as it is against the Islam. They preached the message that the rebels are trying to destabilize the Islamic countries and the Zionist and the anti-Muslim Europe and America especially the imperialists are behind them, so we are not in a position of support. They warn the Kerala Muslims to know the hidden agenda of Jamaat-e-Islami because they supports the Jasmine revolution and it will destabilize the entire nation especially the Middle East and Kerala Mappila Muslims economy is based on the Gulf region. So the Mujahid group announced to their followers to beware about the movement and should protest against the Jasmine revolution. They opposed the movement of Egyptian brotherhood Iqvanul Muslimeen because they have no hope; if they will win the nation will become more liberalized. The thing is that the opposition party of Egypt (Al-noor), are the supporters of Wahhabi Salafi ideologue.

466 Across different groups within Islam in Kerala there is a consensus on the use of certain Arabic words during prayer. These words are considered mandatory to be recited only in Arabic and not to be translated into any other language.
group prayer where the imam will lead them. But the Mujahid groups do not give importance to the group prayer, rather they prefer individual prayer.

5.8 Jamaat-e-Islami and the Qutba Practice

The issue of Friday Qutba is dealt by Jamaat-e-Islami almost same as of Mujahids, i.e. they too support the Qutba translation but with the condition of performing its “arkan” (basic conditions) in Arabic itself. Jamaat-e-Islami is said to have a broad ideology in qutba practice. They are more concerned about social issues and contemporary world affairs. So many social components are there in their qutba. It is a combination of religion, science, and rationality to some extent. As Mujahids say Qutba can be performed in Malayalam except arkans as it was directed by Rabithathu Alam-il-Islamiyya. Normally, in Jamaat there will not be any initial speeches before the actual qutba. There will not be second azan and also ‘Ma’ashara’ before qutba. Qutba will not use sword or any other elements for the proceeding of the prayer. It is mere a qutba in Malayalam with normal conditions which is common for all Muslims. Although there is a criticism against Jamaat-e-Islami that their Qutba has more political components, they counter it. Sometimes it may be because they are more concerned about larger world affairs and contemporary socio-political issues.

It was on 23 March 2013, I went to Irshadiya mosque in Farook College, 15 kilometres from Kozhikode city, Kozhikode district. The mosque is under the control of Jamaat-e-Islami and it is situated in the Irshadiya college campus. I attended the Friday prayer there and got a chance to talk to the imam, Hamza moulavi.

I took wuzu (ablution) and sat in the third row right to the wall. Imam was getting ready there. The jumua qutba started at 12.45 when the call for prayer has come to the ear. A few people only did the ‘sunnah prayer’, while in the Sunni mosque I noticed all the people standing together for the sunnah prayer. After 5 minutes the imam stood up in the mimbar and started to pray for the Muslims who are facing

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467 Interview with Swalih Kottappalli, On 21 August 2013, who is an active worker and the sub-editor of a student magazine ‘Campus live’ of Jamaat-e-Islami of Kerala.

468 Sunnah prayer or Sunnah salat are optional prayers that can be performed by Muslims at almost any time of the day. These prayers are performed in addition to the five daily prayers, which are compulsory for all Muslims. There are a range of prayers available: some are done at the same time as the compulsory prayers, some are done only at certain times, e.g. late at night, and some are only done for specific occasions such as during a drought. All of these optional prayers were originally performed by Prophet Mohammed.
difficulties all around the world. The first word was “Assalamu alaikum”. Then as a continuation of the prayer to the god in Malayalam, he started talking about the current political system in the Middle East. He talked about the hopes coming from the Jasmine revolution (Arab Spring) and he was concerned of the recent failure of democracy in Egypt. He supported Mursi government in Egypt and he shared the experiences of the Egyptian Mursi supporters, what he had done for Egypt and the recent attack and the atrocities made by the army against his supporters. He praised the Islamisation process of Egypt, while considering application of the secular laws for the non-Muslims. Again he prayed for forefathers and dead people to get jannah (heaven) and stopped his talk. He took a two-minute rest in the mimbar and again stood up, then recited a few Quranic words (arkans) in Arabic language and even the groups like Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahids agreed to have arkans of qutba and the language they use should be in Arabic. The Arabic qutba lasted for only two or three minutes, the imam just recited the arkans of the qutba and he started praying to the almighty.

Then the assistant of imam, there is no fixed people in the Jamaat-e-Islami mosques, it may be the local people who call for prayer, and again the imam started the salah. The topic discussed in the mosque before the salah (prayer) was completely political; even I saw how the imam encouraged the followers about the necessity of the purification in the society. For that he mentioned about the dawah (preach the message of Islam) to others and the need for unity for the common cause related with the Muslim community. The topic discussed in the jumua Qutba regarding the Arab spring and the latter happenings, was discussed in all their mosques on the same day.

5.9 Samsthana Sunnis and the Qutba Practice

Among the Sunnis of Kerala, other than the two Samastha (E.K and A.P), Kerala Samsthana Jamhiyathul-Ulama is also well known. Currently it has the leadership under Najeeb Moulavi. Samsthana Sunnis are almost like the other Sunnis Muslims of Kerala. The basic difference lies in the issue of the use of loudspeaker. On the basis of hadith and early Islamic practices, the ulama like Sadhakathulla Moulavi who was the

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469 Jamaat-e-Islami supported the Jasmine revolution and they preached the message that it should avoid the corruption and autocracy in the Islamic worlds and the people need the democratic edicts so it should be appreciated. The party of Mursi is created under the inspiration of Iqvanul Muslimuun which the Jamaat-e-Islami is taking their ideology.
then president of Samastha Kerala Jamhiyathul-Ulama opposed the loudspeaker Qutba. Later he came out from the Samastha Sunni body and formed this new group.

Nadapuram jumua masjid, which has more fame and name, is one of the major so-called masjids in Kerala. This masjid is a major landmark of the city. It is situated in the heart of Nadapuram city, 59 kilometers away from Calicut. It also has more than hundred years of Sunni tradition in the area. It was a Friday, 8 March 2013, (Rabee-ul-Akkhir 28) I got a chance to speak to the general secretary of the masjid. He gave me lots of information about the history of Nadapuram masjid. It was founded in the early 19 century with the help of local king and also the British rulers. Furniture from Britain is exclusively shown there. The mosque had connection with the famous Mamburam in Chemmad of Malappuram district.

The time was getting over for the jumua. People were filling the gap between rows. It was 1 pm, after wuzu (ablution) I took a seat in third row right to the wall. Imam was getting ready there, mukri or mullah stood in front with a sword in his hand as the tip was touching the ground. He called for “ma’ashara” in Arabic. Then imam came and stood on mimbar. The first word was “Asalamu alaikum”, then the mulla called for the prayer for the second time. Then the imam who was sitting at the time of the call for salat stood up again and started the Qutba, with hamd (eulogizing Allah and his last Prophet), and other regular words which are being followed in Sunni mosques of Kerala. While the Qutba was going on, I noticed that the Qutba was Nabathiya qutba, which denoted that most of the people who were present there are Sunni Muslims. The secretary pointed out that the mosque belongs to a mahal of more than 300 families, in which the majority are Sunni Muslims.

