

**ISLAMIC TRADITIONS IN MALABAR:
BOUNDARIES, APPROPRIATIONS AND RESISTANCES**

Thesis Submitted to the Pondicherry University in fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
SOCIOLOGY

By
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Under the Supervision of

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Islamic Traditions in Malabar: Boundaries, Appropriations and Resistances** submitted to Pondicherry University in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology, is a record of original research done by **Mr. Hashim. T**, during the period of his study 2011–2014 in the Department of Sociology, Pondicherry University, under my supervision and guidance and that the thesis has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship or any other similar titles.

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DECLARATION

I, hereby declare that the thesis entitled, ‘Islamic Traditions in Malabar: Boundaries, Appropriations and Resistances’, submitted to the Pondicherry University in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN SOCIOLOGY, is a record of original research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Sudha Sitharaman, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Pondicherry University, and that it has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship or any other similar titles.

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Hashim T
Research Scholar

Abbreviations

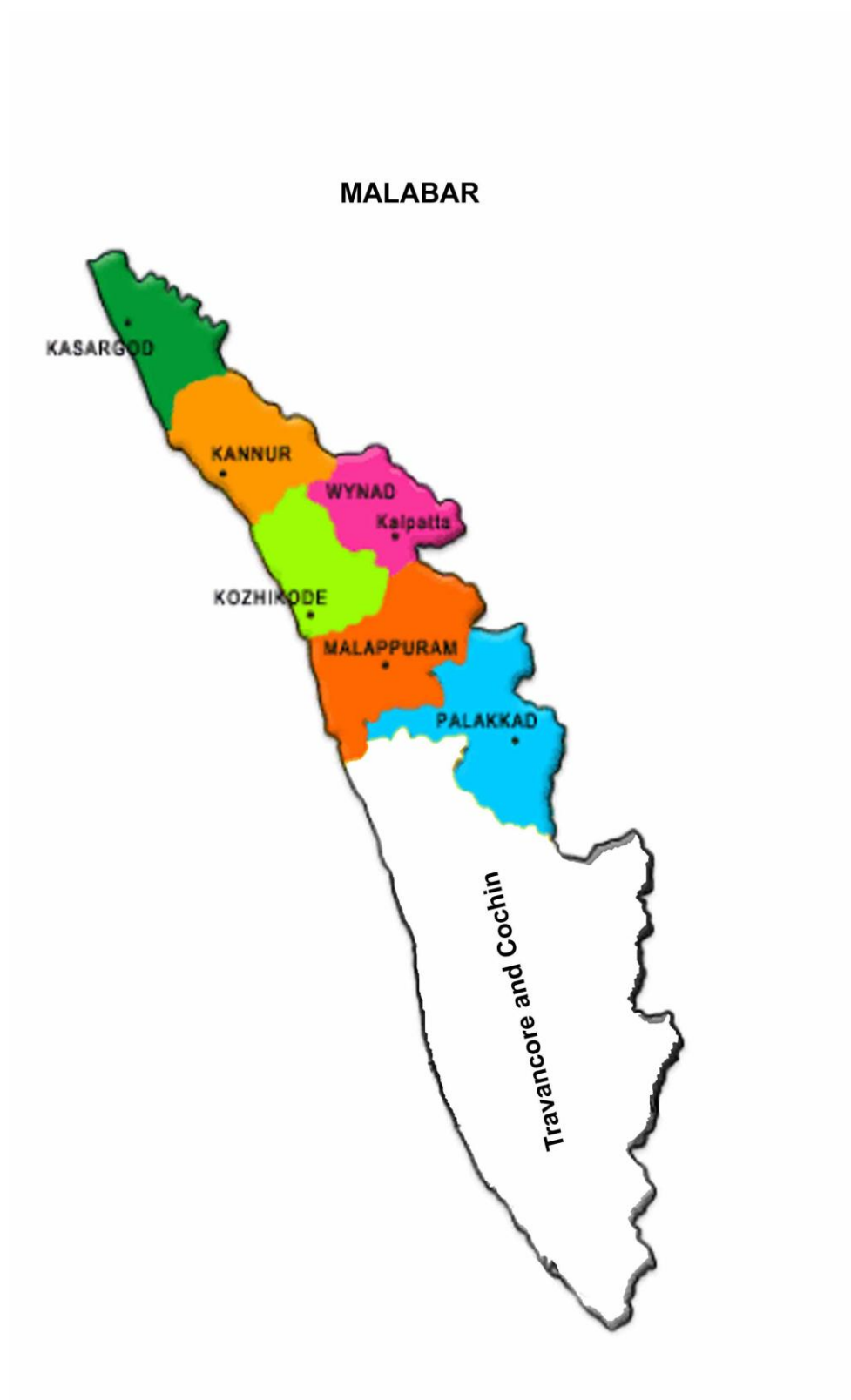
BJP	Bharathiya Janatha Party
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CBSC	Central Board of Secondary Education
GIO	Girls Islamic Organisation
INC	Indian National Congress
INL	Indian National League
IPB	Islamic Publishing Bureau
IPH	Islamic Publishing House
ISM	Ithihadussubanil Mujahideen
ISS	Islamic Sevak Sangh
IUML	Indian Union Muslim League
KNM	Kerala Nadwat-ul-Mujahideen
KJU	Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulema
LDF	Left Democratic Front
MGM	Muslim Girls Movement
MES	Muslim Educational Society
MSM	Mujahid Students Movement
NDF	National Development Front
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
SC	Scheduled Caste
SIMI	Students Islamic Movement in India
SDPI	Social Democratic Party of India
SSF	Sunni Student Federation
SYS	Sunni Yuvajana Sangam
SBS	Sunni Bala Sangam
SBV	Sunni Balavedhi
SKSSF	Samasta Kerala Sunni Students Federation
SKJU	Samstha Kerala Jamhiyathul Muhminuun
SIO	Students Islamic Organisation
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UDF	United Democratic Front
SNDP	Sree Narayana Darma Paripalana Sangam

MAPS

Political Map: Kerala



Political Map: Malabar



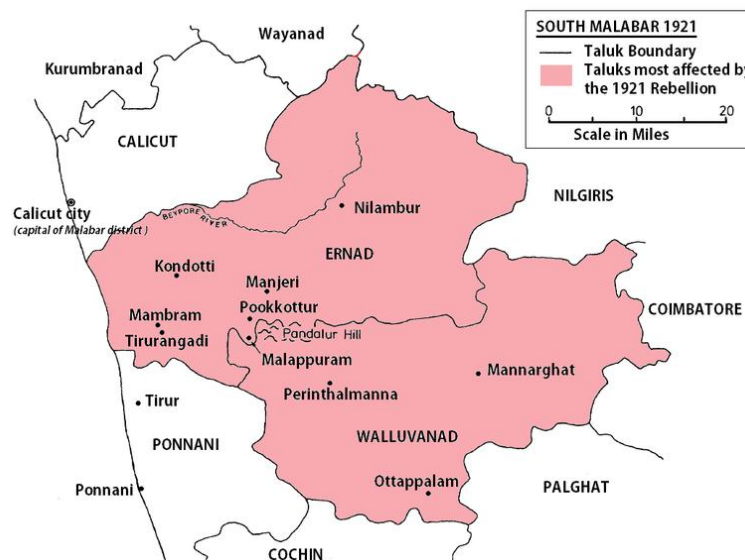
Political Map: Kozhikode District



Political Map: Kodyathur/ Cheruvadi



Mappila Rebellion affected areas of Malabar



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the significant developments in recent times has been the voicing of different groups in politics and other spaces. Articulation of religious identity is one of the significant aspects of these voices. It is important to capture these voices as they are found expressed in a context where one finds crisscrossing of identities and self-definitions. It is in this context that the study of Muslims in Kerala acquires distinctiveness as it not only contributes to the understanding of the larger socio-political scenario in India but also in many complex ways with which religious groups have been negotiating public space in Kerala. The milieu of ‘Muslim question and Muslim space’ is interesting as the study of Muslims open out fascinating areas of enquiry. Further, the investigation of the socio-historical and political factors surrounding the articulation of Muslim self is necessary as they grapple with dimensions of diversity and multiplicity. These diversities are exhibited through local manifestation of lived representation in the public sphere in the form of movements and counter-movements. These endeavors are characterized by an act of balancing between the universal characteristics of Islam and their local interpretations. The everyday life of the Muslims has interesting connections with the contemporary debates and their multiple representations in the public domain. The conflicts/debates and public contestations among the varied Muslim groups are some of the most significant defining features of the contemporary Muslim community. One of the recurring themes in the scholarship in/of Islam and Muslim communities in India is the question: is Islam one or many? This is precisely the question my study attempts to answer. What follows is an effort to understand the articulation of religious practices by different groups within Islam locating the focus on Mappila Muslims¹ in Malabar², Kerala.

¹ Mappila is also spelled as Mappilla, Maplah, Moplah, and Moplamar. Etymologically it has been glossed as a contraction of *Maha-pilla* (big child, a title of honor conferred on immigrants). The term Mappila is used to refer to Christians in the southern part of Kerala.

² The northern part of Kerala which consist of the present day Kasargod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palakkad, collectively called as Malabar was part of Madras Province before the formation of the Kerala state.

In the effort to locate the cultural, social, and political distinctiveness of Muslim groups that appeared and developed in a particular area, it is very essential to identify socio-historical factors that influenced the community. This is one way to approach the Mappila Muslim groups in Malabar, Kerala. The coming of Islam to Malabar itself has significance, since it came directly from Arabia on to the coast of Malabar for trade. There is a debate among the historians and religious scholars about the time when Muslim as a community emerged in Kerala. A section of historians believe that Muslims came at the time of Prophet Mohammed's rule in Arabia, whereas, some others have the opinion that it was just after the death of the Prophet. These facts show that Muslims had a direct contact with Arabia and thus, had access to direct information about Islam propagated by Prophet Mohammed. This view is widely shared among Muslim scholars with regard to authority over Islamic practices. But, it also opens up more questions on the diversity that has come about after this religious inception. One can see that Muslims from the southern part of India are different from their northern counterparts, in their way of life. South Indian Muslims are very much integrated into the native Hindu community. This assimilation can be seen in their dress, food, manners etc. There is another significant feature, which is unique to the Mappila Muslims; their intense religious devotion along with close adherence and understanding of the *sharia*³ and veneration of Sufi saints in addition to the adaptation to the local culture. The Mappila Muslims are unique in their linguistic, cultural, literary areas too. The Madrasas in Malabar, Kerala, use Arabic as well as Arabi-Malayalam, a creolized form of Arabic that can be read in Malayalam. It is believed that formation of such a separate language called Arabi-Malayalam was believed to solve issues engendered through misinterpretation of Islamic practice at the local level. The Muslims of Malabar had a close cultural contact with native Hindu people. Majority of the Malabar Muslims are followers of shafi⁴ schools of jurisprudence and the rest

³ The term means way or path; it is the legal framework within which the public and some private aspects of life are regulated for those living in a legal system based on Islam.

⁴ The four major sharia schools for Sunni Islam are hanafi, maliki, shafi and hanbali. Apart from the Quran and sunnah, the Sunni organisations completely depend up on the four schools of jurisprudence. The Hanafi School of jurisprudence is named after Imam Abu Hanifa in Iraq. He moreover looked up on the issue of reasoning and to a certain extent allowed free thinking in legal interpretations. Their followers were concentrated in west Asia and in India (except in Malabar in Kerala). See Kurup, K. K. N & Ismail, E. 2008. *Emergence of Islam in Kerala in 20 Century*. New Delhi, pp.253. The Maliki School of jurisprudence is named after Malik Ibn Anas also referred as Medina school. The Shafi School of jurisprudence introduced by Idris-Al-Shafi, who was a stringent jurist of Islam, paved the

belong to the hanafi school of jurisprudence of Islamic *fiqh*⁵. Except for the Muslims of Kerala, all other Muslims in the country have their genealogy linked with the invaders from Afghan lands during the middle Ages. This Persian contact consequently made all section of Indian Muslims except the Mappila Muslims very familiar with Urdu; an alternative to Arabic, which besides being a common language in many parts of northern India, is also the medium of instruction in Madrasas in these areas.

The Arabs came to the coastal region and were engaged in '*mutha*'⁶ marriage and gradually an Arab-Malayali group of people formed in Malabar. Miller says, "The Arab affinity has affected and continues to affect the language, religion and culture of the Mappilas more profoundly than those of any other Indian Muslim".⁷ The Arab traders went to visit different places. They had no chance to maintain regular marital relationships because of their profession and therefore they resorted to *mutha* marriage. Wherever they reached i.e. in Ponnani, Kozhikode, and Thalasseri. Zamorin rajas accommodated the Arabs and offered help to them to promote trade. The features of Mappila Muslims never end in distinction with others because the Muslims of Malabar do certain things like following of matrilineal (*marumakkathayam*⁸) system, which is different from the system followed by other Muslims of southern Kerala. The Mappilas can be seen engaging in two prominent

way for the foundation of Islamic law based on theory. This law is popular in Egypt, Syria, and south India especially in Malabar, Jordan, Palestine, Indonesia and Malaysia. The Hanbali School of jurisprudence is named after Ahamed Ibn Hanbal and preaches 'extreme fundamentalism' (This School did not get much popularity among the world Muslims till the puritanical and fundamentalist reform of Ibn Abdul Wahab of Saudi Arabia in the name of Salafi movement.) in the matter of hadith.

⁵ *Fiqh* is the Islamic jurisprudence and an extension of sharia code of conduct expounded in the Quran.

⁶ It is a private contract made in a verbal or written format. A declaration of the intent to marry and an acceptance of the terms are required, where the duration of the marriage and dowry must be agreed upon in advance. The Arab traders get married with the native women and Arab men had to pay a mutually agreed upon '*mehr*' or bride price. The wife retained custody of the children of the marriage and they remained part of her family rather than that of her husband. The minimum duration of the marriage is debatable and durations of at least three days, three months or one year have been suggested. At the end of the contract, the marriage ends and the wife must undergo *iddah* (a period of abstinence from sexual intercourse, usually the length of two menstrual cycles). The *iddah* is intended to give certain paternity to a child, if the wife becomes pregnant during the contract. See George, Alex. 1989. Malabar Khalasis' Traditional Technology to the Rescue in Perumon, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 18, pp. 965-967.

⁷ Miller, E Ronald. 1976. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala; A Study in Islamic Trends*. Madras: Orient Longman, pp.51.

⁸ Under the *marumakkathayam* system of inheritance, descent and succession to the property is traced through females. The mother formed the stock of descent and kinship as well as the rights to the property was traced through females and not through males. *Marumakkathayam* literally means inheritance by sisters children as opposed to sons and daughters.

occupations. Agricultural activities predominate certain of their sections and these sections are concentrated largely in the southern part of Malabar. An interesting character of this section has been its patrilineal (*makkathayam*) system. The other is involved in trade and mercantile activities and is concentrated in the urban areas and mostly in northern Malabar. The section of Mappila Muslims who inhabit the coastline follow the matrilineal system of family life. One can see a resultant debate over this from the 16 century onwards on the opinion of whether the matrilineal system has been accepted in the Islamic sharia. Therefore, while studying such a community the essential understanding of *fiqh* has to be problematized. Each debate has different kinds of notions in the public life; some may be theological or related to social issues. The religious movements in Malabar generated debates and discussions in the everyday life of Muslims which might not appear in other region of Kerala. The image created is that these movements and the counter movements over the name of Islam made for an interactive community. It paved way for different approaches based on lived experiences of the community. Diversity became a predominant fact than the fixed notion of universal Islam and the thesis attempts to question the very idea of homogeneity at the theoretical as well as at the level of practice.

The Salafi inspired Mujahid movement emerged in the 1920s and was concentrated initially in central and southern Kerala and later entered Malabar. The introduction of Mujahid movement among the Muslims of Kerala caused a rethinking among the Sunni ulama about their structure and their way of propaganda, which accorded them the power to decide and organize. Thus, in 1925, with the aim to push out new sectarian movements from within the Muslim community, preaching the message of Islam began to be implemented in a wider scale. After the introduction of the Sunni movement, these differences between traditions engendered public contestations, which many times eventually led to intervention of the secular state over such disputes. Sunni ulama began to make counter attacks over the new Salafi inspired ideology. The local features of Islam and its popular practices came under full censure from the Mujahid activists that appeared in Kerala since early 1920s. The variety of popular cultural practices became issues of contention for the new Mujahid group that reinstated the idea of a monolithic Islam. While conferring to the larger

reformism of Salafism and pan-Islamism⁹, the Mujahid found the local variant of Islam followed in Malabar to be problematic. They contend that the idea of Islam has been getting diluted at the local level due to the influence of other traditions, particularly Hinduism. The newly emerging movements tried to substitute their teachings as the original teachings of Islam as per their claim. These Salafian groups, it was alleged, implemented ‘foreign’ ideology but we can see that in its contextualization, it is purely local although varied from the original Salafi or Moududi ideology. Such a contextualization would help us to understand the distinctions, diversities and particularities of Islamic practices and its rich embodiments in Kerala. The socio-historical and religious backgrounds of Malabar have played a significant role in molding Islamic reformism and the counter responses from the Sunni ulama against these new Jamaat-Mujahid movements in definite ways. The contemporary debates and resultant conflicts and consensus, diversities of Muslim groups and the emergence of Islamic identity and its maintenance among the Muslims in Kerala etc. need to be addressed in the background of these historical experiences.

New Salafi, Moududian ideology raised basic questions over the traditional understanding and practicing of Islam in Kerala. It questions the authenticity of popular cultural practices among the Muslims of Malabar. The introduction of the new styles of faith and practice of Islam that was unknown earlier to the Sunni sections brought in multiple interpretations and explanations on the question of Islamic religious practices. Islam as a religious identity invents reasons for envisaging contestations and debates among its followers. The public domain of Muslims in Malabar vibrates with never-ending discussions and debates regarding the question of true Islam and its different ideological proliferations. These groups and factions, on behalf of revivalist and conservative groups within Islam used their organisational setup and ideological capitals for engaging in this continuous struggle over the title of true Islam. Each group criticized others for their deviations from the true path of Islam. Years of disputes and propagations over the inquiry of true Islam have caused very little agreement over the scriptural and practical issues. This has

⁹ Pan-Islamism is a political movement advocating the unity of Islam and Muslims under single Islamic state—often a caliphate—or an international alliance or organisation similar to a European union with Islamic principles.

caused for the emergence of different movements such as Mujahid, Jamaat-e-Islami and further proliferation of the Muslim groups in Malabar.

The question of diversity and its varied exhibition can be seen through the history of Mappila Muslims. Veliyamkode Umar Khazi, a reformer of Mappila Muslims of Malabar in the 19 century, referring to the narcissism and vanity of the new elite Mappilas of aristocratic families, wrote:

Aya faqiran binnasabi
Kaifata faquru
Wa asluku-min qablu
Thiyyan wa Nayaru
Wa Asari Musari
Wa Mannanu Pananu
Wa Koyappanu Chettiaru
Wa Nayadi Parayaru¹⁰

(You who boast of pedigree
What is your base?
Are you not converts from
Thiyyas, Nairs
Asari, Musari
Mannans, Panars
Koyappans, Chettiars
Nayadis & Parayars)

The new movements (Mujahid, Jamaat-e-Islami) professed to undo the unethical and superstitious beliefs and inauthentic religious practices of the community; they oppose the authority of the ulama. They question the very idea of traditionalistic Islamic culture that caused disputes between the Sunni Muslims and Mujahid/Jamaat groups. The Sunni ulama started to work against these new movements and they started to establish Madrasas all over Malabar to oppose this new movement. The Mujahid leaders used the Khilafat movement as a way to influence the Muslim mind and to preach the idea of pan-Islamism.

¹⁰ *Umar Khazi*, (Biography) by Veliyamkodu Mahallu Jamaath Committee, Veliyamkode, 1999, p.143.

1.1 Muslim Communities in Kerala: An Ethnographic Setting

Generally Muslims are seen to be unified in their belief and practice: however, in reality, over many centuries, Muslim faith and practice have come to be shaped and modified by dynamic regional cultures and the changing social and political context in which they have taken root. The conflicts and the differences among the groups are some of the most significant defining factors of the contemporary Muslim community in Kerala. The arguments about what constitutes correct practice of Islam emerged in Kerala among the religious groups in the early 20 century. Writing about the situation in the state of Kerala, I can say that the reformist programs articulated from the end of the 19 century onwards by Hindu and Christian communities have much in common with similar processes taking place amongst Kerala Muslims; they were all responding to, reflecting upon similar historical contingencies, and reacting to each other. The Salafi movement was strictly opposed to the Sufi belief in Islam. Salafism came from Saudi Arabia with the aim of promoting reformism in Islam. They opposed Islamic Sufism and its practices in the name of *bidah*¹¹. According to Osella and Osella, the reformism is purely local and possesses its own identity although it bears some contact with the gulf Salafi movement.¹² The reformists targeted several customs and practices of the Muslim communities of Kerala which otherwise shared many of the beliefs. These religious group differences have developed into sub-identities in Kerala where a Muslim religious identity is rotating around these factions. Their socio-religious life is highly influenced by the affiliation to these factions. There is a significant opposition set up in homogenized conceptions of Muslim community (as ‘opposition between ‘textual’ and ‘practiced’ Islam’) and the nature of contemporary reform movements. This study brings to focus the diversity in the Muslim community. Here, I attempt to map the debates among Muslim groups of Malabar, Kerala, in order to analyze the conflict and consonance between them.

¹¹ Bidah is a kind of un-Islamic innovation. Bidah is distinct from heresy (ilhad); heresy is considered to be an act of conscious rebellion and former is the result of confusion, especially as it refers to disagreement with authority of pertinent Prophetic tradition.

¹² Osella, Filippo & Osella, Caroline. 2007. Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India, *Modern Asian Studies*, pp. 318-319.

The Sunnis, the biggest religious groups among the Muslims in Malabar, are today divided into two sections, A.P Sunnis¹³ and E.K Sunnis¹⁴. In Kerala, both Sunni groups have their own organizational setup. These popular groups have maintained different wings to cater to people on different platforms. The A.P Sunnis have been active with their student and youth wings. One of the prominent student wing associated with the A.P Sunni groups has been the Sunni Student Federation (SSF). While one could also see the E.K Sunni Muslims mobilizing their students through Samastha Kerala Sunni Student Federation (SKSSF). It is important to note that these Sunni groups though have different wings to address the concerns of people from within, they do not have womens' wing. Women have been at the marginal in these groups, which reinstates the idea of conventional gender divide within the community. Most of the Muslims in Kerala follow the shafi school of jurisprudence but the reformist groups do not give any credence to any school of jurisprudence be it the shafi or hanafi. Along with these two Sunni groups, another group came to be formed in 2003 in Malabar under the leadership of Sadhakathulla Moulavi. He decided to withdraw his membership from Samastha Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulama and formed a new organisation (Kerala Samsthana Jamhiyathul Ulama). A gamut of socio-religious institutions including mosques, madrasas, schools, colleges, orphanages and publishing houses contributed towards a heightened sense of belongingness and loyalty to these groups among the followers. The socio-religious life of the common people is highly influenced by the affiliation to these groups. A Muslim in Kerala belongs to A.P Sunni or E.K Sunni or official Mujahid or Madavoor Mujahid, Jamaat-e-Islami or any among the newly formed groups. Such a fragmentation of religious identity has given rise to considerable tension and conflicts within the community. Quran Sunnath Society is another group working among the Muslims of Malabar. The Ahmadiya Muslims belong to another community and are not accepted by most of the other religious groups in Islam, though they argue that they are also a part of Islam.

¹³ Named after A. P Aboobakar Musliyar, who is the current General Secretary of A.P Sunnis. Sunnis were divided into two in 1989 due to the difference of opinion within the organization.

¹⁴ Named after E. K Aboobakar Musliyar, (Popularly known as '*Shams-ul-Ulama*' among Kerala Muslims), who was the former general secretary of *Samastha Kerala Jam'iyath-ul-Ulama*.

These group differences and the following contestations in the name of true Islam revolves around the theological and ideological issues. After the demolition of Babri mosque, the Indian Union Muslim League¹⁵ (IUML) started losing significance in Kerala politics. The league's claim over the idea of Muslim majority came under examination. The Muslim League witnessed a split in the party after the Babri incident. Consequently, albeit paradoxically, most of the Muslim groups aligned themselves with the Left Democratic Front (LDF), led by Communist Party of India (Marxist) in their attempt to oppose IUML which was the prominent party supporting the rival United Democratic Front (UDF)¹⁶. Therefore, one can see the interesting examples of Jamaat-e-Islami and a Sunni group section publicly supporting Communist party during the elections. Here as well, these groups to justify their political affiliations and leanings invoke Islamic theology. These political affiliations, mostly based on temporary pragmatic considerations are increasingly becoming essential dimensions of the identity articulation of these groups along with their respective theological and ideological positions.

The above mentioned Muslim groups, with community support, and political engagement, offer competing claims of legitimacy and authenticity, in their claims in/of Islam for Muslims in Malabar. It is the tension between these groups that create unexpected alliances in political sphere. As will be made clear, there are three major components to my argument for Mappila Muslim religious groups' and the tension between them: First, Muslims in Malabar (and in Kerala, south India generally) live in a competitive religious public sphere—they can choose to affiliate themselves with one of the ulama-led *maslaks* (Sunni A.P, Sunni E K, Mujahid A.P, Mujahid Madavoor group, Quran Sunnath Society, Ahmadiya, Tablighi Jamaat) or with any of the Islamist groups (pan-Islamist inspired Jamaat-e-Islami, National Development Front (NDF), being the most prominent two groups, some of which have their own political parties). Second, the Muslim religious groups have gone through a process of 'rationalization' over its long history because it has refused to confine religion to the private sphere. And third, it illustrates the 'objectification' of religion, that is, the

¹⁵ The most prominent political party of Muslims in Kerala.

¹⁶ Kerala politics is characterized by two opposing political coalitions; CPI (M) led Left Democratic Front and the Congress led United Democratic Front (UDF). These two coalitions have been assuming power in the Kerala assembly in alternate elections since 1980s.

conscious thinking through of questions about religious identity and conduct at the individual level, where earlier generations had taken such matters as given rather than something to be problematized. I argue that these characteristics make Mappila Muslim religious groups ‘modern,’ and also ‘secularizing’—an argument to which I will return, as it is at the heart of the chapters that follow.

1.2 Studies of Muslims in India

Studies on the Muslim community find that Muslims constitute the largest religious minority in India and are deeply embedded- culturally, economically and politically-at the local, regional and national levels. According to Jairath, most of the literature on Islam either assumes relative homogeneity particularly with regard to shared goals, or does not provide any extensive comment on the existence and impact of competition among the different Muslim religious groups. He further states that some academic work has been concerned with analyzing a particular group in detail, but without engaging the dynamics of competition with other groups. For him, Muslim groups in India have often been viewed as competitors rather than seeing them as allies. He points to the need to take in to account the diversity and hierarchies among them and also be attentive to the regional context in which the role and experiences of these groups are defined.¹⁷ Islam has always been a major faith tradition in south Asia. A pertinent question that emerges in this context is that, why is that we hardly see any engagement within Islamic traditions that would provide civilizational values to Indian society? Until recently, with a few exceptions,¹⁸ no serious attempts were made towards studying the Muslim communities of India and their social structure. It is imperative to examine some of the arguments of several social scientists who attempted to comprehend the diversity within Islam and theorize the changing scenario of Muslim communities across the world. Jairath states that Muslims in different states are not necessarily homogeneous. They are divided in to various caste-like, generally endogamous and frequently traditional occupation-based groups, which constitute a local system of stratification. Muslims are not a homogenous community

¹⁷ Jairath, K. Vinod. 2011. *Frontiers of Embedded Muslim Communities in India*. New Delhi. pp.9.

¹⁸ Ahmed, Imtiaz (Ed.).1973. *Caste and social stratification among Muslims in India*. See also, Ahmad, Imtiaz. (ed.) 1976. *Family, Kinship, and Marriage among Muslims in India*. See, Ahmad, Imtiaz. (Ed.). 1981. *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India*. See also, Das, Veena. 1984. for a folk theology and theological anthropology of Islam. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. Vol.18, No 2, pp. 293-300.

and ‘there is considerable diversity in the beliefs and the practices of Muslims’.¹⁹ The historicity of Islam with its past of negotiating with contradictory cultures and belief systems at different times and places, has contributed to the diversity of India. It is perhaps essential to conceptualize and understand these multiplicities in order to create a sense of the compound articulations of Islam. The diversities within Islam are manifest in the contested theological arrangements and its group expressions among the Muslim societies.

There are many scholars, who have studied the different aspects of Muslim communities in India. Some scholars like Edward Simpson and Rubina Jasani, writing on the varied lifestyle of Gujarati Muslim communities, stress the complexity, pragmatic and contingent nature of people’s engagement with Islam (reformist and otherwise). They extensively studied the reformist movements and the approaches and stands of the traditional sections against the movement. Simpson offers us a study of three men over ten years, which clearly shows the shifts in their opinions and practices and the ways in which other factors impinge upon the latter. This led Simpson to warn against privileging religion as the principal—or perhaps unique foundation for Muslim identity and practice.²⁰ Nile Green and the Osella consider the wider modern context that underpins the emergence and development of reformism.²¹

Some scholars like Francis Robinson, Muhammad Qasim Zaman focus on the reformism in Islam. Robinson reminds us that reform is not recent, but has roots in the deep Islamic past and its existence formally since the 18 century.²² Irfan Ahmed studied about the caste system among the Muslims in Aligarh, focused on the sectarian conflicts between the Ashraf’s and Ansaris in north India. Ahmed studied the works of Jamaat-e-Islami in north India that he found in the Aligarh Muslim University. His study shows that the founder Maududi’s original thoughts were not unequivocally antifeminist. While Moududi is, Ahmad argues, ‘neo-patriarchal’, he also, for the first time, considers women as individuals and opens up Islamist activism to them. This paved way for later Jamaat activists to make some radical ideological

¹⁹ Ibid, pp.7-10.

²⁰ Osella, Filippo & Osella, Caroline. 2008. Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India, *Modern Asian Studies*, pp.6.

²¹ Ibid, pp.7.

²² Robinson, Francis. 1984. Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922. *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 157-161.

moves and for the movement as a whole to shift position on ‘women’s issues’ over time.²³ Some scholars like Arshad Alam²⁴, discuss the works of north Indian madrasas; they also talk about the sectarian differences between the religious groups in north India. Alam discusses the narrow orientation of two north Indian madrasas, concerned primarily to train students in reproducing sectarian differences between Bareilly and Deobandis.²⁵ Farzana Haniffa focused on the relations between non-Muslims and reformist Muslims. Haniffa explores how processes of constructing the self-consciously pious Muslim female subject are working to recast the ethnic identity of ‘Muslim’ in a manner which regards it as exclusive to the ethnic others.²⁶ Shehabuddin discusses the interesting process by which one of the apparently most ideologically robust of reformist groups—the Jamaat-e-Islami, came into form. He discusses the pragmatic actions and analyses the shifts in the positions of the group using fundamental ideology.²⁷ Jeffrey studied about the family planning methods and approaches among the Muslims of India and he analyzed the role of ulama in Muslim society.²⁸

Zubaida confronted the very idea of a homogenous Muslim society and argued that there are many Muslim societies, and the range of their variations is comprehensible in terms of the normal practice of social and political analysis like any other range of societies. She made an analysis about the differentiations that exists among the ulama. She states that ulama assigned different meanings and roles at different socio-political contexts. The city and its ulama represent the high culture of Islam, literate, unitarian, sober and puritanical, as against the low or little cultures of the nomads, centered on the saint, the saintly lineage, and magic and ceremony.²⁹ Muhammad Qasim Zaman did an elaborate study on the complexity of understanding the position and the role of the ulama and the question of their opposition with Sufism as posited by scholars like Gellner. This is a noteworthy resistance set up in homogenized

²³ Ahmad, Irfan. 2009. *Islamism and democracy in India: The transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

²⁴ Alam, Arshad. 2011. *Inside a Madrasa: Knowledge, Power and Islamic Identity in India*, Routledge: New Delhi

²⁵ Ibid. pp.181-202.

²⁶ Osella, Filippo & Osella, Caroline. 2008. *Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India, Modern Asian Studies*. Cambridge University Press, pp.7.

²⁷ Ibid, pp.8.

²⁸ Ibid, pp.8.

²⁹ Jairath, K. Vinod. 2011. *Frontiers of Embedded Muslim Communities in India*. New Delhi, pp.2.

formations of Muslim society and is important in understanding the ‘opposition between ‘textual’ and ‘lived’ Islam’ and the nature of present-day ‘reform’ engagements. According to Zaman, “not long ago, contrasts between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ were a convenient shorthand way of explaining what particular societies had to get rid of in order to become part of the modern world”.³⁰

In most Islamic communities across the world, Islamic tenets that each community regards as authentic are used. To them, the actual practices that constitute true Islam are the real substance of sociological enquiry in the study of religion. Here, I try to make sense of how strong convictions of this true Islam shape and provide meaning to the everyday life of people in these communities, rather than enquiring into what is true Islam. The attempt to find out what is true Islam in a theological perspective is less fruitful and it belies the very spirit of sociological enquiry.

Writing about the situation in the state of Kerala, Osella has argued the reformist programmes articulated since the end of the 19 century by Hindu and Christian communities have much in common with those taking place among Kerala Muslims; all are responding to, reflecting upon similar historical contingencies, and reacting to each other.³¹ The same can be said about the different regions of India. Jairath underlines the importance of this aspect when he asserts that ‘narratives about culturally distinctive actors must try to translate and represent the historically-situated discourses of such factors as responses to the discourses of others, instead of schematizing and de-historicizing their actions’. In other words, the beliefs, practices and political actions of Muslim communities cannot be understood when studied in isolation but must be seen as embedded in dynamic and wider social, economic and political contexts.³²

Scholarship on Islam can be seen focusing on four aspects of the Muslims of Kerala. Namely: a) The status, origin of Mappilas in Kerala b) Mappila revolt and Khilafat movement c) Economic and socio-political development of Malabar and d) Reformist/traditionalist movements among the Mappila Muslims of Malabar, Kerala.

³⁰ Ibid, pp.2.

³¹ Osella, Filippo & Osella, Caroline. 2008. *Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India, Modern Asian Studies*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 320.

³² Jairath, K. Vinod. 2011. *Frontiers of Embedded Muslim Communities in India*. New Delhi, pp.3

To understand the nature of the Mappila Muslims it is important to know the origin, evolution and status of this community. Historians such as Theodore P. Wright (1977), Miller (1976) and Stephen Dale (1978, 1982) conducted research on the origins of Muslims in Kerala and compared south Indian Muslims to the north Indian ones. Bayly studied the religious and social life of south India and its large indigenous population. She emphasized on hierarchies of caste rank and inherited status. She states that the south Indian Muslims integrated into the Hindu society and they practiced some customs and practices according to local norms and had strong links with the Hindu sacred settings.³³ Another scholar Osella studied the Muslims of Malabar, their culture, lifestyles and their socio-economic status and developments. In addition, she focused on the cultural differences among the Muslims in Malabar.³⁴ Hardy studied the south Asian Muslim communities; mainly focusing on the coastal regions of northern Kerala. He made an extensive enquiry into the causes of the emergence of heroic ideals and cause for Jihadis and Mujahids in Kerala. The author focuses attention on questions of how a great central religious tradition is re-worked regionally to meet challenges that are peculiar to a region.³⁵ Another scholar Stephen F Dale focuses on the communal relations and harmonies that existed in the 16 century in Kerala. According to him, the ‘accommodation through avoidance’ was the basic theme of the Hindu-Muslim relations in Malabar that was made possible through the interrelated process of immigration, intermarriage and conversion when in the 18 century a large portion of Mappilas became tenants. One notes differences based on status between 16 century trading Mappilas and 19 century Mappila agriculturists.³⁶

The second aspect on which many of the scholars focus is the collective actions of the Mappilas that is represented in the form of Mappila revolt and Khilafat movement. These two events have been the point of reference for most of the scholarship. Scholars like D N Dhanagare (1977), Rolland Millor (1976), and Dale (1978) opine

³³ Bayly, Susan. 2004. *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900*. London: Cambridge University Press.

³⁴ Osella, Filippo & Osella, Caroline. 2008. *Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India, Modern Asian Studies*. Cambridge University Press.

³⁵ Hardy, P. 1982. Islamic society on the South Asian frontier: the Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1, pp. 193-194.

³⁶ Dale, Stephen F. 1973. Communal Relations in Pre-Modern India: 16th Century Kerala. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 16, No. 2/3, pp. 319-327.

that the Mappila revolt was a fanatical one. Others like K K N Kurup (2011), Prakash Karat (1990) are of the opinion that the revolt was completely an agrarian revolt initiated by the poor agriculturalists against the big Hindu landlords. Dhanagare studied the south Indian culture, religion and social structure. He seriously observed the agrarian conflict that had occurred in Malabar.³⁷ Wagle states that the Mappilas of Malabar confronted two powers. At the internal frontier, Mappilas were challenged by the Hindu landlords and in the external frontier they had to face the European powers.³⁸ Another scholar Robert L. Hardgrave took a different approach. He dealt with the 1921 Malabar rebellion and the ramifications of the rebellion on the community. He focused on the historical significance of Malabar as a region that provided space for the rebellion. According to him, the revolt turned out to be a well-planned effort. It helped to put forward the dynamic nature of the Mappilas and boost the widespread growth of followers throughout Kerala, especially in Malabar.³⁹ Dale and Menon focused on the *nerca*⁴⁰, a kind of religious expression common to Muslim communities along with certain indigenous elements, which comprise the religious beliefs. The study also had its interest laid in the role of Sufis in Kerala society.⁴¹ Panikkar opined that Dale's primary study was not about the religion but of how the religion became a factor for the revolt as he focused on the social structure of Malabar.⁴² Another scholar O.P. Salahudheen studied the interaction of religion with anti-colonial mobilization. His study deals with not only the rebellion but also the anti-colonial struggle, Congress movement, the role of Congress etc.⁴³

The third aspect that the studies focus is the economic and socio-political development of Malabar. After the state formation, few scholars undertook studies on

³⁷ Dhanagare, D. N. 1977. Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics: The Moplah Rebellions in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century's, Past & Present, *Economic and Political Weekly*, No. 74, pp. 112-141.

³⁸ Wagle, N. K. 1982. Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Māppīlas of Malabar, 1498-1922. *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 87, No. 2, pp. 521-522

³⁹ Hardgrave, Robert L. 1977. The Mappila Rebellion, 1921: Peasant Revolt in Malabar. *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp.57-99.

⁴⁰ Festivals usually happened around Sufi saint dhargas.

⁴¹ Dale, Stephen F. & Menon, M. Gangadhara. 1978. Nercas: Saint-Martyr Worship among the Muslims of Kerala, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 523-538.

⁴² Panikkar, K. N.1982. Mappilas Religious Militancy. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.17, No. 20, pp. 823-824.

⁴³ Salahudheen O. P. 2007. Political Ferment in Malabar. *Social Scientist*, Vol. 35, No. 11/12, pp. 29-38.

socio-cultural and political development aspects in Kerala. Scholars like Wright⁴⁴ and Prabash⁴⁵ studied the economic and political aspect of Mappilas of Malabar. After the emergency, political parties began to play a big role in Malabar, which triggered a number of studies on the political influence of that region, especially the Mappilas living there. Oommen extensively looked up the issue of communalism and its vital role in politics and he concluded communalism to be a difficult task to undo because its expressions are very different in diverse contexts; thereby, he states two types of communalism; first, is a political doctrine and second, being one of behavior based on community sentiment.⁴⁶ Prabash looks at the relationship between the communist front and the Muslim League.⁴⁷ Miller studied the politico-social life of the Mappilas, analyzed the role of Muslim League in Kerala, stressed the importance of Sufi saints as objects of popular worship and focused on the social aspects of the nerca and other types of religious celebrations. He makes no real attempt to answer the basic questions about the genesis and the characteristics of Mappila outbreaks.⁴⁸ Dale criticized Miller for his lack of historical knowledge. He discusses more about the contemporary debate in the community. He compares and studies the Muslim religious groups.⁴⁹

The fourth aspect covered by the studies is the reformist/traditionalist movements among the Mappila Muslims of Malabar, Kerala. There are studies undertaken to understand the diverse Muslim traditions and organisations/communities of Kerala. Scholars such as Francis Robinson⁵⁰, Osella and Osella⁵¹, Roland E Miller⁵², Mattison

⁴⁴ Wright, Jr, Theodore P. 1966. The Muslim League in South India since Independence: A Study in Minority Group Political Strategies, *The American Political Science Review*, pp.579-599 also see Muslims and the 1977 Indian Elections: A Watershed? *Asian Survey*. pp. 1207-1220.

⁴⁵ Prabhash, J. 2000. CPI (M)'s Muslim League Dilemma. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, No. 34 pp. 3009-3011.

⁴⁶ Oommen, John. 1995. Politics of Communalism in Kerala, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 11, pp. 544-547.

⁴⁷ Prabash, J. 2000. CPI (M)'s Muslim League Dilemma. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 35, No. 34, pp. 3009-3011.

⁴⁸ Miller, E Roland. 1976. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: a Study in Islamic Trends*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, pp.82.

⁴⁹ Dale, Stephen F. 1979. Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 196-198.

⁵⁰ Robinson, Francis. 1984. Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922. *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 157-161.

⁵¹ Osella, Filippo & Osella, Caroline. 2008. Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India, *Modern Asian Studies* 42, Vol.2, No.3, pp. 317-346.

Mines⁵³ etc. focus on the studies of reformism and revivalism among the Mappila Muslims. Roland E. Miller mainly studied the reformist/revivalist movements among the Muslims in Malabar. According to him the “Mujahids (Salafi movement) in Kerala are basically fundamentalist and puritanical rather than modern”.⁵⁴ He categorized the organisations in to different folds as reformists and traditionalists. Scholar Robinson studied the Islamic reformist movements and its influence over the Kerala Muslim community. According to him, the causes of the spate of reformism are dialectically linked with the long established local tradition, which began to be affected by the worldwide Islamic revival.⁵⁵ Another scholar Osella and Osella studied about the Mujahid movement and its developments as a reformist movement among the Mappila Muslims. She focuses on the public debate in Kerala between reformist and traditionalist and points out that reformism happened everywhere in Kerala and in all religious communities.⁵⁶ However, her focus remains the reformist attempt made by the Mujahid movement, neglecting the aspects of Jamaat-e-Islami, or for that matter the Sunni groups and their claim over the reformism. Arguments regarding the constitution of true Islam initiated by the reformist groups began in the early 20 century. They opposed Islamic Sufism and its practices with its 1400-year-old tradition in the name of bidah. Mattison Mines states, “It has long been recognized that Muslim ritual and behavior often owe as much to local custom as they do to Islamic tradition. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find Indian Muslims combining Indian and Islamic traditions. This is not to imply that Indian Muslims form a homogeneous population or that Islam is a monolithic religion: neither is true. Muslims in India are culturally, politically and linguistically highly diverse, and the character of Muslim identity and integration varies greatly. Thus, over much of northern India Muslims are characterized as reluctant acceptors of their minority status. However, in Kerala, they considered as well-integrated acceptors. In addition,

⁵² Miller, E. Roland.1976. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: a Study in Islamic Trends*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

⁵³ Mines, Mattison. 1975. Islamisation and Muslim Ethnicity in South India, *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 404-418.

⁵⁴ Roland, E. Miller.1976. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: a Study in Islamic Trends*. New Delhi: Orient Longman, pp.82.

⁵⁵ Robinson, Francis. 1984. Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922. *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 157-161.

⁵⁶ Osella, Filippo & Osella, Caroline. 2008. Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India, *Modern Asian Studies* 42, Vol.2, No.3, pp. 317–346.

while Muslim-Hindu antagonism is common and prevalent in northern India, we can see just the opposite character in such relations in Kerala”.⁵⁷ The analysis of social stratification among the Muslim societies in India is inseparable from the analysis of historical structure and socio-economic structure as a whole. Here the Muslim traditions and differences among the communities are part of the prevalent caste system in Kerala. Further, we can see that the Muslim communities in Kerala, which claim foreign origin, have higher social status more than the local converts. His focus is on the role of caste and hierarchy among the Mappila Muslims. In addition, his main concern is to look at the inter-community relations, a comparison between the Hindus and Muslims and its various manifestations in the Mappila community. Similarly, Santhosh’s study of the religious organisational debates focuses on the identity question of Mappila Muslims of Malabar as they emerge in interactions between the Hindus and the Muslim. As the focus of the study is intercommunity relations rather than intra community, identity questions prevail over the religious/theological and the lived experiences of the Mappila Muslim community which this study attempts to correct.⁵⁸

The above review of literature reveals that the studies on Muslims focus exclusively on the professed theological underpinnings of the religious groups. While the theological dimension is an important component to understand the articulations of groups what is noteworthy is the changing nature of the theological articulation of the groups. My study endeavors to look at the changing dimension by bringing the diversity of articulations from the field. Here my query is about the intra-community relations to find out the nature of organisational debates and diversity and to delineate the claim over true Islam and further proliferation of Muslim groups. To understand the discursive tradition of Mappila Muslims I focus on the intra-debates rather than going to inter-community debates. The differential investments in the Muslim-self and the shifting nature of ‘Othering’ within the community rather than inter-community shall be attended to.

⁵⁷ Mines, Mattison. 1975. Islamisation and Muslim Ethnicity in South India, *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 404-418.

⁵⁸ Santhosh R. 2009. *The Process of Religious Identity Formation: A Sociological Study of Religious Organisations in Kerala, South India*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis.

1.3 Theoretical Understanding

The religion Islam reveals enormous diversity in its practices based on differing theological underpinnings. These diversities are manifest in its theological and organizational manifestations and their public contestations. It is therefore very relevant to understand and conceptualize the importance of complex diversities among the Muslims in the world. The organizational debates and contestations over true Islam by the religious groups in Malabar can be seen in the nature of their public posturing. They groups aim at specific issues, often picked up from their everyday lives; and the varied positions taken in the process and diversities over the issues at different times are very relevant for the study. It is necessary to juxtapose the differing viewpoints of the groups with extant scholarship which hitherto has attempted to understand them. It would be helpful for us to begin by taking note of the contestations and agreements reached by the different religious groups of Kerala.

The perspectives provided by social scientists in order to explaining the diversity of Islam in India may be divided into four overlapping positions, such as, the theory of Islamisation (see Eaton 1984⁵⁹), co-existence or syncreticism (Ahmad 1973; 1976; 1981⁶⁰) and hierarchical model (Madan 2004⁶¹). The question is, are these perspectives, provided by scholars, sufficient to understand the complex dynamics that are at play within Islam? I begin by querying the given perspectives simultaneously juxtaposing them with wide-ranging diversities among the Muslims in Kerala, especially in Malabar. The offered perspectives of understanding the diversity of the Muslim communities may be further grouped into two based on their sources; first, based on textual sources and the second on practice. As Roy states:

“...the students and the diverse observers of Islam in south Asia and even beyond have long been familiar with the inner divergence of the Muslim communities which crystallized into two broad clusters and strands of Muslim beliefs and practices, most commonly perceived to represent the distinction between the universal attributes of the religion derived from its

⁵⁹ Eaton, Richard M. 1993. *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 55.

⁶⁰ Ahmed, Imtiaz (Ed.).1973. *Caste and social stratification among Muslims in India*. See also, Ahmad, Imtiaz. (ed.) 1976. *Family, Kinship, and Marriage among Muslims in India*. See also, Ahmad, Imtiaz. (Ed.). 1981. *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India*.

⁶¹ Madan, T. N. 2004. *India's Religions*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

scriptural and textual sources (*kitab*), and its particular formulations cast in the mould of its local geo-cultural and customary beliefs and practices” (*adat*).⁶²

The above scholarship forwards the need to understand Islam in both its components of ‘text’ and ‘context’. The scholars seem to be sensitive to the multiplicity that the context is endowed with, while considering the text to be a constant entity. This perspective would not allow for understanding the possibility of multiplicity inherent within the text and also the prospect of it being interpreted in multiple ways.

Following from this, what I attempt through this study is to bring to focus the possibility of multiple readings of the text and the diverse ways of interpretation, while not losing sight of the diversity in the practice of Islam.

Many scholars writing on Muslims, has discarded the ‘popular’ expressions, of practice dubbing them as against the tenets of Islamic norms, values, customs, traditions and practices, and termed them as folk Islam. Many social scientists have pointed out the underlying essentialism of labels such as scripturalist and lived or folk Islam and how they mask the complexities and wide-ranging diversities inherent in a given context. The underlying perspective obtained is to study of Islam in India, that is, the scriptural and the lived Islam, as binaries. According to Das this perspective has prevented scholars from seeing the diversity and wide-ranging aspects of Islam(s) and thus they fail to interpret the diverse strands in the ‘scripturalist’ or ‘textual Islam’.⁶³

Being a topic related with the religion and religious communities, the discussion is very important and not only, the academicians and social scientists but also theologians, who are intricately linked with it. So, considering the issue of scriptural and folk Islam, the Islamic theologians normally considered the ‘popular’/‘folk’ practices and consider them un-Islamic. Roy points out that many Islamic theologians and several historians are unanimous in describing such practices with value loaded negative impressions. He also mentions the Bengali historians who used terms like

⁶² Roy, Asim. 2005. Thinking over ‘Popular Islam’ in South Asia in *Living Together Separately: Cultural Indian in History and Politics*. (Ed.) Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 32.

⁶³ Das, Veena. 1984. for a folk theology and theological anthropology of Islam. *Contributions of Indian Sociology*. Vol. 18, No 2, pp. 294.

‘incomplete conversion’, ‘half converted’, ‘semi converted’, ‘half believers’, ‘deviants’, ‘indianised’, etc.⁶⁴, which betrays the value judgments and partiality prevalent among those scholars.

The study of Indian Muslim communities requires the recognition of diversity and differences among the Muslims and changing spatial-temporal contexts taking into account the changed roles and the responses of every section. One way by which anthropologists have attempted to resolve the problem of diversity is to adapt the Orientalist distinction between orthodox and non-orthodox Islam to the category of ‘great’ and ‘little’ traditions, and thus, to set up the seemingly more acceptable distinction between the scripturalist, puritanical faith of the towns, and the saint-worshipping ritualistic religion of the countryside.⁶⁵ Great traditions have also been called textual traditions, high traditions or universal traditions etc. The little tradition is the heterodox form of the religious periphery. The little tradition incorporates many elements of local traditions and practices. The day-to-day religious practice by the lay people is termed little religion. These traditions also called as ‘local traditions’, ‘low traditions’, or ‘popular religion’.

Eaton put forward four conventional theories of Islamisation such as religion of the sword, religion of patronage, religion of social liberation and immigration theory.⁶⁶ The oldest of these is the ‘religion of the sword’ theory. During the middle ages, Muslims were the rulers of the nation. They came here through invasion, and established the empires. The question remains: if Islamisation was part of military or political strategy? It can be presumed that those locales which were exposed most intensively and over the longest period to rule by Muslim dynasties - that is, those that were most fully exposed to the ‘sword’ - would have by today represented the maximum amount of Muslims. But, reality turns out to be contrary, as those sections where most spectacular Islamisation happened, such as eastern Bengal⁶⁷ or western

⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 36.

⁶⁵ Asad, Talal. 1986. *The Idea of Anthropology of Islam*, Washington DC: Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, pp.6.

⁶⁶ Eaton, M. Richard. 1993. *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 58.