But there the irony is that they did not use loudspeaker, which is the recognizing symbol of ‘Samsthana Jamhiyathul-Ulama’. Actually, even though they were not supporters of ‘Samsthana’ why these people who belong to Samastha Kerala Jamhiyathul-Ulama follow their practice. The answer was quite interesting. The famous Samsthana group leader ‘Keezhana Kunhammad Musliyar who died recently was a native of Nadapuram. Though he does not belong to Samastha Kerala

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470 Mamburam Maqam is one of the busiest Muslim pilgrim centers in South India. This Maqam was built over the grave of Sayyid Hussain Ibn Alavi Jiffry Thangal popularly known as Mamburam Thangal. He died in the month of Shaban in the Hijra year 1169.
Jamhiyathul-Ulama, due to peoples’ respect for him, all of them follow his ideology in jumua prayer. As a respect to him and his ideology, many of Nadapuram Sunni mosques follow the same. So, here it is a matter of social relations or social sentiments rather than mere ideology.

In first Qutba, the topic was”-brotherhood in Islam. He was saying that:

“You stand in a row shoulder to shoulder with each other. No one is higher or lower in status than his neighbor. In the divine court, in the presence of Allah, you all belong to one class; you all have the same status. Nobody feels polluted if a fellow worshipper’s hand or body touches him. We are all equally pure, because we are all human beings. We are all slaves of one God and believers in one din (belief over Islam)”.

Besides, the importance of great aslafs, (pioneer) who died in the month of Rabee-ul-Akhir was also mentioned. At the end of the first qutba, one Quran ayat was recited. “Oh men, Behold, we have created you all out of a male and a female. And we have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all aware (Quran, 49:13) Then imam sat down on mimbar. Again he stood up and started preaching in Arabic about the Prophet’s family, followers and other noble men. At last he prayed (dua) for Muslims all over the world. Then the Qutba was finished. After that, jumua salat of two raka’t was held and lastly collective prayer also was conducted, like the one in all other Sunni mosques.

5.10 Organizational Debates on Qutba Practice:

In the whole history of Muslims in Kerala, from the beginning itself, they were more concerned about the religious life, worships and practices. Islam has reached Kerala at the time of Prophet Mohammed itself. Thus, although having a unique culture, still they are bound to protect their lineage and tradition through these kinds of debates and discussions which are marked in the history. The Sunni ulama of Kerala took keen interest in promoting the Arabic qutba in Friday prayers and they believed that in jumua qutba, any language other than Arabic is un-Islamic along with the fact and evidences of religious texts in favor of promoting Arabic Qutba. This was the overall
condition in Kerala till the 20th century. It was in 1940s that the Jamaat-e-Islami activism reached Kodiyathur, in the Cheruvadi area. K.C Abdulla Moulavi introduced this Jamaat-e-Islami ideology in Kodiyathur, and from the initial period itself they faced many problems from Sunni Muslims.

The coming of Mujahid movement in Kerala, as said earlier, had tremendous influence on the Sunni Muslims. The Mujahid leader K.M Moulavi wrote an article in *Al-Irshad* in 1926 July regarding the issue of using vernacular language for qutba (speech) Friday special prayer. He supported the use of Malayalam language for Qutba. He argued that the real intention of Qutba is to get awareness of the issue related to the Muslims and so it should be in the regional languages. So regarding this matter he issued a fatwa to promote Malayalam in the Friday prayer and this fatwa commonly referred to as Arabi-fatwa. The group of Mujahids, Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulama conducted a seminar at Punarppa in which they decided to promote Malayalam qutba all over the Mujahid mosques and decided to propagate the needs of using regional language. In the field, I met an age-old Mujahid activist, Abdullah from Cheruvadi, he told that:

“It was a wonderful experience for me; we wondered...You know, it was very nice. To us, only after the introduction of Malayalam qutba we started to understand what Islam is. In my locality even the Sunni ulama also started to recite Qutba in Malayalam. So we thought it will not make any contestations among the theologian’s but later the situation changed and debates were started regarding the Malayalam Qutba. After introducing Malayalam Qutba, people felt so happy because that was a chance for them to understand what is the meaning of Qutba prayer. So many Sunni mahals started reciting Malayalam Qutba. Our Cheruvadi is an example for this, still we follow Malayalam Qutba”.  

In 1915, the Islamic scholar and Tirur Dheenul Islam Sabha Manager, Muhyudheen Moulavi translated the book “Nubathiyya Qutba” into Malayalam. The name of the book was Yakoothun Athwiya. Until 1915, the Mujahid movement did not reach Kerala. The ulama did not notice this translation, and later in a Mosque of Vengaloor

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471 Interview with Abdullah on 11 January 2013.
village in Tirur thaluk the Qutba started getting recited in Malayalam. Later he published another Malayalam qutba of Yakooth in 1916. Later, a few other mosques also started to recite Malayalam Qutba around Malabar and the ulama noticed this. They checked the Malayalam translation of Qutba and found that forty religious scholars had signed in favour of the book. The Ponnani Makdhooms ulama intervened in the issue and the ulama contacted all forty scholars to find out the facts regarding their comment in the Malayalam Qutba book, and found out that most of the scholars were not aware about this translation and they were fake signatures.

The Ponnani Makdhooms made an extensive inquiry over the issue and found out that the majority was fake signatures and even they found that the names of Sunni leaders in the list were false. Ponnani scholars called the author of the Malayalam Qutba, Moulavi Muhiyudheen and decided to estrange and neglect him through Kaikotti purathakkal472 from the mahal committee. The scholars who signed in the Malayalam translation book really did not know the fact that it was for reciting, but they thought the translation was just for understanding because those who signed in the book were actually against the recitation of Friday Qutba in vernacular languages. Many Sunni imams in different places of Malabar started reciting Qutba in Malayalam, and when this issue was noticed by the Samastha Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulama, they met at Meenchantha in Kozhikode. It was the seventeenth ulama conference and they passed a resolution to oppose the vernacular Qutba on 15 March of 1947, and decided that for qutba other than the Arabic language is a bidah (unislamic). The Samastha ordered to Sunni imams to stop the Malayalam Qutba.

Most Sunni mosques accepted the Samastha recommendations and avoided the Malayalam qutba from the mosque. Ten years later, Samastha headquarters received an anonymous letter, requesting the Samastha to produce evidence for the Arabic Qutba. The letter also requested them to produce the hadith on the basis of shafi schools of jurisprudence. On the basis of this letter to Sunni Samastha, Mushavara decided to write a detailed description regarding the Qutba prayer and Samastha allotted the responsibility to Moulana Sadhakathulla Moulavi and the fatwa was

472 It was the duty of scholars of Ponnani mosque those who had made un-Islamic practices they barred from the Mahal. And the word Kai means hand and kott means claps. Therefore the Ponnani scholars clap and order to refuse the entry to those who did the un-Islamic practices.
published by him in *Al-Bayan*. Later this fatwa came to be known as *Al-Bayan fatwa* and passed unanimously in the Samastha Mushavara in 3 November 1957. The Kodiyyathur Khazi M Abdul Asees Musliyar opposed this fatwa and he opined that there is no provision in Islam for qutba that it must be in Arabic. He further said that the qutba should be for the people and so they must be able to understand what the *khatib* says. He wrote a book titled ‘The Jumua qutba and the Al-Bayan fatwa’ (it was in Arabic-Malayalam language) in which he criticized the blind and superstitious practices of ulama. Sunni ulama body took the issue as a serious one, because lots of ulama supported the fatwa of Kodiyyathur Khazi and Mushavara appointed E.K Aboobakar Musliyar to give appropriate answer to the fatwa and the issue. Later a debate took place between Kodiyyathur Khazi and E.K Aboobakar Musliyar at Punoor on 8 February 1958, in which both sections explained the Quran and hadith dealing with the issue and they remained in their stance without change. Both sections explained that their views are more relevant and will not follow others. They propagated that if you want to follow the true Islam you people should follow this.

The Samastha ulama said that the vernacular Qutba is *bidah* because it is not part of Islam. From 5 century all around the Muslim world, the Arabic Qutba has been followed, and the vernacular qutba started only after the introduction of Salafi movement. Later Kodiyyathur Khazi M Abdul Asees Musliyar rejected the association with the Samastha, and he tried to form a separate organization, Jamhiyathul-ulama-ul-sunniya in 1980. But it had no long life because of the serious attacks from the Samastha group. They completely opposed their preaching, their ideologies and did not cooperate with them. Meanwhile Samastha made another fatwa that the Malayalam Qutba is *haram* because it is not a part of Islam and ordered that it should be in Arabic.

In the Mahal mosque at Karakkunnu, in the district of Malappuram, Jamaat-e-Islami started performing qutba in Malayalam. Then a native namely, Thrikkalangod Nelliparamban Beeran challenged the mosque’s decision to recite the Qutba in Malayalam in High court. The verdict was that “the aim of qutba is to give advice to the believers in a language that they can understand. There is no guideline for this in Quran. So the believers are bound to follow the Prophet. He has stated that those who are present should take the responsibility of conveying the meaning to others in last
Qutba. He gave the advice in their mother tongue. Finally, the Jamaat-e-Islami, which is continuously inspired by social issues from all over the world, including Egypt supported “rabitha”, as they began to quote Rabithathu-Alam-il-Islamiyya, Egypt’s Masjid conference, which was held on 1975 September and the decision taken was that all parts of qutba except “arkan’ should be in the language of the majority of spectators.

5.11 The Controversy over the Use of Loudspeaker in Qutba

In the middle of 20 century, the loudspeaker began to be used in masjid haram in Mecca and also in other Muslim mosques all over the world. In Kerala, the mosques began to use the loudspeaker for prayer purposes, especially for the Friday Qutba and for reciting Azan. The Sunni ulama from the beginning itself opposed the use of loudspeaker in mosques. In 1955, Samastha introduced a book titled “Kifayathul Vildhan” for Madrasa, dars, and othupalli students in which the use of loudspeaker was mentioned as bidah and proclaimed that it is anti-Islamic. The book again explained that there are a few essentials for a Qutba, that is, the qutba should be heard by forty people and the ‘reciting person’ i.e. imam should be a healthy person so he can reach the maximum of listeners and so no need of using the loudspeaker.

On the contrary, the movements like Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahids widely promoted the loudspeaker in mosques and in madrasas. It provoked the Sunni ulama and they strictly banned the loudspeaker from the Samastha mosques. For them, the problem was that while using the microphone, there in that process of transformation, the lost sound will be reproduced with the help of amplifier and later the listeners cannot get the real sound of the reciter due to the transformation and the involvement of amplifier. So the ulama thought that it is not suitable for the Qutba and the use of microphone is against the hadith and our practice. The new religious movements such

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475 Al-Masjid Al-Haram (sacred mosque or grand mosque) is in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is the largest mosque in the world and surrounds one of Islam’s holiest places, the Kaaba. Muslims face in the direction of the Kaaba while performing salat.
477 Dars system promotes Mosque centric residential learning system.
478 Othupalli (morning or evening Madrasa in Malayalam).
479 Samastha 80 Anniversary Booklet, 2009, pp. 33.
as Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami promoted the use of loudspeaker and as a result Samastha decided to produce a joint fatwa from several scholars against the use of loudspeaker. The ulama of Samastha like, Shamsul ulama, Khuthubi, Shaikh Hasan Hazrath of Vellore, Shaikh Aadam Hazrath, and Muhammad Shafeeh were the leaders, who were behind this fatwa which criticized the use of loudspeakers and narrated that it is the promotion of new movements and they are leading the Muslim ummah to un-Islamic ways. They strictly recommended the mahal committees to stop the use of loudspeaker.

The fatwa had a widespread impact among the Sunni ulama and they were compelled to avoid the use of loudspeaker from the mosque. The fatwa triumphed and prevailed around Malabar up to 1960s. But later Samastha changed their arguments regarding the use of loudspeaker and it created a few tensions among the ulama. On 8 April 1967, the Samastha Mushavara met at Kozhikode under the chairing of Moulana Kanniyath Ahamed Musliyar. In the meeting, the Mushavara decided to change their earlier decision in favour for the use of loudspeaker in Qutba and in the masjids. The decision taken by Samastha was sudden in nature and the impact was very big. The dissatisfied ulama, organized themselves and questioned Samastha ulama the reason for the sudden decision without consulting all ulama. The fallout of this, the president of the Samastha Moulana Sadaqathulla Moulavi decided to resign his post in Samastha and he initiated a new group. He founded another group for the ulama named Kerala Samsthana Jamhiyathul Ulama. This was the first great split among the Sunni ulama ever in the history of Malabar.

According to the ulama like Sadaqathulla Moulavi, Islam never permits the ummah to use the loudspeaker while doing the Qutba, because it is clearly a bidah. According to the hadith of Imam Ibn Hajar and Ramli, imam must be louder and he must be able to provide his own sound to forty people who gathered for the Qutba. The controversy yet persists among the Kerala Muslims, and a few mosques in Malabar have completely avoided the use of microphone and loudspeaker. The masjids in Vandoor, Nadapuram and a few other places are still following the rules of Kerala Samsthana Jamhiyathul Ulama. This was the controversial debate among the Muslims of Kerala especially in the northern part of Malabar. The ulama spent a lot of energy for
establishing their arguments and still it is marked as a great unsolved debate among the Muslims of Kerala.