⁶⁷ Richard Eaton has offered a historically grounded theory of Islamization wherein he argues that the mass Islamization of rural Bengal took place during the Mughal period with agrarian expansion by clearing forests and creation of the landed gentry around mosques and shrines headed by charismatic

Punjab, lay on the border of Indo-Muslim rule, where the 'sword' was weakest, and where animal force could have put forth the least influence. Whereas in the heartland of Muslim rule in the higher Gangetic plain - the field of the Delhi Fort and the Taj Mahal, wherever Muslim administrations had ruled the most intensively and for the longest epoch of time the Muslim population aggregated to only 10 to 15 percent.

The theory of the 'religion of patronage' views that Indians of the medieval era converted in order to obtain some positive special religious treatment from the ruling class—liberation from taxes, promotion in the bureaucracy, and so forth. This theory has forever found acceptance with western inspired secular social scientists that see any religion as a dependent variable of some non-religious agency, in particular an unspecified wish for social improvement or for prestige. A number of instances from Indian history may be cited to support this theory. In the early fourteenth century, Eaton states, for example, Ibn Battuta accounted that Indians presented themselves as new converts to the Khalaji sultans who in turn satisfied them with the best clothes of respect according to their rank. The Kayasthas and Khatri of the Gangetic Plain, the Parsanis of Maharashtra, and the Amils of Sind all refined Muslim culture by virtue of their filling the government's large need for clerks and managerial servants at all levels.

An additional theory to the repertoire put forward is that of 'religion of social liberation'. Elaborated by British ethnographers, Pakistani nationals, and Indian Muslims, among many others, the matter of the speculation is that the Hindu caste system is a strictly prejudiced form of social organisation and that the lowest and most dishonored castes, after understanding Islam as an ideology of social fairness and impartiality, converted to Islam in order to run away from Brahminical oppression and domination. Eaton states that a deep interpretation and reading of Persian sources suggests that in their presentation of Islam to Indians, Muslim intellectuals and ulama did not stress the Islamic ideal of social equality and equal opportunity as opposed to Hindu caste, but rather Islamic monotheism as conflicting to Hindu polytheism. However, even if it was true that Islam had been offered as an ideology of social fairness, there is plentiful proof that former Hindu communities failed upon

leaders who instituted new religious cults. For details see Eaton, M. Richard. 1993. *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 226.

conversion to improve and to get better their status in the social hierarchy and that, on the contrary, they simply accepted Muslim society using the same practice of birth-ascribed rank that they had in Hindu society.⁶⁸

The immigration theory is not really a theory of conversion at all since it views Islamisation in terms of the diffusion and transmission not of belief but of peoples. In this view, the bulk of India's Muslims are descended from other Muslims who had either migrated overland from the Iranian plateau or sailed across the Arabian Sea. The immigration theory explains the Muslims' invasion into India all the way from the Iranian plateau and from Arabia. As we know, the Arabs had a long history of trade relationship with India and as part of their trade relationship with south India they came there and had marital relationships with the Malayali women. In addition, the Muslims migrated from the Iranian plateau and settled in North India.

A further problem with the model, according to Talal Asad, is that it leads anthropologists to assert that 'neither form of Islam has a claim to being regarded as 'more real' than the other'.⁶⁹ According to the Islamisation theory, the process of Islamisation was a homogenous phenomenon among the Muslims in India. This process involved the increase of the customs, beliefs and rituals of the traditional Muslims to get adapted to the newly formed higher stratum of the Muslim civilization. When a Hindu cluster was transformed into Islam, it is straight away disliked from the Hindu social system, accepted a new name that signified a better social status, and advanced a claim to have descended from one of the noble born (Ashraf) families of Arabic or Persian origin. Roy states that the clear and constituent assumptions about Islamisation, underpinning the conventional perception and conceptualization of this internal divide in Islam as unmistakable. It is presented as a simple, unbroken, and unidirectional process in history of transition and transformation from popular to learned, lower to higher, custom to scripture, heterodoxy-heteropraxy to orthodoxy-orthopraxy, little to great tradition, and syncretistic to purist Islam.⁷⁰ Rahman makes the rigid statement from the orthodox

⁶⁸ Roy, Asim. 2005. Thinking over 'Popular Islam' in South Asia in *Living Together Separately: Cultural Indian in History and Politics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 40.

⁶⁹ Asad, Talal. 1986. *The Idea of Anthropology of Islam*, Washington DC: Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, pp.6.

⁷⁰ Ibid, pp. 40.

position. He explains that ‘Islam in Bengal was full of corrupt and irreligious practices and the Islamisation process changed this entire corrupted practice, meaning a transformation of folk/popular Islam to the true Islam and he identifies the incomplete conversion as a channel to receive all the corrupted practices from outside’.⁷¹ To call a Muslim something less than a Muslim is a value judgment and so it will lead to false interpretation of the Islamic practices. How can we distinguish the Indianised Muslim from the true Muslim or whether is it possible to call them as Indianised Muslims or the half converts or are they the deviants from the real path of Islam.

The theory of co-existence put forward by Ahmed was a counter one for the theory of Islamisation. He criticized it through a series of socio-anthropological studies titled as ‘*Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India*’ (1973), ‘*Family, Kinship and Marriage among the Muslims in India*’ (1976) and ‘*Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India*’ (1981). Through this, he explained the diversities and the differences among the Muslims in India. He extensively studied the religious spheres of Muslims and their socio-cultural sharing with other communities. His aim was to degrade the theory of Islamisation thesis and tried to draw that in India the Islamisation process will not win and not succeed and opined that it may not succeed in the near future. He focused on the co-existence element of India’s great past and depicts how the Muslims in India are deeply, emotionally mixed with the neighborhood social and cultural spheres. His anthropological perceptions propose a counterview to the Islamisation thesis. He identifies the textual Islam and the folk Islam as two mutually exclusive entities. According to him the number of kinship patterns, marriage customs, caste-like systems of stratifications, un-Islamic worship and practices are shown as evidences for ‘folk Islam’. He argues that Islam in India is “heavily underlined by elements which are accretions from the local environment and contradict the fundamentalist views of the beliefs and practices to which Muslims must adhere”.⁷² Among other things, Ahmad emphasizes the uniqueness of syncretic aspects of Indian Islam. The scripturalist Islam is as a creation, opposing all elasticity and the manipulability. At the same time the co-existence is presented as a mutually

⁷¹ Rahman Mallik, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal*, Bangla Academy, pp. 7-8.

⁷² Ahamed, Imtiaz (Ed.) .1981. *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications. pp.81.

oriented, adjusted, and flexible, while the scriptural one restricts any such adjustments.

Roy made some purposeful attempts to analyse the folk elements in Islamic practices. According to him, the folk elements in Islam are not seen as simple bits and pieces devoid of Islamic characteristics, but it was a product of attentive and intentional attempts taken by the elites for the spread of Islam. He looked up on the great and little traditions and he draws the rich tradition of Bengal applying the syncretic aspect and found out the great historical evidences from medieval Bengal. His framework was empirical in origin and he analyzes different socio-cultural and historical aspects of the Muslims in Bengal. He discovered the rich and diverse syncretic practices among the Muslims and his analysis was on the different local contexts and came up with the conclusion that the syncretic aspect as a mindful design of people and as a course of action of accommodation and adjustment shaped by cultural mediators for the expansion of Islam in Bengal.⁷³

Francis Robinson propounds another important contribution on Islamisation thesis and he attacks the co-existence thesis of Ahmed and others. Robinson, attempts to show the gradual marginalization of syncretic practices, and how Muslim societies have moved towards a greater realization of what he calls a 'pattern of perfection'. This for him is readily discernable in the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet.⁷⁴ According to him the folk Islam would be replaced by the more pristine scriptural Islam. Thus, for Robinson the course of Islamic history is clear. As knowledge of this perfect Islamic pattern spreads in countries like India, the process of Islamisation will sweep away the numerous 'dubious' practices that have crept into local Islamic cultures. He illuminates the theological and the ritualistic body of Islam that establishes the perfection. According to him the holy men like ulama and Sufis are the instrumental actors in spreading and transmitting Islam down to following generations the rudiments of the blueprint of excellence. According to Sitharaman "Behind the apparent divergences between the views of these scholars, there is a remarkable similarity, wherein Ahmad and Robinson come to identify 'tradition' as

⁷³ Roy, Asim. 2005. Thinking over 'Popular Islam' in South Asia in *Living Together Separately: Cultural Indian in History and Politics*. (Ed.) Mushirul Hasan and Asim Roy, pp. 42.

⁷⁴ Das, Veena. 1984. for a folk theology and theological anthropology of Islam. *Contributions of Indian Sociology*. Vol.18, No 2, pp. 293-300.

an unchanging set of cultural prescriptions (elite) that stand in contrast to what is changing, contemporary or modern”.⁷⁵ In the words of Das, the position taken by Ahmad and Robinson is problematic, ‘the thesis of Islamisation and the co-existence thesis believe and propagate that the orthodox Islam constitutes a single pattern of perfection which seems to be in the nature of an unchanging essence’.⁷⁶ Das cautions against the tendency of seeing the textual Islam as homogenous with fixed substance. According to her, the assumption of text as a given entity without change and fixed can be seen from the viewpoints and writings of Robinson and Ahmed. According to Das, it prevented them from seeing the diversity and wide-ranging aspects of Islam and they failed to interpret the diverse strands in the ‘scripturalist’ or ‘textual Islam’. The movement initiated by reformists, revivalist sections as part of preaching the message of ‘textual Islam’ at different points of time negotiated with the socio-cultural factors which in turn have led to the emergence of movements. Such attempts are numerous and had the potential to create diverse practices all over in south Asia.⁷⁷

Departing from the dichotomies of “elite”/”folk”, “orthodoxy”/ “heterodoxy”, “tradition”/ “modern”, “purist”/ ”syncretic” Islam, the question emerges - What is the way to speak of the Islam in practice? One way of overcoming this binary was attempted by Madan in his essay “*Not One but Many*”. Following Dumont, he analyzes the complementarity between the binary – folk and scriptural. Joining the debate, Madan liked to go beyond the “syncretistic model of south Asian Islam because it does not address the crucial issue of the relative weight of the constituent element of the syncretistic tradition”.⁷⁸ He propounds a thesis of the Indian Muslims based on hierarchical model. According to him, the process of spread of beliefs to different corners can cause the adaptation of diverse practices in Islam and along with the propagation of Islamic culture; it adopted and mixed up with the indigenous culture. He states that when Islam came in contact with India, divisions of different

⁷⁵ Sitharaman, Sudha. 2010. Conflict over Worship: A study of the Sri Guru Dattatreya Swami Bababudhan Dargha in South India in *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual* (Eds.) Gita Dharampal-Frick & Robert Langer. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

⁷⁶ Das, Veena. 1984. for a folk theology and theological anthropology of Islam. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. Vol.18, No 2, pp. 293-300.

⁷⁷ Ibid, pp.299.

⁷⁸ Madan, T. N. 2007. One among Many: Explorations in the Anthropology of Islam’, *The Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol. 60, No.1, pp.19.

classes undoubtedly marked it. According to Muslim belief, Mohammed himself had prophesied that there would be more camp (*firqah*) in Islam than among the children of Israel, but all will be sent to hell by God; only those who followed his words and deeds, and of his closest companions would be the ones to escape. They came to be called the Sunni (from *ummah*, customary way of life) or traditionalists and account for the great majority of Indian Muslims. Their opponents are the Shias (followers), who came into being, following Mohammed's death, as the supporters of Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, whom they considered the rightful descendant (*caliph*) and chief (*imam*). It was not Ali, however but Mohammed's father-in-law, Abu Bakr, who was selected, ensuring the Sunni-Shia disappointment, which even today shows the way to violence in both India and Pakistan.⁷⁹ Many historians and even Islamists distinguish Islam (from the Arabic word *aslama*, (submission)) as an enormous, rock-hard and consistent faith that acts as solitary, often inflexible, homogeneous whole. In reality, during the twelve hundred years of Islamic time past, its devotees have practiced a variety of ways to live their faith in the reality of a changing world while remaining faithful to the Islamic tradition. He analyzed and studied the Indian Muslims by applying Dumont's notion of hierarchy, which to him is not a "method of classification, of constructing typologies of social phenomenon, but rather a principle of the integration of opposites- whether universal scriptural Islam and local lived Islam or the view from above and view from below in to a meaningful structure or whole".⁸⁰

While talking about Muslims in India, T. N. Madan used the notion of hierarchy that is found in the theorization of caste by Dumont. The questions are that, Do Muslims have a caste system that parallels with that of the Hindus? I acknowledge that the Muslims in India have caste like system of stratification; the system of differentiation among them would not accrue in the way a Hindu caste system works. Here, I would want to make it clear that I am not enquiring in to the question of caste system within Muslims in Kerala. I rather would focus on ascertaining the point that though the Muslim groups work on the notion of hierarchy among themselves a strict codified hierarchical system is not found in them. The notion of hierarchy is fluid and depends

⁷⁹ Madan, T. N. 2004. *India's Religions*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁸⁰ Madan, T. N. 2007. One among Many: Explorations in the Anthropology of Islam', *The Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol. 60, No.1, pp.19.

on the context of their articulations. One would conformably claim that the working of these exchanges can be seen with the notion of difference than a strict sense of hierarchy. As I would demonstrate in the following chapters there is a space for a practicing Muslim to shift from one group to another within Islam, irrespective of the claims for superiority that each group makes vis-à-vis other. Unlike Hindus, Indian Muslims do not separate status from power; status for Hindus is given by birth, while for Muslims mobility is possible from one group to other, whether it may be in vertical or horizontal. The looseness of the Muslim system of stratification and the fluidity of its mobility lead us to question the criteria for differences in ranking. Another criticism on the perspective of Madan is that there is no historicity found in his theorizing to talk about the divergences and consensus about Muslim communities; one must go through its vast historical accounts. Although his theory used the structuralist method to study hierarchy among Muslims, it failed to represent the divergences in the same ideologies and only talks about the binaries between the different strata. Indeed, Madan failed to historicize the Muslim communities in south Asia and thus ‘what is encompassing’ and ‘what is encompassed’ remains ambiguous and blurred. It failed to see the divergent views within the traditions and ideologies. This is point of departure for my study. I shall focus on the ever-changing ideologies of religious groups in their efforts to negotiate modernisation and changing neo-political situations.

1.4 Secularism and Islam

Most academic studies, particularly in the discipline of sociology, adhere to a clear conceptual distinction between secularism as a policy that mandates and limits the role of religion in the public sphere, and secularisation as a process that has two components: the clear demarcation of the public and private sphere within which religion is relegated to the private, and a Weberian demystification of religion. However, what remains unacknowledged in most such studies is that secularism is a project. Critically, the causal relationship between the state project and the social process remains largely unexplored. Vaguely conceptualized, the edifice of secularism is presumed to be standing on the foundation of secularization. Iqdirar states that “it is assumed, based largely on a reified, and perhaps incorrect, reading of the European experience, that secularisation at a societal level, and once in place the

policy will further strengthen the societal process. Yet in the case of many third world countries, and certainly in Muslim ones, the relationship is inverted. It was, and still is, assumed that secularism, the state project, will lead to secularization in the society”.⁸¹ The nationalist regimes of newly independent Middle Eastern and South Asian states from the 1950’s to the 1970’s epitomized the ethos of this assumed relationship between secularism and secularisation.

Secularism is easily conflated with atheism. While the term secularism is also used in Urdu, *ladiniyat* and *dahriyat* were used interchangeably to talk about it. *Ladiniyat* means a state of being without religion and *dahriyat* refers to a refusal of religion. Both are closer to atheism in connotation than the western use of the term secularism. In politics secularism is a doctrine that calls for a separation of the church and state functioning. Yet such an innocuous and seemingly simple statement of separation hides a complex interplay of historical trajectories and political realities that have revealed themselves in vastly variegated interpretations and manifestations of this project. Within much of academic literature secularism continues to have immensely positive normative association intertwined with a continued assumption of universal application. Although in terms of academic disciplines, theories of secularisation have been housed primarily in the field of sociology, their dominance within social sciences as a paradigm remained uncontested until the 1980. Until this time, these theories had, with a few notable exceptions⁸² conflated diagnosis with prescription, description with projection. This becomes particularly problematic in societies that are markedly different from the contexts in which these concepts took initial shape.

In parallel with notion of universal application, and is considerable contradiction with it, is the idea that Christianity is somehow particularly sympathetic to secularism.⁸³ No doubt this view of an inherent sympathy within Christianity refutes history. The secularism that emerged in the predominantly Christian west was a matter of bitter conflict and struggle over many centuries between different segments of the society

⁸¹ Iqtidar, Humeira. 2011. *Secularizing Islamists? Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Urban Pakistan*. London: The University of Chicago Press. pp.8.

⁸² Martin, David. 2005. *A General Theory of Secularisation*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

⁸³ Al-Ali, Najde. 2000. *Secularism, Gender and the State in the Middle East: The Egyptian Women’s Movement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 131.

and not just an intellectual exercise rooted in Christian theology and practice.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, in recent years especially, polemical contrasts are made with the relationship between Islam and secularism- a relationship that seems particularly fraught with tensions. A casual perusal of popular media today would seem to suggest that Islam not only poses a serious threat to secularism, it is the most potent threat. Moreover this idea is not confined to popular media, and a stream of scholarly writing focuses on the perceived clash between Islam and secularism. Myron Weiner⁸⁵, Bernard Lewis⁸⁶ have suggested that Islam rejects secularism and is intrinsically hostile to it. Samuel Huntington's⁸⁷ polemical 'clash of civilizations' made explicit what had remained largely implicit in much scholarship on Muslims until then: the idea that Islam as a totalizing worldview could not accommodate liberal values, particularly those of personal freedom and secularism, and thus could not coexist harmoniously with the west. Ernest Gellner famously claimed that, "no secularisation has taken place in the world of Islam: that the hold of Islam over its believers is as strong, and some ways stronger now than it was a hundred years ago. Somehow or other Islam is secularisation-resistant".⁸⁸ Others have suggested Islamism (a political idea), not necessarily Islam, is a reaction against modernity and unable to accommodate secularism, which is seen as a key constitutive element of modernity.⁸⁹

Conversely, many Muslim liberals have tried to show that Islam presupposes no inherent threat to secularism, and have often pointed the finger at the failed states and authoritarian regimes that have tainted the project with their association in many Muslim countries. Scholars like Van der Veer⁹⁰, Masud⁹¹, pointed out that Muslims

⁸⁴ Iqtidar, Humeira. 2011. *Secularizing Islamists? Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Urban Pakistan*. London: The University of Chicago Press. pp.13.

⁸⁵ Weiner, Myron. 1987. Political Change: Asia, Africa and Middle East, in Myron Weiner and Samuel Huntington (eds.), *Understanding Political Development*. Boston: Little Brown and Company.

⁸⁶ Lewis, Bernard. 2002. *What Went Wrong? The clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*. New York: Macmillan Press.

⁸⁷ Huntington, Samuel. 1993. The Clash of Civilization? *Foreign affairs*, Vol.72, No.3, pp.22-28.

⁸⁸ Gellner, Earnest. 1991. Islam and Marxism: Some Comparisons, *International Affairs*, Vol. 67, No.1, pp.2.

⁸⁹ Iqtidar, Humeira. 2011. *Secularizing Islamists? Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Urban Pakistan*. London: The University of Chicago Press. pp.13.

⁹⁰ Van der Veer, Peter. 2004. Secrecy and Publicity in the South Asian Public Arena in Almaro Salvatore and Dale Eickelman (eds.), *The Public Islam and the Common Good*. Leiden: Brill.

could not have understood secularism in isolation from Christian (western colonial) supremacy. Still others have attempted to show that many Muslim societies were plural and tolerant of religious difference, to make explicitly or implicitly the point that Islam is not opposed to secularism. In the case of Islamism, Irfan Ahmad has made the argument that Islamism itself is changing, from being opposed to secularism to actually supporting it in the Indian context.⁹² These scholars have made many contributions, in particular regarding the lack of theological opposition within Islam toward secularism. These kinds of researches have not engaged with how a process of secularisation may actually unfold in a Muslim society, nor has it looked in any depth at the actual processes that may have resulted from the lack of theological barriers to secularism in Muslim communities. This research attempts to provide a grounded view of the dynamics of this process in the particular context of Malabar in Kerala.

For too long, differences in the modalities of secularisation have been linked to levels of development. Modern social theory took secularisation as a largely inevitable process, and this inevitability was linked to its relationship with cognate concepts, modernisation and development. Paradoxically secularisation was, and continues to be, seen not just as a product of development and modernisation but also as a facilitator of the same. According to Casanova, in historical analysis, secularisation as a concept refers to the actual process whereby “a dualist system within this world and the sacramental structures of mediation between this world and the other world progressively broke down” taking it the medieval three-way classification of this ‘world’ (earth), the ‘other world’ (heaven), and the third sacred-spiritual time of salvation, represented by the church’s calendar”.⁹³ This sacred-spiritual time was mediated by the church’s presence and was separated from *Saeculum*, the secular age proper. Indeed, the word secular is a derivation from the term *Saeculum* that refers to

⁹¹ Masud, Mohammed Khalid. 2005. The construction and the de-construction of Secularism as an ideology in Contemporary Muslim Thought. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 33, No.3, pp363-383.

⁹² Ahmad, Irfan. 2009. *Islamism and democracy in India: The transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami*. New Jursy: Princeton University Press.

⁹³ Casanova, Jose. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp.15.

the empty, homogeneous time outside the church calendar. The popularly held narrative of secularisation runs broadly along the following lines:

Connolly states that “Once the universal Catholic Church was challenged, and dispersed by various protestant sects, a unified public authority grounded in a common faith was drawn into series of sectarian conflicts and wars. Because the sovereign support of the right way to the eternal life was said to hang in the balance, these conflicts were often horribly destructive and intractable. The best hope for a peaceful and just world under these new circumstances was institutions of a public life in which the final meaning of the life, the proper root to the life after death, and the divine source of morality were pulled out of the public realm and deposited in to private life. The secularisation of public life is thus crucial to private freedom, pluralistic democracy, individual rights, public reason and the primacy of state. The key to its success is the separation of church and state and the general acceptance of a conception of public reason (or some surrogate) through which to reach public agreement on non-religious issues”.⁹⁴

I draw heavily upon Talal Asad’s seminal work in realigning our understanding of the secular along with religious as analytic categories. Asad’s contribution suggests that our concept of the secular cannot operate outside our understanding of the idea of religion, or vice versa, and that this relationship is an ongoing, dialectical one.⁹⁵ So Humeira states that “According to Talal Asad the interesting thing is that although religion is regarded as alien to the secular, the latter is also seen to have generated religion. Historians of progress relate that in the pre-modern past secular life created superstitious and oppressive religion and in the modern present secularism has produced enlightened and tolerant religion. Thus the insistence on a sharp separation between the religious and secular goes with the paradoxical claim that the latter continually produces the former”.⁹⁶ In its attempts at regulating religious influence in the public sphere, the state cannot help but impinge upon the formation of

⁹⁴ Connolly, William. 1999. *Why I am Not a Secularist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 19.

⁹⁵ Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp.193.

⁹⁶ Iqtidar, Humeira. 2011. *Secularizing Islamists? Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Urban Pakistan*. London: The University of Chicago Press. pp.14.

subjectivities, norms and standards that influence the practice of religion in the private sphere. Asad's argument is that "there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes".⁹⁷ Moreover, religion consists not just of particular ideas, attitudes, and practices but *also most critically of followers*. Discovering how these followers, "instantiate, repeat, alter, adapt, argue over diversify (to trace their tradition)"⁹⁸ these practices, ideas, and attitudes in relation to the traditions within that particular religion is a key step in our understanding of how that religion might be secularized in different places and times.

1.5 Secularism and Secularisation

Secularisation theory can be seen as sub-theory within the theory of functional differentiation that proposes the increasing specialization of each sphere of social life. One aspect of secularisation theory that received a severe jolt in the 1980's was the idea of privatization of religion. Secularisation theory depends heavily on a clear demarcation of the public and private sphere and the relegation of religious belief to the private sphere. What little debate there was before the 1980's centered on the implication of this privatization rather than a fundamental questioning of the private and public divide or the actual process of the privatization of religion. Thus Thomas Luckmann proposed that religion would become invisible through this privatization and that precisely because of it, religious belief was likely to flourish and grow.⁹⁹ In contrast, several others proposed that this privatization was eventually likely to lead to a kind of atheism. The very public flourishing of the religion in the US, Latin America, Asia, Africa and even parts of Europe, particularly during the 1980's onwards, led initially not to more debate, but rather to a hasty abandonment of secularisation theory. Interestingly the early critics of secularisation theory, like Martin¹⁰⁰, have come to its defense, shoulder to shoulder with some longtime

⁹⁷ Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. London: Johns Hopkins University, pp. 29.

⁹⁸ Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp.194.

⁹⁹ Luckmann, Thomas. 1967. *Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*. New York: Macmillan.

¹⁰⁰ Martin, David. 2005. *A General Theory of Secularisation*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

supporters like Brayan Wilson, Casanova and Karel Dobbelaere, arguing that there is much to be valued in the theory despite its failings. Casanova's exposition of the fallacies of secularisation theory regarding the private-public divide is balanced by a nuanced support for the more defensible prepositions contained within secularisation theory. In particular, he points out that while many trends within secularisation, such as the rationalization of religion, remain valid, it is useful to concede that religion's public presence may provide a critique to the conceptualization of secularisation as a universal theological process.¹⁰¹

Contemporary debates about the public sphere remain largely indebted to Habermas's pioneering work. Building upon the empirical situation around the world when religion refused adamantly to remain in the private sphere, Casanova draws on the work of Carole Pateman in feminist political theory, and of Ervin Goffman, to unsettle our notions of public and private sphere. Carole Pateman's¹⁰² work brought to the fore the patriarchal assumptions embedded in a Habermasian critical rational public sphere. Ervin Goffman's¹⁰³ perceptive analysis of the interaction ritual or the performance carried out in the so-called private sphere of our homes, and among friends and family, also raised questions about the very public nature of the private sphere. To be fair to Habermas, he realizes that his conceptualization of the public sphere cannot be abstracted from the unique developmental history of that civil society originating in the European middle ages; nor can it be transferred, or generalized as an ideal typical model, to any number of historical situations.¹⁰⁴ Habermas's account also incorporates an understanding of the dynamic nature of the public sphere, and he recognizes that the substantive elements that constitute public institutions at one point in history may, at another stage, constitute an undermining of their functions. Thus he notes; "According to the liberal model of the public sphere, the institutions of the public engaged in rational critical debate were protected from interference by public authority by virtue of their being in the hands of private people. To the extent that they were commercialized and underwent economic, technological,

¹⁰¹ Casanova, Jose. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp.25.

¹⁰² Pateman, Carole. 1988. *The Sexual Contract*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

¹⁰³ Goffman, Erving. 1972. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face to Face Behavior*. London: Allen Lane.

¹⁰⁴ Habermas, Jurgen. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry to a Category of Bourgeoisie Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

and organisational concentration, however, they have turned during the last hundred years into complexes of societal power, so that precisely their remaining in private hands in many ways threatened the critical function of public institutions”.¹⁰⁵

In more recent work, Habermas¹⁰⁶ also tried to incorporate the continued and defiant presence of religion in the public sphere. However, the relatively uncomplicated understanding of the Habermasian public sphere remains a dominant one in academic debates, but even more strongly in social imagination. What is interesting for my purpose here is note that the prevailing understanding of the Habermasian public sphere does not analytically unpack the critical rational nature of debate. It is precisely the assumptions about the nature of critical-rational debate that are seen to be under threat from the resurgence of religion in the public sphere. Humeira states that the history of a particular type of secularisation in Europe has meant that religion has been removed from the domain of rational discussion. The suppression of freedom of thought, creative expression, and critical thinking that was closely associated with the inquisitions, the wars of religion, and the particular relationship between society and the Catholic Church in European countries have conditioned this understanding. Readily available cultural material in the form of stories such as Galileo’s fate after placing rationality above church dogma tends to draw attention away from the fact that many of the scientists-representatives of rational thinking-during the enlightenment era were, in fact, believing men who often attempted to harmonize their findings with their faith.¹⁰⁷ My aim here is not suggest that religion is inherently rational, but rather that our notions of rational critical debate, particularly with reference to religion, have tended to proceed along relatively strictly delineated, historically conditioned lines.

The relegation of religion, as the illogical and the superstitious, to the private sphere, anchored precisely in this notion of the public sphere as the space for rational discussions and decisions, assumes a public sphere innocent of inequalities in power. However as Seyla Benhabib has suggested, a claim to dialogic neutrality in rational

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp.188.

¹⁰⁶ Habermas, Jürgen. 2002. *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God and Modernity*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

¹⁰⁷ Iqtidar, Humeira. 2011. *Secularizing Islamists? Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Urban Pakistan*. London: The University of Chicago Press. pp.14.

critical public debate has blinded us to the actual mechanics of power relations in politics. She points out that all struggles against the oppression in the modern world begin by redefining what had previously been considered private, non-public, and nonpolitical issues as matters of public concern, as issues of justice, as sites of power which need discursive legitimation.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, such an aversion to interrogating the mechanics of the public sphere negates the continued importance of religious imagery, values, and political culture of many of the secular Western states. William Connolly suggests as much when he points to what he calls the conceits of secularism: the secular division of labor between religious faith and secular argument, where faith and ritual are to be contained in a protected private preserve and rational argument is said to exhaust public life, suppresses complex registers of persuasion, judgment and discourse operative in public life. Again these registers continue to operate, even within secularism. But they do so largely below the threshold of appreciation by secularists.¹⁰⁹

These registers of persuasion, judgment, discourse remain hidden in large part due to the fact that the precise relationship between secularism, the project, and secularisation, the process, remains understudied and a matter of implicit understanding. It is critical to disentangle the political project of secularism and its life trajectories from the historical process of secularisation in Europe and theories of secularisation that relied heavily, although often implicitly, on this particular historical experience. The vague but generally accepted assumption seems to be that secularisation in Europe led to secularism, but secularism in the non-Western societies will lead to secularisation. The braiding of Western secularisation, secularism, development, and ultimately democracy is such that secularism in its current life has become a project whose imposition by dictatorships is tolerated as a lesser of two evils by Western governments and political audience. Increasingly, secularism is beginning to play a central role in liberal political theory. As Saba Mahmood observes, “in as much as liberalism is about the regulation of the individual and collective liberties, it is the principle of freedom of conscience that makes secularism

¹⁰⁸ Benhabib, Seyla. 1992. Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition and Jürgen Habermas in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press, pp.84.

¹⁰⁹ Connolly, William. 1999. *Why I am Not a Secularist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 19.

central to liberal political philosophy on this account”.¹¹⁰ Masud states that this relationship between Muslims and the West is increasingly being predicated on the ideology of secularism such that secularism is ...evolving as a liberal ideology that is crucial in defining the future relations between the West and the Muslim world. It is the rise of secularism as an ideology that vindicates the Islamists’ stance of treating secularism as an ideology, as a threat to the future of Islam”.¹¹¹

Yet curiously, for a concept with such wide currency, secularism has been very loosely conceptualized, if at all. It is broadly conceived of as a separation of state and religion and left largely at that. In this sense the very looseness of the concept allows it great elasticity; the forms of this separation may take in particular have been huge variations, almost all involving a very active shaping of religion to fit the state’s view of it. Akeel Bilgrami has called this elasticity Archimedean secularism in the Indian context. Just as Archimedes claimed that he could lift the world on a bar if he could find the right leverage point outside of the earth, so secularism as a political project has tended to avoid engagement with substantive issues, attempting instead to bring about a change from the outside.¹¹² Bilgrami suggests that secularism was an imposition in India, but not in the sense of modern intrusion into a traditional society, and in this he negates the views put forwarded by Ashis Nandy¹¹³ and T. N Madan¹¹⁴, but because of the assumption that secularism stood outside the substantive arena of political commitments.¹¹⁵ Bilgrami thus suggests that it was not just an ideological problem but one of methodology in which the state did not adequately engage with the particular modalities of religious practice and political action to separate them out in the Indian context. Bilgrami’s fundamental point regarding the possibility of reformulating secularism through a more democratic engagement about the actual substantive aspects of secularism within the state structures of a relatively democratic

¹¹⁰ Mahmood, Saba. 2006. Secularism, Hermeneutics and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation, *Public Culture*, Vol. 18, No.2, pp. 324.

¹¹¹ Masud, Mohammed Khalid. 2005. The construction and the de-construction of Secularism as an ideology in Contemporary Muslim Thought. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 33, No.3, pp.369.

¹¹² Bilgrami, Akeel. 1998. Secularism, Nationalism and Modernity in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critiques*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp.395.

¹¹³ Nandy, Ashis. 1998. The politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance, in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critiques*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

¹¹⁴ Madan, T. N. 1998. Secularism in Its Place, in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critiques*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

¹¹⁵ Bilgrami, Akeel. 1998. Secularism, Nationalism and Modernity in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critiques*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, Pp.394.

state is seductive. Yet it seems to me pertinent to caution against excessive optimism resting on the imperatives within the state structures toward such as engagement.

James C Scott's perceptive analysis in *Seeing like a State*¹¹⁶ of the tendency, indeed need, for modern states to reduce citizens to manageable, simplified categories suggests that it may be wise to locate our hopes for change at a site broader than the state. An alternative reading of secularism would need recognize that secularism manifests itself in concrete power relations and modes of governance tied to the emergence of the modern state and capitalism.¹¹⁷ In Europe, secularisation led to the release of ecclesiastical property into private hands and market circulation. This was a gradual process with many reversals and contradictory thrusts in different parts of Europe. Nevertheless, the increasing sovereignty of the states sanctioned by the treaty of Westphalia of 1648 and its control over the property and the role of the church lead to a critical redefinition of religion and its limits under the modern state. This went hand in hand with a series of intellectual and political ruptures that supported a new version of religious practice, allowing the state to take over many functions that were previously performed by the church, including education, health care and the provision of meaning to collective life substituting the idea of the nation for the religious congregation. Secularism then, following Asad, can be fruitfully re-conceptualized not as a one-time separation of religion and state but as continues management of religious thought and practice by the state.

Having highlighted the lack of clarity in our understanding of the relationship between secularism as a project and secularisation as a process of privatization of religion, I want to look in some detail at other competing conceptions of secularizations that have not received the significant attention. Linked to, but not exhausted by, the notion of secularisation as the privatization of religion is the idea of secularisation as disenchantment and rationalization: not only would the sphere of religion's influence be limited by its relegation to the private sphere, but the sense of enchantment would disappear with it. Weber's notion of the rationalization of religion

¹¹⁶ Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹¹⁷ Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, see also Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. London: Johns Hopkins University.

one that is often subsumed within the privatization debate. However, I wish to propose here that it is worth separating out the various strands of secularisation theory to think about the changes not in the quantity of the religious belief and practice but also in its quality.

In making explicit, and then questioning, our received understanding of the relationship between secularism and secularisation, we may hope to come to a more nuanced understanding of the processes that are already underway. It seems to me worthwhile here to ask the question: are the Islamists facilitating, albeit inadvertently, secularisation in predominantly Muslim societies? No doubt, the question sounds counterintuitive, particularly since the Islamists themselves proclaim secularism as a target of their wrath. I hope to show that it seems plausible if we are able to critically unpack the alleged relationship between secularism and secularisation and recognize that the two may not be related in a linear manner. Moreover, if we are able to disentangle our conceptualization of secularisation from the narrow confines of a particularly European history, we may be able to perceive a process of rationalization that has been going on in part because the Islamists have brought questions about the role of religion in modern life into the public sphere, in societies that had no need for the kind of secularisation that insisted on a sharp division between the church and the state, the public and the private that occurred in Europe at a particular historical juncture. My attempt here is not to suggest that the Islamists are secular in the sense of consciously identifying with the ideology of secularism—in fact it is very much the reverse of that—but that they are secularizing, that is, they are facilitating a process of secularisation as rationalization of religion. I differentiate here between the secular or secularist and the secularizing. The secular or the secularists are those who identify consciously with some version of the ideology and project of secularism.

Here I want to emphasize that it refers to an attempt to view religion as a logical, cohesive whole, erasing out the contradictions that may have been part of religious thought and practice previously. I argue that the rationalization of religion is not exactly not the same thing as disenchantment, and certainly not proceed only along the lines alluded to by Olivier Roy very briefly at the end of his book *The Failure of Political Islam*:

Islamism is actually an agent of secularisation of Muslim societies because it brings the religious space into the political arena: although it claims to do so for the former, its refusal to take the true functioning of politics in society into consideration causes it instead to follow the unwritten rules of the traditional exercise of power and social segmentation. The autonomous functioning of the political and social arenas wins to, but only after the religious sphere has been emptied out of its value as a place of transcendence, refute and protest, since it is now identified with the new power.¹¹⁸

This loss of legitimacy in the political sphere, I agree, plays a role. Yet it does not seem to me that this loss of legitimacy proceeds in a linear fashion to the emptying out of the religious sphere out of value as a place of transcendence. Muslim scholars like Fazalur Rahman warned some decades ago, at the height of US-sponsored wave of state Islamisation in countries such as Pakistan, that Islam was being exploited for political objectives. Rahman pointed out that “the slogan in Islam ‘religion and politics are inseparable’ is employed to dupe the common man into accepting that, instead of politics or the state serving the long-range objectives of Islam, Islam should come to serve the immediate and myopic objectives of party politics”.¹¹⁹ It seems that the values of transcendence take a different form: rather than complete obliteration, they are subjected to a certain objectification, a term I borrow from Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori¹²⁰. Eickelman and Piscatori are particularly sensitive to the interplay of various long term trends including the impact of mass education, fragmentation of religious authority, and the rise of ethnicity and nationalism in Muslim politics. I understand this objectification to include the attempted subjection of religious practices and beliefs to the structures of homogenizing logic insofar as an attempt is made at erasing out contradictions, but more critically to a conscious engagement with the many aspects of religious praxis. Thus, transcendence is not erased but consciously sought through a modeling of subjectivities, behaviors, and praxis.

¹¹⁸ Roy, Olivier. 1994. *The Failure of Political Islam*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. pp.199.

¹¹⁹ Rahman, Fazalur. 1982. *Islam and Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp.40.

¹²⁰ Piscatori, James. 1986. *Islam in a World of Nation States*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.

1.6 Beyond Binaries

It has been frequently argued that the processes of modernization is characterized by the differentiation of the secular sphere from that of the religious which in turn would culminate in progressive irrelevance of religion in social life and eventually be feted for a retreat to the private sphere, where the right to individual belief is religions only surviving form. Of course, for some time now it has been also recognized by scholars that this is not the way history has gone and religion has shown no signs of leaving the public arena and in fact has ‘re-emerged’ in the recent years to become central again to contemporary political processes around the globe.¹²¹ While in theory it has been argued that processes of modernization should and would culminate in the retreat of religion to the private sphere, so that wherever religion manifests itself in public life, it can/is attributed to the incomplete or failed project of modernization. Subsequently, a good deal of contemporary discussion has focused on how the so-called ‘retreat of religion’ has not been quite a simple thing ever since the beginning of the nineteenth-century. The contemporary salience of politico-religious movements across the globe, as true for India as elsewhere, represents a challenge to the simple correlation between modernization and secularization.

The debate in the public sphere has many view points in the current times. The multiplicity in approach and decisions are the very nature of public sphere debates. The public sphere is not a space where reason unfolded in a linear time. The process of the emergence of autonomous, reasonable individuals was cross-cut by an alternative process through which community identities were reworked and reaffirmed. The identities were being part of censure for the debate and discussions and reformulations based on the collective argument were most often happens. The different ideologies are presenting their reasons for being a perfect group and pure Islam calling others as false. Neeladri Bhattacharya says, “While reason was articulated through the language of tradition and discovered within tradition, tradition was perceived and appropriated through the framework of modern reason. This conflict of languages reflected the diverse sorts of people who constituted the public

¹²¹ See for instance, Casanova, José. 2004. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. See also, Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Harvard: Harvard University Press. And, Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

sphere, and the disparate audiences that any speaker had to address. Consensus within a segment of the public could not be premised on the homogeneity of reason; there had to be a search for a language that could operate with different people in different ways an effort that was fraught with inner contradictions and dangers”.¹²²No kind of homogenized solution may be found. There will be a variety of opinions rather than the making of a homogenized conclusion for the public sphere discussions. Dialogues in public sphere do not necessarily end in consensus; they often reaffirm or redefine differences. The organisations that are involved in the discussions and debates often seem ready for making changes in the interpretations of the text to suit them for the public discussions. To explore the politics of the public sphere we need to understand not only how the consensus on issues is reached and the collective will seemingly forged, but also how dialogues across incommensurable frameworks persistently break down, negotiations and persuasions fail, and how the different languages of debate remain mutually incomprehensible to participants. These breakdowns and collapse of dialogues, characterize the politics of our times.

In this thesis, I argue for an ethnographic approach that accounts for the complexities and diversities of everyday lives. To understand the pronunciation of lived experience, I will have to take the people’s lives as the starting point, just as we have to locate their world-views in both the local contexts, which they are physically acting in as well as the global connections, both imagined and enacted, they locate themselves in. What concerns me is the question of how can we study and understand people’s lives in a way that credits the importance of religious traditions and ideologies without losing sight of the complexities of life experience, the powers to which people are subjected and the active reinvention of traditions and ideologies that constantly take place in everyday life. The main purpose is to understand the complexities in the everyday lives of the people as well as to enquire the passing of ideologies to the generations to constitute true Islam.

One of the key concerns at present for the study of Muslim societies is how to deal with ever present diversities on the one hand and homogenized image on the other. As

¹²² Bhattacharya, Neeladri. 2005. Notes towards a conceptualization of the colonial public in *Civil Society, public sphere and citizenship: dialogues and perceptions* (ed.) Rajeev Bhargava. New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp.154.

Asad has stated, ‘anyone working on the Anthropology of Islam will be aware that there is considerable diversity in the beliefs and the practices of the Muslims. The first problem is therefore one of organizing this diversity in terms of an adequate concept.’¹²³ We can describe Islam as distinctive historical totality, which organizes different aspects of social life. Islam is the blueprint of a social order. This social order holds that a set of rules exists, eternal, divinely ordained, and independent of the will of men, which defines the proper ordering of society. What is similar in the local practices; what is different and why? To do this I need to find out the contestations/consensus and debates in the local ‘Islam(s)’. Further, I need to study the ethnology of Islam to understand the discursive tradition of Muslims. According to Asad, therefore the main ‘task of an anthropology of Islam is to understand the historical production and maintenance of specific discursive traditions. It will also be concerned with both the transformation of discursive traditions and ‘the efforts of practitioners to achieve coherence’.¹²⁴ The understanding of Islam as a discursive tradition also throws up the possibility of looking at Islam not as a constant set of given ideas and practices, but something that is constantly undergoing change according to the specificities of diverse locales and power relations. In such a condition, as mentioned earlier, the dichotomies of “elite”/“folk”, “orthodoxy”/“heterodoxy”, “tradition”/ “modern”, “purist”/ “syncretic” Islam and the “orthodox” versus “orthopraxy”, “real” versus “corrupt” etc. entails an extremely problematic and difficult task to analyze the diverse nature of Islamic practices. Asad opines, “A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history. These discourses relate conceptually to *a past* (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and *a future* (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or long term, or why it should be modified or abandoned), through *a present* (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social

¹²³ Asad, Talal. 1986. *The Idea of Anthropology of Islam*. Washington DC: Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, pp.1, see also Jairath, K. Vinod. 2011. *Frontiers of Embedded Muslim Communities in India*. New Delhi: Routledge

¹²⁴ Asad, Talal. 1986. *The Idea of Anthropology of Islam*. Washington DC: Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, pp.6

conditions)".¹²⁵ He pointed out the importance of the present practices and makes clear their contestations and relations in the particular context. "Clearly, not everything Muslims say and do belongs to an Islamic discursive tradition. Nor is an Islamic tradition in this sense necessarily imitative of what was done in the past. For even where traditional practices appear to the anthropologist to be imitative of what has gone before, it will be the practitioners' conceptions of what is *apt performance*, and of how the past is related to present practices, that will be crucial for tradition, not the apparent repetition of an old form".¹²⁶ He states the tradition is not just a clean repetition of the past but the practitioner's suitable conception is very important. Here in the definition of Islamic beliefs and practices he clearly mentioned the link to the other local practices, which are usually set in the social conditions of the local context.

Mahmood elaborates on Asad's approach to understanding Islam as discursive tradition as those that involve pedagogical practices that articulate a conceptual relationship with the past, through an engagement with a set of foundational texts (the Quran and the hadith), commentaries thereon, and the conduct of exemplary figures. Tradition, viewed in this way, she suggests, is not a set of symbols and idioms that justify present practices, neither is it an unchanging set of cultural prescriptions that stand in contrast to what is changing, contemporary, or modern. Nor is it a historically fixed social structure. Rather, the past is the very ground through which the subjectivity and self-understanding of a traditions adherence are constituted.¹²⁷ Tradition, in this sense, may be conceived as a particular modality in which reflection upon the past is a constitutive condition for the understanding and reformulation of the present and the future. Islamic discursive practices, in this view, link practitioners across the temporal modalities of past, present, and future through pedagogy of practical, scholarly, and embodied forms of knowledge's and virtues deemed central to the tradition.

My argument is that Asad's definition of Islam as discursive tradition is useful. His idea of discursive tradition suggests that it is a mistake to study Islam in a monolithic,

¹²⁵ Ibid, pp.14.

¹²⁶ Ibid, pp.15.

¹²⁷ Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.pp.115.

essentialist conception of Islam; there may be as many forms of Islam as there are Muslim communities. The next point is that, it is crucial that we accept the self-identification of Muslims. If someone calls himself a Muslim and identifies certain practices as Islamic, as a scholar of religious studies, we must begin by accepting that statement as true and then examine how these practices differ from those of other Muslims. The question to be explored is why there are differences between religious groups, which identify themselves as Muslims. This is where Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition is most useful. As a discursive tradition, Islam is constantly being reshaped to fit in an ever-changing world.

In the words of Saba Mahmood, "Asad suggests that Islam is best regarded as a 'discursive tradition' whose pedagogical practices articulate a conceptual relationship with the past, through an engagement with a set of foundational texts (the Quran and the hadith), commentaries thereon, and the conduct of exemplary figures. Tradition, in this sense, may be conceived as a particular modality of Foucault's discursive formation in which reflection up on the past is a constitutive condition for the understanding and reformulation of the present and the future. Islamic discursive practices, in this view, link practitioners across the temporal modalities of past, present, and future through pedagogy of practical, scholarly, and embodied forms of knowledge's and virtues deemed central to the tradition".¹²⁸ Tradition, viewed in this way, is not a set of symbols and idioms that justify present practices, neither is it an unchanging set of cultural prescriptions that stand in contrast to what is changing, contemporary or modern.

Traditional modes of interpretations have historically been a contentious one in Muslims societies and have reached a new level of intensified struggle with the ascendants of Islamists movement in the Muslim world. Notably a significant portion of the Islamist movement labor is dedicated to re-creating the condition and the practices that sustained the older the methods of interpreting the Quran. The debates about how interpret and enact the variety of Islamic embodied injunctions purview Muslim public life. In what follows I want to argue that, in order to understand the importance of debates to public life in Kerala we need to bring the questions of ethics

¹²⁸ Ibid, pp. 115.

to bare up on politics and vice versa and thus complicate the separation of this realm so commonly assumed in liberal political theory.

Therefore, what I propose in the present study is that - if Islam is not to be considered as a single unified tradition, and then it should be seen as to how the historicity of religious communities and the several practices contribute to our understanding of it. Here in this thesis, I can say that the historical reality is social reality, also this study is not going to find out the literal truthfulness of the different traditions. Drawing from Reinhart Koselleck¹²⁹, we take the historiography as a history of the evolution of the language of historians. In this respect, Koselleck's work converges with that of Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida, all of whom stress the status of historiography as discourse rather than as discipline, and feature the constitutive nature of historical discourse as against its claim to literal truthfulness. Showing us the way here again is Talal Asad's work. Drawing from Asad, I would like to argue that, "for the anthropologist of Islam, the proper theoretical beginning is therefore an instituted practice (set in a particular context, and having particular history) into which Muslims are inducted as Muslims".¹³⁰ The idea of unchanging Islamic traditional practices questioned by Asad is concerned about the static tradition that was flowing down to Islamic communities from the past. The notion of correct practice is important and according to him it is not only the monopolistic claim of learned elites, but also of the ordinary folks including the villagers and tribes who believe it to be true. His opinion is that "a practice is Islamic because it is authorized by the discursive traditions of Islam and is so taught to Muslims- whether by an Alim, a khatib, a Sufi shayk or an untutored parent".¹³¹ He states that Islam itself agrees to the plurality regarding the practices and its interpretations. Regarding the plurality of Islam, Asad notes that now the Islamic ritual, like many other non-liberal traditions, is based on the notion of plural social alliances and spiritual traditions especially (but not only) of the Abrahamic civilization [Ahl-al-kitab]. And, of course, it has forever accommodated a plurality of scriptural explanations. There is a well-known saying in the *Sharia-Ikhtilaf Al-Umma Rahma* [difference within the Islamic rituals is a blessing]. This is

¹²⁹ Koselleck, Reinhart. 2002. *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, London: Stanford University Press.

¹³⁰ Asad, Talal. 1986. *The Idea of Anthropology of Islam*. Washington DC: Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, pp.14.

¹³¹ Ibid, pp.15.

where the thinking of *ijtihad* and *ijma* come in. As modes of increasing and sustaining the Islamic tradition, they show adherence to the construction of coherent differences, not the imposition of homogeneity.¹³²

According to Saba Mahmood, the conceptual role that foundational texts play in Asad's notion of tradition is particularly relevant to the ways in which the participants of the different religious movements used the canonical sources (the Quran, hadith and juristic commentaries). For Asad, an engagement with the founding text of Islam is not limited to scholarly commentaries alone, but entails the practices of ordinary Muslims, such as when an unlettered Muslim invokes the authority of sacred texts to solve a practical problem, or a child argues with a parent about the correct (or incorrect) nature of an Islamic practice.¹³³ So we can see the differences in practices and also the current practice will influence the spatial context of that region and also has some variations in the practices from place to place because the tradition will synthesize with the local environment.

1.7 Statement of the problem

The above reviews and theoretical models show us a way to understand the Muslims of India. Along with that, this thesis tries to map the contemporary debate in the public sphere of the Mappila Muslims of Malabar. These different studies concentrating on specific time and context give us varieties of ideas about the Muslim community. The contemporary discourses in the everyday life of Muslims based on the question of authentic practices and their contestations among the Muslim groups in the public realm in Malabar questions the very idea of homogeneity and the uniqueness in the everyday life of a Mappila. All the Muslim religious groups argue that they are the real proponents of true Islam and calling others as false. The situation in which Islam appears in diverse settings and discourses brings forth a number of significant questions regarding the nature of Islam as a religious identity and its constituent Muslim-self. Islam has been interpreted and presented by its followers and practitioners as quite flexible, capable of adapting and responding to a wide variety of situations and discourses in different socio-temporal contexts. Having stipulated

¹³² Ibid, pp.15.

¹³³ Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton University Press. pp. 116.

ideologies, these groups are ready to make contextual interpretations towards matters/issues concerning the everyday life of Mappila Muslims and these approaches show ways that are in wide contrast with each other. These differences and contradictory views regarding each practice make them enunciate their own authentic approach through the interpretation of the text. So each group claims 'true Islamic point of view' as theirs and others as something else. Even the Islamic explanations are sometimes just antithetical to others' views but the followers keep it as the 'right interpretation'. The question of whether such interpretations are correct or not becomes irrelevant in a sociological enquiry and it becomes sensible to ask under what circumstances that a particular kind of theological explanation is adopted and why. So-called 'reformists' and 'orthodoxy' in Kerala neither comprise homogeneous entities nor exhibit enduring, constant and stable theological and ideological orientations and as a result, these categories become untenable, unless used only as indicators of broad trends and not as substantial reified categories conveying a given set of ideas. Based on the assumptions one can understand the term Muslim community not simply as a single pattern towards being a Muslim, but as a way to 'experience' through ideological underpinnings of each group to reach the ultimate goal for which this religion stands. The multiple religious groups within Islam in Kerala are involved in the process of conflict and consensus between themselves. Even while using the term 'Muslim community', the study understands the prolific diversity in the approaches of this 'community'.

Once the ideological basis of these groups are clearly understood, the next task is to find out the nature of interaction, contestations and co-existence and the approach towards issues by these religious groups in the everyday life of its practices in the specified locality. The argument to be proved in this research is that the ideological nature of the groups in the public life exhibits dynamism. The identity is single or many, whose claim over the true Islam or true believer are right. While doing so, it does not create the category of Islam as a single identity in their everyday life. The thesis examines the diversity in the daily setting of Mappila Muslims of Malabar where different interpretations and meanings of Islam are constantly shaped and articulated in their public and private domain, with having a strong ideological orientation for each religious group. One of the fundamental premises of beginning

such a task is the rejection of an essentialist notion of single Islamic concept. Recently, especially after the 1990s the new sectarian groups emerged among the Mappila Muslims tried to put forward the idea of universal Islam and pan-Islamism. As a result the complete polarization between the groups and conflicts within the communities happened among the Muslims in Malabar. The multiple religious identities and the constitution of true Islam through focusing on the identities makes the public more divergent. With stringent and stipulated ideologies, the groups make the theological debates in the public sphere of Kerala, particularly in Malabar for the constitution of true Islam. As a result, the politicisation of religious groups became more debatable among the public sphere of Kerala.

The encounter between the Muslim religious groups in Kerala has produced complex processes that cannot be understood through the available propounded theories and the frameworks of ‘great and little traditions’, ‘islamisation’, ‘syncretism’, ‘reformism vs. orthodoxy’, etc. The term reformism and orthodoxy and its practical forms cannot be sustained as a given set of ideas or stable or single uniform body, which are always trying to be closer towards each other. These positions are historically drafted and are products of numerous discourses. This way the thesis aims to show that the ideological interpretations are not stable, sets of ideas than actions of a particular context. It tries to understand the different approaches of the groups apart from their ideological settings and tries to sketch out the contextualization of their ideologies and the resultant adjustment towards the ideological settings. It perceives identities as fixed in the local socio-historic contexts and it has something with history rather than the mere continuation of given ideologues.

The study, thus, is an effort to understand the complexities involved in the contemporary discourses of the Muslim groups, and the conflicts/debates thereof in Malabar, Kerala. The major questions that I seek answers to in this study are as follows; does the division between ‘scripturalist’ and ‘lived’ Islam hold well as we look at Islam in India? How does one query the very idea of “homogeneity” (set of ideas or stable or single uniform body) of Islam? What practices may be taken to be Islamic? The various contradictions in the attempts of unification of religious groups and resultant fragmentation of the community. Considering the diversity, vis-à-vis, ideology and practice, how do we understand efforts towards universalization of Islam

and their contestations? How do Muslim groups make sense of going back to the ‘fundamentals’ in entirely new socio-historic contexts? Should we understand the processes of shifting nature of Muslim-self and ‘othering’? Should they be in terms of inter-community or intra-community? How do we explain the increasing secularization process/the influence of modernity among the Muslim communities? How do Muslim groups negotiate with the new socio-political situations? From what frameworks do we analyze the historical evolution of Muslim groups and the changes in the approach (ideologies are never stable or uniform) towards religious and non-religious issues? How do the theological and doctrinal debates within Islam produce contested categories of ‘true Islam’? Do various reinterpretations (*ijtihad*) of the Quran and hadith give rise to ingenious ways of opening up debates on the question of Islam in practice? Based on the above questions the following are the objectives of the study:

1.8 Objectives

- 1) The study is about the multiple traditions of Islam among the Mappila Muslim groups in Malabar, Kerala. It focuses on the Muslim organisational debates, 20 century onwards, concerning the practice of Islam, and what is it to be a Muslim, which presuppose an orthodox Islam and disagree on what it is.
- 2) In examining the debates among the Mappila Muslims, the study attempts to lay bare how boundaries are drawn between Muslim religious groups, beliefs and practices standardized, loyalties secured and define community membership. The focus of the study is also to enquire how tradition(s) are appropriated and stand refracted as it negotiates its way through in the changing socio-political situations much of which is also ushered in by the state.

1.9 Methodology

Here, I intend to examine the diversity of/in Islam in its theological and organisational debates where the very notion of what constitutes true Islam is itself a matter of fierce interpretative debate among the Muslim groups. Through this thesis, I attempt to

query the very idea of homogeneity of Islam. The first and foremost indication guiding the enquiry is to comprehend the intra-community/organisational debates among the Muslim groups by studying not only the nature of theological and ideological contestations over the claim of true Islam but also the practical manifestations of these contentions on the everydayness of being. The diversity is the constituent, which brings all groups as separate entities with their own ideological orientations of the traditions rather than a single identity. The contestations over the claim of reformism, multiple interpretations over true Islam, and debates over the socio-cultural intervention of Muslims on the state initiative secularisation processes and increasing politicisation of religious groups are burning issues within the Muslim groups in Kerala. To observe this, I chose Malabar region in Kerala as the field of study. Nearly sixty-five percent of the Muslims in Kerala live in Malabar. There are ideological underpinnings, which link a Muslim with any of the mentioned groups. The embrace of Islamic groups and a vibrant and active socio-religious sphere are the most significant conditions to examine the research questions of this study.

For the contextual analysis and to find out the nature of interaction, diversities and co-existence of these religious groups in a locality and to get the lived experiences of the Muslim communities through living divergent organisational debates, to find out the diversities among the Muslim communities in the public sphere, and to get at the lived experiences, I have selected Malabar as my area of study, and narrow it to Kodyathur of Kozhikode district in Kerala.

The name Kodyathur is derived from the word “Kodi Kuthiya Ooru” which means it is a confluence of different religions, political parties etc., and Kodyathur is surrounded by two rivers, Chaliyar and Iruvazhinji and the place Cheruvadi, which comes under the Kodyathur Village, originates from two words Cheriya (small) and Vadi (garden), located 20 kilometers east of Kozhikode. Approximately 2500 members constitute a *mahal*¹³⁴ and people are well concerned with political and religious in this place. The religious groups such as Sunni A.P, Sunni E.K, Samsthana Sunnis, Mujahid A.P or official Mujahid, Mujahid (Madavoor), Mujahid Sakariya

¹³⁴ The word mahal literally means a living place set aside for a particular group of people. Generally, Muslim mahals in Kerala have a big mosque along with numerous small mosques. The mahal will have secretary, president and a committee will take decisions regarding mahal nivas (natives) issues.

Salahi group which are recently constituted; Jamaat-e-Islami, Tablighi-Jamaat, Ahmadi Muslims, Quran Sunnath Society are the Muslim groups working among the Muslims of Kodyathur, Cheruvadi for the constitution of true Islam. Apart from these religious groups the political parties like Muslim League and NDF popularly known as Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), Welfare Party of India with the support of Jamaat-e-Islami have been working in the Muslim community with a notion of protecting the 'Muslim self'. Each group has specific practices, customs, and separate mosques. The interesting thing is that normally Tablighi Jamaat has only a few mosques in Kerala due to their organisational setup but we can see that even they have separate mosques in Cheruvadi/Kodyathur. Ahmadi Muslims have their own mosques because of the fact that other sects consider them as non-Muslims. Community level conflicts between Sunnis and Ahmadiyas used to happen in the earlier times, which later led to the historic *Mubahila*¹³⁵ incident in the area.

Kodyathur/Cheruvadi can be seen as a microcosm of Muslim community of Kerala, reflecting the socio-cultural and political dynamics within the community. In Kodyathur/ Cheruvadi, as in the case of Kerala as a whole, there are no Shias, but mostly Sunnis. The Sunni Muslims are the followers of shafi school of jurisprudence and few of them who preach hanafi practices can be seen in certain areas of Palakkad and Kasargod. Kodyathur and Cheruvadi show the enthusiasm of being a unique Muslim public life in Kerala as all Muslim religious groups present in the village are very active in their works. The majority of the Muslims belong to Sunni groups either A.P or E.K, and groups like Jamaat-e-Islami, Tablighi Jamaat and Mujahids, Quran Sunnath Society, which are very active in the villages by directing people for the constitution of true Islam. Each of these groups has its own organisational wings for children, youth and adults. The continuous debates and contestation among them make the religious sphere of Kodyathur/Cheruvadi an extremely important site of investigation as outlined in the research question. The best possible way to understand the theological and organisational debates among these groups is to go through their

¹³⁵ Mubahila literally meaning 'mutual prayer'. In Islamic tradition, it refers to a form of resolving religious disputes. When two sides of the argument cannot reach up to a conclusion, they start prayers to God for truth to be revealed by cursing the wrong side. Since curse means 'moving someone far away from the divine mercy' and moving far away from mercy is being close to divine wrath—therefore, the essence of the meaning is: Wrath be on the liar. As such, whoever is the liar shall face the evil consequences whereupon the truth will become evident before the disbelievers as well.

vast amount of publications produced. Every group has its own periodicals, newspapers, magazines etc. The groups, especially Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid movements have extensive lists of publications targeting different sections of the Muslim population. Now the Sunni Muslims have also entered the publication field to counter the new interpretations of other groups. Moreover, these groups regularly publish books, booklets and pamphlets, clarifying their own position and criticizing others. These publications, mostly polemical in nature, provided much needed information regarding the debating issues and areas of differences between these groups. The purpose here is to study professed manifestoes or written ideologies of the religious groups, which are all debating Muslim identity and true Islam. There are more than twenty-five magazines and six newspapers that are published in Malayalam by different groups, which form the source material to map the debates among the Muslim groups and collecting information from the significant people/opinion makers in order to capture their arguments. I tried to sort contestations on each theme based on their differing perspectives from their published documents and magazines in order to map the dynamism and differences among the Muslim groups. Newspaper reports and press statements issued by these groups have also been utilised.

The materials for the study collected at different times of my fieldwork from May 2011 to December 2013. Primary data was collected through unstructured interviews with significant people and opinion makers. Detailed interviews were conducted with an unstructured questionnaire of the people's representatives of the different groups and the office bearers of the organisations/ libraries across Malabar to get the historical as well as present debates prevalent among these religious groups. The sympathizers and the moral supporters of the groups, a number of people who refused to be identified as the followers, and a number of people who made valuable comments and opinions through social networks such as Facebook, Twitter; and the ulama and teachers of madrasa were interviewed.

I noted down the conversation in Malayalam and tried as much as possible to use the same terminology as the informants had. The ethnographic interaction was supported by library research I carried out in various libraries such as C.H Chair Mohammed Koya Library, Calicut, and Hira Library Kozhikode. Pamphlets on topical issues, magazines for men, women and children, books and commentaries in Malayalam

have been produced regularly by all the Muslims groups of Malabar for a long time now, and I use them to support my understanding further. In translating and transliterating conversations, I have omitted the use of most diacritical marks for ease of reading.

As a point of departure to know more about the groups, I used the participant observation method especially in January 2013 for the collection of data regarding the controversial debate over the claim of renaissance of the reformist and revivalist groups. Along with this participant observation, several events in the community observed. During the fieldwork, I attended public meetings conducted by the religious/political groups in different locations of the Malabar region. This includes the meetings of Quran Sunnath Society, Sunni, Jamaat and Mujahid groups. Similarly another major source for collecting the information from the field was through the ‘public discourses’ locally known as *vayalu/ samvadham* delivered by the leaders of the groups. The notices, pamphlets, small books, souvenirs distributed by the groups were also of much help. These sources provided information with respect to identity constructions of Muslim groups in this region. Attending meetings, rallies, and processions was an important part for collection of information about the activities of these groups.

1.10 Chapterisation

First chapter critically explores the conceptual frameworks like islamisation, syncretism, co-existence and hierarchical models put forward by various scholars in their attempt to comprehend the dynamics at play within Muslim communities. It argues that all these frameworks pre-suppose already existing binary opposition between textual and lived Islam and points out that such a pre-condition is problematic. An argument for a flexible and more plural notion of Islam is presented in this chapter. Later, through the research question, it elaborates the objectives, methodology adopted for the study and chapterization scheme of the thesis.

Second chapter delineates the various ‘tales’ of origin and evolution of Mappila Muslims. Furthermore, it discusses the diverse approaches of the ulama of competing schools and their views about the Nationalist and Khilafat movement. Ulama used ‘texts’ to interpret the relevance and irrelevance of participation in the movements in

the forms of fatwas. Most of the Sunni ulama opposed nationalist movement in the country but supported the Khilafat movement. The ulama affiliated to Salafi ideology supported both nationalist and Khilafat movements in India. This chapter maps the approaches taken by the ulama on these confrontations. Also, the chapter addresses the resultant divisions among the Muslim groups and public contestations among the Mappila Muslims in the name of *Mappilastan*¹³⁶.

The third chapter examines the origin and growth of a number of Islamic religious groups in Kerala and analyses their different theological and ideological foundations in the name of constituting true Islam. This chapter provides a profile along with the professed manifestos of all the major Muslim groups of Malabar. It maps the evolution of all religious groups in Kodyathur. It describes the different debates at theological level between the Sunni and Jamaat-Mujahid groups. It also gives an account of the work of Jamaat-e-Islami and maps their work aimed towards the purification of Islam. A brief account of the reformation activities of all groups in that area is also provided in this chapter.

In order to capture differences in the ideologies and multiple stances of the religious groups, I pick up three themes to substantiate the differing position of Mappila Muslim religious groups in Malabar, Kerala. Chapters IV, V and VI explore these themes.

Chapter four seeks to explain the claims of the Muslim groups over the reformism and revivalism among the Mappilas. It delineates the various contestations from the Muslim groups on the celebration of Milad-e-Sharif, Onam, and Christma. For example, Jamaat considers Onam as part of Kerala culture and as cementing element uniting for Hindus-Muslims; but Mujahids and Sunni Muslims consider it un-Islamic. For the Muslims of Jamaat-e-Islami, the celebration of Milad-e-Sharif (Prophet's birthday) is un-Islamic while the Sunni Muslims considered it as part of Islam. In putting forward their arguments, groups, as I elaborate to show, make claims to be authentic propagators and practitioners of Islam. This chapter further discusses the recent issue of 'Islamophobia' and its various manifestations in Kerala politics.

¹³⁶A matching petition was set forth by the Mappilas in the 1940s until India got freedom, for the establishment of "Mappilastan" as a separate Muslim majority province in south Malabar.

Further, it discusses the constituent elements of the ‘Muslim-self of the pan-Islamic groups in its bid to constitute ‘true Islam’.

The fifth chapter introduces the debate around *Qutba* (special lecture following the Friday congregational prayer) and translation of Quran into Malayalam (language spoken by the people of Kerala). Translation of Quran is considered as *haraam* by Sunni Muslims while the Mujahids are in the forefront in translating it to the regional language. Paradoxically, the fact remains that the translation of Quran in to Malayalam was first attempted by the Sunni Muslims. After the introduction of Salafi movements, Sunni ulama withdrew from the translation question. The allegation was that Mujahids were misinterpreting the Quran. What constitutes ‘true Qutba’ also has come to the frontiers of all other debates that exist among Moppila Muslims.

The sixth chapter begins with a recent debate in Kerala about a government circular on Muslim girl’s age at marriage. It recommended reducing the marriageable age of Muslim girls from 18 to 16. For the first time ever in the history of Mappila Muslims, a group of Muslim women came out to protest against the ulama and they burned the effigy of the religious scholars in public due to their disputed comments against women. The chapter discusses questions relating to gender and community rights that the circular opened up among Moppila Muslims. It begins with describing the appropriate behavior in the everyday life for the Muslims. While the inquiry is in the area of ethics, what is of concern is not values enshrined in moral codes, but the different ways in which people live these codes, something sociologists/anthropologists are uniquely situated to observe.

Seventh chapter provides a summary and findings of the thesis, where it shows how Muslim community in Kerala is undergoing a process of adaptation and modification according to the changing socio-political scenario. The study unfolds different discourses among the Muslim organizations, calling in to question the understanding of ‘tradition(s)’ as an unchanging set of cultural prescriptions that stand in contrast to what is changing, contemporary or modern. While certain continuities in earlier practices are evident, it is also clear that the modern adaptations of classical Islamic notions are modulated by, and refracted through contemporary social and historical conditions. The Muslim religious groups in Kerala enter the complex process of upholding and justifying their own theological positions by rejecting the concept of

single Islam. As result the question we need to unpack would be, is Islam one or many?

Chapter II

Mappila Muslims of Malabar

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the problem and significance of the study. Additionally, I critique the available framework in their understanding of the practice of Islam in general and also in the context of India. The study, as I have mentioned in the first chapter augments the dynamics of the idea of multiplicity found both in text and context. Though the study focuses its attention on the practices of Islam in Malabar in the present context, it is important to consider the antecedents to the developments that one is witness to in recent times. This chapter fulfills this dimension. It traces the history of the articulation of the Mappila Muslims since the colonial times, apart from mapping the origin of the Mappilas as a community since 6 century AD.

In the following pages, I would first give an account of the origin of Mappila Muslims in Malabar. The account delineates the claims and counter claims made by scholars on the origins of the community. The next part of the chapter brings the articulations of the Mappila Muslims on the colonizing ventures of different powers, starting from the Portuguese to that of the British. This is followed by an account of the negotiations that Mappila Muslims made during the nationalist movement phase. This account also brings out the emergence of different Islamic movements in Malabar during the early decades of 20 century. Later part of the chapter describes the role of the Muslim League in creating identities among the Mappila Muslims and its numerous demands of the Muslim cause. And this is followed by a summary of the whole chapter.

2.2 Origin of Mappila Muslims

While talking about Kerala, one of the most significant features regarding the spread of Islam, that has been highlighted by social scientists,¹³⁷ is the peaceful way through which Islam entered the region. Dale states that the Muslims came to Malabar by sea, and as a result they settled and spread on the coast. They reached the Malabar Coast with the intention of trade. He notes that even during the time of the Prophet, the

¹³⁷ Kurup, K.K.N., Ismail, E. 2008. *Emergence of Islam in Kerala in 20th Century*. New Delhi, pp.253.

Arabians had trade connections with Kerala. After the capture of Mecca by the Prophet, the Muslims spread throughout the Middle East. As part of their livelihood Arabians reached every nook and corner of the world.¹³⁸ Arab traders who came from the Persian Gulf and Red Sea married the native Malayali women who subsequently converted to Islam and left. The prevailing matrilineal system among the Muslims of the coastal areas is attributed to these liaisons. Wagle states that the Muslims in Malabar are integrated into the indigenous culture and also despite the Mappilas' self-awareness as Muslims they are highly integrated into the indigenous community in Kerala. They speak Malayalam, dress like *Nairs*¹³⁹ and, in their kinship and social customs, they have followed the local norms.¹⁴⁰ The Mappila Muslims adhere to the Shafi School of jurisprudence rather than the Hanafi School which is followed by Muslims in other states in northern and central India. The Mappilas also had cultural contact with Indonesia, commercial communities of Gujarat, and Philippines than most Muslims in south Asia.

Scholars are in agreement that Arab trade relations with Kerala precede the birth of Islam. Oommen states that Islam came to the south peacefully compared to the north. They intermarried with Hindu women and produced the Mappilas of Malabar, the Navayats of Canara (Kasargod) and the Lebbais, Marakayars and Rowthers (Palakkad) of Tamil Nadu.¹⁴¹ Owing to the link of the Arab merchants between Arabia and India from very early times, the Mohammedan influence in southern India dates back almost to the very inception of Islam. Simon Digby studied the Muslims of south India and he notes that they are more integrated into Dravidian culture and the Kerala Muslims are completely differentiated from the south Asian Muslims and also have a lack of Indo-Persian cultural influence. He states that the south Indian Muslims are completely different from the north Indian Muslims.¹⁴² Considering these views, we may note that Islam reached south India very peacefully when compared to the

¹³⁸ Dale, Stephen F. 1990. Trade, Conversion and the Growth of the Islamic Community of Kerala, South India, *Studia Islamica*, No. 71, pp. 156

¹³⁹ Nair is one of the high caste communities among the Hindus. In Malabar the land was mostly under their control before the Mappila revolt of 1921.

¹⁴⁰ Wagle, N. K. 1982. Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Mappilas of Malabar, 1498-1922, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 87, No. 2, pp. 522.

¹⁴¹ Oommen, John. 1995. Politics of Communalism in Kerala, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 11, pp. 545.

¹⁴² Digby, Simon. 1983. Islamic society on the south Asian frontier: the Mappilas of Malabar, 1498-1922, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 2, pp.324.

north. In south India after the arrival of Arabs the oppressed natives were converted to Islam and in early times the Arabs were engaged in a special type of 'mutha' marriage and later they settled here. The contact of Islam with south India is much older than that of the north. Miller states that the 'Kerala Muslims are part of the Arab Muslim world rather than of the Persian cultural milieu of the Mughal empire and the Deccan sultanates'.¹⁴³ In Malabar Mappilas' spoken language continues to be Arabic and the vernacular language rather than Urdu or Persian. Susan Bayly describes the characteristics of the large indigenous population and the peculiar social system of south India and emphasizes hierarchies of caste rank and inherited status and states that the south Indian Muslims are considered as the converts from the lower caste Hindus due to the oppression of higher castes. The converted class became people of great strategic and commercial importance in the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu and Malabar Coast.¹⁴⁴

It is believed that when Vasco De Gama visited Calicut in the last years of the 15 century, Mappilas had high influence in the Zamorin's court, so the Portuguese could not obtain commercial power at first. Osella and Osella say that the Portuguese arrival was when Vasco-da-Gama arrived in 1498 and began a long and bloody struggle against the *Moors*¹⁴⁵ to get control of pepper trade.¹⁴⁶ While it seems unlikely that the Portuguese presence completely disrupted existing trade networks in the Indian Ocean, its effect on Kozhikode was significant; for a period, the Portuguese monopolized the pepper trade and, following continual harassment, Arab traders left the city. Osella and Osella say the Portuguese traveler Vasco-Da-Gama reached Kappad near Kozhikode in 1498. They attacked the Arabs and the natives. Gama attacked the hajj travelers from the sea and killed them in 1502. More than 400 hajj travelers were killed in that incident. It provoked the Muslims in Malabar who started

¹⁴³ Miller, E. Roland. 1976. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, pp. 96.

¹⁴⁴ Bayly, Susan. 2004. *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900*, pp. 2.

¹⁴⁵ The *Moors* were the medieval Muslim inhabitants of the Maghreb, Iberian Peninsula, Sicily and Malta. Their descendants are presently known as the Maghrebis of present day Egypt and Arabian Peninsula.

¹⁴⁶ Osella, Filippo & Osella. 2003. *"I am Gulf": The production of cosmopolitanism among the Koyas of Kozhikode*, pp. 4.

to fight against the Portuguese. Later the Portuguese became the masters and monopolists of spice trade in India.¹⁴⁷

Dale is of the opinion that Portuguese had several aims here; they arrived not only for trade but conversion to Christianity was also their aim. They did not accept the social and cultural situation of Malabar and tried to undermine the social system of indigenous people. It is widely accepted among historians that the Portuguese not only attempted to usurp the spice trade, but also were eager to persecute the Islamic community whenever an opportunity arose.¹⁴⁸ Miller points out that the reason for the hostility between Portuguese and Muslims was not only economic but also the religious fervor of the former. The king of Portugal was granted authority by the Pope to conquer the kingdoms of the Mohammedans and to possess their goods.¹⁴⁹ Portuguese attitude towards the Muslims was one of the hardened hostility on account of economic motives and the idea of colonization. In the light of these realities we can see that the Portuguese hostility towards the Muslims was strong even after centuries of their conflict in different parts of the world. The communities like Koyas¹⁵⁰ of Kozhikode and Keyis¹⁵¹ of Thalasseri are considered the higher strata of the Mappila society. The Arab traders came as traders and later they got into marriage alliances with higher caste Hindus. Big *Taravads*¹⁵² were converted to Islam with all their members. Osella and Osella studied about the culture and social conditions of early Malabar, especially the culture and history of Thekkepuram in Calicut. The main

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, pp.6.

¹⁴⁸ Dale, F. Stephen. 1980. *The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922 Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.2

¹⁴⁹ Miller, E. Roland. 1976. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*. Delhi: Orient Longman, pp. 39.

¹⁵⁰ Koyas are a subdivision of Mappila community. They are mostly concentrated in and around the Thekkepuram (western part) of the city of Calicut. They claim their descent from upper caste Hindus of Kerala such as Nair as well as from the Arabs. The entire Nair taravads began to be converted into Islam and the Koyas became the descendants of Arabs who came here to trade. They were very well received and respected by the Zamorin Raja [erstwhile Hindu rulers of Kozhikode] who gave them land, allowing them to settle. The Koyas flourished at the time of Samoothiris.

¹⁵¹ The word Keyi meaning 'ship owner' in Persian language. The Keyis are known for their immense wealth and land properties acquired through trade with the help of English East India Company. The Keyi family has its roots in Thalasseri, Kannur district. Keyis only marry from another Keyi family and are noted for their matrilineal system of inheritance.

¹⁵² Taravads were matrilineal institutions. That is, the family line was traced through the females and birth in the taravad endowed all children with the protection and care of the taravad. Fathers had no specific properties separate from their own taravads to give their children, and fathers held no special claims over their children. Male care and discipline of a son in the taravad was the duty of the uncle, the mother's brother residing in the taravad.

occupation is trade and the Mappilas have strong contacts with the gulf. The majority of the people of Thekkepuram are prosperous with high incomes.¹⁵³

Dale says there are ample opinions with regard to the marriages of Arabs to the native women. The Hindu *Raja* (king) of Calicut welcomed them and allowed them to marry the local women. He states that according to Barbosa it must certainly have been lower caste women who married or became the concubines of Muslims; no Nambutiri or Nair women are ever likely to have taken such a step unless they had already been made outcasts for some profound social transgression.¹⁵⁴ Dhanagare studied the south Indian culture, religion and social structure and focused on the agrarian conflict that had occurred in Malabar. From the 9 century onwards Arabs had contact with Malabar. From early times, Arab merchants and sailors used to roam the streets of Kozhikode and were entertained in Koyas' houses as guests and friends, sometimes as 'husbands'. Those Arabs settled in Malabar married the higher caste Nair women.¹⁵⁵

Malabar was a part of Madras province and so was under the direct control of the British government. British government made many policies like Land Tenure Bill 1882, Mappilas Act 1854 and these types of direct intervention from the government over the people created discontent and discomfort in Malabar. The historian Hardy studied about the south Asian Muslim communities and he focused on the Mappilas of Malabar and studied 400 years of Mappila history. Hardy states that the Muslims of Malabar confront two sections i.e. from Britain, who destroyed the trade monopoly and another from the politically dominant Hindu majority. The fight against these two groups caused the emergence of heroic ideals, Sufis and Jihadis as well as Mujahideen. He states there is a significant role of the ulama in the Mappila revolt and his study focuses attention on questions of how a great central religious tradition is re-worked regionally to meet challenges that are peculiar to a region.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Osella, Filippo & Osella. 2003. "*I am Gulf*": *The production of cosmopolitanism among the Koyas of Kozhikode, Kerala*, pp.2-4.

¹⁵⁴ Dale, Stephen F. 1990. Trade, Conversion and the Growth of the Islamic Community of Kerala, South India, *Studia Islamica*, No. 71, pp. 162.

¹⁵⁵ Dhanagare, D. N. 1997. Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics: The Moplah Rebellions in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century's, Past & Present, *Economic and Political Weekly*, No. 74, pp. 141

¹⁵⁶ Hardy, P. 1982. Islamic society on the South Asian frontier: the Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, pp. 193-194.

The spread of Islam in south India was the influence of Sufis and their works and mystical acts are now seen to have been crucial in the expansion of Islam into south India and many other Muslim societies. Every year the ceremony of *nerca*¹⁵⁷ festival is conducted by different groups. The Kuttayi nerca is one among them. This nerca was probably due to the reflection of the relatively modest status of the senior Kuttayi Thangal. The natives conduct nerca in the name of Abdul Qadir Jeelani, a Persian Sufi saint. The popular Mappila song book “Muhyudheen mala¹⁵⁸” relates the history of his life. It shows the immense power of Sufis over the Malabar people. Dale and Menon stated that the nerca around the *dargahs* (grave yards of Sufi saints) in south India are the part of religious expression common to most societies but there are certain indigenous elements, allegedly Hindu, also introduced along with the prevailing religious beliefs.¹⁵⁹

Tipu’s invasion of Travancore through Malabar¹⁶⁰ and the subsequent withdrawal to his homeland played an important role in the history of this land. The Mysore kings Haider Ali and his son Tipu introduced a new system of land revenue. The Mysore king employed Canarese Brahmins as their revenue officials, who collected the taxes from the cultivators in actual possession of the land; hence Haider’s invasions and later Tipu’s conquests of Malabar (when many of Brahmins and the Nairs, the owners of the most of the land, ran away perhaps, to the forests or to the neighboring state of Travancore out of fear) the persons in actual possession of the soil, the cultivators in possession of the lands, paid their revenue to the kings of Mysore in their own name and eventually asserted an independent right over them. The point that needs emphasis in this place is that the Mappilas and lower classes of the Kerala became proprietors of land, especially in south Malabar, where the hold of the Mysorean kings was longest and greatest, and thus, even after they were driven out of Malabar and the old proprietors of land returned from their ‘hiding places’, these cultivators were ultimately able to successfully set up right of prescription as against their

¹⁵⁷ Nerca or Urz is the death anniversary of a Sufi saint.

¹⁵⁸ 400-year-old poem in Malayalam literature. This Arabic-Malayalam poem is believed to be written by Mohammed, a former Khazi of Kozhikode.

¹⁵⁹ Dale, Stephen F. & Menon, M. Gangadhara. 1978. "Nercas": Saint-Martyr Worship among the Muslims of Kerala, *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 523-538.

¹⁶⁰ In 1789 Tipu sent forces onto the Malabar Coast to put down a rebellion and the same year he captured Malabar.

quondam proprietors. Ali says that “apart from the changes introduced into the revenue system of Malabar, Haider Ali’s regime does not require any special mention; in his administration there was no element of the religious bigotry, and he left his Hindu subjects alone in the matter of their religion and social custom”.¹⁶¹ Dhanagare argues that the Tipu’s invasion was the reason for the emergence of strong Islamic ideals in Malabar. He further states that until Mysore conquerors reached Malabar there is no evidence for forceful conversion.¹⁶² Tipu’s invasion of Malabar has been debated by historians. Panikkar states that the Hindu chieftains leaving or not leaving Malabar in all probability was political and not religious. Further he says that at the time of Tipu’s invasion both poor Mappilas and poor low caste Hindus received a temporary relief from the payment of rent.¹⁶³ Dhanagare states that coastal Mappilas were the traders and Tipu forcibly converted the Hindus to Islam. According to him the customary land rights of the different classes had been disturbed during the short-lived Mysore rule. At the same time, he opines that conversion must have offered the Cherumar¹⁶⁴ a chance to free themselves from the oppression of Jenmi landlords and he also states that during these invasions Nambutiri Brahmins fled in fear and sought asylum in the state of Travancore where the rulers were Kshatriya, while the Nair chiefs either followed suit, surrendered to the conqueror or took refuge in the jungles to continue the struggle.¹⁶⁵ According to Sathar, Tipu’s withdrawal from the Malabar and the British arrival caused the power again to come into the hands of landlords and higher castes. K.N Panikkar, however has rejected this so called “Hindu flying” theory. He says there is no definite information about a Hindu movement out of Malabar during this period.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Ali, Hamid. 1938. *Custom and Law in Anglo-Muslim Jurisprudence*. Calcutta: Thacker, Sprink & Company. pp. 28.

¹⁶² Dhanagare, D N. 1977. Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics: The Moplah Rebellions in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century’s, Past & Present, *Economic and Political Weekly*, No. 74, pp. 115.

¹⁶³ Panikkar, K. N. 1982. Mappilas Religious Militancy, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 17, No. 20, pp. 824.

¹⁶⁴ The Cherumar people have their separate and exclusive traditions and beliefs, partly due to their segregation from the mainstream community at the bottom end of the caste system in Kerala. This made them retain their local folkloric or Hindu belief systems that were unique to that age and area.

¹⁶⁵ Dhanagare, D.N. 1977. Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics: The Moplah Rebellions in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century’s, Past & Present, *Economic and Political Weekly*, No. 74, pp. 112-141.

¹⁶⁶ Sathar Abdul, K. K, 2012. *The Mappila Leader in Exile: the Political Biography of Syed Fazl Thangal*. Other Books, Kozhikode, pp. 68.

2.3 Islam and Malabar

The question when Islam came to Kerala has been contested by historians. There is a great difference of opinion regarding the approximate time when Islam was first introduced into Malabar in Kerala. The two important stories associated with the coming of Islam and the origin of the Muslim community are given below. Many scholars¹⁶⁷ opine that Islam reached Kerala in the 7 century and it came directly from Arabia. There is a belief that the arrival of Islam was very prominent in Kerala and that Cheraman Perumal, one of the Chera rulers, had observed the splitting of the moon done by the Prophet in Arabia to show his supernatural powers to the non-Muslims and Cheraman Perumal queried about the person behind this supernatural deed.

“Oral tradition (particularly among the Mappilas) records that while Cheraman Perumal was reigning at Kodungallore while wandering on his balcony with his queen saw the moon being split into two and later being rejoined (Another version says he had a dream, a strange dream in which the moon split into two halves. One half fell to the ground and the other half remained in the heavens; later the two halves came together again and the moon set in the usual way. The rajah was greatly confused by this dream for he believed it to be an omen - though of what he could not tell). He was mystified and consulted his astrologers who apparently confirmed the occurrence of such an event. A few months later, a group of three Arabs led by Sheikh Seijuddin, trying to reach Adam’s peak in Ceylon (the present day Sri Lanka), landed in Muziris (Kodungallore, Kerala) and were talking about their new religion and the Prophet Mohammed. Later upon hearing that the moon splitting was a wonder wrought by Mohammed, the king gets curious and decides to go to Mecca himself. Accordingly he abdicates his throne, divides his kingdom into 34 ‘amshas’ stretching between Kanyakumari and Gokarnam, amongst his nephews (it was a matrilineal society) and boards a ship to Mecca. The king upon reaching there meets the Prophet, and accepts

¹⁶⁷ Ali, Hamid. 1938. *Custom and Law in Anglo-Muslim Jurisprudence*. Calcutta: Thacker, Sprink & Company, See also Zainuddin Mandalamkunnu. 2014. Presence of Islam in South India: in the records of 9th and 10th century. *The Guide*. Vol.1, No. 1, pp.8, See also, Kurup, K.K.N., Ismail, E. 2008. *Emergence of Islam in Kerala in 20th Century*. New Delhi, pp.253.

the new religion and accepted the name Thajudeen. He married the sister of then King of Jeddah. On his return trip, accompanied by many Islamic religious leaders, led by Malik-ibn-Dinar (RA), he fell sick and passed away. But he had given introductory letters for the team to proceed to ‘Musiris’ (Kodungallore, the Chera capital). The visitors came to Musiris and handed over the latter to the reigning king, who treated the guests with all respect and extended facilities to establish their faith in the land. The king also organized help for the artisans to build the first Mosque at Kodungallore, by converting Arathali temple into a Juma-Masjid. It was built in 629 A.D., and the area around it had been ear-marked for the team’s settlement”.¹⁶⁸

The historical authenticity has questioned by many historians and they have remarked that none of the reputed history books mention this story and it seems to be a myth. A mention of the Cheraman Perumal legend appeared in the 16 century book *Tuhafat-ul Mujahidin*¹⁶⁹ by Shaik Zainuddin, but he too did not believe in its historical authenticity. Saiva¹⁷⁰ tradition denied conversion of Cheraman Perumal to Islam. After the death of Prophet, the Arabs started the voyages to different parts of the world for trade and the Islamic preaching. According to historian Sreedhara Menon, the Cheraman legend is not corroborated by any contemporary record or evidence. None of the early or medieval travelers who visited Kerala has referred to this incident in their records. While Sulaiman (850 AD), Al-Beruni (970-1039 AD), Al-Idirisi (1153-54), even Marco Polo (1271-94), Ibn-Batuta (1324-54), Abdur-Razack (1441), Nicolo Conti (1444) did refer to the conversion story of the Perumal—but none of these travelers speaks of the story of the Cheraman’s alleged conversion to Islam.¹⁷¹ Sreedhara Menon authoritatively states that Kerala never had a king called

¹⁶⁸ Ali, Hamid. 1938. *Custom and Law in Anglo-Muslim Jurisprudence*. Calcutta: Thacker, Sprink & Company. See also, varnam.nationalinterest.in, see also historicalalleys.blogspot.in, 2 December 2008, The Perumal and the pickle by Maddy.

¹⁶⁹ *Tuhafat-ul Mujahidin* is a historical work by Zainudheen Makhdoom on the struggle between the Mappila Muslims of Malabar and Portuguese colonial forces in the 16th-century. This is the first work based on the history of Kerala authored by a Keralite, albeit in Arabic. The book provides an analysis of the events, as well as the lifestyle, customs and family structure of the people of the time. Muslims considered this book as the most authentic information about the origin and evolution of Mappilas in Malabar, Kerala.

¹⁷⁰ According to Saiva tradition, he had an association with a Sundaramurti, the last of the three hymnists of *Devaram*. Cheraman Perumal disappeared in 825 A.D, about 200 years after Prophet Mohammed.

¹⁷¹ Menon, A. Sreedhara. 1970. *A Survey of Kerala History*. Kottayam: National Book Stall. pp. 135.

Cheraman Perumal and quotes Herman Gundert, the German who composed the first Malayalam-English dictionary and the grandfather of Herman Hesse for this. Shaik Zainuddin, the author of the *Tuhafat-ul Mujahidin* writing in the 16 century, has spoken of the Cheraman legend but the learned historian was not inclined to believe its historical authenticity. It has now been proved that the 9, 10 and 11 centuries comprised the age of the Second Chera Empire when the Kulasekharas exercised their authority over the whole of Kerala from their capital at Mahodayapuram. It is inconceivable how this would have been possible had the kingdom been partitioned, as alleged.

In yet another version of Cheraman Perumal story, by M.G.S. Narayanan, the conversion of Cheraman Perumal into Islam occurred in the 12 century A.D. In the light of the available data, according to him, the second Chera empire begins in the 9 century only and the rulers of the second Chera Empire, the Cheraman Perumal's were:-

Kulasekara Alwar	800-820
Rajasekara	820-844
Sthanu Ravi Varma	844-885
Rama Varma	885-917
Gotha Ravi Varma	917-947
InduKotha Varma	947-962
Baskara Ravivarma I	962-1019
Baskara Ravivarma II	979-1021
Vira Cherala	1021-1028
Rajasimha	1025-1043
Bhaskara Ravi	1043-1082
Ravi Rama Varma	1082-1090
Rama Varma Kulasekara (Cheraman Perumal)	1090-1102. ¹⁷²

Scholars like Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai and M.G.S. Narayanan have new findings to offer. Based on the earlier mentioned lineage about the second Chera Kingdom, the conversion of Cheraman, if it happened, would be in the 12 century only. According to Elamkulam, till the 11 century, Kerala was not partitioned and Perumal's were ruling at Mahodayapuram till 1102 A.D. If the Perumal died in Arabia and if he wanted his associates to go to Malabar to spread Islam then he must have accepted

¹⁷² Narayanan, M.G.S. '*Political and Social conditions of Kerala, under Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram*', (C 800 AD - 1124 AD) (unpublished Ph.D thesis), Kerala University, 1972, pp.82.83.

Islam while in Arabia and kept the fact a secret. It was this time that Nambudiris became prominent in Kerala and caste system was well established. The Muslim travelers did not mention this probably because it had not become sufficiently public to receive attention in their works.¹⁷³ According to M.G.S. Narayanan, there is no specific contemporary evidence regarding the advent of Islam in Kerala.¹⁷⁴

Historians, especially the Mappila historians started to question the new findings of Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai and M.G.S. Narayanan. However, historians like Zainuddin Mandalamkunnu say that “when we study about the emergence and expansion of Islam in south India, we have to accept the information from Arabic and Persian sources. Unfortunately, the historians who managed this subject did not depend on original Arabic scripts. For this reason, old Arabic evidences were gone unnoticed in their history making. For the research about Kerala Muslims, these historians refer only ‘Keralolpathy’ and ‘Tuhafat-ul Mujahidin’. This is absolutely immature. In this regard, Muslims should be blamed for not attempting to spread the geographically written travelogues of Arab travelers. History has the style of descriptive narration as other subjects have. The ruling side always used it as a tool for their domination”.¹⁷⁵ He says that in the periods of royal dynasties was depicted as praise for conquerors and victories. But in the democratic period, it was written on the basis of cultural and civil interests of the ruling majority. So, from the historical narrations one can see that the overestimation and imposition of ‘own’ values to the historical facts and ignoring the minor groups of the nation. According to Mandalamkunnu “colonial modernism supported this kind of selfish process and neglected the minor histories, also included the histories of these communities in the categories of myth and imaginations”.¹⁷⁶ Another Mappila historian, Abdurrahman Mangad opines that a tradition of the Prophet has also been reported from one of the companions, Abu Saeed al Kudri, regarding the arrival of Cheraman Perumal. “A king from India presented the messenger of Allah with a bottle of pickle that had ginger in it. The holy Prophet

¹⁷³ Kunjan Pillai, Elamkulam. 1970. *Studies in Kerala History*. Trivandrum. pp.2.

¹⁷⁴ Narayanan, M.G.S. *Political and Social conditions of Kerala, under Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram*, (C. 800 AD - 1124 AD) (unpublished Ph.D thesis), Kerala University, 1972, pp.582.83.

¹⁷⁵ Mandalamkunnu, Zainuddin. 2014. Presence of Islam in South India: in the records of 9th and 10th century. *The Guide*. Vol.1, No. 1, pp.8.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, pp.10.

distributed it among his companions”.¹⁷⁷ After the death of Cheraman Perumal a group of Islamic preachers reached Kerala. The leader of the group was Malik-Ibn-Dinar and they constructed a Juma Masjid in Kodungallore in Kerala (Cheraman Juma Masjid). This incident demonstrates for Mappilas that that Islam reached Kerala at the time of the Prophet. But, Cheraman Perumal’s conversion to Islam is yet a controversy.

Here below, historian Hamid Ali draws the different accounts of this controversy:

- a) It is said that the first settlement of the Muslims on the West Coast took place in the 6 century when the Prophets lived in Hejaz.
- b) Another account is that the first settlement of the Muslims on the West Coast took place sometime in the 7 century A.D.
- c) Another school lays down the period to be the beginning of the 8 century A.D., during the reign of Umayyad caliphate during 705-715 A.D.
- d) A fourth view puts it to the early decades of 9 century A.D. during the Khulashekara rule in Kerala.
- e) The fifth view is that it was some time during the Middle Ages, but later than the middle of the 10-11 century.¹⁷⁸

Whatever the period Islam was first introduced into Malabar, it is certain that the Mappila Muslims of Malabar have certain special features and characteristics when compared with north Indian Muslims as mentioned earlier in the chapter. When we take the issue of the advent of Islam in Kerala, the historians are divided into two sections. However, due to the different accounts over this issue, the debate is still open among the social scientists.

Islam in India, in all probability, first emerged in Kerala and the Mappilas are the descendants of the first Indian Muslims through Arab contact. Checking the annals of history, it is found that, Islam was introduced in Kerala within a few years of proclamation by the Prophet of his mission. It is worth considering the fact that inscriptional and literary evidence proves that Muslim communities began to inhabit the coast of Kerala by the end of the 6 century. They were primarily traders, who supported the missionary and religious leaders to help them to convert the native

¹⁷⁷ Mangad, Abdurrahman. 2014. Indo-Arab relations in Ancient Period. *The Guide*. Vol.1, No. 1, pp.8.

¹⁷⁸ Ali, Hamid. 1938. *Custom and Law in Anglo-Muslim Jurisprudence*. Calcutta: Thacker, Sprink & Company. pp. 24.

population. The local rulers, with their tradition of religious tolerance fostering all religions, including Judaism and Christianity, gave them liberty. They also allowed 'foreigners' to marry local women, and establish families. The communities that formed were through the alliance between Arab Muslims and local women as well as with converts from local population, began to be called as 'Mappila'.

2.4 Pan-Islamism and Muslim Alliance with the Indian National Congress

The extant scholarship understood that the Khilafat movement of the Muslim community was made of myriad alliances which were constantly shifting right from its inception. For some Muslims the movement was a pan-Islamic one whose goal was to retain the position of the Khilafat and the sultans' control over the religious places. For others it was about protesting against colonialism. Both groups were fighting against Britain but influenced through different ideology. From this viewpoint if we study the Mappila Muslims in Malabar of Kerala, we will fail to justify the above statement. In Malabar the situation was entirely different. There was an ideological debate among the Mappila Muslims of Malabar, especially among the ulama regarding the Khilafat issue. The pan-Islamic inspired ulama supported the Khilafat as well as the Indian nationalist struggle like in north India. But some ulama who were gaining rewards from Britain, such as appointments as Khazis, appointments in different government bodies etc. were against the Turkey's Khilafat and issued fatwas in favour of Britain, and so they propagated the idea of being loyal to the British crown for the fulfilment of Islam. Several leaders who had been fighting for the independence turned away from the nationalist cause and made the caliph their primary concern. The question: do we need to support or oppose the Khilafat? - was therefore central. Also in several historical accounts in the late 19 century, there is a common distinction drawn between the "nationalist Muslim" and the "communal Muslim" embodied in the figures of the Congressman Badruddin Tayabji and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, to refer to the differences between the Muslims who joined the Indian National Congress and those who staunchly advised against it. In Malabar the pan-Islamist movements later turned towards the demand for a separate autonomous state in the name of Mappilastan as like Pakistan. The demand was supported by different nationalist/communal leaders from the Muslim community. So, here I would like to ask the question that 'Are they more loyal to the community or to the nation'?

While Khilafat divided Muslims into those in support of Britain and against, scholarship would benefit from debates taking place in the vernacular in the regions to distinguish non- nationalist and communal Muslim *vis a vis* their positions on the Muslim League as well. The section seeks to address issues of nationalism, communalism and anti-colonialism vis-à-vis Congress party as well as Muslim League, among the Muslims in Malabar. The discussion on the differing positions of the ulama will be taken up through the fatwas issued against Britain and Indian Nationalist movement.

According to Ansari, the pan-Islamism and its response to the British in India were represented by four major strands. The first strand constituted the young leaders among who got western education and belonged to the group of Aligarh Muslims. They are Mohammed Ali, Shaukat Ali and Moulana Hasrat Mohani. They had come to believe that agitation against British rule was the only effective way of safeguarding Muslim interests. The second strand of pan-Islamists, led by Abul Kalam Azad, owed more to the radical ideas of Jamal Uddin Afghani, who put their own political perspective that Muslims should cooperate with the Hindu brothers to unify politically and revolt against the British. In June 1912, Azad started *Al-Hilal*, a newspaper published in Urdu, writing in which he was able to emotionally move north Indian Muslims by the narration of events that happened in Turkey. The third section of pan-Islamists emerged from the Darul Uloom Deoband in Uttar Pradesh during the Khilafat period which was organized by some of the ulama at the religious seminary at Deoband. They emphasized the necessity of understanding Islam in order to equip Muslims to fight against the British. The fourth group was those who had travelled from India and concluded their work in Europe, the Middle East and Afghanistan. They are equipped with highly religious and secular education that led them to fight against Britain.¹⁷⁹

The dissatisfaction of living in *darul harb* (land of unbelief) and the vision for the foundation of *darul Islam* (the abode of Islam), made the deeply religious Muslims distrust the British Indian laws, which created discontent against the British regime. The involvement of government through the colonial laws, created within the

¹⁷⁹ Ansari, K. H. 1986. Pan-Islamism and the Making of the Early Indian Muslim Socialists. *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No.3, pp. 512.

Muslims a feeling for the establishment of darul Islam in India. The politically oriented ulama of India initiated the fight against Britain's decision towards Turkey. The Muslims had a feeling of deep hostility and unhappiness caused by the Turkey-Italian war in 1911 in Libya and loss of Balkan region and was further provoked by British attack against Turkey during First World War. Moulana Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali, two leading members of this anti-British movement, called for the Khilafat movement, entered the scene in 1916 and so did Abul Kalam Azad, then a pan-Islamist. The British emerged victorious after World War I in 1918.

The leading Khilafat workers as well as Congressmen assembled at Amritsar and decided to organize themselves under the guidance of Gandhiji against British. Even though the status of the Sultan of Turkey as a 'supreme religious authority' of the Muslim world had no practical implication outside Turkey and Indian Muslims had never before known such status and homage, Muslims of India gave full support to the cause and it became quite perceptible that it would be easy to march under religious banner rather than national, secular spaces. Gandhi, who was criticized by his friends and had justified his alliance with the Khilafat movement in the name of Hindu-Muslim unity, failed to realize that Khilafat movement which inspired the pan-Islamic idea, cut the very roots of Indian nationality theory.¹⁸⁰ Gandhi suggested that the Muslims—"If the peaceful non-cooperation movement does not succeed in getting justice, then, they have the right to follow the path shown in the holy Books of Islam and I whole-heartedly support this path".¹⁸¹ Gandhi reinforced the Khilafat activists in order to bring unity. They invited the Amir of Afghanistan to fight the infidels and to lead them. On 18 August 1919, at a meeting supported by the Bombay Khilafat committee, Gandhi, the only Hindu who attended the meeting, linked himself straight with the Muslim concerns regarding the caliph. He used the case to censure the Khilafat committee for its lack of direction and particular aims. With the ethical and

¹⁸⁰ According to M.H. Panhwar the Khilafat movement was the major reason for the partition of the nation. If Gandhi had not given support to the Khilafat movement, the ulama and the pan-Islamic activists would have reduced to nothing in the country. So he criticized Gandhi for providing space for the religionists in the nationalist movement, which was later exploited by them for advocating the establishment of separate nation for Muslims. see Panhwar, M.H. Abdullah Haroon and His Times.pp.2.