The controversy over the qutba translation is still an important discussion among the Mappila Muslims. The increasing sectarian movements have promoted more rigid actions in the religious beliefs to become more pristine Islam, as result the polarization increased to a large extent because each group claimed that they are the representatives of true Islam. Qutba translation was not considered as *haram* by the Sunni Muslims. After the Mappila, Khilafat incidents, the Mappila Muslims were started to inspire the ideologies of Hasanul Banna, Rashid Rila and Ibn Abdul Wahab. As result the Mujahid movement started to work in the community. The leaders understood that the common people had lack of Islamic knowledge in their practices. As a way to enter in to their mind, these Mujahid Moulavis considered mosque as the best way to preach the ideology of Islam. So it comes to think about the translation of qutba and Quran into vernacular language because then only it will reach to the indigenous people. The Mappila revolt and Khilafat movement caused high hostility between the Khilafat supported and British supported ulama. Likewise, among them a section of ulama thought the emergence of pan-Islamism will create problems in the community and it will lead more chaos. The Sunni ulama started to oppose this new pan-Islamist movement. Also they opposed all their works in the community and projected them as problem creators in the community. As result the initiatives done by the Mujahid Moulavis over the translation of Quran and qutba in Malayalam, caused heat debates among the Mappila Muslims of Malabar, Kerala.

It is quite interesting that though all factions in Kerala follow the same sources as their basic rules and laws, when it comes to practice they differ. In the context of Muslims in Kerala, everybody has their own justification regarding their stands and they will support it at any cost. Muslims in Kerala, which has no scarcity of religious scholars, has a long tradition of following texts in its full meaning. The situation continued up to 1920s. The new movements interpreted the same text in another manner, and they established their arguments on the basis of those same resources which were familiar for others for centuries. They started to interpret the text in the light of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). Quran, *hadith*, *ijma*’ and *qiyas* are the four
fundamental sources of Islamic sharia with which the new religious movements such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid started to dominate the stage.

5.12 Translation of Quran

Quran represents its followers through different names. These different names carry variety of meanings. The name ‘Quran’ referred in the Quran itself and the Arabic word Quran originated from the root ‘Qaraa’, which has wide meanings such as ‘to read’ or ‘to recite’. As it is a verbal noun the meaning would be the recitation or reading. The word ‘Quran’ has been mentioned in the text seventy three times.

Another name of Quran is furqan which means criterion. Quran is believed to have the criterion between the truth and the falsehood. The word furqan has been mentioned four times in the Quran. Tanzil is another name of the Quran. The word Tanzil implies ‘revelation’ or ‘sent down’. Another name is dikr which means ‘reminder’, or ‘remembrance’. It directly reminds the followers about the codes of law, about their clan, origin and destinations. The word dikr is five times mentioned in the Quran. Kitab is also a name referred to Quran conveying the meaning that it is a scripture or a book. As it conveys the meaning, it is to preserve and must be obeyed by those who are the followers. This name has been mentioned in the Quran seventy seven times. Another name of the Quran is nur which means light, as the meaning conveyed, the followers of Quran believed that it is a light to their life. Quran also comes with other names like the huda, rahma, and shifa which mean ‘guidance’, ‘mercy’, ‘healing’ respectively. Majid (meaning Glorious) is also another designation given to Quran. Quran attains an important part of its followers and so it is considered a glorious part of their being. Another name of the Quran is mubarak which means ‘blessed’. It is believed in Islam that Quran has been sent down to, blessed and bringing blessings and confirming the revelations which came before it. Quran says that ‘humanity may warn the mother of cities and all around her. Those who believe in the hereafter believe in this book and they are constant in guarding their prayers’(Quran 6: 92). Another name of the Quran is bashir which means ‘the announcer of glad tidings.’ So these are the various names of the Quran which are mentioned in the Quranic text itself.

The Muslims believe that the holy Quran is the words of God and it is revealed to the entire humanity to lead them in the right path. It was revealed through the Prophet
Mohammed in the medium of human language, because the language used in the Quran is Arabic. The Quran revealed to the people of Arabian Peninsula so it was Arabic, the language of that people. It was considered as a social necessity that the revelation of the Quran should in Arabic. The immediate audience who received the Quran through Prophet Mohammed was Arabian. From the time when the Quran was revealed to the Arabs through their language to understand the meanings, the Arabic language has become an integral component of the essence of God’s message. The basic doctrines and its practices of Islamic community was developed in the Arabian Peninsula, Arabic was animated with the life of the ummah. The development of the Islamic state itself was towards a revitalization of the Arabic language. The Quran and its believers considered Islam as the only recognized way of religion of God. It is believed that the tenets of Quran in the form of its laws and values would attain a greater value when it is understood and practiced in the language of Arabic. The language of Arabic attains much centrality even in the non-Arab world because it is considered the original language of Allah. Though Arabic is an important component of an Islamic life it did not remain unchallenged in other places where the local language becomes an important medium for practice of Islam. History points to the fact that Islam spread from the Arabian territories to other spaces over centuries. The practice of Islam reaching to other places also meant an element of uncertainty in accepting every aspect of the original religion imported from the Arabian territory. The calls of Islam in Arabic found difficulty among the speakers of the non-Arabic language. This difficulty with Arabic led people of the non-Arabic spaces to experiment with their ritualistic practices and religious obligation in their own languages.

The translations of certain parts of Quran started just after the death of Prophet Mohammed. It has been reported that Jaffer Ibn Abu Talib recited forty five verses of the chapter Maryam in the court of emperor Najashi. It was in Aramaic, a local language. Another major translations was done by Salman, a Prophet’s companion who translated the opening chapter of the Quran in to Persian language. But the first complete translation of the Quran was completed in 884 AD by the orders of Abdullah Ibn Umar Ibn Abdul Azeez on the request of the Hindu Maharaja Mehruk in Sindh. It is still not known whether the translation was in Hindi, Sanskrit or any other
language. The holy Quran, it does not discuss anything about the last Prophet Mohammed, though it is divided into 114 chapters and arranges neither thematically nor chronologically but rather from longest to shortest. It begins with the most important chapter ‘Al Fatiha’ or ‘the opening’. Each chapter has been given some name like ‘The Cow’ or ‘The Feast’, but these have almost nothing to do with the content that follows. The Quran itself says that its verses and each dialogue from the God have multiple meanings, some of which are unknown to understand by the human beings and known only to God, and apart from that in both style that follows Quran and its content is unique among scriptures. The Sunni Muslims of Kerala are against any kind of translation of Quran. The reason why they opposed the Quran translation is that they think God’s word cannot be changed according to the local context. The Sunni Samastha of Kerala published a souvenir related with the state conference, in which they say “the words of Quran are thought to be infused with divine power, so a man cannot make any judgment or interpretation about a comment in the Quran. The God handed down the Quran through Mohammed and the physical book with its cover and pages is considered sacred and is to be handled only in a state of purity. That is the reason its writings are on buildings and tombs and the like sacred places in order to sanctify them. The people placed and kept the verses in pockets, lockets and are worn as amulets to ward off evil. They are etched into cups so that when one drinks from them one consumes God’s divine power. This art of Islamic calligraphy is an evidence to the people who believed in Islam that the book is divine and it is not good to translate to any other languages. The inherent sacredness and purity of the holy Quran creates an unusual problem for many Muslims. Even though the Muslims considered this as a word from the God through Arabic language, the problem is how the non-Arabic people would understand the meaning of the Quran. Since the first half of the 6 century when the Quran was collected into a single authentic book, it fixed Arabic as the language through which it was originally revealed to the people through Prophet. All the Muslim world believed that translating the Quran into any other language would violate the divine nature and features of the text. It was believed that God has sent the Quran in Arabic, so the human beings have

no right to make any changes in the form or content. Over time, the need for the Quranic translations has come, because of the difficulty in understanding the meanings through Arabic language.