¹⁸¹ Gordon, Richard. 1973. Non-Cooperation and Council Entry, 1919 to 1920. *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 7, No.3, pp.443-473.

honest backing of tens of thousands of Hindus, he commented that the Muslims should dictate their own terms to government.¹⁸²

Mohammed Ali criticized the Hindu patriots who patronized their language as the language of nationalism and portrayed the Hindu cultural idiom as Indian nationalism. Mohammed Ali, during the time of Khilafat and non-cooperation movement, focused on the Hindu-Muslim unity all over the country. He criticized the orthodox and fundamentalist approaches of Shudhi¹⁸³ and Tanzim¹⁸⁴ (Tablighi) movement. But in the middle of the 1920s the role of both Mohammed Ali and Shoukath Ali had been eclipsed because of the relationship between Islam and Indian Nationalism. Nationalist leaders like Tej Bahadur Sapru, Madhan Mohan Malavya, Lala Lajpath Rai and Bipin Chandhra Pal condemned that Muslims for their devotion to Islamic faith and not to their country. This came as an aftermath of the publication of article entitled 'extra-territorial patriotism', in book 'Comrade' written by Mohammed Ali. The right wing Indian nationalists criticized him on the grounds that his political ideal was not aligned to national spirit but with Islamic theology. They added that Muslim leaders were never a part of Indian nationalism, they are Mohammedans first and Indians later. They claimed that these leaders' aims meandered on an extra territorial level and patriotism being not basically territorial ceases to exist synonymous to pan-Islamism or universal brotherhood. So the logic was extra-territorial patriotism is distinctly anti-national. But Mohammed Ali maintained and argued that there is no contradiction between the beliefs of a person and his submission to the nation.¹⁸⁵ Gandhi's approaches to the relationship between religion and politics were very close to that of Mohammed Ali's view. He stated that an Indian Muslim can and should fight for the freedom of Kashi as well as for the freedom of Kaaba.

¹⁸² Ibid, pp.148

¹⁸³ It is a conversion movement to the Hindu religion started by Arya Samaj. This movement launched massive efforts in the early twentieth century to 'reclaim' those 'fallen away' Hindus who were converted to Islam during the Muslim political rule in India.

¹⁸⁴ The emergence of the Tablighi Jama'at or Tanzim movement was a direct response to the rise of the aggressive Hindu proselytizing movements such as Shuddhi (purification) and Sangathan (consolidation), and this movement believed that only a grassroot Islamic religious movement could counter the efforts of the Shuddhi and Sangathan, "purify" the border-line Muslims from their Hindu accretions, and educate them about their basic beliefs and rituals in order to save them from becoming easy prey to the Hindu proselytizers.

¹⁸⁵ Tejani, Shabnum. 2007. *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History 1890-1950*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, pp.173.

Mohammed Ali argued that for Muslims to accept mandates over Iraq, Syria and Palestine would amount to a total disregard of the wishes of the Prophet. He invited Indian Muslims to start the Khilafat for the Turkey caliph. He invited the north Indian ulama to issue fatwa¹⁸⁶ in favor of the movement. Thus the Muslims of India launched the Tehrik-e-Khilafat and formulated its objectives. The objectives were; a) To maintain the Turkish caliphate. b) To protect the holy places of the Muslims. c) To maintain the unity of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸⁷ Public meetings and demonstrations were attended by thousands as a protest against colonialists and both Hindu-Muslim spokesmen came together to condemn colonialism. According to Shabnum Tejani, the part played by non-cooperation was inevitable since these leaders believed that there were only three ways¹⁸⁸ to save Islam from danger. Religion had a strong influence on the Muslim mind and the leaders of both the Khilafat and the non-cooperation movement urged Muslims to fight the colonialists. Religious leaders had lots of control over the rural Muslims and always urged them to give support. There was always a distance between the saints and the leaders, but in spite of that, extremist leaders asked ulama to make fatwa¹⁸⁹ against colonialism and also to direct boycott of councils. The colonialists were surprised by the intensity and sudden growth acquired by the movement and its widespread response among the popular masses.¹⁹⁰

The responses to the non-cooperation and Khilafat movement from the Muslims were diverse in different places. For example, the Muslims of Sind, especially the cultivating class who were almost completely unaffected by the movement, followed the advice of Pir of Sind and remained faithful to British. In Karachi, the Muslims did not accept the call for the non-cooperation but they supported the Khilafat campaign. On the other hand, the Shia Muslims in Sind opposed the non-cooperation movement and rejected their support for the Khilafat movement. According to Shia sect there are

¹⁸⁶ A legal opinion delivered by a Muslim qualified to interpret Islamic law, namely an Alim or Mufti.

¹⁸⁷ Khan, Agha Zuhaib. 2012. Civil Service for State Pakistan. (The CSS point) Karachi Publications, PP.2.

¹⁸⁸a) Non-Cooperation: it means you must keep a distance and never make a connection to the enemy of religion.

b) Hijrath: it means to leave the place from the enemies of land. c) Jihad: to fight with the enemies of religion for Allah and for the protection of belief. See Tejani, Shabnum. 2007. *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History 1890-1950*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, pp.154.

¹⁸⁹ A legal opinion delivered by a Muslim qualified to interpret Islamic law, namely an Alim or Mufti.

¹⁹⁰ Tejani, Shabnum. 2007. *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History 1890-1950*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, pp.174.

two conceivable expressions for them to show their loyalty towards Britain and go against the movement. First, the objection was based on theological means. While all the Sunni Muslims were the followers of caliph, the Shia Muslims opposed and did not follow the Turkish caliph as their Islamic ruler and they opposed their legitimacy as the descendants of the Prophet. Secondly, in the 1918 constitutional reforms, Britain confirmed Muslims as a separate electoral category which made Shias fear the loss of their recognition as a community among the Muslims and along with their privileges. By late 1921 the coalition unraveled due to many reasons and both the communities started to meet exclusively. Along with these, three further events were crucial; first in the late 1920s Moulana Azad and Moulana Abdul Bari issued a fatwa and proclaimed to the followers to migrate from India to Afghanistan. The fatwa was the *hijrath*- (migration) (withdrawal of Muslims from India to abroad) from darul harb to the darul Islam. As a response, more than 60,000 rural people of Sind migrated to Afghanistan. The people believed and followed hijrath as an alternative to non-cooperation.¹⁹¹ During the hijrath many were attacked and killed by the Afghan tribes, who looted their money. So the Amir of Afghanistan opposed the hijrath and ordered to stop it which compelled several thousand poor people to return, while many died on their return.

The hijrath to Afghanistan was an impractical idea, with an emotional appeal based on a black and white division of the world into darul Islam and dar-al-harb. A heartbreaking sprout of the Khilafat movement was the hijrath proposed by Jamiyat-ul-Ulama-e-Hind. When a land is not safe for Islam, when a land comes under the control of oppressors or infidels, a Muslim has two options- *jihad*¹⁹² or hijrath. But the ulama decided the hijrath, migration from darul harb to darul Islam. Around 925 eminent Muslim scholars signed this fatwa. In the North West frontier province and Sindh, hundreds of families sold their land and property and departed through the Khyber Pass. Many people died in the hijrath, while migrating to Afghanistan. It is reported that “more than 18000 Muslims were moved during this time”.¹⁹³ Afghanistan, a poor country, was unable to accommodate huge population and so they

¹⁹¹ Ansari, K.H.1986.Pan-Islam and the Making of the Early Indian Muslim Socialists. *Modern Asian Studies*, pp.522.

¹⁹² Jihad here means standing for the victory for the making of Muslim land.

¹⁹³ Tejani, Shabnum. 2007. *Indian Secularism: A Social and Intellectual History 1890-1950*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, pp.174.

closed its borders and Amir of Afghanistan demanded the migrants to return to their homeland. At its grassroots, some Muslims considered the movement as pan-Islamic in nature, whose goal was to retain the position of caliph and for retaining the status and power over jaziratul harb. But some considered this movement as a protest against colonialism. Once it stopped, return migration was not possible, so large numbers of poor migrants died on the way. The same demand was later raised against the nationalist idea of unity and it became a demand for the land of Muslims and became a cause for the emergence of a new nation named Pakistan, which again propelled large scale migration to the Muslim land. Unfortunately the Hindu-Muslim unity gradually receded which was later utilized by the communal sections of each group which eventually ended up in further tensions.

The movement¹⁹⁴, regardless of its acceptance across the nation, failed to achieve its professed objectives. The purpose was to preserve and promote the power and authority of the Ottoman caliphate, and to take a decision about jaziratul harb and the holy places of Islam in conformity with the sharia.¹⁹⁵ And for the establishment of darul Islam they started fighting against the British authority. It also helped to widen the political sphere of Muslims, to come down to the lower classes instead of being constrained within the upper class Muslims. All sections of Muslims such as ulama, businessmen, scholars and other professionals made their way to the forefront of public life.

There were many reasons for the breakup of Khilafat movement in India. Gandhi himself decided to stop non-cooperation movement and Khilafat movement due to unanticipated consequences such as Chauri Chaura, Mappila rebellion and hijrath to

¹⁹⁴ The main focus of the movement, that is Khilafat or jaseerathul Arab were the motto of the Muslims in the movement and so the educated Muslim leaders and nationalist leaders like Gandhi wanted to get the support from the Muslims by using the religious sentiment of the Muslims. The ulama did not reach a single monolithic agreement regarding the caliph. Since their expert knowledge did not finally form a solid collective agreement, they were divided among themselves on theological issues. The ulama interpreted the issues on the basis of their own theological understanding. They experienced the divisions on several issues such as hijrath to Afghanistan and non-cooperation with the British government and cooperation with the Hindus. The Muslims of India identified themselves to be in a paradoxical situation, since the invasion of Britain of India made them believe that they are living in darul harb and also the countries adjacent to Hindustan proper (i.e. the North West provinces), were all part of the enemy {darul-harb). To them, idolatry (kufr and shirk) was present everywhere. They understood that there is no place for (holy law) darul Islam. Whenever such circumstances exist in a country, the country is a darul-harb. It is too long here to specify all conditions.

¹⁹⁵ Akhtar, Safir.2002.*Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement*, 1918-1924. Islamabad, pp. 544.

Afghanistan etc. After the Mappila revolt there were similar kinds of revolt started all over the country. Later the arrest and detention of the Moulana Mohammed Ali and Moulana Shoukath Ali in September 1921 came as a severe blow to the Khilafat movement. Gandhiji realised that the ways employed to reach the goal were erroneous. In 1924, Mustafa Kamal became the president of Turkey and started to use secular laws, which resulted in some tensions and discontent within the states and Muslim communities in Turkey. They announced an end to the Khilafat movement by calling it as a blunder. It was a big blow to Indian Khilafatists who had been campaigning on behalf of Turkey and Khilafat. The leaders began to find themselves in a delicate position. Gradually the interest of the people died down over this issue.

2.5 Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement in Kerala: The Response of the Mappila Muslims

As a national liberation movement, in Malabar hundreds of Khilafat committees were formed with the support of Congress party in Malabar. The religious scholar Ali Musliyar¹⁹⁶ became the leader of Khilafat movement in Malabar. The newspaper reports depicted the active involvement of Mappila Muslims over the Khilafat causes. The Cochin Argus reported that “aggressive sympathy shown by Mappilas in Malabar for the Ottoman Empire in its war with Italy”.¹⁹⁷ Another newspaper, The West Coast Reformer, an English daily from Kozhikode, reported that with the support given by Mappilas to the Red Crescent Society formed through the efforts of Muslim leaders like Moulana Abul Kalam Azad and Ali brothers, medical aid was made available to the Turkish troops.¹⁹⁸ The authority also showed keen interest to know the mind of Mappila Muslims. The government of Madras wanted a report from the Malabar District Magistrate to know the Mappila feelings about the Balkan War. The Malabar District Magistrate reported that the educated Mappilas in the centres such as Malappuram, Perinthalmanna, Mannarkkad and Mambad were discussing the war with keen interest.¹⁹⁹ The report mentioned about the continuous forty days of prayer in the Perinthalmanna Mosque for the victory of Ottoman Empire. These activities

¹⁹⁶ He was a descendent of the Great Makdhooms of Ponnani, Makdhooms were the traditional Islamic scholar family who centered at Ponnani.

¹⁹⁷ *Cochin Argus*, Cochin. 25 November, 1911.

¹⁹⁸ *West Coast Reformer*. Kozhikode. 5 December, 1912.

¹⁹⁹ Innes, C.A. Letter to the Under Secretary, Government of Madras, 25 November.1912, in *Madras Judicial Proceedings File No. 2040*. 9 Dec.1912, pp.4-14., T.N.A., Madras.

showed the intense involvement of Indian and Mappila Muslims in the Khilafat agitation. During the early 1920s the Muslim leaders formed Khilafat conferences and decided to observe the 'Khilafat day'. They also conducted a joint conference (1919, November 23 and 24) of both Hindus and Muslims which was convened in Delhi, in which Gandhiji also attended and promoted the Khilafat and non-cooperation movement. Later this proposal was accepted by the All Parties Hindu-Muslim conference at Allahabad and the All India Congress party at Calcutta in September 1920. According to Evan, "in Malabar, the volunteers²⁰⁰ were made to take an oath in the name of Quran; they were unpaid soldiers, who were meant to fight when occasion rises. By holding Quran in one hand and the sword in the other, Ali Musliyar administered the oath."²⁰¹ During Ali Musliyar's²⁰² leadership Tirurangadi became the centre of Khilafat movement. According to him the Amir of Afghanistan would conquer the land of darul harb (British India) and overthrow the British government. Since Gandhi and Ali brothers were determined to help them, Musliyar was of the view that the Mappilas of Malabar should have faith in these national leaders. Therefore, to show their allegiance, Musliyar opined that, Mappilas should lend their hand in destroying the British rule and boycotting British courts.²⁰³

A peculiar political disorder existed in Malabar during the second decade of the 20 century. The last decade of the 19 century marked the foundation of Indian National Congress and its units²⁰⁴ at the local level. The Congress leader Abdurrahman Sahib started a newspaper entitled *Al-Ameen* in 1923. The sole aim and reason for the newspaper was to remove the allegation that Mappilas are fanatics. He attended the Nagpur session of Indian National Congress of 1920 and he raised serious questions

²⁰⁰ They had the uniform of Khaki trousers and coat, and the red turkey cap too with an emblem on it.

²⁰¹ Evans, F.B. The Out Break. 1992. In Kareem, C.K. in (ed.) *Malabar Lahala: 50th Anniversary special book*. Kozhikode, pp.118.

²⁰² After the rebellion Ali Musliyar became the Raja of Khilafat in Southern Malabar, he himself proclaimed the Malabar as a separate Kingdom.

²⁰³ Mohammed, K.A. 1992. Ali Musliyar in *Malabar Lahala: 50th Anniversary special book* (ed.). C.K. Kareem Kozhikode, pp.108.

²⁰⁴ Units were formed in Bombay, Madras and Bengal presidencies. In Malabar the District committee was formed in 1910 and the members included Kunjiraman Menon, U. Gopala Menon, K.P. Kesava Menon, T.V. Sundara Ayyar, Kesavan Nair and P. Ramunni Menon, see Lakshmi, L.R.S.2012. *The Malabar Muslims: A Different Perspective*.pp.136.

about the Muslim destiny. One of the sessions was chaired by Moulana Mohammed Ali and he asked Abdurrahman Sahib to lead the Khilafat movement in Kerala.²⁰⁵

The problem with Congress party in Kerala was that it began to be controlled by the “Chalappuram Gang”²⁰⁶. There was a complete absence of political involvement among the Muslims in Malabar between 1920 and the late 1930s. After the Mappila revolt, Mappila schools were started by the government where classes used to begin after the *fatiha* (it is the first chapter of Quran). The District Board decided to abolish this custom and consequently a mass protest began against the decision of ban.²⁰⁷ The chairman of the District Board was the Congress leader, the late K. Kelappan, and Mappila Muslims staged a protest against the Congress for their decision to ban reciting Fatiha in schools.²⁰⁸ After the Second World War began, the Congress ministry resigned in 1939. The All India Muslim League gave a call to observe a “Deliverance Day”²⁰⁹, so it was celebrated by the Malabar Muslim League which was also against the Congress Party. According to Sharafudeen, “the Hindu leaders of Malabar Congress, who were in the government and Malabar District Board, completely neglected the demands of the Mappila Muslims. For instance, the establishment of the separate Mappila schools for the Mappila boys did not have the

²⁰⁵ Lakshmi, L.R.S.2012. *The Malabar Muslims: A Different Perspective*, pp.140. After the Mappila rebellion the majority of the office bearers and leaders of the Congress local committee were Muslims. Mohammed Abdurahiman Sahib and E Moidu Moulavi became prominent leaders of the Mappila Muslims of Malabar. They were associated with the Indian National Congress and the National Movement. A Khilafat conference was held at Thalasseri on 1 May, 1923 and it received an enormous support from the Mappila Muslims because it was just after the Mappila outbreaks. This was the first time the Muslim leaders met together after the Mappila revolt. This was an anticipatory step by Mappilas due to the inaction on the part of Indian National Congress leaders and inconsiderateness from the part of Hindu Congress leaders of Kerala with regard to Mappila revolt. It was alleged that the Hindu upper caste domination was a very peculiar feature of the Indian National Congress and the leaders of Congress, instead of showing sympathy towards poor Muslims, made several allegations against them pertaining to their loyalty.

²⁰⁶ There was a split in the Congress where the left wing was led by Abdurahiman and the right wing or the Chalappuram wing was dominated by the Lawyers, doctors, professionals, teachers etc. Abdurrahman’s left wing was supported by Moidu Moulavi, George Joseph, E.M.S. Namboothripad and the right wing was led by K. Kelappan, Madhava Menon and Ramunni Menon. See, Lakshmi, L.R.S.2012. *The Malabar Muslims: A Different Perspective*, pp.140.

²⁰⁷ K.M. Seethi Saheb.1959. “Keralathile Muslim Leaginte Purogathi”. *Kerala State Muslim League Souvenir*. pp. 22-28.

²⁰⁸ Sharafudeen, S. 2003. *Muslims of Kerala: A modern approach*. pp.62.

²⁰⁹ Muslim League President Muhammad Ali Jinnah declared December 22, 1939 a "Day of Deliverance" for Indian Muslims. The day was intended to celebrate the resignation of all members of the rival Congress party from provincial and central offices in protest over their not having been consulted over the decision to enter World War II alongside Great Britain.

standard of the Hindu Boys”.²¹⁰ The Hindu leaders of the Congress rejected all these demands as communal and it accelerated the process of anti-Congress feeling among the Muslims and Sharafudeen aptly points out that the “Muslim League in Malabar cleverly exploited the minds of Muslims”.²¹¹ Later a number of Muslim activists of Congress left the party and joined the League like Abdurrahman Sahib, who joined the League after a long service with the Congress and in the nationalist movement.

In 1921, a fight stimulated at Nilambur between the Raja of Nilambur²¹² and a Khilafat worker. The news spread quickly to different parts of southern Malabar. The Magistrate of Kozhikode ordered police to arrest the Mappila leaders who were in possession of arms. Ali Musliyar²¹³ became the leader of movement and Ernad, Valluvanad, two taluks were declared as Khilafat Kingdoms. Police arrived at the Tirurangadi masjid and consequently a rumor spread throughout Malabar that the police attacked the masjid. After hearing this news nearly two thousand Mappilas came from different corners of Malabar and attacked the Police as a counter response. Historian Gangadharan, states that the unreasonable arrest of the Mappilas provoked them and made them fight against British troops. Rebellion continued in Malabar and more arrests occurred. Muslims alleged that Hindus were supportive to the police in the violence and frequent violence broke out for the next six months. The attitude of the government towards the Khilafat and non-cooperation movement was notorious. The officials had correspondence and were constantly on the vigil in the Malabar region. The unity between the Hindus and Muslims created more tension for the British regime. The British government discovered that the best way to break up the unity between the Muslims and Hindus was by implementing the Mappila Outrages Act 1882.²¹⁴ The act was against the Muslims, so the British calculated that it would help to create cleavage between both communities. The assertiveness of the peasants

²¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 63.

²¹¹ Ibid, pp. 63.

²¹² Thacharakkavil Tirumulpads of Nilambur were “one of the largest land lords of the taluk (Ernad) and the owner of a great part of the (Nilambur) Valley”, for more information see Gangadharan. M.2008. *The Malabar Rebellion*. Kottayam: D. C. Books, pp.60.

²¹³ He used to wear khadi clothes; he always preferred white khadi garments with a long shirt falling below his feet, and a Turkish cap in the head with a green turban. See. Mohammed, K.A. 1992. *Ali Musliyar* .In C.K. Kareem (Ed.) *Malabar Lahala: 50th Anniversary special book*. Kozhikode, pp. 108.

²¹⁴ Bahauddin, K.M. 1992. *Kerala Muslims: The Long Struggle*. Trivandrum, pp.178.

and the rebellion's pattern had changed as part of the introduction of Khilafat movement.

An enormous anti-British sensitivity transpired among the Mappila peasants after the introduction of Khilafat movement in Malabar. People began to recognize the repressive 'divide and rule' policy of the British. The visit of Gandhiji and Shaukat Ali²¹⁵ made the Congress very active and the workers of Khilafat and Non-cooperation gave an immense welcome to the leaders in Calicut beach.²¹⁶ Gandhi asked to surrender all titles and to resign from all honorary offices. He asked the lawyers to give up their practices and asked students and teachers to leave the schools.²¹⁷ Kurup states that the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements in Malabar led to violent uprisings mainly by the Mappila peasantry in the southern Taluks of Ernad and Valluvanad. The Mappila rebellion received its strength primarily from the poor peasants. Later the Indian National Congress denied and rejected this peasant mobilization as it culminated in violence and rebellion. The brutal suppression of the peasants by the British army was countered by the subsequent introduction of Muslim League politics in Mappila community. According to Kurup, a special kind of political vision within the community helped the British to restrict the growth of the nationalist movement in the southern taluks of Malabar. In brief, these taluks were kept away from the mainstream of the nationalist movement.²¹⁸ Namboothirippad opined that the Malabar became a strong center of the Non-cooperation-Khilafat movement and it could be compared to any other region in the country where the British autocracy has been swept away by the movement and popular participation. It marked an epoch in the history of Kerala because it witnessed such an enormous popular participation. Nevertheless, after the Mappila revolt in 1921, the Khilafat

²¹⁵Gandhi and Shoukath Ali visited Kozhikode to propagate the programme of non-co-operation and reached Kozhikode on 18 May 1920 and they addressed a huge gathering of about 20,000 on the Vellayil beach, Kozhikode. The Mappilas were highly attracted to the speech of Shaukat Ali and therefore in Kerala, Khilafat and non-cooperation meetings were conducted once or twice in a week.

²¹⁶ Menon, Gangadhara M. 1974. The Yakub Hasan Episode: Prelude to the Malabar Rebellion, 1921. Ravindan T.K. (Ed.) *Journal of Kerala Studies*. Trivandrum: Department of History, University of Kerala. Vol.1, No.2, pp.313.

²¹⁷ Ibid, pp.313

²¹⁸ Kurup, K.K.N. 1988. Peasantry and the Anti-Imperialist Struggles in Kerala, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 16, No. 9, pp. 36.

movement suffered heavily, because the nature of the movement has changed from peace to tension.²¹⁹

A great deal of consciousness had come among the Muslims of India, both educated and uneducated, on the Turkish question. The rigidity and stringent mentality among the Muslims of India was established through the Khilafat movement. Khilafat drive was essentially an association to show the Muslim support for the caliph of Turkey against the allied powers especially Britain. On the other hand the Khilafat meetings in Malabar incited so much communal feeling and togetherness among the Mappila Muslim peasants, which led to the uprising of Malabar rebellion and took an anti-Hindu turn in some places of Malabar in July 1921. The intense failure of the Congress-Khilafat cooperation in 1922-23 and the revitalization of communal groups, and the rebirth of widespread Hindu-Muslim riots all over the country showed the inefficacy of Khilafat and non-cooperation movements. Congress party was a complete failure to look after or understand the Muslim community at this juncture. In Malabar the opposition of Congress right wing leaders towards the rebellion contributed heavily in shifting the revolt from its politico-national spirit to the more religious cause. Of course the Mappila fanaticism and the rigid actions alienated them from Congress leaders and from workers. Even Congress leaders were not free from the religious bias. Even the nationalist leader Abdurahiman Sahib was also alienated from the party and later he left the Congress. Due to the repressive measures against the rebellion and the counter movement from the poor peasants made the time of 1920-1921 memorable for the glories and national upsurge. Thus, Muslims and Congress leaders failed to get the confidence of each other. Both Congress and Khilafat leadership failed to prepare and mobilize the people for the nationalist struggles and also were not able to provide national political consciousness which was needed for the Nationalist movement.

2.6 The Trajectory of the Khilafat Movement to Mappila Revolt

This section of the chapter will enquire into the reasons for the transformation of the Mappila Muslims from Khilafat movement to the Mappila revolt. The nationalist leaders of the Congress party encouraged the setting up of the Khilafat committees in

²¹⁹ Namboodiripad, E. M. S. 1984. The Struggle for Proletarian Hegemony: A Short Note on Freedom Struggle in Kerala. *Social Scientist*, Vol. 12, No.9, pp.34-35.

each village in Kerala to strengthen the nationalist struggle. The leaders like Gandhiji wanted to set up the Khilafat areas to strengthen the nationalist movement. The Congress party of Kerala sector as earlier mentioned in the chapter was dominated by Hindu high caste people, and they failed to get the confidence from the Mappila Muslims. The leaders who ranked high in the Khilafat movement were mostly religious scholars, ulama, and Sayids etc. As a result religiously inspired Mappilas later turned away the nationalist cause and staged protests for the religious cause i.e. for Khilafat movement. Also there was an intense debate among the scholars over the nature of Mappila and Khilafat movement. But after all, the discussions were centered only on the religiosity of the Mappila Muslims. So as a continuation, this section goes on to describe the nature of the transformation of the Khilafat to Mappila struggle.

The loyalty of *hajis*²²⁰, Sayids and other Muslim leaders of Malabar towards Caliph's rule in Turkey was not an association that started merely in the 1920s. Such sentiments were reported in 1864 in a letter written by F.C. Brown, who was a planter in Malabar District. The Mappila social reformer, Makthi Thangal (1847-1912) published an evening newspaper *Turki Samacharam* (Turkish News) in 1909. This newspaper created awareness on the socio-political system of Turkey. The attitude of the peasants and rebellion had changed due to the introduction of Khilafat movement. In particular the agitation was initiated to revive the doctrines which Sayyid Fazal²²¹ and his disciples had propounded in the 19 century and more generally to resuscitate the Mappilas' long militant tradition. Then, the Mappila rebellion was significant not only as it was a culmination of more than four hundred years of Malayali history since Vasco De Gama who arrived in 1498, but also as an event in the modern history of both Indian and west Asian Islam. According to Gangadharan the role of Khilafat movement was very important for the awakening of the Mappila tenancy movement in Malabar. At some places in southern interior part of Malabar especially in Ernad and Valluvanad regions the agitation of the tenants took a radical turn under the influence of Khilafatists. In some villages, local tenants created disturbances in the daily life of *Jenmis* (landlords) and the Congress leaders rushed to these places and

²²⁰ Haji is an honorific title given to a Muslim person who has successfully completed the Hajj to Mecca.

²²¹ He was a revolutionary par excellence, he wrote many works on Islamic theology in Arabic like *Fussosathul Islam*, *Alaman Yuvaril Kaffarr*, *Asasul Islam* etc. see. Kurup, K.K.N., Ismail, E. 2008. *Emergence of Islam in Kerala in 20th Century*, New Delhi, pp.155.

advised the tenants to give up such methods. The British government in Madras was also very keen to know the local issues, which they reported to the government of India.²²²

A Committee was set up under Sayyid Alavi Thangal, who was elected as life-time president of the Khilafat Movement in Malabar. Moidu Moulavi issued a pamphlet with the words “Dear brethren”, which addressed the Muslims and appealed to them to help the Turkish financially. British officials in Malabar called the movement ‘Moplah outbreak’ and saw it as being fanatical. Certain religious ideas played a vital role in the revolt. The defining characteristic of the Mappila outbreak was devotion to death. In Kerala, Khilafat movement began to turn into Mappila rebellion. The Mappilas of Malabar believed that Islam is in danger. The Mappila rebellion was a peasant revolt but along with it they fought for their religion. The survival and expansion of the Mappilas was due to their unflinching faith in militant Islamic ideology and also because they were trying to construct an Islamic belief system and fight for an Islamic identity. Mappilas, as it can be seen in the rebellions and movements mentioned, had great power in the politics of Malabar. The Mappila elite became increasingly involved in local power politics. There were many schools set up near the towns but the principal beneficiaries of the new facilities were the sons of Mappila merchants, wealthy traders, businessmen etc.

In another incident the police led 90 rebels to the Tirur railway station from where they were transported to Coimbatore. The rebels were in the goods wagon which had no means of ventilation.²²³ When the train reached Podannur, 64 of these prisoners had died and the rest of them were at the verge of death. This incident is known as “train tragedy” or “wagon tragedy” of 10 November 1921. The people attacked all central government offices such as railway stations, telegraph, etc. The rebellion spread to all southern interior parts of Malabar such as Ernad, Valluvanad regions and

²²² Gangadharan, M. 2008. *The Malabar Rebellion*. Kottayam, pp.55.

²²³ Realizing that Muslims would support the nationalist movement only if it benefited their religion, Mahatma Gandhi and the national leaders of India opportunistically initiated the Khilafat movement. This later turned into Mappila revolt against big landlords and alongside the widespread and violent uprising against the British rule of India, as a result of which hundreds of land lords got killed. After a series of events that culminated in violent clashes between police and protesters, martial law was introduced and the rebellion was mostly crushed. See for detail description, David, S. Mary.1972. Was it a fanatical outbreak? In Kareem, C.K. (Ed.) *Malabar Lahala: 50th Anniversary special book*. Kozhikode, pp. 101.

some parts of Palakkad district. There was no civil administration and the Collector handed over the power to the army. A day after the Tirurangadi incident the police decided to arrest Khilafat leader Ali Musliyar and asked him to surrender to the government. But he replied that the Khilafat leaders had never been involved in any violence. K.P. Kesava Menon in his book *Kazinjakalam* and E. Moidu Moulavi in his autobiography describe an incident on their return journey from Tirurangadi. There, A.V. Karunakara Menon, leader of the Congress party, and his pregnant wife had to be removed to a safer place. The Muslim volunteers carried the ladies by turn in a bullock cart and went along with the leaders. The group rested in a Muslim house and slept at night in Samoothiris' grain shed on the way. The next day they reached near a Nair's house. A group of people objected to go forward saying that all Hindu houses being protected under the instruction of Ali Musliyar so the strangers were not allowed near the house. On understanding their identity they were allowed to pass and his family was left in the house protected by Muslims.²²⁴

The question was regarding the stand of all other Hindus such as the lower castes; whether they were the supporters of rebellion or not. Historian Panikkar observes that the nature of the revolt of Malabar can be analyzed from a Marxist perspective and the causes of the revolt hints that along with religion, other social issues also played a vital role in Malabar revolt, and that the Malabar uprising was a culmination of a series of revolts during the 19 and 20 centuries. The ulama led the rural people especially in southern Malabar to fight against the British and landlords in the name of jihad (holy war) and so the common people considered ulama to be the leaders of the revolt.²²⁵ Dhanagare states that religion played a major role than anything else and in general the outbreaks followed a similar pattern: almost invariably the outbreak would involve a group of Mappila youths attacking a Brahmin Jenmi, a Nair official or Jenmis' servants; sometimes it also involved the burning or defilement of temples, and occasionally the burning or looting of landlords' houses.²²⁶ In *Mappila Peasant Revolts* by Prakash Karat, he stated that Malabar rebellion was anti-imperialist and

²²⁴ Ibid, pp.182.

²²⁵ Panikkar, K.N. 1982. Mappilas Religious Militancy. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 17, No. 20, pp. 823-824

²²⁶ Dhanagare, D.N.1977. Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics: The Moplah Rebellions in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century's, Past & Present, *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 119.

anti-feudal in nature. Blind religious background helped the peasants for the joint action. But he does not give any monocausal determinism. Karat says that Panikkar does not discount or reject the role of religion in the peasant movement. He says Panikkar is of the view that along with religion economic factors also played a major role. Both Karat and Panikkar believed that the fundamental cause of Mappila peasant movement was the economic factor. Mappila outbreak was due to the agrarian economic exploitation by the landlords and the British officials²²⁷. Also, the religious idiom strengthened the anti-British sentiment. Thus Karat believes that this struggle was revolutionary in nature. The land owners in Malabar were mostly the Nairs and *Nambudiris*²²⁸. Their bitter treatment and also the exploitation from the part of intermediaries created much disturbance in the normal life of the peasants. The hostility towards British law added impetus for a mass uprising among the peasants. The British attitude towards the poor peasants and bad living conditions led eventually to the collective Mappila peasant discontent.

According to Kesava Menon of Congress, “there is no doubt about the genesis of the rebellion, it was born out of police repression”.²²⁹ According to him there were four different types of people who took part in the rebellion; the Khilafat activists, tenants, religious activists and criminal elements.²³⁰ Mary noticed that ‘each followed their own visions and objectives’. There was a general instruction from the leaders of the rebellion to protect Hindu houses. The rebels were protecting almost all big *Kovilakams* (big taravads of higher caste people) such as Tirurangadi Kovilakam, Kottakkal Kovilakam, Paranamby’s Kovilakam in Malappuram etc. There is evidence to prove that the Mappila leaders took great care to protect the life and property of Hindus. Variamkunnath Ahmmed Haji²³¹ enforced a code of behavior on the Mappilas. He ordered that “Hindus are not to be molested, nor is their property to be looted; there should be no forceful conversion; those who violate these rules would be

²²⁷ The tenancy movements created much pressure on *Jenmis*. They warned the Khilafat and tenancy workers to enter their field and made objections to live in their land.

²²⁸ The Nambudiri are one of the Brahmin groups in Kerala.

²²⁹ Bahavuddin, K.M. 1992. *Kerala Muslims: The Long Struggle*. Trivandrum. pp.182-183.

²³⁰ Ibid, pp.183.

²³¹ He was born in a family of revolutionaries. He was a traditional rebel to the British army. He actively participated in the Manjery and Pandikkad revolts. He was an advocate of Hindu-Muslim unity and also he ordered Muslims not to commit forceful conversion.

severely punished”.²³² Further he told that “if the rebels disturbed them they will join with the British government. Definitely that will be a cause for our failure because without their help we cannot survive in this movement because we are fighting against the oppressors”.²³³ The Khilafat movement changed all their interests and attitudes towards the other religions and they started to participate in the movements. But historian Gangadharan noticed that the “Khilafat movement was fed by pan-Islamic sentiments with vaguely defined religious and ideological overtones”.²³⁴ A peaceful political movement was converted to a murder campaign and pictured as a Hindu-Muslim conflict.

The rebellion had left behind several refugees and tensions between Hindus and Muslims. Voluntary relief committees were formed to rescue people and to provide food, shelter, clothes etc. for them. B. Pokker sahib formed a committee named “Mappila Amelioration Committee” and the leader Moidu Moulavi visited the affected areas to provide relief measures.²³⁵ Abdurrahman Sahib was able to collect money from the elites of north India to build orphanages for the purpose of protecting people who were orphaned due to the riots, like Dewar and friends who came to India as representatives of the ‘Servants of India’, an organization formed by Gopala Krishna Gokhale, helped the members of Malabar relief committee who were struggling at that time. “The committee distributed a fund of rupees 270,000 and clothes worth more than rupees 60,000 as part of relief works”.²³⁶ After all these efforts, the life in Malabar began to settle down. The long term impact of the Mappila rebellion was to be seen as Kesava Menon describes, as a gradual polarization and hostility of the Hindus and Muslims. The Mappilas in south Malabar went against the Congress which was alleged to be a Hindu domain. It was noted that some allegations even from the nationalist leaders like Abdurahiman Sahib who criticized that the relief measures by the Congress committee catered to the Hindus alone.²³⁷ So it was alleged that the Congress workers and Khilafat committee initiated the relief measures on

²³² David, S. Mary.1972. Was it a fanatical outbreak? In Kareem, C.K. in (Ed.) *Malabar Lahala: 50 Anniversary special book*. Kozhikode, pp. 102.

²³³ Kurup, K.K.N., Ismail, E. 2008. *Emergence of Islam in Kerala in 20th Century*, New Delhi, pp.172.

²³⁴ Gangadharan, M. 2008. *The Malabar Rebellion*. Kottayam.pp.56.

²³⁵ Lakshmi, L.R.S.2012. *The Malabar Muslims: A Different Perspective*.pp.138.

²³⁶ Gangadharan, M. 2011. Malabar Kalapam Agoshikkaruth. *Mahrubumi weekly*. July. 10-16.

²³⁷ K.P Kesava Menon. 1921. *Kazinjakalam*. pp.128.

communal lines. There was a heated debate in Kerala in 2011, related to the celebration of Khilafat and Mappila revolt.²³⁸ The allegation was that a section of people in Kerala was continuing the celebration of Mappila revolt and Khilafat movement every year as part of their remembrance of the past. The right wing and nationalist historians were the ones who propagated this and alleged that the celebrations were communal in nature though there was nothing to celebrate. Gangadharan raised this question to the Mappila Muslims. According to him the riot of 1921 was actually a useless thing which created only far reaching problems, with no account of use in it to point out.²³⁹

The above information about the Khilafat movement gave us a picture about the role of ulama in the struggle. The Congress leaders of Kerala did not give much attention to the ulama demand for the Khilafat movement. The Mappilas alleged that the Congress party stands with the higher caste Hindus such as Nairs and Nambudiris. A kind of distrust emerged among both congress and Khilafat leaders. Even they fought over the voluntary relief committees, it is stated that the Congress leaders helped only the Hindu refugees and likewise the ulama catered to the need of Mappilas only. Along with that there were good initiatives also from the Mappila leaders like Variamkunnath Ahmmmed Haji, Bava Moopan etc. They demanded the Mappilas to protect the Hindu brethren. The deep adherence to the religious beliefs caused the Mappila Muslims to look at the issues concerning the Mappila community through the religious perspectives. As result the ulama differed in their approach towards the nationalist movement. The following section of the chapter will describe the diverse fatwas raised by the ulama regarding the nationalist movement in India.

2.7 Ulama: Fatwas and Responses to Khilafat and Mappila Revolt

This section of the chapter delineates the different approaches taken by the ulama in the name of fatwas towards the nationalist and Khilafat movement. According to

²³⁸ Gangadharan, M. 2011. Malabar Kalapam Agoshikkaruth. *Mahrubumi weekly*. July. 10-16.

²³⁹ Historian Gangadharan opined in *Mathubumi Daily* on dated 16-23 July 2011, that for a few years, Malabar especially in many places of Malabar district had witnessed frequent annual meetings of Malabar riots. And I (Gangadharan) felt bad when I saw some of these meetings having a color of celebration or in his words “hungama”. The most heart-rending fact was that the majority of audience of these meetings were from Muslim community. In general, the orator’s knowledge regarding the Malabar riots were mostly true; but his use of it to stir up hostilities among people was condemnable. The riot was an epoch in Malabar history and this knowledge can be put to constructive use.

Agrama “all the attentions given to fatwas so far, and for all the writing done on them, we still know surprisingly little about how they actually work in Muslims’ daily lives, how they secure their authority through and within living social relationships. There is, to date, very little ethnographic study of the fatwa and despite two decades of intense and growing interest not a single ethnographic text fully devoted to the practices that constitute it”.²⁴⁰ My aim in this section is to bring out the diverse fatwas to demonstrate that there was no single opinion and single authority prevalent among the Mappila Muslims.

Fatwas are religious responses issued by learned ulama to questions asked of them about certain aspects or affairs of life. One can say that people do not have to obey the fatwas they receive. There are no institutionalized enforcement mechanisms for them. It is entirely possible for a person to seek more than one fatwa concerning the same issue. The writings of the chapter deal with these options, because Mappila Muslims witnessed an enormous number of fatwas from ulama regarding both for and against colonialism. Given this fact and the broad diversity of fatwas these days, one might expect that people would indeed seek more than one, especially if a particular fatwa put them at a disadvantage. But this is precisely what I did not see. Instead, those who received a fatwa tended to follow it even if this caused them difficulty. As earlier mentioned, there was a fight among the ulama over the issue of the participation in the nationalist and Khilafat movements. The pan-Islamic inspired ulama and the nationalist inspired ulama were pro-Congress and stood against Britain. There was an opposition to this approach. Unlike in north India, a group of ulama stood for Britain and they preached the message of the importance of being loyal to the British crown. Both kinds of ulama depended on the same ‘text’ to clarify their position. In Malabar the ulama were scattered due to the multiple ideologies of Islam.

Britain understood the influence of ulama among the Mappila Muslims, as result they monitored the works of ulama at all levels; further this monitoring caused the deportation of leaders like Sayyid Fazal to stop the ulama movement against Britain. It was in 1792 the British occupied the territory of Malabar by replacing the Mysore rule. As in the north, where the British replaced the Mughals, in Malabar also their

²⁴⁰ Agrama, Ali Hussein. 2010. Ethics, Tradition and Authority: Toward an anthropology of Islam. *American Ethnologist*. Vol. 37, No.1, pp.3.

victory was over a Muslim power. Here the changing of darul Islam to darul harb was very obvious. Like the ulama of the north, a section of the ulama in Malabar could declare their area as darul harb. The nationalist Muslims and a section of ulama who got inspired by pan-Islamism proclaimed that it is the duty of Muslim to fight against the anti-Islamic countries and reminded themselves of the inequities done by the Britain against Indian community. They realized that the Islamic countries all over the world are in crisis, so it is the duty of a Muslim to fight for the rights. Soon after the attack on Turkey by Britain, both Salafi and Sunni ulama and the nationalist activists in Kerala started a series of fights with the colonialists. But the aims of both sections of ulama were different. The Mujahid ulama and the leaders fought against Britain and their colonialism over the motherland. A group of ulama did not fight against British for the independence of the nation but they opposed actions of Britain against Turkey, and their motto was to give back the power to the Turkish Sultan. So this section of ulama gave greater priority to Khilafat activities in Malabar than the nationalist movement. The confrontation and adjustment with the colonial regime by the natives was a common phenomenon in Malabar. There was an opposition between these two positions, as a third position, a group of ulama thought the war is against the notion of their belief and it is anti-Islamic to fight against the government. Most of the north Malabar Muslims supported Britain and its rule. They belonged to the trading community and so they had to keep their business interests, while the rebels were mostly agriculturalists from south Malabar. After the revolt these loyalist ulama were rejected by the rebels, which resulted in the fragmentation among the Muslims of Malabar.

In 1854 British government passed Moplah act. The act was very strong; by collecting fines from Mappilas in the areas involved in outbreaks, the confiscation of the property of *shaheed* (martyrs), and the indefinite exile of anyone alleged of being involved in rebellion. The British considered any act of violence by the Mappilas as an outbreak and as fanaticism. Britain defined Mappila outbreaks as ‘religious acts’, where the participants were devoted to die in the name of religion. Before the revolt, some uprisings occurred in the interior southern part of the Malabar. In 1841, three such incidents took place, each involving less than a dozen Mappilas. Sayyid Fazal was very active in leading revolts where he unequivocally declared “it was no sin but

a merit to kill a Jenmi who evicted a peasant from his land”.²⁴¹ He preached against the Nair domination in Malabar. He told common people not to use honorific words to the high caste people and use the word “u” while talking with them.

Sayyid Alavi and his son Sayyid Fazal of Mamburam, near Tirurangadi were the revered religious leaders of Mappilas during the outbreaks of the 19 century. Their spiritualism and mystic contemplation earned them respect and reputation and all the communities held them in high respect. Sayyid Fazal has authored a number of Arabic and Turkish works mostly connected with the religious teachings. *Uddat al Umara wal Hukkaum li Ihanat al Kafarat wa Adbat al Asnam* (preparation of judges and leaders to undermine the idolaters and unbelief) is a compilation of the opinions of several scholars written by Sayyid Fazal with his own supporting evidences taken from the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed. As a supporter of Turkish Sultan, Sayyid Fazal did his best to assist him in his wars against Russia and the revolting Christians of the Balkan states. He dedicated the Egyptian edition of his book to the Ottoman Sultan. The same book started to be distributed in Malabar through the mosques. In 1851, the Malabar collector, Connolly banned the distribution of the book. The book invited the Mappila Muslims of Malabar to fight against Britain. Sayyid Fazal took the quotes from the text and made the fatwa to claim the relevance of being part of the movement.

The next section will give a brief description of the book written by Sayyid Fazal. According to Randathani, the book starts in the traditional Arabic fashion in the name of God and praising Prophet Mohammed and his relatives. Randathani further says “Prayers are offered for the victory of the Ottoman Sultans. The publisher impresses the readers by revealing the rewards for reading the book ‘if the book is read and its ideals imbibed it will increase the intellect and religiosity. If anyone acts according to the book he would become eligible for spiritual knowledge. It will strengthen the belief and each and every one would show eagerness to read the book and it is necessary to consider the book as a friend’”.²⁴²

²⁴¹ Information given by C Kanaran. Deputy Collector of Malabar to W. Logan, *Malabar Special Commission, 1880-82*, Vol,11,pp,48.

²⁴² Randathani, Hussain. 2007. *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti-Colonial Struggles*. Kozhikode, pp.139-140.

Randathani says, the first two chapters- *Fi nabdathi al Ta'llaqu bi Tadkirati al Umara'wa Tabsirat al Wuzara* (advices and instructions to the leaders and ministers) and *Saif al Battar ala man Yuvali al Kuffar* (the sharp sword on those who take unbelievers as protectors) asks the Muslims to obey the sultan so that religion would be strong. The fatwas in these chapters are connected with the Ottoman rulers and the obligation of the Muslims to obey them. At the same time it commands the Muslims of every country not to take Christians as protectors. The fatwa is compiled by one Sayyid Abdulla Bari al Ahdal, a contemporary of Sayyid Alawi. The author insists that, if an Islamic country is seized by the *harbis* (enemies or kafirs) it should be considered still as an Islamic state and it is incumbent up on all Muslims to resist the enemy with all their efforts to save the country.²⁴³ According to Randathani, Sayyid Fazal says that the Europeans are the worst disbelievers and asks the Muslims against appointing the Christians as domestic servants because they will not seek goodness in their masters. The Muslims who remain as subjects under the Christian rule and remain satisfied with them are sinners and are liable to exemplary punishment, even though they seek the welfare of Muslims through Christian rule. To praise the Christian rulers and to pray for their welfare is a sin, which needed repentance, and if a Muslims praise the *harbis* (enemies) over his own brethren, he is a kafir, that a Muslim cannot praise a debauchee. Through this chapter, Sayyid Fazal invited the Mappila Muslims to fight against the Christian colonialists. Also Sayyid Fazal advised the Muslim leaders to compile war songs in regional languages to incite the people against the European rulers. By doing this he planned to reach the common people to propagate the idea of anti-colonialism.

Sayyid Fazal reminded the Muslims of the divide and rule policy of Britain; according to him the Christian Europe has hostility towards the Muslims. So it is the time to fight against the Europeans. Randathani notes that in the third chapter called *Tanbih al Gafalin* (advices to those who are negligent), the author reminds his readers of the conspiracies of unbelievers (the British) against the Muslims. He asks: "is there any cruel enemy than these unbelievers? How did they make relations with us? Though false means they intrude among us. They fight against us and destroy our women, children and wealth. They conquer our lands, malign our holy places, replace the

²⁴³ Ibid, pp.141.

mosques with Churches, make our women and children captives and impose their religion. Is there any greater sin than making such people as helpers?’’²⁴⁴ The entire chapter is devoted to preaching the message against Britain by reminding the Mappilas about the cruelties done by the colonialists against the Muslims. It asked for the Mappila Muslims to identify the real enemy; so through the large scale participation in the holy war, Sayyid Fazal calculated a victory over the Britain. *Al Durr al Mandum ladul aqli wal Fuhum* (the garland for the intellectuals and the learned) is the fourth chapter of the book. Here Sayyid Fazal describes the importance of the holy war and incites the Muslim rulers and soldiers to fight the Europeans. Sayyid Fazal exhorts strongly the followers of Islam to fight against the *afranjis* (Europeans).²⁴⁵

A section of ulama opposed the Khilafat movement and tried to degrade the movement by propagating that it was against the Islamic beliefs. They thought that it is wrong and Allah will punish those who gave support to the Indian nationalist movement and the Khilafat movement. They believed that Islam strictly opposed fighting against the nation. The ulama thought that a Muslim cannot fight against the nation and should not try to destabilize it. The ulama were facing a critical situation since it was sure that Britain would attack Turkey. It would not be possible or justifiable to favour the British at this juncture, for going against Turkey would be like tampering with their beliefs. Therefore, a section of ulama in India as well as in Kerala raised their voice in favor of Turkey. To counter this situation, British diplomats found out a new strategy by publicly announcing that they are not against any belief or against any religion and also that they should protect religious monuments since it is their duty to protect all faiths as citizens of a secularist nation. They claimed that they are fighting against the Turkish government, not against the caliph and therefore they need co-operation from Indians. The diplomats repeated this throughout their struggle and the Muslims believed them until the defeat of the Turkish sultan. The religious antagonism was used when there was a rivalry where the opponents were either British Christians or Hindu landlords but at the same time in Kozhikode and other parts of Malabar, where the Muslims maintained friendly

²⁴⁴ Ibid, pp.142.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, pp.142.

relationship with the British and landlords, the religion became a weapon of friendship and Muslim leadership acted as the link between the rulers and subjects.

Another position was of a group of people who completely stood for the Britain. They publicly came out to give support to the British regime. They used the religious places to spread the message of support to Britain. For example, Sayyid Abdulla Jifri of Mamburam was a supporter of the British regime and was a friend of William Logan, the collector of Malabar.²⁴⁶ Another Mappila Muslim leader Khan Bahadur Muthu Koya Thangal of Mamburam was nominated by the government to the council for celebrating the coronation ceremony of the British Empire.²⁴⁷ There were so many other evidences available which proved the loyalty of certain ulama and Muslim leaders towards the British regime. When the First World War broke out, the *Khatib* (who lead the prayer in the mosque.)²⁴⁸, Palliveetil Mamukkoya issued a statement in which he compelled the Muslims to be loyal to the British crown²⁴⁹. Another leader Syed Ahammed Attakkoya Thangal of Kozhikode Khazi invited the local people to make a special prayer in the Town Jumua Masjid of Kozhikode for the victory of Britain over the German King. It was on 7 September 1914.²⁵⁰ Mohammed Sha Thangal of Kondotty, the leader of a section of Mappilas maintained good relationship with Britain and he received grants and privileges from the British.²⁵¹ The social reformer of Malabar, Makthi Thangal (1847-1921) circulated an evening newspaper *Turki Samacharam* in 1909 and created awareness about the socio-political system of Turkey among the Mappila community. He issued a pamphlet in which he invited the attention of Mappila community to their problems and sufferings and maintained that these were due to their involvement in the Mappila revolt. The

²⁴⁶ Ibid, pp.148.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, pp.149.

²⁴⁸ The scholar, who lead the prayer in the mosque.

²⁴⁹ After his statement (Palliveetil Mamukkoya) in the Friday prayer, the Range Sub Assistant Inspector Bavamooppa addressed the audience and reminded the Muslims to be loyal to the crown. It was on 18 September 1914.

²⁵⁰ Parappil, Koya Mammath. P.P. 1994. *Kozhikode Muslingalude Charithram*. Focus Publications: Kozhikode, pp.393.

²⁵¹ Randathani, Hussain. 2007. *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti-Colonial Struggles*. Kozhikode, pp.150.

authorities sent him to preach loyalty at the rebel centers.²⁵² These leaders had good relationship with the British authority.

The Sunni scholar ulama Kuthubi made a fatwa against the participation in the freedom struggle. He quoted from the Quran and explained that “thou wilt find the most vehement of mankind in hostility to those who believe (to be) the Jews and the idolaters. And thou wilt find the nearest of them in affection to those who believe (to be) those who say: Lo! We are Christians. That is because there are among them priests and monks and because they are not proud”. He interpreted this Quranic verses and based on the interpretation he pointed out that a Muslim can never do war against Britain because they are Christian believers and so we should not oppose them and as a *Mu'min* (believer) we cannot encourage the idolaters.²⁵³ If the British fail due to this independence movement, the idolaters will come to power and that will not be good for the Muslim ummah”. This fatwa had made widespread impact among the Mappila Muslims, because this fatwa came out to the public just after the Mappila revolt. After the revolt the relationship between Hindus and Muslims disintegrated. British authority calculated that this fatwa would be helpful for them to get support. Also most of the Mappila Muslims, especially the Sunni Muslims who considered ulama Kuthubi as their leader, completely kept away from the national movement after the fatwa. Randathani states that the fatwa issued by Mammadkutty Musliyar²⁵⁴ says that, it is a sin and against sharia to non-cooperate against the wishes of the government by falling in the trap made by Gandhi to show that the government is against Khilafat. He also added that to incite people to violence is just like killing them with poison and sorcery. In his fatwa he made some remarks regarding the British attitude towards the Muslims for the past 2 centuries. According to him, for the last 2 centuries British made no obstacle in any of the issues related with the religion and they are providing complete freedom for preaching the message of Islam. Besides constructing mosques, they provided all assistance by clearing the legal obstacles from the part of the landlords by paying back the jenmam price. Also for the last 2 centuries a lot of Sufi saints lived here, devoted their life for Muslim-Hindu unity and these British have

²⁵² Thangal, Makti. 1981. “Rajabakthiyum Deshabimanavum”, *Makthi Thangalude Sampoorana Krithikal*, (Ed.). K K Mohammed Abdul Kareem. Kerala Islamic Mission: Tirur.1981, pp.722.

²⁵³ Al Quran, Chapter number 5, Surathul Ma'ida. Verse No. 82.

²⁵⁴ His fatwa called as *Mahaqqal Kalafa ala Ismil Khilafa* (rebellious destruction in the name of Khilafat)

given us all freedom to do the religious matters so they knew more things than the Gandhians. According to him the argument of Gandhi's party that Arabia is under kaffirs and Turkish Khilafat is in danger may be correct or not, but Muslims of India are unable to fight against such a vast empire like that of the British, the Muslims are bound to be loyal to them. To fight against the British is like that of a fox, disguising as lion fighting against an elephant. In his fatwa he does not accept the Khilafat of Ottoman sultan as Islamic on the ground that the sultan lacks the qualities of a real caliph: The caliph at least should be a *mujtahid* (One who is qualified to interpret the Islamic law)²⁵⁵ and a *Quraish* (The clan of Prophet Mohammed.). If such a person is not available, the Khilafat had no meaning at all.

Another account was regarding the issue of conflict between the British supporting ulama and the nationalist movement supporting ulama. The nationalist Muslims and those who supported the fight against the Britain called the Ponnani traditional ulama as Qadiyanis (Ahmadi Muslims) and kafir because the Qadiyanis were the supporters of British regime in India. Publicly people criticized the ulama decision not to conduct war against Britain and a song became popular among the Muslims in Malabar about the ulama. The song was like this:

Lakadhbana fee Ponnani Qadiyani
Aamu va Kunjan Bava Kafirani
Vakadhaka Pokkar k k num Kuttyamu
Khad sharibul hamra kadhaka ammu

The meaning of the song is that now days the place Ponnani became the center of Qadiyani and these ulama are kafir and no one want to follow them because they are all drunkards. Here we can see that some sections of ulama opposed the nationalist movement²⁵⁶ and they thought that British rule is better for the Muslims of India. Ulama Kuthubi went around Malabar and faced the people saying that they should not participate in the freedom struggle because it is a kind of shirk to Allah.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ One who is qualified to interpret the Islamic law.

²⁵⁶ Thattangara Kuttyamu Musliyar, Pudhiyakath Kunjan Bava, Abdulla Kutty Musliyar, all belonging to traditional Ponnani dars came against the Khilafat Movement. Randathani, Hussain. 2007. *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti-Colonial Struggles*. Kozhikode, pp.153.

²⁵⁷ Randathani, Hussain. 2007. *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti-Colonial Struggles*. Kozhikode, pp.153.

Kesava Menon, in his magnum opus “*Kazinjakalam*” mentions that “Mohammedans in India accepted and believed the viceroy’s comment regarding the war and the protection of caliph, they believed that British government will support them.”²⁵⁸ Another notable comment was made by Madavan Nair in his book “*Malabar Kalapam*”. He mentions that the “British wanted the full support of the Muslims because in some parts of India the military forces were strong, in which the Muslim soldiers were numerically strong. So they used them for the war, and tried to keep in touch with the ulama, and gave them wrong assurance that they are fighting against the Turkey government and not against the caliph. The British government also requested the believers to support them as true Muslims. He also notes that in 1918 the governor general of India, George repeated their request and showed keen interest to get the support from the ulama.”²⁵⁹

The Khilafat movement in Malabar created much tension among the Mappila Muslims in Malabar. The influence of pan-Islamism could not be accepted by the Sunni Muslims as well as most of the Sunni ulama. The Salafi inspired ulama inspired this universal Islamic concept of Khilafat and they fought for the Turkey cause. The differences in opinion and the approaches later became more intense among the Muslims in Malabar. In the light of the above information regarding the involvement of religious leadership who were either in favor or against nationalism, it can be stated that the leadership of Malabar was not unanimous regarding the independence movement of the nation. Though the Salafi religious leaders supported the nationalist cause and opposed the British regime, a section of ulama and Sayids declared their loyalty towards Britain without reservation. This situation later caused the emergence of new religious movements among the Muslims in Malabar. This became threshold for the spread of Mujahid ideology among the Muslims in Malabar. The leaders like Moidu Moulavi played a major role in the expansion of the movement throughout Malabar and this period became remarkable for their valuable contributions to the development of Nationalism among the Muslims in Malabar.

²⁵⁸ Menon, K.P Kesava. 1921. *Kazinjakalam*. pp.89.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. pp.51.

2.8 Emergence of Muslim League and the Politics of Mappilastan

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, after the Mappila revolt and the Khilafat movement, the ulama of Malabar divided into two or more groups. After all these incidents the Muslim leaders started to search for a political identity for the Mappilas, because these leaders calculated that they failed to get support from the Congress party. As result the educated business class and pan-Islamic inspired ulama started to show their political affiliation to the Muslim League of north India. The pan-Islamism and the following Salafi ideology were the reasons for the emergence of differences among the Mappila Muslim community as well as among the ulama. The ulama and Islam-educated leaders of that time understood the need for uniting the community, but those actions further caused fragmentations in the community due to the different political ideologies such as pan-Islamism and Salafian ideology. The organisations formed after the Mappila revolt and Khilafat movement were highly influenced by these political ideologies. So these organisations either supported the pan-Islamism or the Sunni Islam. The Sunni ulama of Malabar started to organize just behind the Mujahids to counter them in all spheres of Islamic life. At the same time many of the Congress leaders left the party and joined the Muslim League and other Muslim religious/political organisations, as result these leaders, started to organize communally. These Muslim leaders planned to develop a similar kind of political setup for the Mappila Muslims of Malabar. These leaders got an immense welcome from the All India Muslim league stakeholders. Gradually the party, Muslim League, started to work among the Mappilas of Malabar. The upcoming section of the chapter is going to discuss the formation of the Muslim League and its approach towards the nationalist movement in Malabar. The strong religiously inspired Mappila Muslim leaders started to demand a separate autonomous state for the Muslims of Malabar. This section goes on to analyse the demand of the Muslim League for the Mappilastan²⁶⁰, along with a description of how they catered to the Muslim demands, the relations towards the Congress party, the mutual agreement towards the All India Muslim League etc. will also be discussed.

The All India Muslim League was formed in 1906 at Dhaka by a group of higher class Muslim professionals in order to receive the favor from the colonial government.

²⁶⁰ 'Mappilastan', demands a separate homeland for the Mappila Muslims of Malabar, like Pakistan.

They met at different places with a number of English-speaking Muslims. Most of the progressive Muslim groups, simply neglected them as less advanced sections. As a realization of self, the League called for a meeting to consider reorganization on more progressive lines. In 1916, League adopted 'home rule' resolution along with the congress. Furthermore, they entered into an agreement with the Congress concerning a constitution. In the Madras Presidency, Muslim League was formed in 1916 when Malabar was a part of Madras province. The Malabar Muslim League came into existence in 1937 as a part of All India Muslim League. B. Pokker Sahib was an important leader of both Malabar Muslim League and All India Muslim League. This was a major presence in the party.²⁶¹ Abdul Satar Sait was another leader who later became the first secretary of the All India Muslim League and in 1934 he was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly.²⁶² It was on 21 May, 1937, that a unit of All India Muslim League was formally organized in Malabar and K.M. Seethi Sahib and the Kattakath Ahammed Kunji Haji was at the forefront of the new party. For the elections in the Madras legislative assembly, to support K.M. Seethi Sahib for the election, Moulana Shoukath Ali visited Malabar with an objective to discuss the future plans of Muslim League and the League formed the objectives according to his instructions.²⁶³ The League of Kerala supported the partition of the country and they even demanded a separate region for Malabar Muslims, and to be named as 'Mappilastan' on the pattern of Pakistan. On 5 October 1937, a meeting was conducted at Kozhikode to form a branch of the Muslim League and the Malabar League was constituted under the leadership of Arackal Abdurahiman Ali Koya.²⁶⁴ The All India Muslim League committee appointed few members such as Peepur Raja, Syed Mohammed sahib to look at the grievances of Muslims in the states ruled by the Congress party. A meeting of the League was held at Kozhikode in 1938 and the second day's session of the meeting approved the 'Lahore resolution' of the All India Muslim League regarding the partition of India.²⁶⁵ The League leaders and the associated masses started to realize their significant position in the community and

²⁶¹ Seethi Saheb, K.M.1959. "Keralathile Muslim Leaginte Purogathi". *Kerala State Muslim League Souvenir*. pp.8.

²⁶² Ibid., pp.10

²⁶³ Aboo Siddique. 1996. *Seethi Sahib*, pp.49-57.

²⁶⁴ *Mathrubumi Daily*., 7 October 1937.

²⁶⁵ *Mathrubumi Daily*., 26 October 1938.

due to their efforts Muslims began to show interest in personal affairs of their brethren as in political, religious and educational matters. The League was disgusted with the Congress rule when the Second World War broke out. The British government asked the help from the Indian political parties for the war preparation but the League did not co-operate with it, because of the inattentive and irresponsible attitude of Britain towards the demand for the creation of Pakistan. So, the President of Malabar League, Abdurrahman Ali Raja rejected the proposal to become a member of the war preparation committee established by the Malabar district collector. And another meeting of the Malabar district Muslim League committee met at Palakkad in 19 April 1941, where the League stood for the creation of Pakistan and resolved that Pakistan was the remedy for all their worries.²⁶⁶ Later the Muslim League constituted a civil defense committee to advice the Muslims to take effective steps and guidance and they visited different places in Malabar. All India Muslim Majlis (here after Majlis) was established in Malabar on 20 May 1945. Over five hundred people participated in the first meeting at Kozhikode and since it was a pro-Congress political organization it later became an ally of Malabar Muslim League.

The Majlis took the stance which was completely against Malabar Muslims, because according to Majlis, even if the creation of Pakistan might benefit the Muslims of the states in north India it would be unfavorable and harmful for the Muslims of south India. In 1944 the League set candidates and contested in Central Assembly, Madras Presidency Legislative Assembly in 1946 in which League won all the seats in Malabar.²⁶⁷ The candidates of Majlis were defeated by the League. Congress realized that the Majlis was ideologically against the League and therefore they used the opportunity skillfully and joined hands with the former to politically oppose the latter. Abdul Satar Sait, the secretary of the League was elected to the Central Assembly and the leaders like B. Pokker Sahib, P.P Hasan Koya, A.K Khader Kutty, P.K Moideen kutty, Koyappathodi Ahamed Haji, K.M. Seethi Sahib, Abdurrahman Ali Raja and M.V. Hydrose were elected to the Madras Legislative Assembly.²⁶⁸ It proved the increasing acceptance of League among the Muslims. The majority of the Muslims

²⁶⁶ *Mathrubumi Daily.*, 23 April 1945.

²⁶⁷ Seethi Saheb, K.M.1959. Keralathile Muslim Leaginte Purogathi. *Kerala State Muslim League Souvenir.* pp. 15

²⁶⁸ Sharafudeen, S. 2003. *Muslims of Kerala: A modern approach.* pp. 66-67.

realized their destiny to be inextricably linked with the ideals of this party and started to support the claim for a separate nation for the ummah. There are many valid evidences to prove that the All India Muslim League and the Malabar League had good relationship and were on good terms until India got independence. Nawab Sada Liakat Khan, the secretary of All India Muslim League, toured Malabar and the leaders gave him a grand welcome. The Muslim League strongly demanded for Pakistan and as part of this the All India Muslim League leaders regularly visited Malabar and gave appropriate guidance to the local leaders. The All India Muslim League decided to observe on 16 August 1946, as the 'direct action day' for the formation of Pakistan and Malabar Muslim League celebrated the day by conducting public meetings and seminars.²⁶⁹ Later after the election of 1946, the League M L As (Legislative Assembly Members) and Central Assembly members met at Delhi and pledged to face all types of sacrifice for the achievement of Pakistan and in this meeting all members participated who represented Malabar and supported the demand for Pakistan. Seethi Sahib, one of the advocates of Mappilastan, repeated his arguments in the Madras Legislative Assembly and proposed the meaning and idea of Mappilastan. He stressed that Mappila community in Malabar was very large in population and had a separate culture when compared to other Muslims in India and a history of its own because of direct connection with Arabs. He added that the Mappilas are the 'very unfortunate' community; though they struggled for the freedom of the nation with the Hindu community. They did not make any educational progress or development in the community.²⁷⁰ These were the reasons laid out by Seethi Sahib to claim a separate state for Mappilas to grow and to develop in their own way.

The majority of the Muslims of the country especially north Indian Muslims, except very few nationalist and secular educated Muslims, spoke out for and considered the creation of new state namely Pakistan as the remedy for their problems. When Indian National Congress refused to support the demand for a separate state of Pakistan, communal riots broke out in north India like wildfire. But when it became known that British India was going to be divided as India and Pakistan, there began frequent

²⁶⁹ Seethi Saheb, K.M. 1959. "Keralathile Muslim Leaginte Purogathi". *Kerala State Muslim League Souvenir*. pp. 16-17.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, pp.17.

disturbances throughout the country. Abul Kalam Azad opined that some sections among the Muslims and Hindus as well as Sikhs thought that their aims can be attained only through violence.²⁷¹ The communal riots made disorder around the country as all sections, either Muslims or Hindus, lost their confidence over others, caused terrible loss to life and property, and thus plunged the nation into utter chaos. The Malabar branch of the League endorsed their full support to All India Muslim League's vision for the separation of the country and their freedom movement policies. The support for the two nations and the establishment of a new Islamic state was strengthened by a general spirit of identification and by a continuing sense of personal grievance. According to Seethi Saheb "the Muslims clearly cannot involve or participate in the benefit of the proposal so few thoughtful Muslims understood that this would imply problems for south Indian Muslims".²⁷²

In Malabar, by 1946 Jinnah's demand for Pakistan became the prime agenda of the Muslim League. So the division of India and creation of a new nation Pakistan became a primary demand for the League in north India as well as in Malabar. The drive for Pakistan was publicized through music and books. A League bookstall was opened in Thalasseri, named "Jinnah Book Stall" and the books were distributed through this stall which mainly promoted the division of India and the creation of Pakistan through the books entitled "The Meaning of Pakistan", "Pakistan a Nation", "Pakistan and Muslim India" etc.²⁷³ The League leader M. Mammoo Sahib wrote and directed a Malayalam musical play, called 'Mammoo-Musalman Nethav' (Mammoo- The leader of Musalman) and the questions which raised in the play were:

- a) Is Hindu leadership acceptable?
- b) Is Pakistan the Muslims' aim?
- c) Why did we move away from the Congress?²⁷⁴

Meanwhile in support of the demand for 'Pakistan', in August 1946 the League in Malabar conducted several programs and demonstrations in Kozhikode and Thalasseri. Schools, colleges, factories, mills and shops were closed. Over 15000

²⁷¹ Sharafudeen, S. 2003. *Muslims of Kerala: A modern approach*. pp. 68.

²⁷² Roland, E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*. pp.162.

²⁷³ 'Books on Pakistan', *Chandrika*. 12.2.1946. pp. 4.

²⁷⁴ Lakshmi, L.R.S.2012. *The Malabar Muslims: A Different Perspective*.pp.138.

Mappilas were gathered at the meeting to demand for the Mappilastan and the public voices sang together as “Pakistan Zindabad”.²⁷⁵

However the idea of Pakistan and the logic behind the demand pressed the Muslims of Malabar especially the League activists to reach an assumption convenient to their own situation. They were once again in the limelight when the League leaders and its supporters from around the Malabar proposed the establishment of Mappilastan. In this situation the leaders of League who attended the Council of All India Muslim League in the second week of June 1947 in Delhi met Mohammed Ali Jinnah and demanded their needs and pressurized him for the establishment of ‘Mappilastan’.²⁷⁶ Later the Muslim League leaders submitted the same proposal in the Madras Legislative Assembly in June 1947. According to Miller this proposal and the following discussions started to visualize in the minds of Muslims a separate Muslim majority province in the name of Mappilastan.²⁷⁷ Meanwhile the Madras government decided to divide the region into four parts on the basis of language, and the Muslim League desired and asked for an amendment to this resolution which called for the insertion of the word “with the provision for a separate place in south Malabar, named ‘Mappilastan’” after the word Kerala. The League observed “Mappilastan Day” and proposed to hold a ‘Mappilastan convention’ for the division of Malabar like the partition of Punjab and Bengal.²⁷⁸ The submission for amendment in the resolution was finally ruled out by the Madras province but the Muslims of Malabar stood with their demands. Later this was raised as a proof against them showing their disloyalty to the independent India and their aspiration for a separate nation on the same principle as Pakistan.²⁷⁹ However, the proposal was rejected but the Mappila leaders

²⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 54.

²⁷⁶ Sharafudeen, S. 2003. *Muslims of Kerala: A modern approach*. pp. 68-69

²⁷⁷ The South Malabar comprises Ernad and Valluvanad taluks of Malabar, approximately the present Malappuram district, See, Miller. *Mappila Muslims of Kerala*, pp. 162. Sharafudeen, S. 2003. *Muslims of Kerala: A modern approach*, pp. 69.

²⁷⁸ ‘Malabar Muslingalude Samara Sannadhadha’. *Chandrika*. 18.8.1946, pp.3.

²⁷⁹ See, Sharafudeen, S. 2003. *Muslims of Kerala: A modern approach*. pp. 69. explained that, A memorandum submitted to the chief minister of Kerala by the Anti-Bifurcation Committee in Perinthalamanna in 1968, pp.10. Mentioned about a letter allegedly written by the founding father of Pakistan (Mohammed Ali Jinnah) written to the Muslim League leader, Mohammed Ismail, stating that: “Mappilastan should be formed in the *Hindustan* constitution as a separate entity, and when proper time comes, we can link it with Pakistan”. Later when the Muslim League leaders from the Madras Legislative Assembly met Jinnah at Delhi, in June 1947, and had a discussion on the proposal for the division of the country as India and Pakistan, Jinnah gave no hope to the Malabar

were determined to get a separate province within the union of India, thereby, some solution to their problems might be met. When the Madras Legislative Assembly passed the resolution without considering the proposal of the League as a separate state, League members organized walkouts with cries of “Pakistan Zindabad” and “Mappilastan Zindabad”. Before the partition of the country Jinnah was the supreme word for the League but he left India for Karachi on 7 August 1947, without giving proper guidance to the leaders and followers. The political chaos in Hyderabad²⁸⁰ and the plan to attack the Hyderabad by Indian military and subsequent outbreak of riots in Hyderabad resulted in the arrest of some leaders around the country. It resulted in the closure of some League offices and branches and some office bearers resigned from the post. It made leaders to be more concerned about their political future. Later, a few prominent leaders followed Jinnah to settle down in their ‘dream land’. The separation resulted in the weakening of the party because the majority of the Muslim League members of north India went to Pakistan, and the remaining Muslim League members gradually began to be marginalized within the public life in the country. Sharafudeen states that following the partition Mappilas also became a part of Indian state having a deliberate secular ideal with a Hindu majority.²⁸¹ In the post independent political situation, the League remained only in Malabar and contested the Madras Legislative Assembly and the Muslims of Malabar in Travancore and Cochin, which had together become a state, named Kerala.

2.9 Summary

The failure of the revolt and the lack of political interest pushed the Mappila Muslims to take a communal route to politics in the later decades. This is compounded by their opposition to Congress. Subsequently, the 1930s saw the rise of the League throughout Malabar, which reinforced the national Muslim League demand for Pakistan. A matching petition was set forth by the Mappilas in the 1940s until India

representatives. The meeting discussed the issue of Mappilastan, but he finally dismissed these ideas as “fanatic, foolish and deserving of no consideration”. And he commented that “it’s all closed”.

²⁸⁰ Hyderabad was a landlocked state in southeastern India. While 87% of its 17 million people were Hindus, its ruler Nizam Usman Ali was a Muslim, and its politics were dominated by a Muslim elite. The Muslim nobility and the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, a powerful pro-Nizam Muslim party, insisted Hyderabad remain independent and stand on an equal footing to India and Pakistan. Accordingly, the Nizam in June 1947 issued a *firman* (royal mandate or decree issued by a sovereign in certain Islamic states) announcing that on the transfer of power, his state would be resuming independence. The Government of India rejected the *firman*, terming it a “legalistic claim of doubtful validity”.

²⁸¹ Sharafudeen, S. 2003. *Muslims of Kerala: A modern approach*. pp.72.

got freedom, for the establishment of 'Mappilastan' as a separate Muslim majority province in south Malabar. The argument made was that besides being a much oppressed community, the Mappilas also had a history and culture of their own related to their Arabian background. The ecology of Kerala is itself more similar to south-east Asian than most regions of the South Asian subcontinent and in terms of their Arab derived Islamic culture they had a history of long conflict with European powers. Malayali Muslims were spread out in several Islamic communities of south-east Asia, which originated as trading settlements. It was not only Kerala which became an Islamic frontier in the early 16 century; Muslims in Indonesia and the Philippines also found themselves confronting hostile European powers; at first the Portuguese and then the Spanish who moved into those areas. In both Sumatra and the Muslim regions of the southern Philippines, centuries of defensive and ultimately unsuccessful warfare evolved the same tradition of suicidal "Jihads" as it developed in Kerala. Then too, in Philippines as in Kerala, the prolonged struggle between Europeans and Muslims eventually led to the growth of a modern separatist movement. In Kerala this movement gradually achieved political expression after the failure of Mappila rebellion, obtaining many of its objectives in 1969 when a Muslim majority district was established in northern Kerala. This demand was rejected but later succeeded in making a Muslim majority district called Malappuram. The contemporary politics of Malabar suffered heavily due to the communal polarization generated by the revolt of 1921. Later the question for the Mappilastan and also the creation of the new district Malappuram as a Muslim dominated one created much politico-religious polarization in Malabar. The new political vision in the name of pan-Islamism among the Muslims and the failure of Congress party to get the confidence among the Muslims caused for the dislocation of the relationship between the Hindus and Muslims. Later, this communal grouping became a prime factor in the split of the nation, and so in Kerala, same condition occurred in Malabar but the lack of political vision failed them in creating a separate region in the name of Mappilastan on the same pattern for the creation of Pakistan. Consequently, it questioned the Mappila loyalty to nationalism. The next chapter provides a detailing of the different organizations that propagated ideas of pan-Islamism and Salafism. The debates on pan-Islamism and Salafism led to the emergence of different organizations that foregrounded the ideas of revivalism

and reformism. The accounting of these organizations and their articulations would get much sharper sense with the background that I have provided in this chapter.

CHAPTER III

Religious Groups and their Theological Differences

3.1 Introduction

The history of Mappila Muslims reveals that the idea of nationalism never found credence in their articulation. What is interesting is the favourable context that paved way for the emergence of different Islamic organizations in Kerala that debated issues of revivalism and reformism. In this chapter I would bring the emergence and sustenance of organizations like Sunni, Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami. I go on to analyse how differences gradually surfaced among these Muslim groups. In the process of delineating the difference between these groups, I point to the emergence of separate identity among the Mappila Muslims. Apart from introducing the emergence these organizations, the chapter focuses attention on the theological debates engaged by these organizations. I bring to front four significant issues, {*Istigasa and Taqleed* (appeal for help or protection from anybody other than Allah), *Maqabara* (graveyard of Sufi saints), *Tirukesham* (Prophet's hair), *Dawah* (proselytization)}, over which the groups debated/contested.

I first describe the genesis of Islam and its diverse manifestations in Kerala, following which, I define the concepts of *tajdid* (reformism) and *islah* (revivalism) among the Mappila Muslim religious groups. The series of contestations among the religious groups, who are aware of their differing ideologies and identities, shall be attended to. Dwelling deeper into the contestations, I seek to provide a definite outline of multiple ideologies and contestations that take place in the name of true Islam, among the Muslim religious groups in Malabar.

3.2 Muslim Groups of Malabar

The studies by historians and Islamic scholars pose the question, whether Islam is unitary/ monolithic? The historicity of Islam, especially the need of negotiating with divergent cultures and belief systems at different points of time and most significantly, the encounter with modernisation have greatly contributed for an enormous degree of diversity of Islam in India. Muslims in different states in India are not homogeneous. They are separated into a variety of caste-like, normally endogamous and regularly conventional occupation-based groups which constitute a

local system of stratification. In a broad separation one section migrated to India over several centuries from Arabia; Afghans, Turks etc. and in different competences such as military leaders, soldiers, bureaucrats, architects, spiritual men, traders and slaves and the local converts were generally, though not absolutely, from the lower caste groups²⁸². There are other sections, such as sectarian ones (Shia-Sunni) and those that are in between like the Mujahid-Jamaat-e-Islami, Barelvi Sunnis, Ahle Hadees, Deoband, Firangi Mahal etc. which enrich the diversity among the Indian Muslims. The distinction between the universal attributes of the religion derived from its scriptural and textual sources (kitab), and its particular formulations cast in the molds of its local geo-cultural and customary beliefs and practices (adat). The former is viewed as the formal, normative, universal, and macro element of Islam, while the latter is seen to represent its pragmatic, practicing, and living domain of Islam.

There are two major divisions of Islam which are the Sunni and the Shi'a. Sunni Muslims believe that the Prophet Mohammed's descendants are preferred by the society of those who go behind the sunnah (the words and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed) or spiritual pathway of the last Prophet. On the other hand, Shia Muslims believe that Prophet Mohammed wanted his son-in-law, Ali to be his successor. The first two starting points of Islam, namely the Quran and the sunnah, are not only the essential textual resources of Islamic regulation but are also the key spiritual texts of Islam. All the groups and communities recognize that the two fundamental sources of the sharia are the Quran and the sunnah of the Prophet. There are differences between the Sunni Muslims and the Shia Muslims. However the Quran and the sunnah are the same for all the groups. The sunnah of the Prophet is of equal importance to the Quran because like the Quran it is also believed to be of godly inspiration. The Shia Muslims believe that sharia is open for all and that a few changes can be made according to the context. Reformulations over the sunnah, hadith (an oral communication traced back to the Prophet Mohammed) and Quranic explanations.

Shia Muslims consider Ali as second to the Prophet Mohammed. The Shia Islam acquired political and ideological importance after the Islamic revolution of 1979 in

²⁸² Alam, Arshad. 2009. Contextualizing Muslim Identity: Ansaris, Deobandis, Barelvis. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. xlv, No. 24, pp. 86-92.

Iran. Khomeini, the Shia cleric and the leader of Islamic revolution in Iran was a critic of western ideas and an opponent of secularism. Sufi Islam rose and was enriched from the confrontation with worldliness and power. The rising stress on jurisprudence in the Sunni and Shi'a branches of Islam resulted in the early historical appearance of the Sufi movement, which emphasizes an inner heart-felt spiritual rapport with God. Sufi orders came to existence as a reaction to the strict Islamic orthodoxy. These Sufi orders strengthened the social interaction and communal harmony among Muslims in India.

3.3 Mappila Muslim Religious Identities through Community/Organisational Representations

The religions of Kerala are an amalgam of faiths and the major religions are Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. According to the 2011 census, 56 % of residents are Hindus, 24% are Muslims and 19% are Christians. Kerala consists of 3 regions, in which Malabar, where the Muslims are dominant, secondly the central Kerala where the Christians are dominant and the Travancore region where the Hindus are dominant. The Malabar was an administrative district of Madras presidency before independence. The British administrative districts included the present day districts of Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palakkad. After the formation of Kerala state in 1956, Kasargod district was merged with the state from Dakshina Kanara region of Karnataka. The Muslims of Malabar form approximately 65 % of the total population of Kerala Muslims. There are several Muslim communities in Kerala such as Thangals, Dhakinis, Thulukkans, Pussalan, Koyas, Keyees, Ossan, Marikkar and Mappila of whom most are identified by their occupation. Apart from the Mappilas of Malabar, there are 8 endogamous Muslim communities in Kerala, of which Turukkan, is found in Travancore. The other is Bohra, Cutchi Memon, Dakhni Muslims Labbai, Marakkan, Muslim (Travancore) and Rowther. All of them are endogamous; the first three speak Malayalam; Labbai and Rowther speak Tamil and Marakkan speak a dialect of Tamil Malayalam combining Sinhalese. The Bohra, Cutchi Memon and Navayat were traditionally wholesale merchants and exporters. The Bohra community dominated and spread in Kozhikode and Mattancherry in Cochin along with their business. They are exclusively affluent communities. Dakhni Muslims were traditionally cavalry men and spoke Urdu. In Kerala they are found

mostly in Cochin and Malabar. Most of them are now petty traders. They were traditionally religious functionaries in Kerala. Marakkan are localized along the west coast from Kollam to Kanyakumari. Rowther are also traditionally petty traders and had migrated to Kerala from the state of Tamil Nadu. In Kerala, they are engaged in a variety of occupations ranging from being butchers to doctors. Another community is Turukkan, they are a localized community, tracing their origin from marriages between Persian traders and local Jain women and are found in Dakshina Kannada and in Kasargod districts. Their language is Urdu with a higher percentage of Persian words.

Apart from these, there are groups working among the Muslims to promote true Islam and each of these religious groups claim that they represent true Islam. Given the community identities, the Muslims carry separate religious group identities in Kerala, especially in Malabar. The strict rules and customs of those groups made the members more aware about their goals. The dominant section of Muslims, Sunnis, here are identified by their conventional beliefs and practices and adherence to the strict laws of shafi school of jurisprudence. In time, the Muslims split into groups with differing theological and ideological bearings. The times confronted them with the split and philosophical changes according to the context. Sunnis divided into three groups; later Mujahids into three, and as studies indicate that the Jamaat, like other groups has historically transformed the objectives with a view of indigenisation.

Earlier writings have pointed out that there organisations that originated among the Muslims in Malabar for the purpose of unification and the cultural preservations of Mappila Muslims of Malabar. Dhanagare in his study of Mappila Muslims, states that the *Himayath-ul-Islam Sabha* (also known as the Mappila Sabha) was established in 1880. Members of the religious hierarchy such as Sayids and Khazis, who are traders, merchants, commercial farmers and professional men, dominated the Sabha which in principle stood for the 'amelioration of Moplahs'.²⁸³ He states that another Mappila organization was the *Mounath-ul-Islam Sabha*, established at Ponnani in 1900 with the prime objective of spreading the network of Mappila preachers all over Malabar,

²⁸³ Dhanagare, D.N. 1977. Agrarian Conflict, Religion and Politics: The Moplah Rebellions in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century's, Past & Present, *Economic and Political Weekly*. No. 74, pp. 132.

and securing new converts to the faith. To date, the Maunathul Islam Sabha is powerful in Malabar. At first it was controlled by a few business men, and thus remained elitist²⁸⁴. These organizations were under the control of Sunni Muslims. They preserved the traditional identities of Muslims in Malabar. In 1922, in Kodungallore an organization was formed as part of the Salafi ideology. This organization is known as *Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham*, Kerala Muslim United Association (here after Aikya Sangham). The leaders of the Aikya Sangham was Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi (1849-1932) who is known as the father of Islamic renaissance in Kerala. However the peasants of Malabar and the people of interior southern districts of Malabar were controlled by the ulama. The emergence of Aikya Sangham movement was a milestone in the history of the Kerala Muslims. The Salafi movement which was waning in influence in some parts of Kerala got unified under Kerala Muslim United Association. The main task of this association was to solve the land disputes of the Muslims of Kodungallore. Besides solving the land disputes, the Aikya Sangham began to criticise *moulud* (the blessed birth of Prophet Mohammed), *ratheeb* (a form of self-torture while in a state of spiritual ecstasy) and *nerca* (religious celebrations at the tomb of great scholars and Sufi saints) which were practiced by the Sunnis, thus, entering religious domains. Following this the Sunni ulama began to consider them as anti-Muslim.

The Salafi ideologies of the Mujahid movement were found to be functioning in the Aikya Sangham. Vakkom Moulavi of Trivandrum, held that the laws of Islam concerning temporal matters were not commutable, and hence, depending on the conditions of time and place they are subject to change. He emphasized the principle of Ijtihad-ital (independent judgment) against the Islamic age old practices. On the contrary the Mujahid movement led by ulama best exemplified by Vakkom Moulavi is believed to have never reached the mainstream Muslim community, particularly in northern Kerala, where the angry Muslim peasantry was weighed down by the successive defeats of their numerous revolts. However the Mujahid movement became successful to a great extent in heralding the era of new debates in the name of 'reformism' among the Muslims of Kerala. This movement emphasized a number of

²⁸⁴ Ibid, pp. 133.

theological arguments that are characteristic of Islamic reformism in other parts of the world.

The 'reformism' among the Muslims first started in Kodungallore, near Kochi and later spread to Malabar area. Sanaulla Makthi Thangal²⁸⁵ was in the forefront of the movement. On the one hand, the movement emerged among the Muslims as a counter propaganda against the Christian missionaries, it was against the blind beliefs and un-Islamic practices in the community. Vakkom Moulavi came to know about the new religious scholarships and their reformist activity in central Kerala. He took up publication and periodicals such as Muslim, Al-Islam, Deepika, Swadeshabimani²⁸⁶, which dealt with Salafi ideas and its preaching's.

Along with the introduction of primary, secondary and higher institutions of learning, the modernisation of madrasas, was taken up by the leaders of Aikya Sangham in Kodungallore. However, Malabar remained untouched by the new movement and it was only through the initiative of Khatib Mohammed Moulavi that reformist influences gained significance in this region. Khatib Mohammed Moulavi hailing from Tirurangadi, was formerly actively involved in the Mappila rebellion. Later he developed close association with the new Salafi ideals and involved himself in the Mujahid activities. Subsequently, he involved in publications such as *Al-Irshad*, *Al-Islah*, and *Al-Murshid*. He was also a regular contributor to the *Al-Manar* published from Egypt. His fatwas were widely accepted and were in demand by fellow Moulavis as he was considered as an authority on the Quran, hadith, shafi and hanafi schools of jurisprudence. One can say that Mujahid²⁸⁷ movement and the resultant ripples in the community in favour of the movement heralded the era of reformism

²⁸⁵ He resigned his government job and occupied himself in advocating and writing in defense of Islam. In his book "Kadora Kudaram" published in 1884, he severely criticized the Christian missionaries for hurting Islamic sentiments among the people; also he criticized the blind superstitious beliefs of the illiterate Muslims.

²⁸⁶ The Swedhasahbimani journal has a peculiar place in the history of journalism in Kerala. Vakkom Moulavi criticized the colonial government with the editor, Ramakrishna Pillai. Finally British regime deported the editor to the Andaman Islands and on 26 November 1910 government banned the publication.

²⁸⁷ The Kerala Mujahid movement is quite often referred to as the Wahhabi movement. The Sunnis of Kerala call the Mujahids as Wahhabis with a negative connotation. The movement has its influence from the reformist effort of Abdul Wahab of Saudi Arabia but it has some close affinity to other reformists including Ibn Tamiyya (1262-1327), Sheik Ahmed Sirhindi (1563-1624), Shah Waliyullah (1702-1763), Sayyid Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), Jamaluddin-al-Afghani (1839-1897), Mohammed Abduh (1849-1905) and Rashid Rida (1856-1935).

among the Muslims of Kerala. It created a separate identity for them among the Muslims vis-v-vis that of Sunni and Jamaat-e-Islami. Having understood the reason for the Muslim backwardness, the Mujahids focused on education apart from religion. The leaders understood that the most important reason for the Muslim backwardness was the lack of education and hence, consequently went on to establish a number of schools and colleges in and around Malabar.

3.4 The Mujahid Movement

Kerala's Mujahids (Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen [KNM]) are universalistic trends and shared Islamic belief towards purification. Indeed, public discourses between the groups in the name of reformism and traditionalism, I argue, has produced shifts in practices and consequently, has worked to generate and redefine the focus of reformism. This group is basically against the beliefs and practices of the Sufi tradition and advocate ideologies in/through Islam that are in opposition to the traditional beliefs and practices. The Mujahid movement emerged as a response to the worldwide uprisings of Salafi movement and according to the Salafi leaders, they advocated purification and the return to the 'real' path of Islam. Towards this end, they opposed the *nerca*, i.e. beliefs in black magic and worships of Sufi saints other than Allah, that are widespread in many parts of India as well as Kerala. Inspired and encouraged by the big effort made by the Aikya Sangham through its activities, the Moulavis of Malabar wanted to follow up this mission in this area even after the Aikya Sangham disintegrated. The themes on which Mujahids concentrated their attack were *shirk* (polytheism) veneration of saints and the worship at their tombs, *nerca*, *moulud* (the blessed birth of Prophet Mohammed), *ratheeb* (a form of self-torture while in a state of spiritual ecstasy) etc. Hence, they strongly opposed the cultural practices like *urz* or *nerca* which were held on the anniversaries of saints. Another area in which Mujahids took initiatives was that of the translation of Quran into Malayalam and the Malayalam translation of Friday Qutba. Apart from this, the Mujahid leaders were in the forefront to demand and represent to the government on a series of topics which were of vital interest and concern to Muslims, such as religious education in schools, appointment of religious teachers in the government schools as Arabic teachers, fee concession for Muslim girls in higher education and sanctioning more educational institutions for Muslims etc.

The leaders like K.M Moulavi and E.K Moulavi took leadership of the Muslim League. They thought Muslim participation in politics was necessary to protect the socio-political rights of the Muslims. The earlier mentioned leaders of the Muslim League were the leaders of Mujahid movement as well. K.M Moulavi demanded the Muslim community organise at the communal level to cater to the needs of Muslims. The group also maintain intimate relationship with All-India Ahle-Hadees, an organisation of ulama in north India. The Mujahid movement has played a significant role in setting up modern education of Mappila Muslims and the women's empowerment through the education. It is particularly relevant that these goals were achieved while the organisers were still working within the fold of religion and without projecting religion as opposed to modern education.

Under the banner of Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham, the Moulavis formed another organisation, named Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulama. This organisation initially was of ulama, however later they extended the organisational set up to its other members as well. As mentioned earlier the Salafi inspired ulama formed Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen (KNM) in 1950 under the leadership of K.M Moulavi. Later, an organisation for youth was formed in 1966 called Ithihadu Shubbanil Mujahideen (ISM) and Mujahid Students Movement (MSM) for male students and Muslim Girls' Movement (MGM) girl students which went on to become feeder organisations for the Mujahids in Kerala. The movement was backed by several publications including periodicals like *Al-Manar*, *Shabab*, and women's journals *Pudava* and *Iqra*. The Mujahid mosques function as cultural centres, they have libraries in most mosques from where periodical religious discourses are delivered. Amidst all these female education remained a great priority. Arabic colleges were also established. At present, there are more than five hundred Madrasas and a number of Arabic colleges under the Mujahids in different parts of Kerala. In addition, the Board of Islamic Service and Missionary Information (BISMI) also started to give guidance and advocate true Islam. They set up a publication division and published several books to promote their ideologies among the Muslim families such as *Shabab weekly*, *Pudava monthly*; *Al-Thouheed* and *Sneha Samvadham* for intra and inter community debates; and Salafi voice as a web magazine. The Mujahid section encountered a division in 2002 after some years of infighting over political and religious issues into A.P Mujahid and

Madavoor Mujahid. Hussain Madavoor was the then leader of ISM. The A.P faction named after the cleric, Moulavi A.P Abdul Khader Musliyar and Madavoor Mujahid named after the cleric Hussain Madavoor. The Madavoor faction published a daily called *Varthamanam* which came under criticism from Mujahid (A.P Mujahid) for their liberal attitude towards social issues.

The Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami share a number of universal strands of Islamic activism in their opposition to the different Islamic ways of life represented by Sunnis. Like all movements, Mujahid and later, the Jamaat-e-Islami movement began their activism with their exhaustive criticism against the Sunni Muslim community for their alleged superstitious beliefs. The religious degradation and the superstitious beliefs in the community were identified as the fundamental reason for the degeneration of the community. Their critique of the traditional Islam in Kerala involves several theological issues regarding different aspects of beliefs and practice in Islam. This gives rise to the organised forms of religious activities which worked among the Muslims in Kerala after the Mappila rebellion.

3.5 The Sunni Muslims

The Sunnis are the dominant and major community of Muslims in Kerala. Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulama was formed in 1926 to resist the emerging Salafi groups. This organisation was registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1934 and a constitution adopted by which anyone who has undergone the religious curriculum consisting of Alfiyah, Fathul-Muin, Jalalaini²⁸⁸etc. under any leading ulama was consider eligible for to become members. In 1926 the members of Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulama organised a conference at Kozhikode in which all the Sunni ulama of Kerala participated and consented to change the name of the organization to Samastha Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulama under the leadership of Varakkal Mullakkoya Thangal. The Samastha Sunni Ulama with the support of Sunni Muslim community proclaimed their main opponents as Mujahids. During 1940s, the Sunni Muslim community initiated associations such as Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Vidhyabyasa Board, Samastha Kerala Sunni Yuvajana Sangham (SKSVS), Sunni Students Federation (SSF) to recognize and support education among the youth and students along with

²⁸⁸ These doctrines are based on the Ahlu-Sunna-Va Jamaat which the Sunni Muslims all over the world follow out of belief.

propagating Sunni ideology. It is regarded as the largest Islamic educational system with more than 8500 madrasas under its umbrella. Having realized the importance of publications for disseminating the ideology of Sunnis and in opposing the ideologies of Salafism, Moududism, Qadianism (Ahmadiya movement) towards establishing a Sunni identity. The first monthly journal, *Al-Bayan* came out in 1929. Other weeklies such as *The Sunni Times*, renamed as *Sunni voice*, along with *Al-Muallim*, *Sunnat*, *Al-Dahwa*, *Risala* etc. came to be published.

In 1989 Sunnis were divided into two factions-one led by E.K Aboobakar Musliyar and other one by Kanthapuram A.P Aboobakar Musliyar. Majority of A.P section of Sunnis became the supporters of Left parties in Kerala. The paradoxical nature of this association became a cause for the emergence of strong debates among the Muslims in Kerala. The other section, E.K Sunnis is supporting Muslim League and some of its leaders also became the leaders of Muslim League.

E.K Sunni is one of the powerful Sunni factions of Kerala under Samastha Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulama which belongs to shafi school of jurisprudence. It is the largest Muslim religious group of Kerala in terms of number of followers. The Sunni Yuvajana Sangam (SYS for the youth), Samastha Kerala Sunni Student Federation (SKSSF for higher students), Sunni Balavedhi (SBV for children), Samastha Kerala Jamhiyathul Ulama (SKJU for clerics), Samastha Kerala Jamhiyathul Muallimeen (SKJM for religious Madrasa teachers) and Samastha Kerala Islamic Education Board are the major organisations working under the banner of E.K Sunnis. The E.K faction of Sunnis has monthly and weekly publications named *Thelicham* and *Sathyadhara* respectively. Apart from the print publications they have number of web sites to promote their ideology like Islamonsite.com and truepath.com et al.

A.P Sunni is another powerful Muslim Sunni group in Kerala, also belonging to the shafi schools of jurisprudence which has an influence in political and religious life of Muslims of Kerala. Like all other mentioned organisations they also have their own feeder organisations such as All India Jamhiyathul Ulama (AIJU for the clerics), Sunni Yuvajana Sangham (SYS for the youth), Sunni Student Federation (SSF for the students), Sunni Bala Sangham (SBS for children), Samastha Kerala Sunni Vidhyabyasa Board. The leader of this group, Kanthapuram A.P Aboobakar Musliyar had announced a policy of “helping those who help us” to support any political group

in Kerala. A.P Sunni section has their own publication house called Islamic Publishing Bureau (IPB). Apart from the publications, they have monthly magazines such as *Sunni Voice*, *Risala* and *Poonkavanam* for Women. *Siraj* is the official newspaper of A.P Sunni Muslims of Kerala.

By the end of 1980's the A.P and E.K groups were crystallized into two separate entities. The groups popularly referred to as A.P Sunnis and E.K. Sunnis. The A.P or Kanthapuram (a village near Kozhikode town) Sunnis under the leadership of A.P Aboobakar Musliyar with strong Gulf connections. The reasons for the split are believed to be many. One being the fabricated charge of mismanagement against A.P Musliyar in relation to a foreign fund for a mosque at Arikkode. And another being its relationship with the Muslim League in Kerala. As a supporter of communal harmony, Kanthapuram Musliyar has a policy of non-involvement of religion in politics and vice versa. In contrast, most of the A.P Sunnis sympathise with Congress like the Jamhiyathul-Ulama-e-Hind in the north India had in the past. Notwithstanding the clear stand taken, Kanthapuram Musliyar joined with Communists, mainly Communist Party of India Marxist (CPI-M) in almost all the elections. Such an attitude from an orthodox section towards the atheists and non-believers definitely marked a change in the attitude of Muslims towards the communists in the socio-political situation of Kerala. However, a section of Sunni ulama considered Muslim League as their supreme body and they thought that the Sunnis should be a part of the League. Also, the E.K Sunnis under the leadership of E.K Aboobakar Musliyar, supported of Muslim League party. Many Mappilas remained loyal to the E.K Sunni's approach. After the split, Sunni Student Federation (SSF) came under the control of A.P. section of Sunnis, as a consequence E.K. Samastha formed Samastha Kerala Sunni Student Federation (SKSSF). Following this, the cultural centre of Sunni Muslims Marqazu Saqafathi Sunniya of Kozhikode, a prestigious Islamic institution of south India came under the control of A.P Aboobakar Musliyar. The division created several strains in the Muslim community, a consequence of which were the attacks on Muslim ulama. In another incident, Son of Kundoor Abdul Kader Musliyar, a prominent Sunni leader of A.P section, was killed by the E.K. Sunnis. Subsequently the Mahal committees came to be divided and the growing frustration among the ulama led to their resignation from their positions in both groups.

3.6 The Jamaat-e-Islami

Jamaat-e-Islami is another major organisation among the Mappila Muslims of Kerala. Initially it was an organisation committed to the establishment of Islamic state. This organisation was founded in 1941 by Abul Ahla Moududi, an Islamic thinker, scholar and writer. Jamaat-e-Islami, is an integral part of the pan-Islamic movement in Kerala, whose followers were generally known as Islamists. The Jamaat-e-Islami started their work in Kerala in 1948 and at that time they faced many obstacles from the Sunni Muslims as well as from the Mujahids. Around 1960, this organization became an important group among the Muslims. The organization worked with a cadre level setup throughout the country. The head of the Jamaat-e-Islami is called Ameer. Each state has a separate Ameer. Initially, Jamaat-e-Islami believed in the establishment of Islamic state through political Islamism, following which secularism and democracy were considered as haram (religiously forbidden). However, after the Emergency in 1975, Jamaat decided to cast their votes and to participate in the elections in India.

Jamaat-e-Islami too have publication houses with periodicals and journals divisions. The Islamic Publishing House (IPH) is the largest one in Kerala. The periodicals published under Jamaat-e-Islami are the *Prabodhanam weekly*, *Bodhanam bimonthly*, *Aramam women's monthly Magazine*, and *Malarvadi, a children's monthly*. Along with these publications, they have a popular newspaper called *Madhyamam* daily which was launched in 1987. They also run a newspaper in the gulf with the name *Gulf Madhyamam*. Recently in 2012 they started a news channel *Media One*. Along with these, they also manage web groups such as *Thafheemul Quran*, *Islam Malayalam* and *Islam Padanam* etc. dedicated to the promotion of their ideology. There are feeder organisations working under the control of Jamaat-e-Islami to promote the ideology among women, youth and children such as the women's wing, Girls Islamic Organisations (GIO), the Solidarity Youth Movement, Students Islamic Organisations (SIO), and Malarvadi Balasangam. The publications and networking for dissemination of Islamic knowledge have helped in educating the youth and creating a favourable attitude to modern education and women's education. All the above mentioned activities of the organisation has helped in creating a political and cultural consciousness among the Muslim communities.

3.7 The National Development Front (NDF)

The National Development Front was established in 1993, following the demolition of Babri masjid. Many consider this group as a militant and fundamentalist organisation. The focuses on socio-economic issues of minorities with a special stress upon the problems of Muslims, Dalits and other backward communities. Their objective²⁸⁹ is to preach (dawa) and propagate the teachings of Islam. They have Publications such as *Thejas*, daily newspaper and also a weekly by the same name. National Development Front has adopted a slogan ‘Swathantryam–Neethi–Surakrsha’ meaning freedom, justice and security respectively.

The NDF deserves special mention among the Muslim communities in Kerala, for they consider Hindu groups to be the ‘Other’. While all above mentioned organisations have their own ideologies and objectives, along with their own interpretations and approaches towards each issue and with that they engage in constant contestations regarding the theological issues at the local level, NDF on the other, actively participates in the unification of Muslims to fight against the ‘enemy’ such as Hindutva groups. The organisation’s decision was to keep a neutral stand towards all the other Muslim religious groups and not involve in any public debates which are controversial to the Muslim community. NDF has realised the tremendous possibility of the unification of the Muslim community especially the youth, above all their group differences to counter the enemy without.

3.8 Ahmadiya Muslims

Ahmadiya Muslims emerged in the colonial times in India. Its teachings originates from Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1839-1908) of Qadiyan in Punjab. During the last years of his life, he claimed himself as the successor of the Prophet. Ahammadiyahs have

²⁸⁹ The objectives are;

- 1) To create national awareness and pride among the people.
- 2) To protect the diversities as cultural and provide the space for the concept of unity and diversity and prevent the exploitative forces that threaten the unity and safety of the nation.
- 3) To plan to improve the health, education and standard of living of the people.
- 4) To create awareness about the oppression among the oppressed and uphold their rights and plan the developmental measures to improve their conditions.
- 5) To coordinate the oppressed people for their liberation and conduct movements to protect the human rights of the people.
- 6) To strive for the comprehensive progress of the backward classes and coordinate different groups working in the realm of culture and the development.
- 7) To recognise and make people conscious of the challenges raised by fascist communal forces in our country.

believe in Allah and Prophet Mohammed but they also believe that God sent Mirza Ghulam Ahmad for restoring the true essence and pristine form, which had been lost from Islam due to cultural assimilations and adaptations. Thus, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad himself believes that God sent him for the *tajdid* (reform) and *islah* (revival) through peaceful propagation of Islam. In 1889, he founded the Ahmadiya Muslim Jamaat to revive the true spirit of Islam and see themselves as Muslims but ironically, almost all Muslims around the world do not consider Ahmadis as Muslims as a few of their views are considered to be against the basic teachings of Islam. There are differences in the concepts regarding death and return of Jesus²⁹⁰ and the concept of jihad with reference to the false interpretation of Quran. Ahmadis are also not permitted by Muslim leaders of the other groups to participate in the All India Muslims Personal Law Board, an independent body of Islamic religious scholars that the Indian government recognises as representative of Indian Muslims. Soon after the death of the reformer Ahmad Ghulam, the movement divided into two over the issue of his Prophethood and his succession. The Ahmadis belong to hanafi schools of jurisprudence and consider themselves as Sunnis in Islam. The Ahmadiya Muslim community believed that Ahmad Ghulam Mirza had been a law-bearing subordinate of Prophet Mohammed but the Lahore Ahmadiya movement however, believes that there could be no Prophet after Mohammed and viewed itself as the reformist movement of Islam. Ahmadis accept Quran as their holy text, along with hadith and practice of the sunnah. Ahmadis believe that Ahmad was divinely commissioned by the God for the purification of Islam as Prophet Mohammed did in Mecca and Medina. However they are considered as Muslims by law in India (*Shihabuddin Imbichi Koya Thangal vs K.P. Ahammed Koya*, December 8, citation A.I.R. 1971 Ker 206)²⁹¹.