As a result the scholars were in tension and through discussion they reached a conclusion to translate the Quran into other vernacular languages. The Quran has to be translated to understand the essentials of Islam. Ultimately, the Muslim religious scholars gave sanction to translate the Quran. It is observed that some translations were thematic, while others were literal or word by word. It is argued that both the approaches are acceptable even though there are some reservations. Apart from this there are some differences of opinion with regard to employing one of these approaches mentioned above amidst the Muslim religious scholars and translators. They believed what they did to be correct and accurate. At the same time, there are many translators who admit that they have faced serious problems, difficulties and even serious mistakes and corrections in the process of translation for the characteristics and uniqueness of the Arabic language. Another major thing is that considering all other works, Quran is perhaps the least translatable.

5.13 Language as a Barrier for Translation

While doing translation the major task is to understand the varieties of meaning of a particular word from the text. Arabic is a language whose words can have multiple meanings, sometimes contradictory meanings and context. So how one chooses to extract a particular word from Arabic to any other languages has a lot to do with one’s biases and prejudices. The Islamic historian Abdurahiman Mangad has told that “while taking an example from the Chapter 4 Sura of the Quran\(^{481}\), Verse 34, which has long been interpreted as allowing husbands to beat their wives. Almost all the early translations were done by the men ulama/scholars only, so we can assume that they understood and interpreted Quran from their perspectives. The fourth chapter says “as for those women who might rebel against you, admonish them in their beds, and strike them (adribuhunna).” The problem, as a number of female Quranic scholars has noted that the word adribuhunna can also mean “turn away from them”. It can even mean “have sexual intercourse with them”. Obviously because of the ignorance

\(^{481}\) Al-Quran, Chapter No 4 Al-Nisah, Verse 34.
of God’s language, the translator can choose any language and the translation will be coloured by whatever his or her preconceived notions are about a husband’s authority. He added that the new crop of Quran translators with gender sensitivity are brushing aside the centuries of men traditionalism, male domination and men centric approaches to read Quran and its numerous men-centred approaches of translations and the new translators bring forth their new interpretation in favour of a more contemporary, more individualised, and often more gender friendly approach to Quran. Moreover through this process they are not only doing just a translation but they are reinterpreting the way Islam itself is being understood and to fit in the modern world.\textsuperscript{482}

It is believed that any type of translation to any language will not be the word of God but it will be a mere work of human beings. Keep in mind about the perfect and widest meaning and different phrases of the Arabic language and imperfect human knowledge will admit that the agreement of ‘no’ translation of Quran. First of all, translation of any kind from one language to another language is considered as almost impossible because of the variations and differences of the language and the context. The Arabic language is more comprehensive and it is very difficult to convey the real intention through the translation. For example we can see that the idea of a word (let alone a sentence) into English. One can say that the original translation of the meaning will not be free from distortion because some of the words of Quran seemed to have more than one meaning. A translator may just put a word to understand the particular meaning and most of the time he may not get an exact and accurate word that is similar to the Arabic word. Most of the times the Quranic word needs to represent multiple meanings and in such a situation the translator may find it difficult to convey the original meanings. In such a situation the translator may present a word synonymous to the Arabic word in its literal meaning without taking into account the metaphorical dimensions of the word or the meaning. Thus the chance for errors in the translation is more in the holy Quran.

The common phrase in the Arabic, of which regularly Muslims are in use, al hamdu lilah (الأَحْمَد لِلِّه) translated into English or any other language as ‘All Praise to be God’.

\textsuperscript{482} Personal interview with historian Abdurrahman Mangad, was on 9 August 2013.
Now the \textit{al} (ا) conveys different meanings when we translate into English or any other languages. This \textit{al} (ا) small conveys in Arabic the following meanings.

1) Each and every individual of the thing mentioned, taken separately;
2) All the individuals of the thing mentioned taken jointly;
3) The species of the thing mentioned taken jointly;

So if we want to translate such a small word, we have to convey all the meanings mentioned above and have to say ‘Each and Every, all and the’. Then while checking the next word \textit{hamd} حمد there is not a single word in English to convey its idea. The word hamd has no meaning because the phrase “praise” in translation of madah مدح, it means praise or compliment, not hamd حمد; thanks is translation of shukr شكر, not hamd حمد. Then once we come to the last portion of the word i.e. Allah الله is generally extracted and called as God. The problem is that the word Allah الله has no plural and no feminine. So this name itself shows that the God is one and only ‘one and that He has neither partner nor any equal’. But ‘God’ has plural (gods) and feminine (goddess). These are some of the primary problems while a translator is doing the job of translation.

The most important problems in the translation of languages are the cultural differences in the communities i.e. the differences in cultural practices between the culture of the original text and the new culture into which the text has been translated. The idiomatic phrases found in the text were specific to the Muslims of that period, may not make sense in the Indians living in this modern world. Another major problem regarding the translation of the Quran is the differentials of Muslim faith regarding which translation should be considered as correct. There are numerous Muslim societies with varied practices made at the conclusion through the textual interpretations, but the understandings the interpretations are in different ways. Translations cannot be a straight forward one from one language to another. The entire Muslim scholars won’t believe that scholars of religion would come to an agreement over a single transmission, each and every group has its own interpretations of Quran and they believe that the best is with them. Along with the cultural differences for one to understand the context of Quran textual interpretations, there are vital linguistic differences in translating the Quran to any language for that matter.
Imam Abu Hanifa permitted the recitation of Quran in salah in the Persian language. Later his followers also allowed to people to recite Quran in the Turkish language in salah. This school of jurisprudence believes that who are unfamiliar with the Quranic language may recite short passages in their mother tongue until they have learned them in the Quranic language. So these schools of jurisprudence propounded the ideology that the worshipper if not able to recite the Arabic version of Quran, he may use any other languages he knows if it justifies the same meaning in Arabic. The second opinion is shared by the majority of the scholars and jurists, the schools of jurisprudence such as maliki, shafi and hanbali schools of jurisprudences strictly prohibit the recitation of the Quran in translation in salah. This school strongly believes that the musalli (one who performs prayer) is knowledgeable of Arabic or not, for the translation of Quran is not the Quran in the true sense. It is considered that the translation is not the word of God so that even takbir (beginning of the prayer with Allahu Akbar) for salah in other languages than Arabic is not permissible. There are prominent scholars of Sunni theology, Ibn Hajar Asqalani of shafi schools of jurisprudence states that if the Musalli is capable of reciting the Quran in Arabic language, it will not be permissible for him to refrain from it and his salah will not be rewarded. Islam promotes as an obligatory duty to those who embrace the religion to learn Arabic because it is the language of the Quran and a key for it to be comprehensive and holistic. So except one school of jurisprudence, all other Islamic jurists marked that the translation of Quran in salah is not permissible and every Muslim must know Arabic to recite Quran.