²⁹⁰ According to the Quran, Jesus, although appearing to have been crucified, was not killed by crucifixion or by any other means; instead, "God raised him unto Himself". In the 19 chapter of the Quran (in verses 15 and 33) Jesus is blessed on "the day he was born and the day he will die and the day he is raised alive" which clearly declares that Jesus never died and will die a natural death and will be raised again on the day of judgment. Muslims believe that Jesus will return to earth near the "Day of Judgment" to restore justice and to defeat al-Masih ad-Dajjal ("the false messiah", also known as the Anti-Christ).

²⁹¹ A landmark ruling by the High Court of Kerala, on 8 December 1970 in the case of *Shihabuddin Imbichi Koya Thangal vs K.P. Ahammed Koya* upheld their legal status as Muslims. In this case, the court ruled that Ahmadis are Muslims and that they cannot be declared apostates by other Muslim sects

The message of Ahmadi Muslims reached Kerala during the time of Mirza Ghulam himself. It was Abdul Khader Kutty, a merchant from Kannur who initiated the movement as a result of his close contact with Mohammed Deedi, a follower of Ahmadi, a native of Mahal Island, Lakshadweep. The Ahmadiya movement started with a few members from Kannur and later it spread to Kozhikode and Malappuram districts of Kerala. The Ahmadis were opposed by all other Muslim groups with tooth and nail and apart from their ideological differences, the common Muslims of Kerala, especially Muslims of Malabar ostracise them without any intermingling causing Ahmadis to set up their own mosques, madrasas, cemeteries and pushing them to lead a life of isolation from the mainstream Muslim community.

The main proponent for the spread of Ahmadiya movement was B Kunjahammad and the opponents are the Sunni, Jamaat, and Mujahid Muslims in Kerala. Moulana Chalilakath Kunjahammad and his disciple Sulaiman Musliyar made a fatwa against the Ahmadis that they are not a part of Islam because they oppose the basic belief and practices of Islam and that Prophet Mohammed is not the last of the Prophets. This is the message they convey to its members. In 1913, there was a debate that occurred between the Moulana Chalilakath Kunjahammad Haji and B Kunjahammad at Pazayangadi of Kannur. Later, people started attacking the Ahmadi members around the Malabar region and called them as kafirs (Non-believers of Islam). Ahmadis published a book explaining their activities which was named *Thuffathul Malabar*. Countering this the Sunni ulama also published a book to counter them. The book's named '*Radhul Qadiyani (Ahmadis)*' in which they criticized Ahmadis. Decades after, criticism against the Ahmadis became very strong and in several places they were subjected to physical attack. The contention against Ahmadism for the Sunni ulama is that they have misconceptions about Muslim and they misinterpret Islam. However Ahmadis believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyan was the incarnation and manifestation of Prophet Mohammed. This belief is considered un-Islamic and which lead to Muslims in general consider them as non-Muslims. Ahmadi Muslims occupy few regions of Kerala especially in Kodyathur, Pallipuram, and Kannur etc. Consequently serious contestations between Ahmadis and other Muslim groups such

because they hold true to the two fundamental beliefs of Islam: that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed was a servant and messenger of God.

as Jamaat-e-Islami, Sunnis and Mujahids resulted in the famous Mubahila²⁹² debate, conducted in Kodyathur in 1978.

3.9 The Tablighi Jamaat

The Tablighi Jamaat or faith movement was founded by Maulana Mohammed Ilyas (1885-1944). The movement primarily aims at Islamic spiritual reformation by working at the grass root level, reaching out to the Muslims across all social and economic spectra to bring them closer to the practices of the Prophet Mohammed. They work among the non-Muslims also. Tablighi Jamaat came forth as an offshoot of the Deoband movement. Its inception is believed to be a response to Hindu reform movements such as the Arya Samaj. Members of Tablighi involve themselves in tours known as chilla (voluntary donation of time) bringing in at least ten members when they set out on a journey. These tours can be daylong journey covering short distances or they may last several weeks. During these journeys, Jamaat concentrate on the systematic preaching and propagation of true Islamic values. There are six principles²⁹³ which are quintessential to Tablighi Jamaat's teachings which members are to abide by. Women work among other women and travel occasionally with their men folk on longer tours. Although Tablighi, in principle, prefer to use any mosque as their base while travelling, over time specific mosques throughout the world have come to be known as Tablighi mosques. The movement came to Kerala in the 1960's and has become very popular among the professionals and the educated. While some ulama are suspicious of the Tablighi activities the selfless work of its members has attracted thousands into its fold. Due to their non-sectarian outlook they have come to be easily accommodated in any social situation without bearing malice towards any other group.

²⁹² Mubahila literally means mutual prayer. When the argumentations from both sides fail to resolve a religious issue, the parties jointly pray Allah to cast His curse on whichever of the two parties is false.

²⁹³ a. Kalimah: An article of faith should be accepted by all Tablighi workers that there is no god but Allah and the Prophet Mohammed is His Last messenger'

b. Salah: 'Five daily prayers that are essential to spiritual elevation, piety, and a life free from the ills of the material world'

c. Ilm and Zikr 'The knowledge and remembrance of Allah conducted in sessions in which the congregation listens to the preaching by the emir, performs prayers, recites the Quran and reads hadith'

d. Ikram-e-Muslim: 'The treatment of fellow Muslims with honor and deference'

e. Tashih-i-Niyyath: 'Reforming one's life in supplication to Allah by performing every human action for the sake of Allah and toward the goal of self-transformation' of Dawa Tablighi: 'The sparing of time to live a life based on faith and learning its virtues, following the footsteps of the Prophet.

3.10 Quran Sunnath Society

A new organisation appeared in the second half of 1960's and it was launched, by Abul Hasan Moulavi. The movement derives its inspiration from Salafi groups which argue for a free and liberal thinking instead of imitating the four Imams and their textual interpretations. When he found most of the hadith against his mode of thinking and propaganda, Abul Hasan Moulavi opposed the authenticity of hadith citing some of the religiously ignored texts of Muhthazila²⁹⁴ scholars. In order to convince people and make his propaganda acceptable in the light of his rejection of hadith, he justified his ideals as not contradictory with authentic hadith. Following the way of Aboo Hudail, an Islamic scholar, who cited that, for the acceptance of a hadith, a minimum of twenty scholarly reports are mandatory. This helped in clearing his way in opposition to all sets of hadith that are preached throughout the world. He denied the diversity of Imam's interpretations and hence he became an enemy of all other Muslim groups. Unlike the Ahmadi sections, he did not hesitate to pronounce that Jesus is no more. He opined that riba (interest)²⁹⁵ is never prohibited in Islam and argued that Quran expects a Muslim to pray three times and therefore offering prayer five times a day is not necessary.

In regard to Ramzan, he believed that fasting is not mandatory. In addition, he derided hajj pilgrimage as nothing other than generating business for Arabs and just another way to make them economically sustainable. In short, a good number of his arguments are against the rituals and procedures of Islam. Sunnis dissented him in a number of debates in Malabar during the first half of the 1960's. Some of the Sunni leaders regarded, his interpretation of Islam as misguided deriving from orientalist. To scrutinise his argument further one might suggest that his inspiration could be derived from the propaganda of orientalist like Ahmed Ameen and Aboo Rayya,

²⁹⁴ *Muhthazila* is an Islamic school of theology based on reason and rational thought.

²⁹⁵ Riba (interest) is forbidden in Islamic fiqh. Riba is an Arabic word meaning usury, addition or growth. Historically, the consensus of Muslim jurists held that any loan that involved an increase in repayments was forbidden, and as such, the Islamic state prohibited it. The Quranic term is not limited to money but as well includes all transactions in which the debtor returns a sum of goods in excess or above the original agreed transaction, be it money, commodity, any other item or goods or services; anything in excess of original agreed agreement is considered riba if items exchanged are of the same kind (such as gold for gold). There are two types of riba discussed by Islamic jurists: an increase in capital without any services provided and speculation (Maisir), which is prohibited by the Quran and commodity exchanges in unequal quantities, also prohibited in the Quran.

whose scholarships were deeply entrenched in the ideology and propaganda of orientalist's studies.

A magazine titled *Nireekshanam* (observation) was published by Moulavi and which remains the main source to preach Quran Sunnath Society's 'true' Islamic ideology. In 1980, the Society published another book titled *Al Burhan*. Moulavi was assassinated by some Muslims allegedly by fanatical Muslims who believed strongly in Sunni Islam. Presently, his followers continue with the mission of Moulavi under the banner of Quran Sunnath Society in a few pockets of Kerala.

3.11 Istigasa and Taqleed: Sunni vs. Mujahid

The differences between the Mujahids and the Sunnis may be enunciated through their differences on the concepts of istigasa and taqleed. Istigasa²⁹⁶ literally means call for helping hand. For example, when a Muslim is in trouble can she/he invoke the intercession of anybody other than Allah. This has raised the question of invoking Sufi saints or the prophet in times of trouble. While it is agreed Allah is the supreme power,²⁹⁷ invoking saints and Prophet is Islamic or otherwise. The conflicting issue is the manner in which istigasa is to be practised. The Sunnis say that istigasa can be made to anybody or any objects other than Allah, like Prophets, Saints, nobles etc.²⁹⁸ Mujahids argue that istigasa to any other body than Allah is shirk and a violation of Islam. It for this reason that Mujahids strongly condemn visitation to syncretic shrines and practices of Sunni Muslim community such as *nerca*, *urz*, *moulud*, *ratheeb* etc.²⁹⁹ The sole and vital aim of these practices is to make these great souls mediate between the believer and almighty or request their help believing that such souls can help them prevent misfortune and bring good fortune.³⁰⁰ The Mujahid leader, Vakkom Moulavi wrote in *Al-Islam* (magazine), that "Keeping a Prophet or a Wali (friends of Prophet) between a man and god with a belief that he can intercede with god by virtue of his

²⁹⁶ Istigaza means, to appeal for help or protection from evil forces like *Jinnu*.

²⁹⁷ Kamil, Issudheen. 2000. *Islamika Adharsha Dairy*. Subulsunnah Sahithya Samajam Publications. Kollam, pp. 45.

²⁹⁸ Mohammed, K.P. 1987. *Al-Istigasa*. Kozhikode, pp.1-6. Also see, Karuvampoyil, M.P.A. 2011. MSM Kerala Students Conference Souvenir, Kottakkal, pp. 155.

²⁹⁹ Kallikandi, Ishak Ali. *Kerala Muslim Navothanathinte Vazhiyadayalanga*. 2011. MSM Kerala Students Conference Souvenir, Kottakkal, pp. 155.

³⁰⁰ Samad, M. Abdul. 1998. *Islam in Kerala: Groups and Movements in the 20th Century*. Kollam, pp.157.

supernatural powers and that god would act according to his intercession is shirk”.³⁰¹ Sunni ulama on the other find legitimacy to their practices bringing in the evidence of Imam Busoori, who narrated that believers call the helping hand of the Prophet/saints even after their death.³⁰² The Mujahids in Kerala believe that the saint worship and other ceremonies related to it are a kind of idol worship, because in Islam, a Muslim can worship only Allah.³⁰³ They adhered to the view that those who seek the help of someone other than Allah are non-believers due to the following reasons: 1) To pray someone other than Allah. 2) Believe that Sufi scholars are mediators of Allah. 3) Equate the knowledge level of the Sufi scholars with that of Allah. 4) Believe in the independent capacities of the Sufis and their power to recommend to Allah. A person indulging in these four faults is a non-believer.³⁰⁴ The Mujahids published many Quranic translations to spread their ideology among the common people.

The Sunni Muslims however, claim that the above mentioned four faults are not a part of the *sharah*³⁰⁵. According to them there are three kinds of ‘calling for help’ in belief. They are: 1) Ask the help to those who think them as greater than you, 2) Ask somebody who you think is smaller than you, 3) Ask your colleagues.³⁰⁶

The first type of asking is ‘*applying*’ and the second one is an *order* and the third one is that of *requesting*. The first one is the Arabic *dua* (prayer). A student asking the teacher or a son asking the father or asking Sufis, are all in the first category. According to the Sunni Muslims respecting our parents does not mean that we are equating them with Allah. Moreover Sunni Muslims say that the argument of Mujahids are ambiguous. For whom prayer is worship and worship is directed to god. Further they argue that Quran itself says that great Sufis will not die even if their physical body disappears from this world.³⁰⁷ Islamic scholars such as Imam Rasi and Imam Gazzali narrated that we can ask help from these saints for getting rewards from

³⁰¹ Ibid, pp. 157, see also Moulavi Vakkom. *Thouheedum Shirkum, Al-Islam (Monthly)*, August 1918.

³⁰² Kamil, Issudheen. 2000. *Islamika Adharsha Dairy*. Subulsunnah Sahithya Samajam Publications. Kollam, pp.57.

³⁰³ Moulavi Vakkom, ‘Question and Answers’, *Muslim (Monthly)*, 1911.

³⁰⁴ Moulavi, M. Najeeb. 2002. *BulBul Dhashavarshika Pathipp*, Kozhikode, pp.198.

³⁰⁵ *Sharah* is the legal and moral code of Islam which was systematized in the early eighth and ninth centuries in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah.

³⁰⁶ Moulavi, M. Najeeb. 2002. *BulBul Dhashavarshika Pathipp*, Kozhikode, pp.199. See also Hakeem, Lukmanul. 1995. *Sahayavum Prarthanayum*. SYS State Committee, pp.15-16.

³⁰⁷ Kamil, Issudheen. 2000. *Islamika Adharsha Dairy*. Subulsunnah Sahithya Samajam Publications. Kollam, pp. 45.

the God. This is the basic crux of the debate over the ideology of istigasa and the related issues of belief and practice.

But the Mujahids propagated that the Quran says to the people that; “And verily we have sent in every nation a messenger proclaiming, ‘Serve Allah and eschew false gods³⁰⁸ (taghoot)’. “And those who put away false gods (taghut) lest they should worship them and turn to Allah in repentance, for them there are glad tidings’.³⁰⁹ Thus Mujahids contend that Islam demands that the believers not only accept Allah as the one and only being worthy of worship but also as the sole sovereign and law-giver. Men and women are His humble receivers, that is, his representatives and trustees and they must take their orders from him for guidance in every walk of life. Allah sent a series of messengers to proclaim his sovereignty to mankind and to invite men and women to submit to it unconditionally. These strong views were built up on the ideological foundation of Mujahids in Kerala. The Sunni’s view of istigasa is that it is not only allowed in Islam but that it is also an act of piety.³¹⁰ According to Sunni belief there is no problem for an intermediary in between the beleiver and the God, and the God would not neglect their needs.³¹¹

According to Sunni Muslims, Allah whispered the blessings to the saints and the Prophets for their existence and so we can intercede them for getting rewards from Allah. The saints are blessed with miraculous powers and special abilities from Allah to spread his words to the believers. So it is possible to intercede them and permissible to conduct rituals in their honour. Notwithstanding, the Mujahids campaigned against these rituals throughout Kerala. But Sunnis believe that death is not the end of life but it is the mere change from this world to another world and that this is confirmed in hadith and Quran. “We bury the physical body in the grave while the soul going to the sky. But there is relation between the grave of the person and his soul even after his death”.³¹² Sunni’s believe that they have sufficient evidence to

³⁰⁸ Al Quran. 16:36.

³⁰⁹ Al Quran. 39:17.

³¹⁰ Samad, M. Abdul. 1998. *Islam in Kerala: Groups and Movements in the 20 Century*. Kollam, pp.158.

³¹¹ Mohiyudheen Kutty Musliyar, Raddhul Wahabiya, Ponnani, 1927, pp.66-67.

³¹² Madavana, Moithu Baqavi, P.S.K. 1992. *Siyarath. Shidhila Chindhakal; Chinda Nayakar*. SYS Book Stall. Kozhikode.pp.16.

demonstrate that Prophet too visited the graves and recited *salam*, (wishing Allah's grace and blessings to the interred person).³¹³

Since the 3 Islamic century, the discussion regarding the practice of taqlid (rigid conformity or submission to the religious scholars) has persisted among the Muslim community. Sunni Muslims follow taqlid as part of their belief,³¹⁴ however the Mujahids take the meaning of taqlid to be blind following. This too has been a contentious issue between the Sunnis and Mujahids in Kerala. The Sunnis argue that the war in Spain several thousand hadithes were lost and therefore hadith may not be a source for all clarifications regarding practices of the Muslim community. The question then is what should a Muslim believer rely on for his practices. Further there are many hadith that strand on contradiction with one another. The issue then is one of coordination between different hadith and the context of its application. The Sunnis therefore argue that the only way out is to follow the footstep of the four Imams (initiators of four schools of jurisprudence) who lived soon after the death of the Prophet, collecting and collating the available hadith from various places.³¹⁵

Mujahid group on the other believe that Muslims must pray only to Allah, and follow Him, respecting the Quran, hadith and the teachings of sahaba and sunnah of Prophet. On the other, Sunni Muslims believe that Muslims should follow any one of the four imams and should obey them and consider them as the last word.³¹⁶ The acceptance of the four imams and their schools of jurisprudence, otherwise called 'madhabs' became the door for the ijtihad³¹⁷, meaning the right of further theological interpretation of Quran or to understand the ways of Prophets or sunnah forever to the Sunni community all over the world.³¹⁸ According to a Mujahid leader Adam Hazrath, Mujahids are against the four imams and accept ijtihad as a way to refine rituals. Mujahids argue that the interpretations of four imams are contrary to each other and may not be applicable in today's world. Thus, interpretations of four imams have been

³¹³ Ibid, pp.16.

³¹⁴ Kodambuza Bava Moulavi. 1992. *Taqlid: Samshayangalkk Marupadi*. SYS Book Stall. Kozhikode, pp.13.

³¹⁵ Hakeem, Lukmanul. 1995. *Sahayavum Prarthanayum*. SYS State Committee, pp.29, See also Karma Shasthram. 2004. Sunni Voice, November 1-15, pp. 46.

³¹⁶ Karma Shasthram. Madhab. 2006. Sunni Voice, November 1-15, pp.77.

³¹⁷ Individual judgment exercised by one qualified to establish a legal opinion.

³¹⁸ Moulavi, M. Najeeb. *BulBul Dhashavarshika Pathipp*, 2002, Kozhikode, pp.212-213. See also Kodambuza Bava Moulavi. 1992. *Taqlid: Samshayangalkk Marupadi*. SYS Book Stall. Kozhikode, pp.8-9.

replaced by Quran and sunnah by the Mujahids. It may thus be noted that this resulted in complete restructuring of the rituals and the traditions of the ancestors by the Mujahids.³¹⁹

The above theological differences have found a way into the ritual practices. For example, there is a difference in the way in which Mujahids and Sunnis follow the principle of offering prayer five times a day. While the Sunnis pray together for the blessing of Allah after the completion of salah (ritual prayer),³²⁰ the Mujahids deem it contrary to the practice of Prophet and term it as a bidah. Similarly, the Mujahids do not cover the head during the salah but the Sunnis believe that it is desirable to cover the head with a cap or a towel.³²¹ While the two groups are in agreement on fasting during the month of Ramsan, there are disagreements between them regarding the observance of fast on the day of *mihraj*³²², (the Sunnis believe that this day Prophet went on a journey to interact with God). The Sunni Muslims observe fast³²³ on that day, while, the Mujahids claim that there is no command from God or it is not a part of Prophet's practice to observe fast and therefore consider it as bidah.³²⁴

The theological differences between the Sunnis and Mujahids is also manifest itself in other matters of social. During the 1920's Sunni community opposed starting Madrasas in Malabar. Their argument was *dars* (religious teaching that take place in the mosque under an imam) more appropriate sites of learning. The Madrasas were now opened to girls which was against the prevailing practice. However Mujahids established Madrasas from the early 20 century. Sunnis held the Samastha Mushavara meeting of all Sunni scholars of Malabar at Mannarkkad in 1930 and unanimously resolved not to send women to Madrasas and further placed a ban on calligraphy by women.³²⁵ Earlier the Sunni community opposed women's education, citing the reason that women were banned from writing and calligraphy. Mujahids, however, allowed the writing of examination for both boys and girls. Examinations for both

³¹⁹ Hazrath, Adam. 1986. Ijtihad and Taqlid, *Samastha Sixteenth Anniversary Souvenir*, pp.76.

³²⁰ Kamil, Issudheen. 2000. *Islamika Adharsha Dairy*. Subulsunnah Sahithya Samajam Publications. Kollam, pp. 114.

³²¹ Ibid, pp.114.

³²² which falls on the twenty seventh day of Rajab

³²³ Siraj News Daily, Kozhikode. 24 August 2 1997.

³²⁴ Karuvampoyil, M.P.A. 2011. MSM Kerala Students Conference Souvenir. Kottakkal, pp.154.

³²⁵ Al Bayan monthly 1930 March. pp. 30.

boys and girls, which was later accepted by the Sunnis.³²⁶ Mujahids encouraged English education while the Sunni scholars degraded it and contempt English as the language of hell, calling those who enrolled in them as '*kafir's*' (non-believers).

The Sunni Samastha conference of 1945 banned all cooperation with the Mujahids and advised the parents not to marry or send their children to their families. The Sunnis advocated the Arabic-Malayalam³²⁷ and opposed teaching the regional language (Malayalam) and went on to issue fatwas against it. By the middle of 1930s Sunni Samastha withdrew their arguments against the regional language. This was also the time when Sunni Samastha entered the field of publication. They published *Al-Bayan*, the official mouthpiece initially in Arabic-Malayalam and later in Malayalam.

Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami share a number of features of Islam in their opposition to the Islamic life of Sunni Muslims in Kerala. Like all other movements, the Mujahid and Jamaat movements also began criticising the existing practices of the Muslim community in Kerala. They believed that the form of religion practiced in Kerala by Sunnis in the name of Islam is far away from true Islam. Further, they critiqued the role and the control of the clergy and opined that domination over the knowledge would become a decisive factor in faith. However the Sunnis believed that the ulama are the only transformers of knowledge, leaders of the community and who teach the basic tenets of Islam and Muslims should follow them.³²⁸ The Mujahid movement propagates that the Muslim should follow the God and the words of Prophet i.e. *ahulu Sunnah*, rather than following the *fiqh*³²⁹.

During the 1950s, Mujahids who had earlier taken up the cause of education established Kerala's first Muslim college in Kozhikode with the support of Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen (KNM). Sunni Muslims soon followed suit and established

³²⁶ Poonkavanam Monthly, 24 January 2000.

³²⁷ During the 1920s Arabic was considered as the language of the Muslims. However many faced difficulty in understanding the language. As a result, a new language named Arabic-Malayalam came into existence among the Mappilas of Malabar.

³²⁸ Poonkavanam Monthly, 24 January 2000.

³²⁹ The Quran gives clear instruction on many issues, such as how to perform the ritual purification before the obligatory daily prayers, but on other issues, some Muslims believe the Quran alone is not enough to make things clear. In some topics the Quran and *Sunnah* are silent. In those cases the Muslim jurists try to arrive at conclusions by other means. Sunni jurists use analogy and historical consensus of the community. The conclusions arrived at with the aid of these additional tools constitute a wider array of laws than the Sharia, and is called *fiqh*.

schools and colleges along with Arabic colleges throughout Malabar. The major section of Sunnis under the leadership of Kanthapuram A.P Aboobakar Musliyar and under the banner of Samastha Kerala Sunni Jamhiyathul Ulama established many major institutions in Malabar including Markasu ssaqafathu Islamiya at Kunnamangalam in Kozhikode. Many engineering colleges and colleges for general education are now being run by A.P Sunnis in Kerala. Earlier, education which was confined to boys is now extended to both boys and girls.

It may here be recalled that the new movements such as Mujahids and Jamaat-e-Islami and their contestations with the Sunni Muslims have not only remained theological but encompass the social life of the Muslims adhering to their perspectives.

3.12 Exigency over Tradition and Revitalization

In Cheruvadi/Kodiyathur, an attempt of Islamic activism was first initiated by Mujahids during the late 1920s. The Jamaat-e-Islami was established in Cheruvadi/Kodiyathur in 1940s. It is important to note that the groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid were initially influential among the more educated, high class gulf migrants belonging to influential families such as Musliyarakath family, Thangals etc, and only later they spread to the common people. In the words of Jamaat leader, Abdurrahman PP³³⁰, the spread of Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami in Cheruvadi/Kodiyathur was quite slow and gradual. "It was not until the 1970s' that we were able to conduct meetings in this area and subsequently when we were able to, a few interested people from the nearby villages gradually began to attend meetings and slowly, through them we could establish our movement in that area."

An examination of the other narratives of the Jamaat leaders suggests that Muslims were saved from irrationality and obscurantism by Jamaat-e-Islami. Abdu Mash, another Jamaat-e-Islami leader, recalled that it was in the 1940s that the Jamaat-e-Islami activism reached the Kodiyathur/Cheruvadi area. He further stated that:

Until the advent of Jamaat-e-Islami people believed that diseases were believed to be caused by evil spirits and malevolent forces. There were hardly any differences between Hindus and Muslims as the latter had

³³⁰ Interview with Abdurrahman P.P on 25 April 2013.

converted from the former and continued to believe in Hindu deities. Dressing was very much traditional, the male members had to shave the head, and they had to wear a beard and modern dressing was mocked at.³³¹

E.N Ibrahim Moulavi, another leader explained to me the hardship Jamaat encountered in spreading their message. He noted that Sunni families considered us as non-Muslims, they decided to have no contact with our families. Always they questioned our ways; the constant surveillances made us more vigilant about our ideology. He explained that:

‘Jamaat-e-Islami had conducted a series of lecture programmes and public meetings by learned scholars of the organisation in Cheruvadi/Kodiyathur town. There were instances of stone throwing, and hurling rotten eggs and tomatoes at the stage. People would get into frenzy on hearing the word *puthen prasthanakkar* (new reformers). Gradually, the violent opposition was reduced and it assumed the character of intense competition as both groups would hold meetings one after the other to refute and rebut each other’s theological points and arguments.’³³²

Elderly leaders of Quran Sunnath Society groups narrated to me about how they were subjected to abuse and physical violence by the Sunnis. The Quran Sunnath Society leader MA Yousuf Karunagapally explained that:

It was in 1980’s that Cheruvadi witnessed to a public debate between Chekannur Moulavi of Quran Sunnath Society and E.K Hassan Musliyar of the Sunnis. The debate started after the evening prayer, and it continued till the morning. Both groups were not ready to compromise over many issues. At last the Quran Sunnath Society members decided to stop the programme.

The violent opposition and physical resistance against the new (Jamaat, Mujahid) groups gradually declined by the end of 1980s and translated into intense public face-to-face³³³ debates and propaganda pursued through the print media by the competing groups.

³³¹ Interview with Abdu Mash on 22 April 2013 in Cheruvadi.

³³² Interview with E.N Ibrahim Moulavi on 4 June 2013.

³³³ Groups were conducting face-to-face debates on a scheduled date and place; the best speakers were invited to attend these debates.

Jamaat since the time of its inception has made explicit effort to decrease the role of spirituality and miracle in Islam and has vehemently opposed various traditional practices. This includes saint worship, visits to cemeteries to pray for the diseased, and extended social ceremonies surrounding life cycle events such as marriage, death and birth. Nasar, a Jamaat-e-Islami worker explained to me how Jamaat found acceptance among the Muslims and has transformed their lives. He illustrated this acceptance by drawing attention to the emulations in styles of dressing. He stated that:

Jamaat activism brought fundamental changes in the everyday life of the Mappilas. Earlier almost everybody used to wear amulets. These were tied to the neck, waist or the arms. Now, we do not see people wearing them. Even if they do, they conceal it under their clothes.³³⁴

This to Nasar was on account of the influence that Jamaat has had on the Mappilas in Malabar. Here it goes without saying Jamaat's modernity was a source of contention with the Sunnis. Many of the ulama who criticised Jamaat believed that it was stripping Islam of its spirituality.

There was a widespread belief regarding moral degeneration on account of influence of western values and modernisation. In the words of Nasar, the Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid groups consider the watching of television as *haram*. He stated that, "children went to watch cricket and football matches in the television in the neighbouring homes. So, we were compelled to buy television. We are aware of the moral degeneration due to un-Islamic practices. However, we now need to transform our lives in lieu of the changing times for reasons of acceptance".³³⁵

The changes claimed to be brought about by the Jamaat and the Mujahids were contested by the Sunnis. Sunnis argued that the alleged changes by the Jamaat and the Mujahids happened not because of but despite them. In the words of Shamsuddeen, a Sunni, "we are very proud to wear the traditional *dhoti* and white Sunni cap. He added that, "the new Salafian and Moududi movements have destroyed everything that we had in the past as a symbol of identity...They think that wearing trousers and shirt is part of modernisation and wearing *dhoti* and Sunni cap is traditional. In fact, Jamaat has the same ideology propagated by the colonizers. These

³³⁴ Interview with a Jamaat-e-Islami activist Nasar on 24 October 2013.

³³⁵ Interview with a Jamaat-e-Islami activist Nasar on 24 October 2013.

new movements have become transmitters and spokespersons of western ideology.” Further, h stated that this is why our historians have noted that the British took special interest in spreading the ideology of Salafism and pan-Islamism”; the roots of which lie in the destruction of Muslim indigenous cultural identity, which shared a good relationship with other non-Muslims.³³⁶

The Sunnis also claimed that “whatever good that may have happened to the Muslims are because of influence of modernity and not because of either the Jamaat or Mujahids or their reformism. The Samsthana Sunni leader Moulana Najeeb Moulavi criticized that adaptation of modern ways actually destroyed the Mujahid community. He stated that:

The ignorance about the Islamic practice among the Mujahids stems from their influence of Egyptian Salafism which resulted in the dismissal of a significant number of hadith. However, with the increased gulf migration of the Mujahids we see a greater acceptance of Saudi Salafism which upholds the hadiths. So the hadith that was earlier rejected has found acceptance among the Mujahids.³³⁷

The reason thus offered to the changes in the Muslim community remained heterogeneous and differed with their organisational affiliations. Similarly, the Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami emphatically oppose the conduct of nerca due to its alleged un-Islamic character and involvement of visible Hindu symbols; the response of Sunnis, however, range from reluctant acceptance of the Mujahid/Jamaat arguments on the one hand to the emphatic argument that nerca is Islamic.

3.13 The Differences within Sunni Section as A.P and E.K.

Tension between A.P and E.K Sunnis has persisted since the time of their division in 1989. In January 2013, Malabar witnessed tension and violence between the two Sunni groups and this incident opens a window to understand the nature of interaction between the two. In the coming section, I sketch out the differences between these two groups drawing from the incidents.

³³⁶ Interview with a Sunni AP worker at Pathririya, Malppuram on 25 October 2013.

³³⁷ Najeeb, M Moulavi. 2013. *Nusrath-Al-Anaam*, Vol 2, No 45, pp.7-8, Kozhikode.

The annual conference of Sunni Karanthur Markaz, which is under the control of A.P. faction of the Sunnis, held a conference in Kozhikode on 9 January 2013. I went to attend the conference and I saw a big stall with stacked books about the history of Markaz. My friend and I went to the stall and there we saw three young ulama answering doubts about Islam to a group of people who had assembled around them. I noticed that it was a question-answer session related to Islamic belief and practices. The young ulama were the students of Markazu Saqafathi Sunniyya of Kunnamangalam and while answering, they consulted the older ulama, who were in the conference. Out of curiosity, my friend said we are from Pondicherry university and the prayer hall inside the university campus is managed by Jamaat-e-Islami students. “My question to you sir is can I offer prayer in the hall”? to which the ulama said “no”, you may not. The ulama explained that Jamaat-e-Islami being *bidahees* they cannot lead the prayer. Further, my friend said, “we are in good relationship with all other groups in the campus i.e. with Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid students, can we offer *salam* to them?” to which ulama again said “no”. Members of Jamaat-e-Islami are considered Muslims but are considered deviants from the path of true Islam that Sunnis follow.

In Kodianthur there are two mahal committees, instead of one, A.P and E.K sections of Sunnis respectively. They also have celebrations and cultural programmes in their respective mahals. The formation of two mahal committees has explained to me by Ismail, an active member of Samastha Kerala Sunni Student Federation (SKSSF), the organisation of Sunni E.K faction thus:

We worked together before the split, but in 2000 Gram Panchayat elections, in which for the first time the Left Front won in our area however the ward councillor did not take any interest in the constituency. We have one road that was constructed when “Ravana ruled the country”, we repeatedly made request for construction and maintenance of road. They neglect us because we are E.K section of the Sunnis. Do you think they will *jannah* (heaven). Always they (Muslims in Communist party) are in contact with the atheists. Their leader Kanthapuram is inviting all the sorts of atheists to their yearly conference. They are working only for material benefit.

I also met another active member of Sunni Student Federation (SSF) the organization of A.P Sunni group, Samsudheen. When asked about the divisions and the conflict between the two sections of the Sunnis, he had an other story to offer. He said:

Once up on a time we were one mahal and we hosted all the programmes together. In 1999 the mahal committee of Kodyathur constructed a grant mosque in the town. Both groups spent all their money and energy on that. After the construction of the mosque we found that the financial expenditure was not transparent. On another occasion we saw that they had hung a calendar belonging to Chandrika group, a newspaper run by Muslim League inside the mosque. As you are aware the E.K faction of the Sunnis find are affiliated to the Muslim League. This angered A.P Sunni workers. One of our members, Abdullakutty went to the mosque on the same day and hung a Kesari (newspaper, a mouthpiece of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) calendar on the wall of the mosque. He added that, if they have the right to put their calendar, we also have right to put any calendar. Later they applied “Green” paint to the mosque (it is the official flag colour of the Muslim League), and he told me that now they are applying green paint to all their mosques because of the influence of the League. He added that this is the work of the Mujahids who are in league with the Muslim League”.³³⁸ We (A.P Sunnis) now have our own mosque.

After noting the reasons behind the division between the A.P and E.K Sunnis, I wanted to know more about their differences from members not belonging to their groups. I met a Jamaat-e-Islami member who offers prayers in both the mosques belonging to the Sunnis. I asked him the reason for the construction of two separate mosques. He told me the origins of the problem relates to the appointment of Khazi (Khazi, Qali, *Kazi*, *Qazi*, an Islamic legal scholar and judge) by the mahal committee. The appointed Khazi was not acceptable for the E.K Sunnis because he was an A.P Sunni supporter. As a fall out of this the E.K Sunnis appointed Panakkad Thangal as their Khazi. Earlier, festivals were being celebrated together and now they are separate. The mahal committee which had only one madrasa has now being divided

³³⁸ Personal interview conducted on 24 January 2013.

into four, catering to Sunni A.P, E.K, Mujahid A.P, Madavoor and Jamaat-e-Islami respectively. Presently all the groups have their own separate mosques. In yet another incident narrated to me Abdullakutty mentioned how during the rally and commemoration programme of the Prophets, E.K Sunni ulama distributed the flags of SKSSF (feeder organisation of E.K Sunnis), which was questioned by and written explanation sort by other members.

The conflict between the A.P and E.K Sunnis is a common sight in Malabar. One among that type of conflict is the Kootav mahal problem is one of the example of such conflict which is situated in Manjery. Kootav mahal is function under the jurisdiction of A.P section. Hasan, a native of Kootav mahal Jamaat related one such incident:

“Before Sunni Samastha was divided we were in another mahal committee. In 1992 a few A.P Sunni members decided to construct a separate madrasa and mosque at Kootav which had public support. Ever since its inception in 1992, the Mosque and madrasa remains under the A.P group. The madrasa registered under the Samastha Kerala Sunni Vidhyabyasa Board, runs under the aegis of A.P group. A controversy aroused in relation to Eid celebration. The orders from the A.P state mahal committee were followed which created displeasure among the rest of the groups”.

The contention was the mahal committee always invited A.P Sunni leaders for all its programmes. The League which is with the E.K Sunnis contenting groups. Meanwhile a CPI (M) party member, Kunjali and his few followers came out from the Communist party and joint the League, and which served as a boost to the E.K Sunnis to enhance their demands. These demands included, the demand to invite E.K Sunni leaders. However this was challenged by the A.P Sunnis and denied. An A.P Sunni follower, Noushad, recalled how November 2011, Kunjali and his followers came to the mosque in the night and hung the Chandhrika calendar (as mentioned earlier). This provoked the A.P Sunnis to replace the Chandrika with Siraj (Siraj Daily runs under the control of A.P Sunni Muslims) calendar. This tension resulted in violence between the two groups.

In another incident that occurred in 2012, for a marriage of Kunjali's relative, the League and E.K Sunni members decided to have Niqah in the mosque without enrolling in the mahal register³³⁹. Instead, they registered in the neighbouring mahal committee for the purpose. This led to another tension in the village.

On being informed, Kunjali and his followers came to the mosque to put up resistance, however they were forced to disperse with the help of police. Subsequently on 3 July 2012 the unit secretary of Sunni Yuvajana Sangam (SYS) was attacked, along with his family and other members. Again, on 10 March 2012, a group of Sunni Student Federation and Sunni Yuvajan Sangam members attacked by E.K Sunnis. This yet again resulted in A.P Sunnis accusing the League for all its support in inflating the tensions. Shameer, a SSF member from the mahal committee said:

“The League and E.K Sunnis are two sides of the same coin. The intervention of the League in the affairs of the mahal committee along with the support to the E.K Sunnis has created tensions in the Kootav mahal. Further, the League is appointing E.K Sunni leaders in hajj and Waqf boards”.

In Malabar the differences between the A.P and E.K Sunnis have assumed such serious proportions that they almost function as separate communities. There are no theological variation between these two groups, however, there is a clear differentiation and demarcation between them. Both groups have succeeded in almost all villages in establishing their respective mosques, schools and madrasas for their children.

The divisions, movements and counter movements have resulted in tensions among the Muslim community in Kerala and especially so in the Malabar area. A number of mosques and religious institutions were shut down by the government of Kerala because of the constant conflict between these two groups. As part of the educational empowerment of the Muslim community both the groups receive support from the

³³⁹ All the marriages should be registered in the mahal committee register. In Kerala, to get the marriage certificate from the concerned bodies (Local Self Government Bodies under the Kerala government), Muslims should produce a marriage registered letter from the respective mahal committee secretary.

political parties. This is in contrast to their opposition to the same education in the name of un-Islamic practices.

3.2.1 Tirukesham Controversy

In 2011 Malabar witnessed yet another debate in which for the first time, all Muslim groups and the political parties deliberated over the issue of *Tirukesham* (Prophet's hair). On 8 February, A.P Sunni leaders convened a press conference in Kozhikode to release the future plans and projects of their organization. The following day, Mathrubumi newspaper reported that, India's largest mosque is being planned to be built in Kozhikode covering an area of 12 acres on the sprawling 'Knowledge City' complex of Islamic religious and Cultural Jamia Markaz Ssaquafathi Ssunniyya³⁴⁰ near here. Estimated to cost Rs. 40 Crore for construction, the mosque would be able to accommodate 25,000 people for prayer at a time, Markaz sources here said. The work on the mosque would begin within five months and it would be completed in less than two years. Located at Karanthur about 10 km from Kozhikode, Markaz is a leading Islamic centre of learning and charity, headed by religious scholar Kanthapuram A.P Aboobakar Musliyar".³⁴¹ The Sunni ulama of Kanthapuram procured the Prophet's hair from an Islamic scholar of UAE, around which they decided to construct a grand *Shahre Mubarak* masjid. The fall out of the press conference saw the reformist organizations and E.K Sunni groups come together to criticize the A.P Sunni's to construct the masjid in the name of Prophet's holy hair.

The E.K Sunni leaders like Bahavudheen Kooriyad, Mufthi Cherusseri Sainudeen Musliyar criticized their initiatives and spoke against A.P Sunnis in the media. The E.K Sunni leader, Bahavudheen Kooriyad claimed that the Prophet not asked anybody to build mosques or to preserve his hair. Further the '*sanad*'³⁴² of the hair too was not clear. He added that Muslims believe that very few of the Prophet's hair survived today. Those that do, including one in Delhi's Juma Masjid, one of India's largest mosques, have a written lineage or chain to show how they have come down from the Prophet to be with the current holder. Along with their *Mushavara* (higher body of

³⁴⁰ Jamia Markazu Ssaquafathi Ssunniyya is a Sunni Islamic university in Kerala, a prominent Islamic institution under A.P Aboobakar Musliyar. Operating since 1978, it is located 14 kilometers east of Kozhikode.

³⁴¹ Mathrubumi, February 9 May 2011.

³⁴² A document with the list of persons who passed the hair over generations, by which it can be known how it reached to the present guardian.

scholars), passed a resolution condemning the building of masjid to preserve His hair and which raised doubts about the genuineness of the hair. It also raised doubts on the 'sanad' as to how the hair of Prophet reached its present care-takers after 14 centuries. The E.K Sunnis questioned the rationality behind building a huge mosque to protect the Prophet's hair and along with the origins of the hair. Consequently they staged protest against the belief.³⁴³ The move to construct such a mosque, was condemned by all major Muslim organizations in the state of Kerala. Some reports pointed towards the plan of Kanthapuram Sunni group to build a mosque and township surrounding it in the name of Knowledge city and questioned the motives behind the construction of the mosque.

Ahmed Qasraji of Abu Dhabi handed over the 'Prophet's hair' to Kanthapuram Musliyar at a function held in the Markaz, centre of the Samastha A.P group, during the last Milad-e Sharif in 2011, however, one of the members from the same family questioned the genuineness of the hair. This was followed by the official daily of A.P Sunnis, Siraj with report that a long queue of many devotees came to witness the Prophet's hair on the day of Milad-e-Sharif. This report claimed that the hair is of value and the *sanad* produced by A.P Sunnis is true. However the newspaper statements of SKSYS (Samastha Kerala Sunni Yuvajana Sangham, A.P section) claimed that the documentary evidence to prove that the thirukesham (holy hair) of Prophet Mohammed in its possession was authentic. One Shaik Ahammed Al Qasraji, a descendant from Qazraji tribe, one of the prominent tribes in Medina came with *sanad* for a meeting at the Markaz, which was attended by scholars from India and abroad. A.P Sunnis on the other hand contested the information and said "we are prepared to go to Abu Dhabi if they are willing to join us to verify the authenticity of the holy hair, so that unnecessary controversy could be ended".³⁴⁴ When pointed out that the ancestry of Qasraji family which had close link with Panakkad Syed Hyderali Shihab Thangal of the E.K group, they alleged that were unaware of the existence of the hair. We know that there is nothing related with Prophet's hair with the Qasraji family, to this Kanthapuram ulama responded saying that Panakkad Thangal is misguiding the people for they were aware of the hair. Denying the charges of being

³⁴³ Madhyamam Newspaper 9 may 2011.

³⁴⁴ News web India, Sunday 17 March 2013.

commercial, Kanthapuram Musliyar defended himself that the donations from India and abroad for construction of the mosque were to enable the devotees to offer prayers and have a glimpse of the holy hair.³⁴⁵

Later, the issue was taken up by the groups such as Mujahids and Jamaat-e-Islami and they propagated that Islam never supports tradition and that Sunnis were advocating religiously illegal and un-Islamic traditions to the new generation. Mujahids claim that these practices tantamount to being *shirk*, against the basic tenet of Islam because it promotes idolatry and hence staged protest to spread the message against these beliefs. Gradually the movement of the reformist began to include other practices such as *dharga* practices and worship of Sufi saints. In Kerala there are many Sufi saints' *maqbaras* (graves) especially in the northern state of Malabar and a few Sufi *dharga* are in southern Kerala, which also became the targets of protest. The two Mujahid groups, Madavoor and official Mujahids who campaigned against the project complains that preserving Prophet's hair was not in Islam.

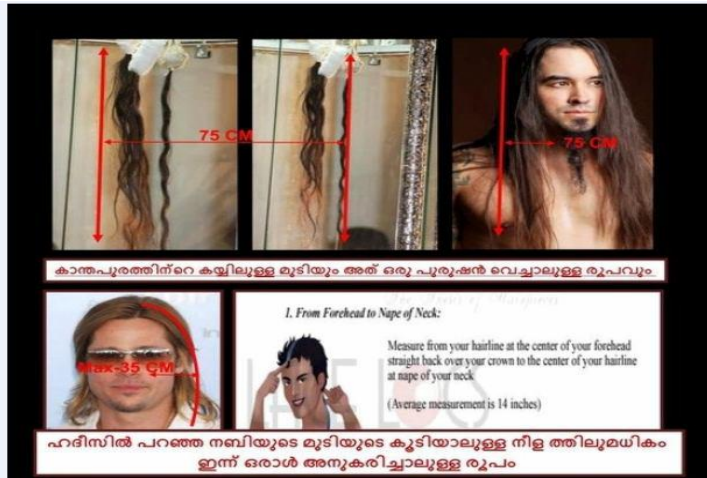
Following this, the Hindu newspaper reported that, Jamaat-e-Islami's, Amir, T Arifali had spoken against the plan to establish the mosque and warned Muslims of Malabar to be cautious about such a plan. He said, "It is basically an attempt to give birth to a new shrine, which is against the principles of Islam". He further added that, "it is not the time to discuss the authenticity and genuineness of the hair. To establish a mosque in the name of Prophet Mohammed is against the fundamental teachings of Islam that forbids all physical forms of divinity".³⁴⁶ Jamaat-e-Islami's Ameer T. Arifali in a newspaper report stated that, "according to Sahih Al Bukhari (Volume 7, Book 72, Number 788): Al-Bara narrates: I did not see anybody in a red cloak looking more handsome than the Prophet; Malik narrates: The hair of the Prophet used to hang near his shoulders; Shu'ba narrates: The hair of the Prophet used to hang down to the earlobes". The paper went on to say that in spite of this stringent criticism, Kanthapuram ulama is going ahead with the construction and that the organization intends to keep the mosque as a pilgrimage centre like the Hazratbal mosque³⁴⁷ and

³⁴⁵ Ibid, 2013.

³⁴⁶ The Hindu 13 May 2011.

³⁴⁷ The word Hazrat, meaning holy or majestic, and the Kashmiri word bal, meaning hair. It contains a relic, believed by Muslims of the world to be a hair of the last Prophet Mohammed. The relic was reported disappeared on 26 December 1963. There were mass protests all over the state on the

Ajmer dargah. Arifali, the Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, stated that it is an obligatory task of Islamic reformist movements in Kerala to scuttle the attempt to build a mosque in the name of Prophet Mohammed.³⁴⁸



(Source: Siraj newspaper, 26 March 2011)

Subsequently an email was circulated with the above picture, especially to the media and the intellectuals. Later it's spread through social networks such as Twitter, Facebook etc. It was a model picture which clearly explains the length of Prophet's hair, in which the picture tried to asserts the length of Prophet's hair. It states, "If he has long hair it would be like one shown in the picture. The second row picture depicts the exact length of Prophet's hair for comparison". The picture on the web became a subject of discussion among the Muslims. However Sunni ulama criticized the picture stating that no model may be used as comparison to explain to explain Islamic tenets and Islamic symbols; using them would only degrade the Prophet. The Gulf Daily Mail (newspaper) reported that Kanthapuram Musliyar argued that Markaz was only safekeeping the holy hair and not to worship, but as mark of respect to Mohammed.³⁴⁹

disappearance of the Mo-e-Muqaddas (the Hair of the Prophet) with hundreds of thousands out in the streets. The action committee was formed to recover the relic. On 31 December the Prime Minister Nehru made a broadcast to the nation on the disappearance of the sacred relic. The relic was recovered on 4 January 1964.

³⁴⁸ Madhyamam Daily 26 March 2011.

³⁴⁹ Gulf daily mail, Dubai, 23 May 2011.

The E.K Sunni leaders challenged the A.P Sunni group to prove the genuineness of the holy hair by putting it to a fire test³⁵⁰ which the latter group refused. The E.K Sunni leaders questioned A.P Sunni group's faith in the power of the Prophet's hair because it is believed that if holy, it would not get burned. They deemed such a test necessary to avoid betrayal of the faithful.³⁵¹ In a first instance, the CPI (M) state secretary Pinarayi Vijayan in support of the E.K Sunni leaders stated that, "every one's hair would get burned if set on fire".³⁵² Kanthapuram Musliyar dismissed this statement by reinstating the idea that fire would not destroy the holy hair. He added, the holy hair need not be subjected to such tests to prove its sanctity. Given the history of the family from whom the hair was procured.³⁵³ He went on to say that, the individuals of other religions and non-believers have no right to comment on this subject and that outside interference on religious affairs may promote communalism.³⁵⁴ Again the E.K Sunni challenged the A.P Sunni leaders to test the genuineness of the hair and hold it against the light. It is understood that the hair would not produce a shadow if genuinely holy.³⁵⁵

Tirukesham issue generated a debate bringing in legal intervention and political involvement. A petition³⁵⁶ was submitted to the Union Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of home, finance and ministry of minority affairs. The complaint was registered in June 2011 and the union government responded after a month and directed the home department of the state to conduct an inquiry on the issue. By now there was huge

³⁵⁰ The E.K Sunnis challenged Kanthapuram and his sect to throw the hair into fire so that its genuineness could be proved. If the hair truly belonged to the Prophet, fire will not destroy it, they say. But Kanthapuram was wise enough not to take the chance and retorted that the E.K Sunnis were being anti-Muslim by proposing burning of the Prophet's body part. But Communist Party Secretary Pinarayi Vijayan stated that fire would destroy hair irrespective of to whom it belonged. But Kanthapuram said that atheistic politicians had no right to speak about the Prophet's hair and matters of religious faith. E.K groups says that "If the hair is genuine, even fire will not be able to destroy it. We know that he will not be ready to accept our challenge as the hair in his possession is just a small bundle of fibre," Kanthapuram dismissed the challenge saying that only ignorant believers would demand a test of the Prophet Mohammed's Holy Hair. "According to our faith, it cannot be subjected to any kind of trial. Their demand for a trial by fire proves their ignorance in religious matters," he said. From Omantribune.com.

³⁵¹ www.dailypioneer .com, Sunday 29 January 2012.

³⁵² Times of India, 21 February 2012.

³⁵³ www.dailypioneer .com, Kerala Sunnis' battle over truth of Holy hair, Sunday 29 January 2012.

³⁵⁴ Times of India, 21 February 2012.

³⁵⁵ Kerala Sunnis' battle over truth of Holy hair, www.dailypioneer .com, 29 January 2012.

³⁵⁶ Petitioner, U.C Aboo of Vadakara, Kozhikode submitted that Kanthapuram A.P Aboobakar Musliyar was exploiting the Muslims across the state by making false claims that the hairs collected by him were the relics of the Prophet Mohammed.

pressure on the government to conduct an enquiry. Because of the huge pressure and political influences no enquiry was conducted.³⁵⁷ As a result, U.C Aboo decided to approach the High court of Kerala on 6 July 2012 with a petition. In which he complained that “the Prophet’s life time was from 570 A.D to 632 AD, and after 1400 years of his death, Kanthapuram Musliyar has come up with a claim of His long hair to exploit the Muslim community”.³⁵⁸ The petitioner contended that Islam does not promote or permit worshipping of the ‘remains’ of any person, including that of Prophet Mohammed, though the Muslims attached importance to the relics of Prophet Mohammed.

As a response, the High court of Kerala directed to the state government to conduct an enquiry into the Thirukesham (holy hair) controversy and take necessary action. A notice was sent by the Kerala High court to the then Congress led government. Muslim League being allies of the Congress led government created stale-mate on the issue. The League on the other was with the E.K Sunnis, finally the incident resulted in tensions among various Muslim groups. Further the E.K Sunni leaders compelled the League to pressurise the government to submit an affidavit in this regard. On 19 December, the Kerala government submitted an affidavit which stated that any investigation to test the hair’s authenticity may lead to problems of law and order in the state. At this point, Kanthapuram A.P Aboobakar Musliyar also submitted an affidavit at the Kerala High court. He stated that Shahre-Mubarak masjid to be built in Kozhikode was not meant to preserve the holy hair.³⁵⁹ The E.K Sunni leaders criticized this and initiated a campaign putting up notices and flex boards, complaining against campaigns to raise funds for the masjid. Further they also criticised that the affidavit submitted by A.P Aboobakar Musliyar in the High court for his change of position wherein the affidavit does not name even Shahre-Mubarak’.³⁶⁰ Thus, the affidavits and counter affidavits resulted in a big controversy among the Muslim communities in Malabar.

³⁵⁷ As reported by the lawyer Noorudheen Musliyar, of U.C Aboo. The New Indian Express, 9 July 2012.

³⁵⁸ The New Indian Express, 9 July 2012.

³⁵⁹ Rs.40 crore Masjid not to preserve Holy hair: Kanthapuram, Twocircles.net, 19 December 2013.

³⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 1.

The events strained the relationship between E.K Sunni Muslims and the League and soured the relationship with A.P Sunnis further. The Chief Minister of Kerala was asked to submit another affidavit to the High court of Kerala to explain the events relating to the issue. At this point another attempt was made by the E.K Sunni Muslims to stage a rally against the construction of Shahre-Mubarak mosque in the name of protecting the holy hair. To this end, on 28 February a rally was set out to the City Police Commissioner's office of Kozhikode. However, the League leaders intervened, forcing the Chief Minister of Kerala to call for a meeting with E.K Sunni leaders. In this meeting the Chief Minister assured that the government would submit another affidavit to the high court of Kerala regarding the issue. This however did not happen. In retaliation the E.K group held a rally at the commissioner's office of Kozhikode on 28 March 2013. On 7 April 2013 the E.K faction sent a letter to the League leaders condemning their intervention on the issue. Finally, the League decided to call for a consensus meeting with the E.K Sunni ulama. At this point A.P Sunnis proclaimed that the proposed masjid was not to protect the holy hair but to protect the same in museum near the masjid. Taking these recent developments into cognisance, doubts have been expressed if such attempt are being made to wriggle free from the holy hair controversy. This has weakened A.P Sunnis prospects among the Muslim community in Malabar.

3.2.2 Thablighi-Jamaat and the Dawah Debate

The *dawah* (invitation) debate is yet another debate among the ulama regarding the issue of proselytising the non-believers into Islam. It is believed that this debate led to the birth of Thablighi Jamaat activities, with its roots in Nadapuram and Kodyathur in Kozhikode which later spread to other parts of Malabar.

Muslims believe that it is their duty to preach and proselytise. According to Islamic belief there are two types of people, those who are aware and practice Islam; and non-believers. The question is about the consequence if they fail in their duty; will they go to heaven or hell? The onus of not knowing the teachings Islam lies squarely on Muslims (believers). Kadameri Abdul Khader Musliyar, a Sunni leader stated it is the responsibility of the Muslim to preach the message of Islam otherwise they will be responsible for the non-believers (*kafirs*) misconceptions about Islam. Sunni ulama criticized him for this ideology and his Moududian notion of Islamic belief. The Sunni

ulama believed that, as a secular democratic nation, they had no right to preach the message of Islam aimed at the non-believers because it may spoil the decorum of the existing system. Therefore, the Sunnis believed that the Islam should be practiced setting a model for non-believers to emulate.

In 1960, Kadameri Abdul Khader Musliyar wrote a book titled, *Al-Munjee minal fitna* explaining the relevance of dawah to non-believers. He supports this claim citing a hadith named *Jamhul Jawamih*, which deals with the issue of believer's responsibility to dawah. He added that they did not have responsibility for their belief and they would not be subjected to hell even though they did not preach *dawah*. The book invited resistance from the ulama and opposed Kadameri Abdul Khader Musliyar sighting that the Samastha like Moulana Kuthubi had also alleged him of preaching misinterpreted hadith. The argument was that the Quranic word "*Quafil*" (the Quranic word for *dawah*) was misinterpreted as it is the responsibility of every person to know religion; as a secular nation one cannot participate in the dawah activities going against nation and harmony. Therefore the Samastha opposed him and invited him for a public debate in Kodyathur. Kodyathur at this time was the centre of Islamic contestations. Following which Samastha published another book detailing the matters related to *dawah*. In this process they sought the help of Maulana Sadhakathulla Moulavi and Maulana Kanniyath Ahammed Musliyar. The book titled "*Al munji anil munji*" published in 1960, put forward the argument against dawah.

During 1960s, when Tablighi-Jamaat came to Vellore *Bakiyath-ul-Salihath* to preach their ideology the ulama of Vellore hesitated to welcome them. Similarly, when Tablighi-Jamaat came to Malabar the Sunni ulama put forth a strong opposition. Towards this end, the ulama along with Sunni Samastha constituted a committee to look into the matter which submitted a report in October 1965. Where the report condemned Tablighi activities and informed the imams of each mosque under the Samastha to disallow them to preach in the mosque. As things stand today Sunnis do not entertain Tablighi activities in their mosques and mahals. Up on which Tablighi members decided to construct a mosque in Kodyathur.

3.2.3 Summary

Going through the chapter, I can say that the movements such as Mujahid, Jamaat-e-Islami and the Sunni Muslims cannot be put into any of the categories as reformist or

revivalist. Even though both Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid represent and claim themselves that they are the true proponents of Islam, there are irresolvable differences and disputes over many issues between them in their theological positions.

The migration to the gulf, influence of modernization inspired all the Muslim religious groups in Kerala. The idea of pan-Islamism and Salafi ideology started to question so many indigenous practices. It seems after the long cultural and civilizational contact with the Hindu community, the Muslims adopted practices and beliefs, which was a threatening element in Islam for the new movements such as Jamaat, Mujahid, while a group of Muslims considered it as a binding factor of Hindu-Muslim unity. A kind of revivalism happened among the traditional Muslims, they are also much aware about the distinction of un-Islamic and Islamic. Hence this chapter analyzed the local level manifestations of religion to understand the grassroots level religious expressions of the Muslims with respect to rituals and practices.

In order to capture the claims over reformism and revivalism and multiple stances from the religious groups, the next chapter goes on to delineate the recent debate among the Mappila Muslim religious organisations over these issues.

CHAPTER IV

Organisational Debates over Reformism: Un-Islamic and Secular Issues

4.1 Introduction

A consequence of the public debates between religious groups of the Muslims in Malabar has been the shift in ideology and practice within communities working continually to generate and redefine the focus of reform and anti-reform. This chapter analyses the understandings of reformism from the groups such as Sunni, Jamaat-e-Islami, Mujahid and Quran Sunnath Society. The supposed inextricable link between traditionalism and 'backward and un-modern practice' embedded in rural and lower strata has been extensively discussed in this chapter. The state of Kerala witnessed reform activities in the 20 century which involved all communities, including the Hindus. In the initial stage, all the movements had to address the higher strata of the society. Here one can say that there is not much distinction unlike the north India where we find the Ashraf and Ajlaf³⁶¹.

Next in this chapter I go on to discuss the secularization process within the Muslim religious groups of Malabar. Thereupon, I discuss the identity politics in the context of the sectarian strife over the claims for true Islam. There I also sketch out the role of the Muslim League in Kerala after independence. The origin of Jamaat-e-Islami movement created more debate and tension in Malabar. Since its inception the Sunni ulama opposed them severely. The most important idea that Jamaat-e-Islami propounded was that of political Islam. Their rejection of the democratic and secular state caused vehement opposition from the rival groups (Sunni, Mujahid etc. from Kerala) around the country. They also had to confront the question of loyalty from all spheres of political space. The idea of political Islam and the constitution of the God's rule, revolved around the concept of *ibadath* (worship). The groups, whether Jamaat-e-Islami or Mujahid, got united under a general concern with *shirk* (refers to the sin of practicing idolatry or polytheism), which even now sometimes lead them to confrontation with Sunnis. In Kerala, the proliferation of newspapers enhanced the

³⁶¹ The Ashraf belonged to the dominant political elites, while the bulk of the Ajlaf remained associated with ancestral professions as artisans and peasants which were looked down upon as inferior and demeaning.

debate concerning true Islam among these groups. All the groups have their own newspapers and magazines that provide regulations about identity and practice. Further, I attempt to sketch out the different claims by religious groups towards the purification tendencies of Islam. It also talk about islamophobia and the counter propaganda from the side of Muslims. Later, I attempt to throw light on the different approaches towards the celebration of Milad-e-Sharif (birthday of the Prophet), Onam, Christmas, the latter being Hindu and Christian festivals respectively.

4.2 Tajdid and Islah: Reformism and Revivalism among the Muslim Communities in Kerala

The purity of Islam in the name of reformism and revivalism has been a point of contention among the Muslim groups in Kerala. The word reformism itself is embedded in a plurality of meanings across Muslim groups in India as well as in Kerala. The tendency to identify reformism in Islam only with the arrival of colonialism and European modernisation has of late come under censure from the Muslim intellectuals who see such an understanding as euro-centric that obfuscates and degrade the Muslim life in Kerala. Drawing from religious scholars such as Sheik Zainuddin Makdhoom I and II, Khazi Muhammad, Sayids of Mamburam, Variamkunnath Muhammad Haji, reformism broadly is taken to be an attempt to throw new light on the society at the time of crisis and the ability to lead the community forward. Be it as it may, another point is the reformism claimed by the new Salafi, Moududian religious groups. For them, reformism among the Muslim community has its origins in the Mappila and Khilafat movement in Malabar. The Khilafat paved the way for the emergence of the idea of pan-Islamism and universal Islamic brotherhood. Sunni Muslims on the other hand trace the genealogy of reformism to 17-19 century, the period when they fought colonialism.³⁶² There are questions of ‘Who are the reformists?’ ‘What is reformism?’ and where to place the organisations like Jamaat and Mujahids, within orthodoxy/modernity? There are different perspectives on the offer for the reformist tendencies in Islam. Different models and degrees of Islamisation of the Muslim communities in India, particularly in Kerala has been provided which ultimately was designed to suit their interests and

³⁶² For a detail discussions see Hussain, K.T. (2008), Sainudeen Mandalamkunnu, (2007) Randathni Hussain (2007).

purpose according to the manifestos of each group. The ideologies and manifestoes of these new movements were tailored to suit the interests and the purposes of communities and vice versa in their journey towards Islamisation. Here, in the section below, I set out to deliberate on the varied kind of activism among the Muslim groups as part of reformism, in search of the conventional usage of the word reformism and revivalism used by the scholars in the transformation of, what is referred to as folk Islam to the puritanical true Islam.

Islamic belief is said to promote an indispensable and strong command for reform and revival. The word *tajdid* meaning renewal and *islah* meaning reforms form the two fundamental pair of concepts of Islam and its believers. Francis Robinson states that from the beginning of the era all over the world, the Muslims have tasted renewal. Since the 18 century the Muslims of India have been subjected to the process of renewal which manifests itself in various modes of action.³⁶³ Thus, according to Robinson, the two basic concepts of Islam and its application and subsequent purification are not in itself 'new' but a reaffirmation of the ancient Abrahamic tradition. Further, he argues that the word *islah* is a Quranic term (chapters 7:170; 11:117, 28:19) and according to the interpretation it refers to the reformist activities of all the Prophets through time, who were sent by God to teach their group of people, their future, and calling on them to return to 'God's path' and the 'real ways'.³⁶⁴ Later, revivalists focused on the eradication of corrupt practices that had crept into Islam in their search for true Islam of God.

Early 20 century was crucial for the reform and revival movements among Muslim groups. Movements such as that of Sree Narayana Guru and Pulaya social reformer Ayyankali among others within the Hindu community of Kerala are crucial, for they provided the conditions of possibility among the Muslims for reform. Leaders like Vakkom Abdul Kader Moulavi, Sanaula Makthi Thangal actively involved themselves both in the religious and social spheres of the community. The Mappila Muslim reformists attacked the established scholars and traditions and criticized conspicuous expenditure for social and religious rituals. Also, "they severely

³⁶³ Robinson, Francis. 2008. Islamic Reform and Modernity in South Asia. *Modern Asian Studies*. pp. 3.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, pp.3

criticized every form of alleged ‘superstition’ and the popular practices as un-Islamic innovations (bidah, plural bidaat’) in the name of religion”.³⁶⁵ The reformism initiated by these leaders was under strict vigil of the religious norms. Transgressions were met with severe consequences. For example, one of the Muslim revivalist leaders, Sanaulla Makthi Thangal was targeted by the traditionalist Muslims because he encouraged female education which was considered *haram* (forbidden) according to Islam. The traditionalists accused him of being a British agent. However the Mappila Muslim reformists like Hussain Madavoor, one of the Mujahid scholars of Kerala, defended that “the most important are the Quran, sunnah and the interpretations of the first generations of Muslims but still we are called as reformists, actually it is the opposite: we want to return to the true Islam of the Quran”.³⁶⁶

The Mujahid reformist movement on the other hand prioritises the person and promotes independent reasoning over adherence to past tradition. In the words of Mujahid leader Madavoor, “the revivalist movement among the Mappila Muslims is about religion and the purification of religious practices”.³⁶⁷ Thus Mujahids oppose, celebrations such as Prophet’s birthday (Milad-e-Sharif), and work for the translation of Quran and Friday Qutba sermons into vernacular language for the benefit of commoners. The revivalism and the transforming activities of the Mujahids were mainly over the religious affairs. However, Sunni Muslims claim that they are the real revivalists because they are those who follow the 1400 years of Islamic tradition. According to Osella and Osella, while the Mujahids scholars consider themselves as reformists, the activism they are involved in actually returns back to the past and not to the future. They illustrate this point on how there was a controversy among the Mujahids over whether it is allowed to celebrate Onam festival,³⁶⁸ (harvest festival, which is a Hindu new year). Thus there is an intensified attention to what is ‘un-Islamic’ in the ideological orientation of the Mujahid movement and the question of whether they are reformists or orthodox.

³⁶⁵ Loimeier, Roman. 2003. Patterns and Peculiarities of Islamic Reform in Africa, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 33, pp. 237-262.

³⁶⁶ Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella. 2007. Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India. *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol42, No 2/3. pp.325.

³⁶⁷ Ibid, pp.325.

³⁶⁸ Ibid, pp.330.

Muslims of Kerala witnessed the growth of several movements where both Sunni and Mujahid movements have played a great role in the emergence of new face of Islam in Kerala, while some continued to follow the traditional concepts of Islam. The Mujahid movement brought a spiritual and social renaissance as they criticized the blind beliefs deeply entrenched in the minds of the common people. Both groups highlighted the importance of Quran and hadith, they understood the path of Islam in different ways which led to an open conflict between these two groups. Mujahids accused the Sunnis as followers of priesthood and accuse them for taking the community to the backwards. However both groups had a common goal which was to strengthen the Muslim community. This has made scholars opine that both groups have played a significant role in bringing the Kerala Muslims to a sophisticated and matured stage. They state that the leadership of these two groups was the chief factor in the renaissance of Kerala Muslims who followed them as their spiritual leaders despite their differences.³⁶⁹

4.3 Renaissance and Reformism among the Muslim Groups of Malabar

The Sunni Muslims of Kerala claims they are the real *Ahlusunnathi-val-Jamaat*; (the only group whose beliefs and teachings are truly in accordance with the Quran and sunnah of the Prophet) once this was the reason for the division in Islamic world as Sunnis and Shias. The Sunni Muslims are guided by the four different schools of jurisprudence namely shafi, hanafi, hanbali and maliki. They have the legitimacy of the *Khulafahu-Rashidhoon* (descendants of the four caliphs after the Prophet). The Sunnis believe that religion and the state are separate entities. They do not believe that Islamic state is necessary for the development of an Islamic social order as against the declared aim of the Jamaat-e-Islami. The Sunnis follow a completely diverse way when compared with Jamaat-e-Islami, because Sunnis believe that instead of going to a centralized solution to solve the issues, they prefer a consensus within the *shura* (religious consultative body) working internally. Again by stressing the consensus of scholars (*ijma*), the Sunnis closed the door for independent reasoning in Islam (*ijtihad*).

³⁶⁹ Samad, M. Abdul. 1998. *Islam in Kerala: Groups and Movements in the 20 Century*. Kollam, pp.157.

Mujahid movement attracted the Muslims and this new Salafian ideology advocated for the ‘independent reasoning’ (*ijtihad*) in Islam and this idea made the Sunni Muslims more hostile towards Mujahids. Violent calls for purification made the Sunni Muslims more vigilant on their ideologies. Later, the argument for the revivalism came from the Sunnis also; they believe that they are the proprietors of revivalism. The most controversial part among the Muslim religious groups is that all groups claim they are the original Islam and call others as false. Rituals which are still observed and considered as part of belief are un-Islamic to the opponents and each group claims its revivalism in the ritual practice with few variations.

The movements such as Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami preach that the salvation of Islamic societies lies in a return by each and every individual to the morality taught in the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet. These movements, in theory, for a return to the sharia, or Islamic law. According to them, this call for a renewed commitment to Islam form the basis for communal solidarity, social justice, and the fair treatment of the poor. One can see that the leadership of these movements are not the ulama, but a new intelligentsia of preachers, community organizers, intellectuals, and missionaries. They no longer cultivate the historical forms of legal, theological and philosophical knowledge. The Islam they envision is not a return to caliphs, imams and holy men, or a revival of historical political concepts, but is a new Islam of commitment to an abstract concept of community and moral authority. Their real point is to define a modern Islamic ethic based on generalized values that allow people living in new social conditions to reorganize their daily lives.

According to Kurup, “the analysis of these writings gives us the highlights of heterogeneous and plural nature of Islamic practices through varied interpretations from the time of Prophet to the Mahdi Qadiyan. But the admirers considered Islam as a monolith that is unshakeable and unchangeable. Of course it is true that we can see that the stringent written Islamic laws are not changing but the interpretations of these texts are representing the diversity. Likewise Islamic sharia is not found uniform when it is put into practice in communities in diverse geographical contexts”.³⁷⁰ Renewals are believed to come to revive religion to correct the practices of Muslim

³⁷⁰ Kurup, K. K. N. & Ismail, E. 2008. *Emergence of Islam in Kerala in 20 Century*. New Delhi, pp. 253.

community. Each reformer propounded different ideologies based on his understandings of the text. They tried to back the original Islam through purification. Accordingly Gazzali, Ahamed Shirhindi of India, Ibn Abdul Wahab of Saudi Arabia, the founder of Wahabism, Abul Ahla Moududi of Jamaat-e-Islami and the imams like Shafi, Hanafi, Hanbali and Maliki, Ibn Thaimiyya. All these luminaries except Abdul Wahab and Moududi are accepted and followed by the Sunni Muslims of Kerala. The 18 century of Kerala witnessed shaping of ideological concepts through the puritanical leaders like Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahab of Saudi Arabia and Sha Waliyullah of India. Alongside them, the ideologies of Jamaludheen Afghani, Mohammed Abd, and Rashid Rida also influenced the Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami movement of Kerala. All of them believed that the main reason for the miserable condition of the Muslims in the modern world is due to their deviation and disobedience from the path of Prophet Mohammed absorbing the alien elements and *bidah*.

In the coming section I am going to explain the claims of various Muslim religious groups such as Sunni, Jamaat-e-Islami, Mujahid and Quran Sunnath Society over the idea of reformism and revivalism among the Mappila Muslims. As like every year, the Mujahid group decided to have their annual conference in 2013, the theme of the conference was ‘hundred years of reformism’. This idea of being the ‘proponents of reformism’ provoked other Muslim religious groups, especially the Sunni Muslims and Quran Sunnath Society in Malabar. These groups started counterattacks for the claim of Mujahid group over the reformism. The coming section of the chapter is going to delineate the debates and several incidence happened related with this conference in Kozhikode.

Against the claims of Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami as the forerunners of reformism in the early 20 century the A.P Sunni group reinstate that they are the real reformers in the community. Randathani, an A.P group intelligentsia says:

“Muslims were reminded of the reward of martyrdoms and pressured to fight against colonialism. Several Mappila songs were produced and many rituals done before they went for a Jihad. They had to take an oath and sanction from the Mamburam Thangal. The main aspect of this religious ideology is that it is mainly utilized to oppose the western colonialists. The effect of

religious ideology in the 19 and the 20 centuries in Kerala caused for the growth of *jaram* (shrine) visitations. Offerings and prayers are a part of their usual life. They started *nercas* in commemoration of the Sufi saints. The Mappila Muslim places in Malabar centred on dargahs (the tombs of Sufi saints). The indigenous soldiers often came to meet these leaders for their support in the struggle. Actually when the reformism started in the 17 and 18 centuries, these Sunni leaders were against the colonialism and these religious scholars devoted their entire life against the colonialists and most of them became martyrs”.³⁷¹

Regarding the claim over the reformism among the Muslims of Malabar, K.K.N Kurup added something more than what Hussein Randathani explained in his narration. He says:

Local Hindu practices were also adopted by these *jarams* such as offering cash, oil etc. The place of Sufi saint *jarams* became a place for the syncretism. *Varavu* (arrivals of procession), particularly *chandhanakkudam*, lighting a *nilavilakku* (traditional pedestal lamp), food and flower offerings, *kolkali* (stick play), burning of incense, musical processions using elephants, display of material arts and fireworks are some of the important ingredients of such *nerca*. Such practices of Muslim masses in the rural setup have been opposed as un-Islamic by the Mujahids, the new revivalist groups in Kerala that originated with the inspiration of Salafian ideology. Later, after the introduction of Jamaat-e-Islami the opposition to these popular practices became stronger. The *nerca* and the ritual recitations of *moulud*, *rathib* are mainly observed by the Sunni community in Malabar. The new movements aimed at the purification of the Muslim community of Malabar but the conservatives branded them as heretics who deviated from the path of Islam.³⁷²

³⁷¹ Randathani Hussein. 2008. *Mappila Malabar*. Kozhikode: Islamic Publishing Bureau.

³⁷² Kurup, K.K.N., Ismail, E. 2008. *Emergence of Islam in Kerala in 20 Century*. New Delhi, pp. 260-261.

During my field work, on 4 January 2013, I went to attend the Mujahid state conference at Ramanattukara of Kozhikode district, near Kodyathur. The speaker was Hussein Salafi from Salafi study centre at Sharjah and his talk was mainly on the superstitious beliefs and practices of the Sunni Muslims of Kerala. He severely criticized the priesthood while talking about the issues related with the Prophet's hair and related controversies. He reminded of the importance of 'hundred years of renaissance' and the establishment of true Islam among the illiterate Mappila Muslim community of Malabar in the 1920s. He added:

“Muslims never knew how to dress properly. Tonsuring head was compulsory and keeping the hair was prohibited. Men dressed up with coloured *dhothis* that reached only just below their knees. They were expected to wear a belt and a dagger and usually the head is covered with a hat or a turban. A man has to shave his head otherwise the moral police will watch him. Women used to wear *kuppayam* (A full sleeve dress.) and *thattam* (head scarf). Men were prohibited to wear underwear and women underskirts as they were deemed as 'haram' (forbidden) by the religious ulama. Their language was corrupt and those who spoke good Malayalam were scoffed at. The ulama opposed the educated Muslims and threatened them and always reminded them about the punishment from the god and the heat of hell. Mosques were not given any importance. It was considered as the abode of 'Jinnu'³⁷³. Night time was dreaded as it believed that all devils and eerie creatures such as *Potti, Pena, Theru, Odiyan, Kurippu, Thattu, Anamarutha* would come out during the night. Black magic and other rituals were practiced widely. As there was no proper belief among people, there were lots of conflicts, violence and unrest among the families. There was absolutely no peace in the family. Women were simply the slaves of men, as

³⁷³ While he talked about 'Jinnu', the crowd who gathered in the state conference laughed loudly, because there is a controversy among the Mujahids regarding the power of the 'jinnu' and later this difference in opinion led to the third split in the Mujahid movement in Kerala. The organizers of the conference were very happy with the word 'jinnu' in his speech, because while talking about the superstitious belief he aimed both the Sunnis and the other new section from Mujahids who believed that 'jinnu' has the power to lead people to do good and bad things. So throughout this talk he intended to reveal the recent controversy in the Mujahid group.

they had not heard of Islamic notion of wifehood. It was also the time of sexual anarchy as adultery and prostitution was common and people completely lacked moral base. Use of alcohol and other drugs were widespread. Even children were addicted to these evils”.³⁷⁴

Before the conference started, they distributed several books, pamphlets, notices and directories about the historic reformist activities that they headed in Malabar among which one of the pamphlets mentioned about their eminent leaders such as Sanaulla Makthi Thangal, Chalilakath Kunjahammad Haji etc. It says:

“The Muslim reformism first appeared not in Malabar, but in Kodungallore, near Cochin in central Kerala, which is also one of the first places where Islam was established in Kerala. While most of these reformist initiatives were carried out in southern Kerala, Malabar was almost untouched. Sayyid Sanaulla Makthi Thangal (1847-1912), is widely considered as the forerunner of the reformist movement that emerged in south Kerala. 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. He is the author of more than fifty books and he used these books to educate the Muslims regarding the true form of Islam. As in Malabar, there were some progressive movements under the leadership of Vakkom Moulavi in southern Kerala. In 1922, in Kodungallore a group was formed as part of the reformist ideology. This group is called as Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham (United Kerala Muslims Association). The most important leader of the Sangham was Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi (1849-1932) who is known as the father of Islamic renaissance in Kerala”.³⁷⁵

On 5 January, on the second day of the conference I had seen a group of people who stood near the conference hall distributing pamphlets to those who came to attend the Mujahid conference in the city. I also got a pamphlet, while I started to read it, a group of people came (Mujahid activists) to abuse those who were standing there to distribute the pamphlets. Then I was scared a little and later when I enquired about the

³⁷⁴ Speech by Hussain Salafi in Mujahid state conference.

³⁷⁵ Hundred years of renaissance, Pamphlet, 2012 December, special circulation for the Mujahid state conference, Kozhikode.

issue, one person told me that the Sunni people are trying to distribute pamphlets with false information in it regarding the conference and the Mujahid group. I just read the headlines of the booklet that was '*Aikya Sanghavum Muslim navothanavum* (renaissance) by Tharuvana, Ahlu-sunna publication, Kozhikode', and then suddenly I kept the book in my pocket. Then I started listening to the programme, mainly it was criticism against the superstitious beliefs that are practiced by the Sunnis as Mujahids allege. The booklet³⁷⁶ which was distributed by the Sunni A.P faction was full of criticisms against the Mujahid movement.

The main theme of the book is that it questioned the renaissance of the Mujahid movement. They questioned the claim of the Mujahids, and the hundred years of renaissance. The Mujahids themselves say that the first organisation which got inspiration from Salafian ideology is Muslim Aikya Sangham, which was founded in 1922. So the claim of hundred years is false. Then the book questions the claim of Mujahids over the leader Sayyid Sanaulla Makthi Thangal; it clearly says that Makthi Thangal was a reformist but he was not a Mujahid. His main argument was against the Christian missionaries of southern Kerala and the book added that Thangal was a follower of Sunni Islam because he believed in *tawassul* and *istigasa*. He was against the women's entry to the mosque and he celebrated Milad-e-Sharif every year. He was against the women's education but supported the primary and religious education; he believed that it was the intention of westerners to destroy the culture of true religion.³⁷⁷

The second section of the booklet has a detailed description of the renaissance activities that had occurred in Kerala in the 1920s. Through this description it questioned the word reformism used by the Mujahids. The book says:

"There were so many movements in the past, which accounted mainly for Hindus especially after 1850s, such as Channar Lahala (1859), Aruvippuram Pradhishta of Sri Narayana Guru (1888), Ezhava Memorial (1896), agitation for right to entry to use the public places for lower castes (1919),

³⁷⁶ Tharuvana, O.M. 2013. *Aikya Sangavum Muslim Navothanavum (renaissance)*, Ahlu-sunna Publications, Kozhikode.

³⁷⁷ Ibid, pp.7.

then later in 1936 the historic temple entry proclamation which all changed the entire perception of Hindu community at high level. The proposed issues were very much social, so the reformers got massive popular support to the issues they raised. Another major point is that all the movements took approximately fifteen years only to establish their mission. But the Mujahids raised the issues that were not relevant in the society and to the community. The book says that, the Mujahids opposed the tradition of 1400 years and their arguments are based on false theological understandings and the interpretations of the text, then how can we call them as reformists. Have they done any reforms in the society? They opposed *Kunooth* in the prayer, common prayer after the Namaz, and so the reformers completely failed to preach the ideology to the poor people, with God's grace, that is good. The Wahabism will destroy our social life because they won't accept the democratic country. Actually they are anti-social and so they are anti-Islamic. For the last hundred years they have been working among us, but still they (Mujahids) failed to convey their messages whereas they (Hindus) took only fifty years to convey their messages. Even now only a few women are attending the prayer but they are talking about the huge participation of women in the Eid Gah for Eid. But if it is a *ganamela* of Usha Uthup the participation would be more than this.³⁷⁸

The temple entry agitation was started in the 1920s in Kerala and through a series of protests the lower caste people won the chance to enter into the temple, which was a giant decision taken by the Travancore Raja on 12 November, 1936. Within 16 years the lower caste Hindus in Kerala cleared their goal. So the Sunni groups are criticising the Mujahids that, what did they do in the last 100 years or so.

The Jamaat-e-Islami Kerala sector also published one pamphlet (*Islamika Navothanam; Randam Ghattathinoru Mughavura* by Jamaat-e-Islami Kerala Halqa, Kozhikode) related with the renaissance and reformist tendencies of Muslims of Kerala. They are talking more about the international scenario and tried to relate with the current situation. For that they published this with Mujahid state conference in

³⁷⁸ Ibid, pp.16.

view. The Jamaat fully supported the works of Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen and their follow-up activities, and their contemporary activities also. They are worried over the recent controversy among the Mujahids about the ‘jinnu’ and its power. The pamphlet reveals that the group has been concern to connect local level issues with the international problems. The pamphlet reads as follows;

“Reformism is not anyone’s private property; it is all about purifying the people and giving the proper engagement with Islam. For the process everyone including the works of Sunni group has made contributions. Reformism is a process and it won’t finish within a stipulated time so each and every section has a pivotal role to make it a success. The gulf migration has a big role in the renaissance of the Muslims so that now we have arts and science colleges, mosques, madrasas and engineering colleges. But what we do not have is a good relationship between different groups. We had great men in the past that lived for the people. So this is a crucial point to us. If the difference is not solved the result would be like what happened in Spain. So it is the time to wake up and start to work together keeping their spirit in mind. We have to give respect to each ideology because we are coming from one”.³⁷⁹

The booklet questions the Mujahids’ approach for their inflexible criticism against the Sunnis and reminding them about the international level understanding of the current scenario such as in Egypt where the Islamists and Salafis (Wahhabis) are ruling together and in Lebanon the Sunnis and Shias are together the rulers. Apart from that the booklet makes advice to the Sunnis to be ready to teach all about schools of jurisprudences in their Madrasas. Jamaat activists had also put a banner in front of the conference, wishing a good future to the Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen and their efforts for the renaissance. Jamaat-e-Islami activists opened a stall to sell their Islamic Publishing Bureau (IPH) books, with a caption of ‘*it’s all about Islam, not about the groups*’.

On the same day when Mujahid conference was held at Kozhikode on 5 January, the activists of Quran Sunnath Society (followers of Chekannur Abul Hassan Moulavi)

³⁷⁹ *Islamika Navothanam; randam ghattathinoru Mughavura*. Jamaat-e-Islami Kerala Halqa, Kozhikode, January 2013.

conducted another seminar near Kodyathur. The theme of the discussion was the renaissance of Muslim communities in Kerala and the false claim of Mujahids over the reformism. They circulated a picture full of descriptions about the Mujahid activities, which questioned their claim of reformist activism. Basheer Tanalur was the speaker and his satiric talk was completely degrading the Mujahid renaissance among the Muslims. He severely criticized the Mujahids and their claim over the reformism and revivalism. The programme was on 9 January 2013 evening 7 P.M. and while he was delivering the speech a few Mujahid were seen mobilizing people for their conference. Seeing the Mujahids the speaker started to speak about the Mujahids and their works. It was like this:

“Nowadays we are witnessing macabre functions of the Mujahid community which is claiming the responsibility for the innovations and developments amongst the backward Muslim community. But unfortunately during the course of time they got mixed up with the neck deep blind belief which culminated in the premature end of Mujahids. These people met their end with Quranic verse ‘*bismi*’. Amidst the heated controversy on *bismi* as the first verse of *fatiha* (*fatiha* is the first chapter of Quran) Mujahid people could not stick to their ground. At the first instance of separation these people considered the ‘*bismi*’ as the first verse of *fatiha*. But later on when they heaped money through petroleum export they embraced a new tradition which extremely contradicted with the Sunnis, and this moment onwards they were in imminent danger of collapse. Henceforth *Rabitha* turned as their pathfinder, which is an organisation that tried to interpret the Quranic ideology and the related traditions according to Salafi ideology. They themselves were the uncivilised and uneducated Arabian nomads who reached at the pinnacle of the Muslim leadership”.³⁸⁰

After this, Basheer Tanalur started to talk about the recent controversy over the power of *jinnu* (unseen creatures in Islamic belief, devils) among the Mujahid community and the resultant split. The controversy over the *jinnu* has broken the backbone of the

³⁸⁰ The religious speech (Vayalu) at Kodyathur by Basheer Tanalur on 9 January 2013.

Mujahid community. Once, the community took the helm of renaissance and innovation in the Muslim community when it was trapped in the depth of blind belief, by publishing Quranic translations and opening up many educational institutions. But its stand in the contemporary society is extremely pathetic. In earlier days it used to unleash criticisms against the Sunni people, who were roaming in the dark as traditionalist. But nowadays Sunni clan has become the forerunner of development among Muslims by establishing many educational institutions and publishing different types of Quranic translations and the Sunni groups are controlling many English mediums and English publications. He added that, now the Mujahids are the real orthodox group not the reformers.

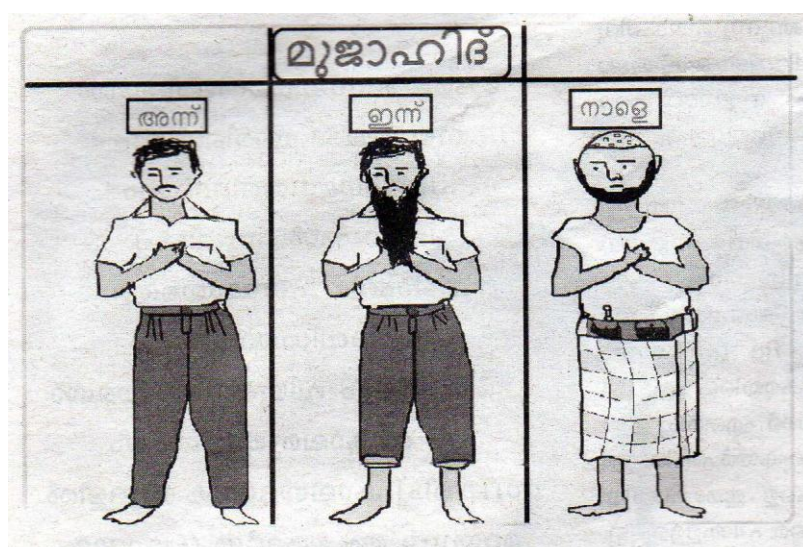
After this talk he showed a picture to the people, which was the same picture that I saw in the banner hanging in front of the Mujahid conference. The Picture is given below;

The Mujahids in Kerala

Past

Present

in future



“He continues that it is worthy of mentioning that the dressing of the modern Mujahid is like comic characters in cinema and drama, wearing a checked *dhoti* and *baniyan* (inner wear) with a hip belt. We can see the modern Mujahid with a long beard and pants which is just like a ‘three-fourth’, discussing about *jinnu* around the clock. They are considering the beard as a sign of pomp and pride and a person who has no beard as silly. Pertaining to

the matter of *jinnu* Mujahid people have many anxieties about it. They are expecting the *jinnu* in each and every corridor of the life even during the intercourse with their wife. So they are necessitated to conduct a DNA test to discern whether the child is their own. On this ground modern Mujahid people are immersed in the categorization of good and bad *jinnu*".³⁸¹ (Later this talk was published in their magazine also).

While talking about the women's entry to the mosque he told it was a contention in the early decades of the 20 century which put the Kerala Muslims in a difficult position. Mujahid group aspired for the woman's entry to the masjid and practice of prayer from there. Against this background the Sunni people promulgated many conventions as well as the women's publications to thwart the women from the catch of Mujahids. He continues in his book-

"Mujahid group says that the *jumua* (Friday special prayer) for the women community is a sunnah on the light of Quranic verse in the Surat-al-Jumua. But here itself they are mistaken that they did not understand the core of the verse because they took two different meanings from this verse that the Jumua is sunnah for women and *farz* (compulsory) for men. If the fact is so, is it allowable to do a sunnah by ignoring a *farz*. Though there were many assertions from the Mujahid community to allow the women to go for jumua, they did not allow them to enter the mosque. Instead they will come to a makeshift shed or something else which is built near the masjid. Moreover they did not allow any of the women to recite the *Azan* or Qutba. Really everything is a drama by the Mujahid community on the light of Quranic verse".³⁸²

He asked the audience to tell what kind of reformism, that they are claiming of as their victory. He says the reformism introduced by them is completely false and a cooked up one.

³⁸¹ Basheer, Tanalur. Oradharsha prasthanathinte dhayaneeya anthyam. *Vedadharshanam*. January 2013. Tirur, pp. 36.

³⁸² Basheer, Tanalur. Oradharsha prasthanathinte dhayaneeya anthyam. *Vedadharshanam*. January 2013. Tirur, pp. 38

“According to Mujahid supporters the women are neglected even in the heaven, even if they pass the Sirath Bridge³⁸³, they are denied the promised pleasure because the man has the possession of the garden and other enjoyments. Therefore, the very purpose of Mujahid women reserving their ticket for practicing hajj with an aim of getting access to heaven is questionable. And after the death of a person why are they praying to give ‘a better wife in the heaven than the earlier one’. Then for what purpose are they praying together wishing them a very happy life in heaven after the death. Is it to fill their pocket like the Sunnis? He added that these are the pathetic conditions of the Mujahids and they are trapped in by deviating from the real path of Quran. For example Quran very explicitly says that the Prophet was not affected by the *sihr* (a kind of black magic), but they are saying Prophet was affected by the *sihr*. By and large we are seeing their mistakes and as a result we are witnessing the funeral function of the Mujahid community and the only remedy for this malady is returning to the Quranic ideology”.³⁸⁴

The *Sensing*, a monthly of the A.P. Sunni group has severely criticised the Mujahid conference and their bitter criticism against the Mujahid group was mainly aimed at their un-Islamic practices. The criticism of the A. P Sunni groups goes like this:

“It was in 2002 that the Mujahid group separated into two groups, namely Moulavi group (A.P Mujahid), Madavoor Mujahid (under the leadership of Hussain Madavoor), after that they started to shower the blames on each other. The Moulavi group brought forth that the rationalism of the Egyptian Salafi manhaj and it denied the hadith for the expulsion of Madavoor group’s derailment from the real path. The Madavoor group brought the unwanted elements of Saudi Salafi manhaj, which according to the Moulavi group was for money (petroleum price). Due to these differences in their path they lost

³⁸³ According to Islamic belief, the narrow bridge which every person must pass on the Yawm ad-Din to enter heaven. It is said that it is as thin as hair and as sharp as the sharpest knife or sword. Below this path is the fire of hell, which burn the sinners to make them fall. Those who performed acts of goodness in their lives are transported across the path according to their deeds leading them to heaven.

³⁸⁴ Basheer, Tanalur. Oradharsha prasthanathinte dhayaneeya anthyam. Vedadharshanam. January 2013. Tirur, pp.38.

chances for reconciliation. As we know everything should be revealed for that we are witnessing in case of Mujahid groups”³⁸⁵.

As said before the debate between the groups, especially Mujahids and Sunnis was one of the main reasons for the tension in the Mujahid group. It was in 2007, at Moovattupuzha of Ernakulum district, a debate was conducted between the A.P Sunni and Mujahids, in which Noushad Ahsani represented the A.P section of Sunnis and Haneef Kayakkodi represented the Mujahid group. The Ahsani of A.P Sunni recited a hadith and to stress its authenticity he narrated the history of Imam Navavi, (the world Sunni Muslims considered him as a great scholar and he has authored several books) that when Navavi had lost his vehicle he recited this prayer then he got the vehicle back. Ahsani asked this question to Haneef Kayakkodi, is it shirk what was done by Navavi? He answered that it should be shirk because who ever be the person responsible for it, a mistake is a mistake. But the reply made by another leader of the Mujahid group later became the point of discussion. Sakariya Salahi opposed it and added that ‘when persons walk in desert hopelessly, he has to call, please help me to any creature who hearing my sound but it should not be a material type of asking for help’. His opinion became a cause for the larger debate among the Mujahid group and it led to further strong actions against the supporters of Sakariya Salahi and his followers. They were not invited to the state conference also because the feeder organisations supported Sakariya Salahi.

On the first day of the conference, Zakir Naik was the main speaker. While he was talking about the recent controversy in the Mujahid group, he talked about the *jinnu*, and he added that if anybody is affected by the *jinnu*, they can have the treatment by using Quran and the hadith. When he talked about this at the venue, the organisers got into trouble. This issue was the main reason for the growing rivalry in Mujahid organisation. Sakariya Salahi and his supporters (those who believe that *jinnu* has power and can ask help from *jinnu* in certain occasion) opened a book stall just in front of the conference hall. On 5 January, in the inaugural day of the conference a group of people came and asked them to shut down the stall; when they refused, next day they attacked the book stall with the help of police and threw the books,

³⁸⁵ Pathiriyal. 2013. Mujahid Sammelanathile Poocha, *Sensing Monthly*, Kozhikode, pp. 37.

materials and other particulars away. The interesting thing is that the Jamaat-e-Islami, Madavoor Mujahid group also had stalls to sell their books there. But the attack was against them only. In the third day of the conference Mujahid leaders publicly announced that *jinnu* has its power and there is no need of discussing the issue here. But after that, Mohammed Anas Moulavi came to speak and added that we cannot say whether *jinnu* has power or not. It became a controversy in the hall and people started to make sounds. Then the leader Hussain Salafi took more than 10 minutes to come out of the conference hall because of the opposition from the activists who do not believe in *jinnu*.

After the state conference, the parental organisation decided to reorganise the feeder organisations. The feeder organisations of Mujahids supported Sakkariya Salahi's argument over the power of *jinnu*. The members of Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen met at Kozhikode and decided to reorganise the committees such as Ithihadu Shubbanil Mujahideen (ISM) and Mujahid Students Movement (MSM), and formed ad hoc committees for the reorganisation. Earlier in the state conference the parental organisations did not invite the feeder organisations for any purpose. The members of these feeder organisations are in favour of the views of Sakariya Salahi.³⁸⁶ The Mujahid group decided not to make any compromise over the issue, because they believed that they do not have the right to make any compromises in the religious matters. We are not ready to pour water into it. The then Mujahid leaders reminded and warned Hussein Salafi of Salafi Quran Learning Centre, Sharjah for his speech against the views of parental organisation. In the conference Hussein Salafi demanded consensus with the Sakariya Salahi.

The description in the above pages on the activities of the different Islamic groups reveal that each of the groups has been active in making claims and counter claims in the context of the socio-political scenario both within Kerala and with reference to political situations in the Islamic countries abroad. There is always a reference to the political scenario outside India to understand the status of Islamic articulation of each other in Kerala. Each group has been claiming authenticity over Islamic practice

³⁸⁶ Madyamam Daily, Malappuram Edition, 14 January 2013.

which reveals the uneven character of the interpretations of Islam and the practice of the religion.

4.4 Secularisation among the Muslim Groups of Malabar

It is very essential and important to note that a chain of non-theological and non-Islamic debates have been made in the process of making group identities. There is an increasing phenomenon of resorting to the secular and non-Islamic aspects for the articulation of their specific special identities. This process is common in almost all the groups in Islam. The increasing politicisation of the groups make them greater rivals of each other and the religious groups keep on changing the manifestos according to the context to fit their specific goals and for the articulation of their identity. So here in this section I am going to explore the process of secularisation and its varied kinds of representations over the Muslim religious groups of Kerala. For that I am going to see the different attitudes and approaches taken by the religious groups towards issues that are being debated among the Muslim communities in Kerala. Drawing through the Mappila revolt and the emergence of pan-Islamic ideology and the resulting origin of the identity issues of the Muslim community are discussed in this section. Also I am drawing the different approaches of the Muslim groups towards the non-Muslim celebrations and also trying to sketch out the secularisation process among the Muslim groups of Kerala.

Here I am trying to sketch the secularization process among the Muslim groups in Malabar. There are many hurdles there for the proponents of secularism in the community. The acceptance of secularist notions had taken a long time to be received by the popular culture of the community. Through finding different approaches from groups one can make a conclusion that the approaches towards the secularism and its process is not a single one but varies from one group to another group.

The formation of Kerala state and the merger of Malabar to the Kerala state helped the Muslim community to become an important minority group in the state. One of the significant factors of this community in Kerala was their geographical concentration. The community feeling is very prominent in Kerala society but along with the community feeling the communal harmony is very significant when compared to other states. The community level bargaining at the time of election is a

very important phenomenon in the Malabar. Most of these communities act as pressure groups in the politics and promote the interest of their respective communities. The Muslims were started to become aware about own identity especially after the Khilafat and Mappila revolt in Malabar. The entire socio-political spheres of common Muslims had changed after these incidents. Meanwhile the League attached to the political process of the country with a demand for separate Islamic state and this demand influenced the south Indian Muslims, it led to the demand for separate 'Mappilastan' for Mappila Muslims in Kerala. But 1947, the Mappila Muslim leaders realized the situation and they decided to remain in the country unlike the north Indian Muslims. Then against the claims of sub-nationality, the processes of Indianisation started to happen with the Muslim League in Kerala.

After the formation of the state, League had a tie up with Praja socialist party in Kerala. The party increased their seats in the assembly and also they increased their political demands from the government. The Trivandrum city corporation poll in October, 1960 had taken place while the triple alliance was still in effect, so the League garnered two seats. But two years later it was ready to form a local pact with the Communists in Kozhikode (Calicut). When the Chinese attack on India split the Communist party of India into two wings, pro- Russian and pro-Chinese, the communist mayor of Kozhikode and Bafakhy Thangal could agree on criticizing Chinese aggression. Another development in this period was the splits with in the Congress party. League negotiated both with rebels, Congress and Communists, at a local level with seat adjustment. But in the 1965 election, they won only 6 seats and the independent left supporters won 5 seats. After the Emergency, Muslim League in Kerala split into two sections, one is state Muslim League and the other, is Akilendhya National League they later came under a single umbrella with the leadership of Panakkad Sayyid Muhammadali Shihab Thangal. In Kerala the leadership of League came from the Thangals families. Their contribution to the Muslim community in Kerala especially in Malabar was immeasurable. After the demolition of Babri Masjid, League took the stand of preserving the secular outline among the Muslims.

The relationship between the communist front and the League are very a debatable one. But a conservative section of communist party was against having any truce with caste-communal outfits and they consider such a move affects the credibility of the

party as a secular force. There are some different opinions existing among the communist parties' southern and northern leaders of the state of Kerala. This has created a sharp divide in the communist party between the southern and northern leaders. The northern (Malabar) leaders had taken a pro-alliance attitude to the League and the Communist party has been a tale of love and hate. The rationale behind this alliance was because northern Kerala (Malabar) is the citadel of the League; an alliance with it would stand in good stead for the party (CPI-(M)) to make a spectacular show in the Malabar. The Communist leader E.M.S. himself said: looking back, I feel one of our key failures has been in understanding issues connected with the religious minorities in Kerala.

Muslim League, the political group came into being in 1937. The majority of the leaders were once the members of Aikya Sangham and these leaders continued their reformist activities in the community. The great paradox is that the early leaders of League were the leaders of Mujahids. After the entry of veteran leader, Bafaki Thangal, the power structure of the League had changed from Mujahid to Sunni Muslims. Thangal got massive support from the Muslims especially from the southern interior part of the Malabar. During the 1930s many members left the Congress party, leaders like K.M Seethi Sahib joined the League. Another thing is that the leaders of Muslim League supported the nation's split and also advocated for a separate 'Mappilastan' but this type of advocacy never created any type of hostility between the Hindus and the Muslims in Malabar after the state formation.

After independence, most of the educated Muslims and business magnates migrated to Pakistan since it was their promised land. Due to the influence of Indian national sentiment and the geographical peculiarities some Muslim scholars remained in the country. Almost all elite Muslims of north India migrated to Pakistan. The condition in south India was very different as they had no experience of communal riots and chaos which led them to stay here. With partition, only one Muslim legislator from Madras province, Haji Abdu Sathar Sait, a member of the Central Legislative Assembly, migrated to Pakistan. The League in Malabar consistently won the seats in Legislative Assembly in Malappuram and in Tirur of Malabar.

The Muslim League is a powerful political party supported entirely by the Muslim community and it has repeatedly won in elections in Malabar. It has held important

ministries in coalition governments at the state level repeatedly since 1967. As a result of its governmental powers it has been able to provide remarkable material and symbolic benefits to the Muslim community including state pensions for Muslim clerics, contracts for Muslim businessmen, and state holidays for Prophet Mohammed's birthday. A radical Islamic group did emerge when the League argued that the destruction of the Ayodhya Babri Masjid in December 1992 did not require the Muslim League's withdrawal from a Congress-led government in Kerala. Islamic radicals accused the League of betrayal by placing power over religious/community pride. A new group, Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS) was formed, led by a firebrand religious purist Abdul Nasar Madani. The ISS embarked on a path of confrontation with the government and the Hindu nationalists.

As part of the communist-led government, between 1967 and 1969, a Muslim majority district, Malappuram was carved out, headquartered in an area that was the centre of Malabar rebellion. The League also managed to revoke a state regulation requiring government permission to construct and renovate mosques and succeeded in reserving certain percentage of government jobs for Mappilas. The League has always laid claim to the education ministry. The most remarkable victory for the League was the government announcement in 1973 that the Mappilas who participated in the Malabar rebellion would be given the title of 'freedom fighters'. The title carried a state pension as well as benefits for the rebels and their families.