The *tafsirs* are very important in the translation of Quran, it explains the meaning of the verses of the Quran in the light of following sources;

a) Other related verses in the Quran
b) The sayings and actions of the Prophet Mohammed
c) The Sayings and the remarks of the companions of the Prophet.
d) It explains the context of the revelation of each chapter
e) The various levels of recitations of the Quran i.e. Qirahath
f) It will provide additional information to the reader.

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483 Tafsir is the Arabic word for exegesis, usually of the Quran. It is a body of commentary and explication, aimed at explaining the meanings of the Quran. An author of tafsir is a mufassir.
The direct translation from Arabic text cannot be possible in any language without the footnotes and other extra explanations. The commentaries and the explanations are very important in the Quran to convey the message to the people.

The major thing is that the a) historical facts, the historical names are frequently used in the Quran that need further description to explore the facts and context. For example the historical names such as Ad, Samud, Ansar etc. b) Geographical facts are also very important because it is needed to explain the place names and its importance, Quran constantly using some geographical place names such as Safa, Marwa, Sina etc. Another thing is that, c) religious concepts or terminology, unless explained the readers cannot get any understandings about the terminologies. For example, the words such as salah, zakat and hajj etc. The use of footnotes in the Quran is very helpful and a reasonable one was added as a very effectual communicative process of translations. It is helpful to explain the different aspects of Quranic knowledge at its wide angle.

Translators of the Quran face plenty of problems and difficulties while doing the translation to any language. This is because of the uniqueness of the Arabic language which is not inherent in any other languages of the world. There are so many objections faced by the translators, here I try to analyse certain difficulties of Quran translation, particularly into English. A brief outline of the analysis on is given below.

a) There are number of Arabic verbs that cannot be translated into English or any other language. Verbs such as Bakhila, Asrafa, Abtala, Amata etc., cannot be translated by rendering a single word. To explain this kind of verb one may need a lot of words or he may need to have a combination of words.

b) There are certain words in Arabic which we cannot be substituted, for example, words like mudari (aorist) in English. This word represents both present and future tenses combined at a time whereas in other languages, including English a word represents either present or future. Thus through these difficulties we can see that thousands of such words are rendered into English incomplete.

c) In some languages, including English language, there are only two numbers singular and plural. There is no single word to convey the sense of the Arabic dual (tathniyah) in nouns as well as verbs, both in the second and third persons.
d) In Arabic language, the feminine plural in the second and third person is always distinguishable from the masculine. In English both genders are covered by ‘you and they’. There is no difference for men and women in English, both categories are representing the word ‘they’ and ‘you’. The translators are facing problems while representing gender in the Quran translation.

e) Another problem is the repetition of synonyms, it is frequently occurring in Arabic but in English language there is no action for it. For example inna nahnu nuhya wa numitū literally means verily, We! Surely We! We quicken and cause death, have to remain only partly translated.

5.14 Historical Debates around Quran Translation

The Jamaat-e-Islami activist, Abdu master reminded the social system that prevailed in the Muslim society in the early 20 century. According to him, the Muslims were completely out of the mainstream where they opposed all kinds of progressive development. He told the conventional approaches of Musliyars regarding all the matters where the children had no space. He told that;

“The Musliyar would only teach the students to mechanically recite and memorise some of the Arabic verses and nobody understood the real meaning of what they were learning. Using black board is very rare and the teachers considered writing Allah’s name in the board as sin, most of the Musliyars avoided the blackboard, harsh behaviour from these illiterate and poor Musliyar caused the student to hate the system. Moreover, translating Quran and hadith into Malayalam was considered to be highly sinful. These illiterate religious scholars did not understand the significance of local language. These Sunni Musliyars opposed English education and modern scientific education in the name of haram”.

Over the last century the Quran has been translated into more languages than in the previous fourteen centuries combined. There are numerous translations available in different languages. Before the Muslims, the Christian missionaries started to translate the Quran into other European languages. It created many tensions and provoked the Muslim clergy. Later, especially in the beginning of 20 century the Muslim religious

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484 Extracts from an interview with Abdu master on 20 August 2013.
scholars entered into the field of translation. But whether it is Muslim or non-Muslims and perhaps women who also entered into the field, translations depend up on their logic and reasoning.

From early times itself the Kerala Muslims had direct contact with Arabians and rest of the world. The direct influence of the original Islamic scriptures caused the Mappila Muslims to be more aware about the Islamic practices. Later the indigenous cultural adaptations happened from the non-Muslims resulted in more confusions and tensions in the society. The Islamic scholars started to purify them through several means. The religious scriptures were in the actual Arabic language and the illiterate people have lost their contact with original Islamic practices. The God’s language was unknown to the indigenous people. As a result they lost all the contact with the original text. By the end of 19 century the Christian missionaries started massive campaign for preaching the ideology of Christianity among the indigenous people. The Christian priests distributed pamphlets and notices to the people containing the disagreements and campaigning against the Muslims. Nobody was there to oppose them and correct them in the right manner, that much uneducated the ulama was at that time. Sanualla Makthi Thangal was involved in counter propaganda, against the Christian missionaries on the one hand and against the blind beliefs and un-Islamic practices within Islam on the other. It was his ambition to translate Quran into the vernacular language. He started to write and he finished almost three chapters of Quran, but unfortunately he lost his script and gave up the task.

Once the Sunni’s of Kerala were against the Quran translation, but later because of the pressure from the groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid movement in the Muslim community the ulama started to change the opinion. Here one can see that the ideologies are not changing, but the groups are ready to accept the changing realities and ready to fix the ideology with reformulation. The Sunni community completely changed their old approach towards the translation of Quran. The Kodiyathur Khazi was in favour of the translation of Quran into Malayalam. According to him ‘Islam is simple and it should be for all, it includes the local people so the language that used for the religion must be simple and understandable’.

485 The first English translation of the Quran by an American Women Laleh Bhaktiar. Her translation was published in 2007.
E.N Ibrahim Moulavi opened the story from his memory about the Quran translation history of Kerala Muslims. He added that;

“Quran is believed to be a holy text, that is rendered by Allah and the translation of Quran was considered as sin and haram by the followers and religious guides. A translation of Quran came only after thousand years of its revelation and it was by a Christian named Robert and translation was in Latin. From date up to 1900s it was translated by Christian scholars; only later Ahammadiyas translated the Quran into other languages. In the last decade of 19 century the first translation of Quran appeared in Malayalam. A scholar named Muhiyudheen-ibn Abdul Khader (Mayin Kutty Elaya) a prominent scholar in Arakkal dynasty of Kannur began the works of Malayalam translation of Quran in 1855 he had given a superb translation for Quran which was named ‘Tharjamathu thafseerul Quran’. It took fifteen years for him to complete the work and publish it. It was in Arabi-Malayalam script which had 6 volumes. But constant pressure from the Muslims made him in trouble and at last he drowned the copies of Quran translation in Arabian Sea. Later the scholars from the same dynasty had written the translation of Quran and that had not comes out to the public. The opposition from the Sunni Muslims created much pressure to the Arakkal dynasty and later they gave up these efforts. The next attempt for the translation of Quran was in 1935, a Muslim literature society of Thalasseri produced two parts of thirty chapters of Quran. And it was after the formation of Samastha Kerala Sunni Jamhiyathul Ulama and it opposed the translation. In the meeting held in Himayathul Islam Madrasa of Kozhikode, Pangil Ahamed Kutty Musliyar of Samastha issued a strong opposition and later they conducted many awareness campaigns in this regard”.

In 1971, Samastha joint secretary K.V Muhammed Musliyar (here after K.V. Musliyar) published a translation of Quran, and it became a reason for an unending debate among the religious scholars of Kerala; and even the Sunnis, who opposed the translation earlier, favoured the stance of K.V Musliyar in this regard. The debate was flared by Mujahids and Jamaat-e-Islami. And it was published in the Mujahid daily

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486 Extracts from an interview with E.N Ibrahim Moulavi on 28 August 2013.
titled ‘Al-Manar’. It started that up to this date they, (Sunni Samastha) opposed the translation as it causes the violation of hummath (sacredness or purity), their intention is revealed again by this issue. None of the Samastha scholars opposed this, but later Sadhakathulla Moulavi had written an article blaming the stance of K.V Musliyar and he did not hesitate to argue that a majority of Kerala scholars will never be against this translation- The magazine ‘Sunni Times’ under the supervision of K.V Musliyar and “Nusrath” magazine under Sadhakathulla Moulavi was the phase where both scholars and those who favoured their stance clashed on the ground of ideology behind of each other. Sadhakathulla Moulavi of Samsthana Sunni group opposed K.V Musliyar’s translation of Quran and K.V Musliyar wrote an open letter to Sadhakathulla Moulavi on 17 December 1971. Later in 1975 K.V Musliyar again published two more chapters of translation. The debate continued over a long period of time. In 1980 with the help of foreign funds K.V Musliyar published even the remaining parts of translation and it has been clear that all the young scholars of Samastha joined with his opinion. By its publication in 1980, the condition was worse than the world has ever seen. Even Samastha Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulama president E.K Aboobakar Musliyar came in protest against translation and many articles of his conscientious study in this regard were published in ‘Sunni voice’, (after the split ‘Sunni voice’ came under the control of A.P Sunni). He wrote to the extent that his translation is of entire misguidance and the God described in his translation is not the God of Muslims. The situation was really stormy as even some of the great leaders of Sunni Samastha opposed it strongly along with Samsthana Sunni leaders, and even issued same fatwa that it is strictly prohibited in religion and it will banish the ideal image of Quran and what has been told by eminent scholars of early Islamic era. Borrowing from the words of E.K Musliyar ‘the half Wahhabis in the disguise of Sunni ideology took this as a chance of a fraction between those who favour translation and those who oppose it’. The political lobby of Samastha decided to use the situation for their political gain knowing that it will help them to create a politically favourable atmosphere in Samastha and thus bargain for their gains. Those who kept mum earlier, were seen to oppose it strongly later, and among them it deserves to be noted that E.K Hasan Musliyar and A.P Aboobakar Musliyar, two
eminent scholars of Muslims of Kerala have ever seen, had favoured E.K’s stance in this regard. It was noted that A.P Musliyar supported the E.K Musliyars opinion.

Criticizing K.V Musliyar so severely, E.K Hasan Musliyar authored a book titled “Thahdeer-ul-Ikhn Min Tharjumathil Qur’an”. In this tumultuous situation, Samastha has organized its sixteenth conference and by chance its control was in the hand of E.K Aboobakar Musliyar. Unless there was the Sharia debate and the following fractions among Kerala Muslims, the emerging two factions within the Samastha will be divided on this ground. Later the Kerala Muslims had seen the leaders of Samastha being divided into two groups as A.P and E.K. E.K Aboobakar Musliyar had shared stage with Mujahid leaders when the case of Muslim Personal Law Board had triggered a great debate, and he even tried to make a strong alliance with Muslim League, a prominent Muslim political party In Kerala. Thus issue of translation vanished slowly from the ground of debate and today Samastha even does not hesitate to translate Quran in the way Mujahids used to do in early 20 century. Still officially both Sunni organisations did not recognize the translation of Quran.

Not only the translation but to study the Quranic verses in Malayalam is not possible in their argument but Mujahids and Jamaat-e-Islami started to teach the Quran and criticized the spiritual dominations of Sunni ulama. Mujahid activists tried to teach the meanings of Quran and inspired others to study. But the Sunnis were promulgated that the understanding and interpreting the Quran words and meaning in our language will be a deviation from the real path. E.K Hassan Musliyar wrote in his book ‘Thadeerul Iqvan’ that in the early days scholars were not ready to teach the meanings of Quran, but they will say only the precise of it. Moreover they advised not to teach the Quran meaning, because it will be a deviation from Islam. But Mujahid activists organized many classes to spread the Quran knowledge, so Sunnis opposed it. E.K Hassan Musliyar says this in his book as a scoffing. Later the Mujahids started to translate the Quran into vernacular language and it created several debates among the ulama because the flow into the Mujahid movement is increasing day by day from the Sunni community and they started to revise their old ideologies. According to the opinion of Sadhakathulla Musliyar of Samsthana Sunni, “Mujahids motivated the translation of Quran and distributed it among the common people, but Sunni people

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487 Excerpts from the personal interview with E.N Ibrahim Moulavi.
opposed it by teeth and nail. The protest even went up to throwing of the translation of Quran by Mayinkutty into the sea”. Like this the ‘qutba’ an oration conducting on Friday, at masjid. The Sunni believers say it is ibadath, so it should be in Arabic language, but the Mujahid section believe it is to be understood by people, so it should be in mother tongue.

5.15 A Controversy over the Interpretation of Quran

Any type of interpretation of Quran made debates among the Muslim groups of Kerala. The Quran translation of C.N Moulavi had caused a big discussion among the Muslims in Malabar. All the religious scholars in Kerala demanded to banish and isolate the author from the community alleging his interpretation of Quran as ‘false’. The major problem found out by the Muslim ulama, especially the Sunni ulama of Kerala was that C.N Moulavi gave more priority for the independent reasoning in his translation. He made his own reasoning to explain few supernatural events that had happened in the past according to Quran. It provoked the entire ulama and they attacked him a lot. C.N Ahamed Moulavi was born in an orthodox family in Malappuram in 1906. He became the central figure in the Mappila theology by the ‘mistakes’ in the translation as alleged by Sunni, Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami groups. The Sunnis criticized him as an extreme liberal and the cause of controversy was the alleged rationalism against him. He started the Quran translation in 1953 and finished his the task in 1963 with great difficulty. Historian Abdurahiman Mangad opined that the translation of Quran created both negative and positive result. As a negative element it caused an unhealthy debate among the Muslim groups which ultimately ended up in physical attacks between the groups. In the positive sense one can say that it made varieties of interpretation of Quran with more explanations possible. After this incident the translators became very aware about the different aspects of the language and its multiple meanings and context. The Sunnis opposed him because they alleged that in his analysis of Quran there are many incorrect and flawed interpretations. The debates and allegations were started when he had

489 Extracts from a personal interview with Abdurahiman Mangad. He has also published a pamphlet (qutuba Malayala vivarthangalude Laghu Charithram) containing the information of all the Malayalam Quran translators. It draws information regarding more than 40 people who translated Quran at different time periods.
published Quranic interpretations in Malayalam. He was a revivalist among the Mappilas and so he opposed all types of Sufi, saint, dharga beliefs, and was against the supernatural beliefs. So while he was making the interpretation of Quran he rationalized beliefs and faiths and in historical telling of Quran he made his own interpretations. All know that he was against the supernatural and he tried to make changes in the basic teachings. He made his Quranic interpretations in 1953. According to Miller, C.N Moulavi interpreted that “his interpretation of the parting of the red sea is frequently cited in this connections. With his imagination he re-interpreted and analyzed that the crossing of the Red sea as a natural event and it has nothing to do with the belief, but dependent on Moses’ knowledge of the existing shallows. Steadily probing his way with his rod Moses, who had passed that way before, led the Israelites safely through, while Pharaoh’s soldiers, lacking similar knowledge and probably blinded with drink, plunged in to the deeps”.

After publishing the interpretation in 1963 and the Sunni ulama criticized him severely, later K.K Sadhakathulla Moulavi wrote against the C.N Moulavi in Al-Bayan. He criticized him that he does not know even the basic knowledge about Islam because he made big mistakes while making the interpretation. The famous war in Islam is battle of Badhar; even in the explanation about this war he made big mistakes. But later, the first half of 1970’s a group of ulama influenced by the writings of C.N Ahamed Moulavi took a stance in favor of him. Moreover a section of neo-Sunni educated ulama came with the support for C.N Moulavi and they conducted a debate in Kozhikode in which C.N Moulavi proclaimed his unchanging stance while a section of ulama supported him for this cause and later these ulama became the members of Mujahid movement in Kerala. A section of Sunnis wanted to get the support of Moulana Kanniyath and he supported the Quranic interpretation of C.N Moulavi and he attacked Sadhakathulla Moulavi for his opposition to C.N Moulavi. Actually Kanniyath was misled by the neo-Sunni scholars. Later he understood the issue and opposed C.N Moulavi interpretation.

The strong opposition is continuing still in Kerala, but the interesting thing is that in spite of the strong protest against the translation, there are two non-Muslims who translated Quran into Malayalam. One among them was M. Raghavan Nair from Thiruvalla, he was born in 1911 and after his retirement from the central service, he
started to read about Quran, later he read a Malayalam translation of the book, and he understood the significance of the translation. Islamic Publishing House (IPH) of Jamaat-e-Islami accepted to publish his challenge. Historian Abdurahiman Mangad marked that “it was a great challenge both for him and the publishers, the Jamaat-e-Islami became a target of all other groups that they are giving chances to even non-Muslims to do translation. He took ten years to complete the work and after the work he contacted thousands of publishers to publish the book. Nobody took the responsibility of such a big risky task. Later with the help of Muslim friends he contacted IPH and they agreed to publish the translation”. Another translator of the Quran, Konniyur Raghavan Nair from Pathanamthitta made an excellent work, and the Samanyam Publishers agreed to publish his translation, and he took 36 years to finish the translation work. Forty scholars have translated the Quran into Malayalam till 2003. As said earlier Mayinkutty Ilaya is the first man who translated the Quran into Malayalam. Amongst the forty, the most famous are by Mohammed Amani Moulavi and C.N Ahmed Moulavi, because these books have contributed considerably to the Quran translation debate. Cheriyamundam Abdul Hameed Madani’s translation of Quran is being distributed all over the world by Saudi government through Malik Fahad Quran Printing Press, and it is known for its peculiar feature and the quality of contents. Hafiz P.H Abdul Gaffar Moulavi’s translation was published in 1997 and his translation contains 1046 pages. He is a very famous scholar from Trivandrum and he has adorned positions like, the imam of famous Palayam Mosque and chairman of Waqf Board of the Kerala state. These are some of the famous translations into Malayalam.

5.16 Summary

The translators faced constant pressure from the Sunni ulama of Kerala. The first translator was compelled to throw the copies into the sea; later translations did not come out. Still the Sunni Samastha ulama body believes that it is not Islamic to translate the Quran. Due to the massive growth of Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami movement, the Sunni ulama were also compelled to translate the Quran. Errors in translation has been debated by contesting groups. The serious allegation is that they

490 Excerpts from the personal interview with Abdurahiman Mangad on 20 July 2013 at Calicut University, C H Chair.
use *ijtihad* to interpret the Quran. The history shows the errors occurred while translating Quran into Malayalam. C.N Ahmed Moulavi made valuable contribution to the Malayali Muslims, but the critics say that he made so many mistakes in the translation; even the Sunni Samastha said his translation is completely false and made fatwa against his translation. Later even the Mujahid group itself ousted him from their group. He opened up a new way to understand the Quran. There has been a gradual shift on the question of translation of Quran among the Sunni Muslims. While they don’t oppose the already existing translations of Quran, they do not support its promotion.

While the Sunni Muslims were the first to translate Quran in the 18 Century the efforts from the newly emergent movement to translate Quran subsequently attracted opposition form them on the ground that these translations would have the influence of the ideologies of these groups. As things stand today, the Sunni Muslims do not support the promotion of translating the Quran which is pursued zealously by other groups.

While till now we have examined the theological debates among the Muslim groups and other communities. State as an intervening institution never found a mention in my description except on the issues of Onam celebration. In the next chapter I would take up issues with age at marriage to foreground the relations between state, gender and community. I also talk about the dress code controversy which became a context for the intervention of state through its juridical pronouncements.