The public intervention of Muslim League in Kerala has been highly censored from different corners. The efforts taken by Muslim League leaders attract criticism from other groups. Most often the league finds itself amidst controversy and contention with not only Muslims groups but also Hindutva groups.

For such an example, I can draw a few incidents which happened in 2012 June in Kerala. The Education minister, Abdu Rabb was involved in a controversy and consequently witnessed a big debate related with the communal/secular understandings of Islam. The incident is that the education minister expressed his unwillingness to light *nilavilakku* (Hindu traditional lamp, which is considered a symbol of 'Shiva Linga') in the inaugural function of a state programme at Alappuzha in Kerala. The news report says "on finishing his inaugural address organizers invited Abdu Rabb to light the *bhadra Deepam* (Nilavilakku) and he thankfully rejected the

offer. Then the Alappuzha Municipal Chairperson Mercy Dianna along with other guests lighted the lamp”.³⁸⁷ Along with this, another controversy was concerning the attitude of the education Minister regarding the change of his official house name. It was in 2012 June, when the Kerala government allotted ‘ganga’ house for the education minister of Kerala Abdurabb, where he decided to change the house name from ganga to grace. Also at the same time his ministerial office asked to wear green³⁸⁸ blouse for the teachers who attend the function where the minister is going to inaugurate.

These issues became a major topic of discussion among all sections of Keralaites. The response from the society was very diverse in nature, the former Muslim League leader and the present Left independent leader, K.T. Jaleel severely criticized the decision to change the name of the guest house and for the refusal of lighting the lamp. He criticized that “Islam is not a water to flow, if he did lighting the lamp, then only we can say that he accepts the diversity and pluralism. What is the purpose of refusing this, I can say that this is completely communal and they are spreading the language of hate. The Muslim League is playing with secular space and mixing it with religious sentiments. Islam won’t destruct if anybody lit the lamp”.³⁸⁹ The entire social media and newspapers had taken the issue, and the leaders started to make comments over the issue. Bharatiya Vajara Kendram, a pro-RSS group responded to this issue on the very next day. Their one of the ideologues, P Parameswaran said that “there was no justification for changing the name of the official residence in accordance with the personal preference of its temporary occupants. More importantly, Ganga is the eternal symbol of Indian culture”.³⁹⁰ The writer, Hameed Chennamangalloor criticized the Muslim League for their approach towards this issue. He reminded that the famous Ponnani mosque has a tradition in which all ulama will sit around the big lamp and they seek the religious knowledge. He questioned “Then why the lamp becomes non-Islamic thing, we can say it is a non-living

³⁸⁷ Hate campaign against I U M L minister in Kerala, June 2012 by Abdul Basith MA, TwoCircles.net.

³⁸⁸ Muslim League party official flag is green.

³⁸⁹ Beena K.M. Aka Kazcha, Mathrubumi News Paper, pp. 5.

³⁹⁰ New name of Abdu Rabbs official residence sparks row, Madhyamam News daily, 8 June 2012, pp.5.

thing”.³⁹¹ On the very next day, 24 June the Kesari newspaper³⁹² severely criticized the approach of Muslim League regarding the lighting the lamp. The report continued as “last month we had Kerala State Film Festival, which the famous Iranian director Makmal Baough inaugurated the function with lighting the lamp, and the last year for the founding stone for the Smart City, CEO, Abdul Latheef Mullah also used the lamp for inaugurating the function, they all are coming from and near the ‘headquarters’ of Islam, then they did not refuse to do this, but the problem exists only with the Kerala Muslim League not with the Islam”.³⁹³ Another young leader from Congress party, V.T Balaram also made his comment over this issue. He harshly criticized the education minister for his decision to change his official home name from Ganga to Grace. By listening the words from Twocircles.net, we can see the reports as the “Congress leader V.T Balaram, MLA, led a campaign on this issue against Abdu Rabb in social network sites saying that there is nothing ‘disgraceful’ about Ganga and he quoted Jawaharlal Nehru, who once said, ‘Ganga is the liquid history of India’. Based on these accusations there were attempts to portray Abdu Rabb as one who is intolerant towards symbols of Indian civilization and culture”.³⁹⁴ Whosoever made the comment about the controversy tried to put the act of lighting the lamp as a cultural practice rather than consider it as a purely Hindu religious one. Both left and right wing critics of Muslim League wore the idea of ‘lack of cultural integrity’ and ‘disloyalty’ to the secularist notion of the country against the Muslim league.

The official monthly of Sunni Samastha E.K. group with the supportive status of Muslim League has written a report in their magazine, that:

“the foreigners who had come here and light the lamp do not know the meaning of this, but as an insider, we know that the lighting the lamp is a part of Hindu culture and civilization that we considered as un-Islamic. The problem is actually why the Hindu symbols are the symbols of this so-called secularist nation. Why and How often such controversies are rising and the media show their full potential to show their hate towards the Muslims. Are

³⁹¹ Mathrubumi Newspaper, 23 June 2012. pp.5.

³⁹² Anjam Manthriyil ninnu Anjam Pathilek, Parappuram Murali, 24 June 2012, Kesari Newspaper, pp.5.

³⁹³ Ibid, pp.5.

³⁹⁴ Abdul Basith, Hate campaign against IUML minister in Kerala. Twocircles.net, 7 June 2012.

they ready to sweep the entire religious element from the state subject? For everything the media and ‘so-called’ secularists are questioning us and now we have to show our loyalty to the nation only through accepting the Hindu practices. We are asking those secularists that are you ready to inaugurate any function through reciting *duas* and *dikr*, no, it is not possible, why the entire social system is wrapped with majoritarian practices which is corrupting. The weekly severely criticized the approach taken by the leftist groups and the Hindu fold”.³⁹⁵

It was in 1989 one of the Muslim League leaders, Kunjalikutty refused to lighting the lamp when he was a minister for Kerala state at an inauguration of one government function. The social activists and critics said that Muslim League is still living in the ‘dark age’ and it shows their humility to towards the Kerala culture. But the response from the communist leader EMS Namboothirippad was different, he questioned the authenticity of lighting the lamp and said it is a part of Hindu culture not Malayali culture.³⁹⁶

I have discussed this issue with one of the Muslim League leaders from Parappanagadi (Malappuram), he told me that “actually the fact is that the name of his residence at Parappanagadi, Malappuram district is ‘Grace’, so only he preferred this name for his official residence at Trivandrum. But my question is that is there any religious element in the name ‘grace’? A big ‘no’ is the answer. Then why the Sangh Parivar and right wing media is always criticizing us. The problem here is that our party and the community members who supported him being portrayed as fanatics and extremists. Most of the time they are targeting us, even though we are an ally of Congress party led UDF government in Kerala. It was a young Congress legislative member like V.T Balaram who seemed keen on attacking us without asking the explanation in this matter.”³⁹⁷ The Minister Abdu Rabb replied to the media that “it is Muslim League party policy to not take part in lighting *nilavilakku* at public programmes. There is nothing religious in my decision to choose a fresh name for the official home, my residence at Parappanagadi is Grace and I thought the very same

³⁹⁵ Thelicham Reporter, 7 June 2012.

³⁹⁶ Siraj live. February 19, 2014.

³⁹⁷ Talk with Nasarudheen Kuttipuram on 11 June 2013 at Kuttipuram.

name is apt for my official residence as well”.³⁹⁸ The education minister told the media that “my beloved father Avukkader Kutty Naha (former minister of Kerala) and our forefathers did not light the lamp. So it is our tradition and belief not to do this, this has nothing with secularism, I do not know why the media and the social networks are targeting us, actually this is communalism, the only aim is to target the community”.³⁹⁹

The discussions based on communal sense is very prominent in Kerala, often they are contesting each other for so many issues. For such an example we can analyze a newspaper report on 3 June 2012, a communal level of discussion between the leaders. One can say that the politics has become more communalized in Kerala, especially after 1990s. The Madhyamam daily⁴⁰⁰ spent half of their page for reporting a conflict between the League and Nair Service Society in Kerala over an issue of ministerial status for a Nair politician. The UDF government runs under the leadership of chief minister Oommen Chandy, from Congress party, who hails from Christian community and the alliance of the Congress party is with Kerala Congress (followers are Christians) and the Muslim League which is largely supported by the Muslims of Malabar. From its inception onwards, the Nair community was against giving more importance to the Muslim League and made allegations that the Congress government is appeasing the Muslim community through the Muslim League. League is controlling the government and they had asked one more minister in 2012 and after a lot of discussions with all other parties Congress allowed one more minister for Muslim League. So the League was given another ministerial berth against the existing four berths in the government. This demand provoked by the Nair Service Society (NSS) and they decided to withdraw all their posts from different boards and corporations. On 2 June, Chandrika Daily severely criticized the approach of Nair community and their political stance and criticized their ‘unnecessary intervention’ in the Kerala politics. On 4 June, Madhyamam daily reported this with more highlights, the first two columns were provided for the secretary of Nair Service Society (NSS) to mark his opinion about the newspaper report and the next two big columns are for the

³⁹⁸ Abdul Basith, *Hate campaign against IUML minister in Kerala*. Twocircles.net, 7 June 2012.

³⁹⁹ Abdul Basith, *Hate campaign against IUML minister in Kerala*. Twocircles.net, 7 June 2012.

⁴⁰⁰ Madhyamam, Chandrikayude Rooksha Vimarshanam, Keraliyam Page, pp. 5. 13 June 2012.

highlights of the Chandrika news report about the Nair Service Society. The next 5 columns were for the opinions of different groups like BJP, League, Congress party etc. From this report one can understand the extent of people's consciousness about the communal debates in Kerala. The communal fury among the caste groups through inter-community debate is very crucial in Kerala and the entire political system is also a part of these communal debates. The secular parties also sometimes muddle up the communal issues in politics which has been the landscape in the entire country for the past twenty years.

4.5 Political Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami

The Jamaat-e-Islami was founded in 1941 by Abul Ahla Moududi (1903-1979) with an inspiration from Shah Waliullah's comprehensive efforts to revive Islam in the Indian subcontinent. Also Moududi influenced the ideologies of Indian Salafi movement led by Sayyid Ahmad Shahid of Bareilly. The Jamaat gives utmost importance to creating true Islamic awareness in the Muslim society and cleansing it from un-Islamic rituals and superstitions. Its relentless efforts to salvage the Muslim community in general, and their youth in particular from destructive material influences and anti-religious movements and to lead them to the Islamic belief and its culture have succeeded to a considerable extent. Both Mujahids and Jamaat put forward the Quran, tradition of the Prophet and opinions of the early scholars to substantiate their views. Moududi developed a new ideology to look at Islam through four basic Quranic terms such as *Ilah*, *Rabb*, *Deen*, and *Ibadath*. According to him these four terms contain the whole teachings of the Quran. Taghoot was another major concept he put forward along with four basic terms. In Quran rabb and ilah were used to refer to the God. According to Jamaat the essence of godhood is authority and so the authority is indivisible. Jamaat's need is the universal Islamic brotherhood because it is necessary that all authority and powers should and does reside in one central power, in one sovereign. Moududi gave five meanings to rabb which included leader, head, chief or lord. Therefore whoever attributes any portion of *rubbiyyath* (being a rabb) in the above sense to anybody except Him is liable to be a *mushrik* (one who practices shirk).⁴⁰¹ For *ibadath* according to Moududi there are four meanings

⁴⁰¹ Samad, M. Abdul. 1998. *Islam in Kerala: Groups and Movements in the 20th Century*. Kollam, pp.152.

such as slavery or bondage, submission or obedience and worship. According to Moududi, *deen* in Quran paves the way to live and it is from God, it is God's *deen*, and if it is from a monarch, and then it is that monarch's *deen*.⁴⁰² About *taghoot*, he says that the term implies all states and leaderships, who disobey God. Based on this definition all governments, whether it is Islamic or un-Islamic, who govern people without the permission and heeding from the God are *taghoot*. According to Moududi, a 'true Muslim' can never turn towards the option of a modern state as it is not founded on Islamic principles. According to him, the subservience to Allah should be absolute and complete. All veneration and worship should be directed only at him. According to this argument, a modern state based on the principle of secularism is completely un-Islamic and a true Muslim cannot be happy and contented within such a structure. For a true Muslim, the very distinction between sacred and secular is impossible because in Islam there is simply no concept of anything outside the grace of God. Hence, any political system that is not founded on *sharia* and other Islamic principles becomes un-Islamic. According to them rule of Jamaal Abdul Nasar and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto are glaring recent examples of *taghootdom* for the Jamaat. The practical side of this approach we can see in the attitude of Jamaat-e-Islami towards the government of India. Similarly secularism is too a *taghoot* because it keeps away from the God and human rationality is playing in the social, political, cultural and economic spheres of a nation. When India became independent and constitutional debates were going on regarding secularism and other aspects, Jamaat also pondered over the question of participating in the *taghoot* system. Then they decided not to cooperate with the secular mode of government of India and not to participate in any kind of governmental activity and institution as far as possible. So as a non-cooperation they adopted two ways, one is to boycott. So they kept away from secular politics. Second decision was to reject government employments. Accordingly when the first general election was declared in 1951 the Jamaat ordered to its followers to reject the votes and asked them to strive for the establishment of Islamic constitution.⁴⁰³ Later they faced many criticisms from different corners regarding this matter. Up to 1947 Jamaat stood by this decision.

⁴⁰² Ibid, pp.152.

⁴⁰³ Moulana Abdul Laith, 1983. 'Indian Muslims and the Election'. Kozhikode, *prabodhanam*.

The political ideologies of Jamaat-e-Islami regarding the establishment of Islamic rule are contrary to that of the Muslim League in Kerala. So they are branded as fundamentalist group in Kerala as well as India also. The inimical attitude and the ideology put forward by Jamaat-e-Islami culminated in the banning of the Jamaat activities by the government of India following its declaration of Emergency in 1975. So the oppression forced Jamaat-e-Islami to rethink over its election policy and decided to take a positive approach towards the election. Later Jamaat-e-Islami permitted its workers to cast the vote against the Congress which contributed the removal of Congress from the power. The central *shura* (The apex body of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind.) which met on February 21, 1985, decided to vote against irreligious and dictatorial forces in the election. Also in 1987 Kerala Assembly election, the *shura* of the Jamaat declared that it realizes the necessity of secularism and democracy and they placed some conditions on the candidates who wished to get the Islamist's votes.

- 1) They should have moral values in social and individual life and be free from nepotism and from corruption.
- 2) They should be ready and in favour of banning alcoholism, should work for the emancipation of the society without any injustice on the basis of caste, religion, region, and creed.
- 3) They should save the money from vested interests.
- 5) They should protect the interests of the minorities and should be against the uniform civil code.

To these demands nearly 60 candidates responded positively in that election. In 1989 in the Lok sabha elections and in the 1991 election to the Kerala Legislative assembly the Jamaats were active in the politics and stood for the value based politics. All those policies and policy changes were in full conformity with the ideals of Jamaat. The Jamaat-e-Islami started to function in 1941 at Valanchery under the leadership of Haji Sahib (Mohammed Ali). The Islahi (Salafi) movement helped them to promote their ideology. Jamaat's main aim was to promote changes in the community through education and conversion. They are generally known as 'Political Islamists'.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰⁴ Kurup, K.K.N. & Ismail, E. 2008. *Emergence of Islam in Kerala in 20th Century*. New Delhi, pp. 277.

Moududi many times reiterated his ideology through the objective of Jamaats that is *Iqamatudheen* meaning the establishment of Islam as revealed by God and *Hikumath-e-Ilahi* meaning the 'rule of God' or 'authority of God'. He also held that there is no essential difference between state, society and government, and all are the part of Islamic order based on sharia. Moududi never accepted anything other than Islam whether it is socialism or communism so it was totally around Islam. He used extensive quotes from Quran to establish his deen, sharia, and jihad to establish the rule of God. The strict ideology of Jamaat-e-Islami could not be tolerated by any other groups of the Malabar Muslims. Also in recent times they turned their focus over the educational and the cultural resurgence by concentrating on the students and youth enrolling them in large numbers and teaching them to fight against the western secular and materialistic agenda coming through communism. Thus was formed the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) but later parted due to the difference of opinion. Later they formed another group for the youths; its name Student Islamic Organization (SIO) which started its function in 1982 with an objective for the rejuvenation of the youths and students training in the Islamic way of life. In 1984 Girls Islamic Organisation (GIO) was formed for recruiting women and girl students into the fold of Jamaat.

The remarkable feature of the decisions of Jamaat-e-Islami in Kerala was to support the leftist sections in their struggle against American imperialism. However, their support was selectively limited only to issues of American aggression, issues of Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq. But the main criticism against the Jamaat is their ideology of 'return to Islam' and, is still a taboo to the secular Muslims due to their religious cause.⁴⁰⁵ The Jamaat-e-Islami has succeeded in evolving an image of an Islamic activist group by incorporating a number of secular issues and concerns. The definition of Islamic activism has been made broader to include a variety of issues even at the local level. Members of Solidarity Youth Movement of Jamaat-e-Islami are vociferous about the political obligation of the youth. The group that has been engaging in a number of environmental and anti-imperialist movements in Kerala has a unit in almost all places in Malabar and a number of activists are highly vocal about the new role of the youth. The Jamaat-e-Islami is taking different positions in each

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 279.

election but there is a belief that Jamaat is the supporter of the left sections. In Kerala's political context Jamaat-e-Islami adopts an anti-imperial stance similar to left ideologues, as a result of this similarity in the name of anti-imperialists, anti-colonialists, and anti-American attitude the Jamaat front have shown some sort of a soft corner to the communist front in Kerala and also Jamaat-e-Islami is actively involved in environmental issues in Kerala. The youth organization of Jamaat-e-Islami called 'Solidarity Youth Movement' Kerala is actively being part of environmental issues since its inception. They are actively involved in some movements like Chengara land agitation movement, movement against Coca Cola Company in Plachimada and the Tribal Movement in Muthanga. The secularist parties in Kerala preach the message that Solidarity has some hidden agendas because they are against the democracy and secularism and they are oppose all types of developmental activities in the name of protecting the environment. This criticism become very prevalent after Jamaat came to the Kerala public sphere with a new political party called 'welfare party'.

During my field work I happened to witness a debate in Kodyathur between Mujahids and Jamaat-e-Islami on the basis of theological differentiation. Normally the Jamaat activists are not ready to engage in the public debate. Their state leaders are normally discouraging them from participating in public debates. Jamaat-e-Islami preaches their message to the community through their publications. They entered into the publication section after 1990s and now many other groups are imitating them because Jamaat activists are showing great concern for both global and local level issues. A school teacher, Abdu Mash told me that "in Malabar Mujahid purifies religion and Jamaat purifies society".⁴⁰⁶ Early times, Jamaat-e-Islami considered being a part of democracy as anti-Islamic and so they did not use the adult franchise and also many of their leaders and followers gave up the governmental jobs. After the Emergency in 1975, Jamaat decided to cast their vote. Now they are actively involved in politics. In Kerala they entered into the public politics and formed a party Janakeeya Vikasana Munnani and contested in recent Panchayat elections and won a few seats with a type of cadre level setup following throughout in Kerala. They also promoted the education both for boys and girls and lot of schools and colleges are

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Abdu master on 22 December 2012.

running in Malabar under the control of Jamaat-e-Islami. The main criticism against the Jamaat-e-Islami in Kerala is that they are promoting political Islam and so they have some hidden agendas. Solidarity, the youth wing of Jamaat-e-Islami actively participated in the social issues and their main agenda is environmental protection including the developmental issues all over Kerala.

The crux of the debate was about the political participation and the acceptance of the democratic life of the two groups. The Mujahid leaders asked the Jamaat-e-Islami leaders why they refused to use the adult franchise. As an answer the Jamaat leaders had given this response. One of your strong supporters Abdul Kalam Azad powerfully writes about *hukumath-e-Ilahi* (rule of god), then what is your opinion about Azad's comment regarding the rule of god. And also it is clear that Islam is doing politics means political Islam is acceptable in belief. "Do Mujahids accept the concept of Islamic nation"? Because the Salafi scholar Ibnu Thaimiyya clearly writes in 'assiyyathushaahiyya' that 'no existence for religion without reign'. And also the Mujahid sister part of north Indian movement, Ahle- Hadeez organizations in India and Pakistan are playing the politics and also 'Jamhiyathul Ahle Hadeez', a Salafi group in Pakistan has been working in the politics with Muthahida Majilise Amal (MMA). So here we are asking Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen (KNM) about the Ahle Hadeez's stand on politics. The textbook of Mujahid named 'Prophet Mohammed an incomparable personality'⁴⁰⁷ says that, Prophet Mohammed was the founder of the nation Mecca, established Islamic empire and rule of Mohammed in Medina, he would not have been ideal person if he had not shown this side of life before the death. Saudi Arabia is known as a Salafi nation which maintains and practises the Islamic law and order with respect to the 'Quran', 'sunnah and sharia'.

The most important contention of Jamaat-e-Islami is their insistence on Moududian idea of political Islam and the rejection of democracy and secular state which have drawn much criticism from the rival groups of Kerala. The debates and the contestations over the political foundation of Jamaat-e-Islami mostly revolve around the concept of *ibadath*. The Mujahids criticized the Jamaats that the word *ibadath* means worship alone and it does not imply the meaning such as slavery or obedience

⁴⁰⁷ Prophet; Anupama Vyakthithwam. pp. 134-135.

as Jamaat argues. Moreover, the Mujahids criticized them that, a true believer does not obey the command of a government by considering it as coming from the God. The term taghoot is the most controversial term, Mujahids criticized that the term is used to refer to the 'devil'.⁴⁰⁸ Through their books and pamphlets, both Jamaat and Mujahid leaders involved in the theological debate and they enter into public debate regarding the term to prove that their respective arguments are correct and authentic. There are many different kinds of practices put forward by them to the people and due to these differences a variety of opinions and practices emerged among the followers. The groups like Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami did not accept any kind of school of jurisprudences but the Sunni Muslims all around the world followed the school of practices. The Mujahids and Jamaat's believe that god gave us knowledge through the Quran and by the way of life of the Prophet. So here we can find out that there is no homogeneity with respect to the beliefs of these schools of religion and there are some sectarian differences and conflicts in some countries.

Earlier the educated Muslims found out the need of being a group to achieve the task, as part of this the educated Muslims and moulanas were organized for the development of the Muslim community. Along with that the new educated class understood the need of political empowerment and this aim led them to form League in 1938 in Kerala as part of Indian Muslim League. The political empowerment of Mappilas later caused the emergence of the demand for the separate autonomous land for the Mappila Muslims in the name of Mappilastan like what the Muslim League of north India demanded for the establishment of separate Muslim state in the name of Pakistan. The introduction of Jamaat-e-Islami into India as well as in Kerala was in 1940's when the leader Abul Ahla Moududi had directed his followers and the Sunni ulama understood the threat from this new movement and the Mujahid section also started to come back in the same period, where they lost their power in the community after the introduction of Muslim League. Gradually the power of the League came into the hands of Sunni Thangals and the Mujahid movement completely started to involve only the religious spheres of the Mappila Muslim community. This involvement provoked the Sunni Muslims and they called them as Wahhabis. The

⁴⁰⁸ Samad, M. Abdul. 1998. *Islam in Kerala: Groups and Movements in the 20 Century*. Kollam, pp.157-158.

debate among the Muslim religious groups started only in the 1950's, led to more conflict in the community. The failure for the demand by the League for the separate autonomous power for Malabar created much alienation and distrust among the other communities towards the Muslims. Consequently the League realized their future and because of this fear of suppression from other communities, the process of Indianisation happened in the League. League involved in the democratic system and contested in the election and won majority of seats in Malabar. It caused them to involve more in the public political system than the religious affairs of the Muslims, but they named it as Indian Union Muslim League. The opponents questioned their loyalty, as a result the Muslim League became themselves aware about their fate. The League itself started to project that they are very secular. They had tie-up with the Communist front also; they became the part of ministerial of Namboorthippad's Communist government. It created a good impression among the non-Muslims towards the League. The connection with the material world gave them more criticism from the Sunni sections and this criticism still prevails among the League party of Kerala from the Muslim Sunni groups. The Sunni E.K faction is always with the League where they are offering their full support to the League in the political system. The organizational debates started in the 1950s only, when the Jamaat movement started to spread all over the Malabar. Different kinds of debates were involved in the Muslim groups. The League calculated that the entry of Jamaat-e-Islami is actually harmful for their existence. As a result they started to oppose the Jamaat group from its inception onwards. Jamaat started to intrude into the Muslim mind through preaching the ideology of political Islam. In the early times Jamaat leaders denied the possibilities of entry into the public political party system. But the League opposed them at all levels. When the SIMI was formed at an all India level, the League opposed them for their extremist attitude towards the other communities and blamed the Jamaat-e-Islami for their support to the SIMI. League always kept away from the communal politics even though their name itself provided space for communal feelings, as part of the political system the League always catered to the needs of the minority communities especially the Muslim minority.

After the demolition of Babri masjid in 1992 the communal tensions occurred everywhere in the country. There were thousands of small riots happening in many

places. The nation's entire political system was got into trouble. In Kerala the dissatisfied Muslims left the League formed a separate political party, termed as Indian National League by removing the title Muslim from the name. The new party had tie up with the communist front and the League asked to keep quiet to the followers to solve the tension. The intense strife was once again witnessed among the Muslim religious groups, with an idea of political Islam ISS (Islamic Sevak Sangh) formed but it was short-lived. Another major movement was the NDF, still existing among the Muslim society claiming that they are here to uphold the self-identity of the Muslims. The group entered into the public political system and actively participated in the democratic system of the country. The Mujahids criticized the Jamaat that the word ibadath means worship alone and it does not imply the meaning such as slavery or obedience as Jamaat argues. Moreover, the Mujahids criticized them that, a true believer does not obey the command of a government by considering it as coming from the God. So the Mujahid group is questioning the idea of constitution of political Islam while rejecting the democratic system. According to them, after all, since the government is a material thing and non-living, how could we accept the government even if it is under the caliph? Through their books and pamphlets, both Jamaat and Mujahid leaders got involved in the theological debate to prove their respective arguments as correct and authentic. Jamaat-e-Islami movement took another approach to preach their message, through their publishing system, Islamic Publishing House (IPH), by which they are propagating the ideology of universal, pan-Islamic brotherhood. Normally Jamaat disfavoured the public debate between the groups. So they keep away from the local group differences and at large level they always try to propagate the ideology of universal Islam and advocate for the constitution of political Islam. Jamaat-e-Islami, as part of their agenda of constituting the Islamic rule in the country, completely withdrew from the democratic political system of the country for a while. But after the emergency period, due to the intense pressure and criticism from the secular fold of the country, Jamaat-e-Islami initiated to take over the issue of the political system and decided to participate in the democratic election of the country.

4.6 Contestation over Claims of True Islam: Onam, Milad-e-Sharif and Christmas

The Sunni Muslims believe that the Prophet Mohammed is the holy man with supernatural and divine powers and he deserves special status among the Muslims. On the other hand the new movements such as Mujahids, Jamaat-e-Islami consider the Prophet as an ordinary man and that he performed the extraordinary feats only because of God's intervention. The same contestation over this issue caused the emergence of debate regarding the appropriate way of showing respect to the Prophet. The Sunni Muslims celebrate the Birthday of Prophet along with various activities. They conduct a special prayer called *moulud*⁴⁰⁹ for the glorifications of the Prophet in the early morning on the day of Milad-e-Sharif, just after the Subh prayer. Along with this special prayer varied activities like competitions, cultural events by students, processions, feasts, and decoration of mosque premises are undertaken in every Sunni mosque. The Mujahids and Jamaat's in Kerala do not associate any significance with the birthday of the Prophet's. They rather argue that there is no need to celebrate it as a special day. However, they also ascribe to the view that his ideas and deeds are important that those be followed everyday by a Muslim. The Mujahid group believes that nobody has celebrated Milad-un-nabi while Prophet had been alive. They propagate that this celebration was started in the year 604 after Hijra⁴¹⁰.

The Jamaat-e-Islami leader and the writer E.N Ibrahim Moulavi of Kodyathur said that "they (Sunnis) distributed food and water, with an aim to gain the blessings for feeding the Muslims, and they required to perform such actions to get blessings from the Prophet. On the surface, this is nice and good, but in reality this is a form of *bidah* because there were no means to set a day for *Milad-un-nabi* and it is not mandatory to celebrate it. Because we should respect and remember Prophet in every act and every day so there is no need of a special day. Also today, many of these celebrations contain un-Islamic, such as inappropriate clothing (women), and also the fact that the programme they do goes on late into the night, hence making them unable to awaken for *fajr* (the Morning prayer for the Muslims). 'Jamaat's stand is that they do not

⁴⁰⁹ It refers to the celebration of the Prophets birthday, in remembering his history, deeds and powers.

⁴¹⁰ The first official celebration of Milad-un-nabi was initiated by sultan Abu Saeed Muzaffer, and Abdul Kitab Ibn Wahiyah. Unique concern had taken care of the subsequent things, the arrangement of it being the 12 of rabiul-awwal (Islamic Month, Hijra).

celebrate the Milad-e-sharif, instead commemorate the Prophet's life on the select day "we do not indulge in celebrations like the Sunnis do. We are conducting the literacy/quiz competition for the Muslims and non-Muslims, so we are trying to educate people about the Prophetic ways. We have only two celebrations, Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azah".⁴¹¹

Later an AP Sunni activist, Subair, a native of Kodyathur told me that they are celebrating the *Eid* because the hadith has clearly mentioned about the importance of this day. And also from this year onwards we are planning to make a procession on Republic Day because we are the true believers and unlike Salafis, we respect our country. Without the love and admiration towards our nation Islam cannot be fulfilled. He told me that even hadith supports the commemoration as well as celebration of the Prophet. He asserted "we do not want to get the consent from these Mujahids and Jamaat to celebrate because we love the Prophet and by denying these things actually they are indulging in shirk and bidah". According to him the Prophet himself had pointed out the excellence and quality of this great month and as reply to a question, He answered, 'I was born on that day and Wahi (revelation) began upon me on that day'. Thus he stated, it is now proven that to keep a fast on Mondays is sunnah since Rasoolullah was born on that day. That is why we are celebrating the day on which he was born".⁴¹²

During my field work on 24 January 2013, I went to Kodyathur to watch a Milad-e-Sharif programme. I met a Mujahid activist and asked him about the celebration of Milad. His name was Musthafa. He was 46 years old, working as a school teacher in the locality. To my question on Milad-e-Sharif, he replied:

"The celebration of all kinds is prohibited in Islam and it should be not encouraged in Islam and a 'true Muslim' cannot celebrate and he should believe in jihad and one's jihad should be against this moulud and Milad-e-Sharif. I pity on you for saying you enjoyed 'nabidina' (celebration of Prophet's birthday) rally. It is a bidah and all bidah will lead to hell. Try to learn Quran and hadith from authentic sources. Do not consider this dance and other kinds of public shows as revolutionary changes. It is a deviation

⁴¹¹ Personal Interview with E N Ibrahim Moulavi on 21 January 2013.

⁴¹² The interview was through a telephonic conversation, it was on 23 January 2013.

from right path. May Allah guide you to proper ways and give *ilm* (religious knowledge). First of all I want to point out that Milad-un-nabi is a bidah with solid authentic proofs. The salaf-us-salihoon (pious predecessors of Prophet) by no means practiced Milad-un-nabi after his passing away, nor did the Prophet ever celebrate himself his centenary. They did not limit the celebration into a single day, but for every day of their lives and as time passes, the masses, and people became weak in faith, and as such, they decided to have a day to remind themselves of the responsibilities of being a Muslim, and how can one gain Allah's pleasure? This is a disgusting innovation in Islam. So concluding this, my request to the Sunnis is study Islam thoroughly and select the right path in which Prophet and his companions stood. Please do not support all those things like dance, music which our beloved Prophet objected".⁴¹³

It is noted that whenever I asked about the celebration of Prophet Mohammed's birthday the respondents resort to curious arguments about other two aspects, the TV channel which is recently started under the control of Samastha E.K faction and the controversy regarding the Prophet's hair. In the recent times both issues are discussed very hotly in the Malabar area. I met a lady in Kodyathur, she works as an Arabic teacher in a primary school and while talking about the celebration of Prophet's birthday, she said:

I can never agree with Mujahids that remembering our beloved Prophet and singing his 'maduhus' are major un-Islamic practices. Whatever be your argument for that I am never going to admit that. I just remember the incident of Prophet's arrival to Medina from Mecca that was a day of joy and celebrations. I could even hear how the girls and boys did welcome him with songs and music. I too love my beloved Prophet and love songs and music about him. I find no harm in it. Rather I think it is part of Islamic life, culture and tradition. Anyway I am not in a position to debate with you, because my knowledge in these issues is at a minimum. More than that I am not interested in a controversy, my point is very clear, the Sunni sections of

⁴¹³ Personal interview with Mustafa on 24 January 2013.

Kerala who had taken very stringent and conservative stand on girls coming out and performing in the public like this, are now going through a tremendous change in their attitude and outlook. One good example is this new TV channel and programmes telecast and this should be appreciated, that is it and also I am not a member of any Muslim groups or political parties. So do not take my comments from an angle of any group. But I like to see all you people at least admit the fact that we all are Muslims. That means we are brothers. So please do not break the relationships between our own brothers and sisters whether it is Sunni, Mujahid, Jamaat, Popular front...whoever it may be...that's all.⁴¹⁴

The recent practice of the participation of small girls in the public functions and the changes in the approach from the Sunni E.K faction has come to be debated in public. The practice has found appreciation among people. One of the supporters of this practice, Shabnum says:

“Let me share one experience, when I was studying in madrasa, we girls could not participate in the Milad rally which was and is a very colorful memory of that age. We could only watch the boys lining up and going with full music and slogans. In new white clothes and full of joy. Obviously every one of us had felt very sad about that but we were helpless, my mom had argued that at least girls up to fifth standard should be allowed, there is no harm in that. But the unquestionable ‘sadhar usthad’ did not listen to us. Now the same group is coming up with revolutionary changes in their outlook...very good.⁴¹⁵

I met a professor on the way to Calicut and on the very first moment he identified my intention and he started to talk. He completely rejected the A.P Sunnis initiatives to construct the mosque to protect the hair. He recollected his childhood with much interest. He said

“It was in 1960s while I was a Lower Primary (LP) and then Upper Primary (UP) school student I was put into a school where 95 percent of my

⁴¹⁴ Interview was on 27 January 2013.

⁴¹⁵ Interview with Shabnum Hameed from Calicut University.

classmates and teachers were non-Muslims. All the 365 days of a year I was tonsured headed as my father was from a very rigid orthodox Malappuram Mappila family with wired check *lungi* (dhoti) and wearing 'rani' mark green belt with a squatted leather talisman over the upper right elbow like a normal Malabar Mappila who was standing beside the bench of *ossan* (barber) to have a gift of naked head and saying to me that it is 100% haram if you grow your hair. My usthad's (moulavi) (that time I was put into *palli* (mosque) darz also in the night from Magrib to Isha) recited to me that you will go to hell if you grow your hair. I still remember how my classmates and teachers used white chalk to write on my naked head. I felt very bad and have wept in silence many a times. I still remember those days with bad feeling. My question is if it is haram how would Allah's Prophet grow so lengthy hair before 1400 years? I am not going to the originality of the hair now some people are selling. My question once more is, if something is haram it must first be to Allah's Prophet. Still I am remembering those days, how our Moulavis took the class and made their own interpretations of Quran and if anybody tried to read anything in Malayalam the Moulavis and family members scolded and they said do not read anything in Malayalam or Christian language. The only means of conveying and understanding the knowledge is through the Arabic-Malayalam language. Once one of my friends gave me the Malayalam translation of Quran and while I was reading it from my room, suddenly father came and asked me to show the book and as a response I was badly beaten up. Tell me why this mollas opposed the translation of Quran and religious texts in that period and what were the reasons of banning of translation and later why did they change their decision of not producing the Quran in vernacular language and where is their old so called fatwa's" he added.⁴¹⁶

I met one A.P Sunni activist, his name was Najmudheen, a 33 year old man and regarding this issue he replied like this,

⁴¹⁶ Personal interview on 26 January 2012 from Kozhikode Railway Station.

“They (Mujahids) are creating panic in our community as well as in families because they are pseudo-believers and because of the new Salafi ideology we lost so many contacts and disintegrated our celebrations. We are the ‘true Muslims’ so we want to love the Prophet because we only are in right path. They are even opposing our children’s birthday in the name of bidah. When girls are singing and playing, the Prophet did not stop them, it is also a hadith. But for alcohol, pork, interest, adultery and all, Prophet did put a stop and termed them haram. There you cannot find differences in opinion. The matter of music is still not having a single opinion among scholars. As you follow the imams with the opinion that music is haram, you should strictly follow it and should not entertain it. As I follow the opinions of scholars such as Qarlavi in this matter, I will be supporting and entertaining all good forms of music. These issues do not matter to me because I am a true believer and I am adapting Islam into the present”.⁴¹⁷

In the light of the above, it is clear that the religious texts that stand as a basis for those who maintain that singing is haram are either ambiguous or inauthentic. The hadith attributed to Prophet Muhammad is valid as evidence on the judgment of prohibition. Moreover, all these hadith are declared ‘weak’ by the followers of Ibn Hazm, Malik, Ibn Hanbali, and Ash-Shafi. It seems then that it is only a popular practice in the community.

The language of Islamic activism has provided both Jamaat and Solidarity Youth Movement a special space in the community. The perspective of the Jamaat group completely differ from others in diverse matters. The Moududian idea of political Islam and the idea of the constitution of Islamic nations and the controversial stands on the question of democracy, secularism of the country have been successfully covered and the group has adopted a new pragmatic strategy and new language to communicate with the people for its vote bank politics. The group is attending a mass kind of Islamic activism and using their media to spread this new pragmatic language in Kerala that is quite flexible. Recently the Solidarity Youth Movement has

⁴¹⁷ Interview with Najumudheen on 27 January 2012 at Kozhikode.

transformed to become a political party and this transformation of a group is a telling example of the secularization process in the context of Kerala.

The celebrations of other communities apart from the Islamic celebrations have been much debated among the Muslim religious groups in India as well as in Kerala. The approach towards the non-Muslim celebrations from the Muslim community gives us a complete diverse picture about the groups. The typical assumption is that the purification activism done by the Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami groups is that they had been fighting against all kind of evil practices in the community. Then the main question is that how to differentiate a certain practice as Islamic or un-Islamic. What is the scale to measure the degree of un-Islamism in the practices? For example the celebrations of Milad-un-Nabi are un-Islamic for the Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami but it is considered as Islamic for Sunni Muslims. Regarding the issue of Onam celebration (normally celebrated by Hindus in Kerala, but it is a state festival) the Sunni group has different understandings and they are against the celebration of Onam but Jamaat-e-Islami is supportive of the Onam celebrations. As earlier I have said, the critics have the opinion that the Jamaat-e-Islami has to show off their openness because of their recent decision to be part of Indian politics. So only they are taking a pro-approach for all this kind of non-Islamic practices. Another version is that the Jamaat-e-Islami as a reformist movement fighting against the evil practices within the Islamic fold rather than going to judge other non-Muslims celebrations. As part of cultural togetherness the Jamaat-e-Islami group is supportive of Onam celebrations. The coming section of this chapter is going to discuss the diverse approaches of the groups regarding the different celebrations that are held by other non-Muslims.

The question as to whether Islam permits Muslims to celebrate or offer greetings for any kind of festival other non-Muslims celebrate creates serious discussions among the Muslim groups in Kerala. While looking at the debate related to the Onam celebration, one can see that the primary question is whether the Onam festival is a Hindu festival or state festival. Whether it has cultural dimension or it has religious dimension, if it is religious one, whether one can include this as part of accepting the pluralism or oppose the pluralism of culture, should we take Onam food from the Hindu brethren's home, is that haram or halal, these are the discussions among the

Muslim groups in Kerala. Regarding this topic I started my journey, while my enquiry, one of my friends, Salim Tirur, a supporter of Mujahid group, working as an editor in a popular newspaper showed me a picture and the picture was Jamaat-e-Islami activists celebrating an Onam festival. During my enquiry, I asked Shamsudheen⁴¹⁸, an A.P Sunni activist about the picture, he told me that:

“I found out that Jamaat’s have two celebrations, one is the Eid-ul-Fitr and the second one is Eid-ul-Azah, it means the two eid celebrations they have, Jamaat-e-Islami talking about this only for last sixty years, but after 2002 they changed their approach because now they have their own political party. To contest in the elections and to win the seats they need the other religions’ votes. So that they are trying to make a mask in front of others, that is they wanted to show in front of others that they are very secular and I believe that this also a part of that programme. According to that they are celebrating the Onam festival. But they are not ready to celebrate our Prophet’s birthday. They think the celebration of Prophet’s birthday is bidah, but they do not think it is bidah for the Onam celebration, because they need vote and support from the non-Muslims.



(Jamaat activists conducting the Onam celebration and the distribution of Onam kit)

The celebration of Onam by the Jamaat activists attracted a wider attention among the Muslim public sphere of Kerala, almost all the newspapers and media covered the programme. The response from the wider society was very progressive, almost all sections of people supported the new initiatives of Jamaat-e-Islami. A Jamaat-e-Islami activist, Salih told me that “we have no hidden agenda. We have only one agenda that

⁴¹⁸ Personal Interview with Jamaat activists Samshudheen Karuthedath.

is accepting the plurality, accepting others and respecting others' festivals. We are always encouraging this: because we are living in a plural society and we co-operate with non-Muslims".⁴¹⁹

Jamaat-e-Islami mushavara member and the chief editor of Madhyamam Daily, O. Abdurahiman explains that the government announced that it is a national festival and as a secular country, it is our responsibility to celebrate the day, I did not find anything as shirk, if it is there, avoid only those shirks, it is a people's festival. So we find nothing as wrong in this, it is our part of culture. So we are not finding anything as wrong in this, it is part of our culture".⁴²⁰

Later for the question regarding the Christmas celebration, Jamaat leader took another approach. He said "the Prophet Eisa (Jesus Christ) was one of our prophets. We have no right to celebrate any birthdays includes our last prophet's birthday, so that celebrating Christmas will be shirk". He further advised that it is better to be happy with the occasion rather than being a part of the celebrations.⁴²¹ Muslims all over the world recognized all the prophets and they should be respected. Not only the last Prophet Mohammed, but all other Prophets including Jesus and Moses. So his advice extends to the Jamaat-e-Islami members to keep a distance from the celebrations because they consider that the celebration of Prophet's Mohammed's birthday itself is bidah, not an actual practice of Islam.

The Sunni Muslims openly criticized the Jamaat-e-Islami initiatives to celebrate the Onam, while criticizing the celebration of the Prophet's birthday as bidah. This is a 'joke' initiated to process the support from the non-Muslims. Sunni activist Shamsudheen showed me a banner, the Mujahids published the pamphlet in 1946, in which they mentioned about the importance of the celebration of Milad-e-Sharif and Moulud recitation, and then after 1950s they changed their decision. Shamsudheen lamented "We do not know why they are doing all this in the name of Islam. Actually it is destructing Islam".⁴²²

⁴¹⁹ Personal Interview with Jamaat activists Salih M Kottapally, subeditor of a student magazine 'Campus Live' runs under the Jamaat-e-Islami.

⁴²⁰ Madhyamam Daily, 27 August 2012.

⁴²¹ Abdu Rahman, O. 1998. Islam, Islamika Prasthanam: Chodhyangalkk Marupadi. Islamic Publishing House, pp.273.

⁴²² Personal Interview with Sunni activists Shamsudheen Karuthedath.

During the Sabari Mala season the Hindu devotees bring Payasam from the temple and share it with their Muslim friends. The Hindus consider this as sacred one.⁴²³ The issue of 'aravana payasam'⁴²⁴ became one of the debates among the Muslims in Kerala. The question is whether it is permissible in Islam to drink aravana payasam. Jamaat-e-Islami activists took a positive stand to drink the payasam and believe that there is nothing un-Islamic in this practice. We should respect their belief and also we should eat and drink everything that is halal (permissible) for us.⁴²⁵ I asked a Jamaat leader whether is it possible to eat, he replied to me that actually it is not a part of our culture but our tradition is accepting all this in the name of unity and love. So if you think it is no trouble to eat, you eat as possible for that has no problem.⁴²⁶ The Jamaat group subjected to great criticism regarding this because of their liberal approach towards this issue. While on my journey regarding this issue, a man told me that actually a contractor in Sabarimala is a Muslim and he has the responsibility for making payasam, then who has the problem to eat, I did not think the normal Muslims would not refuse to drink payasam, he said.

The official Mujahid leader's (A.P Abdul Khader Moulavi) harshly criticized the Muslims who drink the payasam because they told that before going for the distribution, they are offering puja over the payasam. For him Muslims should not eat that kind of food.⁴²⁷ The food after doing the puja is not eaten and also the Mujahid leader openly criticized the Palayam (Trivandrum) Juma Masjid imam for attending an *Iftar* (the evening meal when Muslims end the daily Ramadan fast at sunset) programme in a Hindu Kshetra (temple) and he added that his attempt is actually making an impression among others because he is a strict Jamaat-e-Islami leader and activists and so he wants to show his fake and pseudo-secularism.

⁴²³ Sabarimala Sree Dharma Sastha Temple, dedicated to Lord Ayyappa, is the most famous and prominent among all the Sastha temples in Kerala. The uniqueness gathers its voice, as the temple is open to all, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. There is a place near the temple; east to Sannidhanam, dedicated to the Vavar (a sufi and friend of Lord Ayyappa) which is called 'Vavarunada', an epitome of religious harmony.

⁴²⁴ The prasadam (prasadam is a material substance of food that is a religious offering among Hindus, which is consumed by worshippers) at Sabarimala temple is Aravana payasam.

⁴²⁵ Madhyamam Daily, 27 August 2012.

⁴²⁶ Extracts from personal interview with Abdulla Said on February 2013.

⁴²⁷ Kabeer, V.S.M, Mujahid Prasthanathil Sambavikkunnath, Prajaranavum Vasthuthakalum, 22 September 2012, varthamanam.com.

On the very next day the Mathrubumi newspaper reported that the famous hadith scholar A Abdussalam Sullami (Mujahid Madavoor group) opined that ‘eating food as part of Onam celebration is not at all against the Islamic belief and practices. Onam is commemoration to all the people about the unity and diversity. There is no problem in being part of other religious festivals; also it is the way of the Prophet. At the same time we think that eating food in the name of Prophet’s birthday is haram and same it is the case with Milad-e-Sharif and Muharram.’⁴²⁸

The ‘*Sneha Samvadham*’ magazine runs under the control of M.M Akbar, a famous orator of Mujahid official group criticized severely on the decision on participation in Onam celebration. The pages of the magazine were used to convey the message that Onam is purely a religious not a cultural celebration of Kerala. The magazine strongly criticised the policy of secular governments for using Hindu symbols as nation’s symbols. The magazine stated:

“It was in the 1960’s Pattom Thanupilla Ministry decided to include the Onam fest into the fold of the nation’s festivals. Till the 1960s the celebration was purely religious, and there was no dispute over the celebration of Onam, the entire Hindu followers celebrated the Onam as how the Muslims and Christians celebrate their Eid and Christmas respectively. Actually the celebration is against the Mahabali and the lower section because the celebration praising the Vamana and through this it is a festival of higher caste/class. It is purely religious and has nothing with the secular fold. From its beginning onwards, when the government decided to include Onam as a state festival, the intellectuals were opposed because of the religious element of the celebration. The historian Thayat criticised the government’s decision as Hinduisation of secular state and he predicted the forthcoming disputes over the celebration. He added that the entire section of Thiyya, Pulaya, Ashari, Mooshari, Christians and Muslims are out from this celebration, it is a celebration of a minority high caste Hindus. How can the secular state adapt religious symbols? K Mukundhan also criticised the lower caste groups for their celebration of Onam, because he says it is coming from

⁴²⁸ Mathrubumi, 12 December 2006.

their ignorance and the government paved the way for the ignorance”. The magazine discussing Christians attitude towards the celebration, it noted that the Udayamperoor Sunnahadose⁴²⁹ seriously warned the Christians against the celebration of Onam festival because it is purely a religious one. The magazine seriously questioned the religious label given this festival and the plan of government to impose this as state festival, and so this debate got a larger opinion and wider coverage among the Malayali public life.⁴³⁰

Similarly, the celebration on the day of Christmas was also a debatable issue among these groups. On 4 January 2012, as part of my library visit, I was travelling to Calicut, while on the journey I noticed an old board hanging in the street written by Mujahids about the Christmas celebration. The notice says that the greetings and wishes offered to Christmas is not an Islamic culture and if anyone is seen doing this it should be shirk and haram. The report read ‘A Muslim who wishes or replies to ‘Merry Christmas’ clearly testifies that Allah ‘begets’ and Jesus Christ not His messenger but His son. This mere and simple act which is something that is undoubtedly haram (forbidden) and has a disastrous impact on his/her monotheistic approach of Islam i.e. (there are no gods but God alone worthy of worship). What people do not realize that when you are wishing Merry Christmas you are agreeing that Jesus Christ was born on 25 of December and you are agreeing he is the begotten son of god and so it should be a shirk. Kindly refrain from all kind of celebrations and food offered with respect to this occasion and take this as an opportunity to introduce Islam’s beautiful monotheistic concept to your friends’.

Later, for the question regarding the Christmas celebration, Jamaat leader took another approach. According to Abdurrahman, the Prophet Eisa (Jesus Christ) was one of our Prophets. We have no right to celebrate any birthdays includes our last

⁴²⁹ Udayamperoor is a small town situated in Ernakulum District, Kerala. Synod of Diamper, (Udayamperoor Sunnahadose) held at this place, is a diocesan synod (council) that formally united the ancient Saint Thomas Christians of the Malabar Coast. It was convened on 20 June 1599, under the leadership of Alexio de Menezes.

⁴³⁰ PVA Primrose. 2012. Onam Agoshathinte Mathavum Dhesheeyathayum. Sneha Samvadham (Malayalamam), September, pp. 11-18.

Prophet's birthday, so that celebration of Christmas will be shirk, and he advised that it is better to avoid those celebrations.⁴³¹

In my field work I met a school teacher, who told me "our forefathers had no such discussions, 'if they like to eat they eat', nothing related with it, but now the extremist groups are always create debates and we are losing the unity that we had/have in the past. According to him these deliberations started only after 1990s. There are numerous sectarian groups which came out, and they want to 'survive' here in the changing political climate. Only for pragmatic reason they are doing this. It was in 2006, a technical college in Kozhikode objected to their students competing in Onam Pookalam (flavour arrangement competition and payasam distribution)".⁴³² The Muslim Educational Society (MES) of Kerala made a press release in which they seriously criticised the Sunni groups and a section of Mujahid Moulavis fatwa against the Onam celebration and Onam food sharing. The MES⁴³³ relationship with the Sunni Samastha was not good since its inception. The MES commented that Onam is a part of Malayali festival and it is a part of our culture. This has nothing to do with the religion and no need to create any controversy over this; we have to adopt the culture because it is our behaviour to receive everything that is good.⁴³⁴

The very next day the official religious scholar's body of E.K Sunni Samastha SYS (Sunni Yuvajana Sangham) criticised the MES opinion about the celebration of Onam. The ulama groups however defended their right to make religious opinion. SYS state committee opined that 'all are accepting and give reverence to all the celebrations. Eid and Milad are our celebrations and we only celebrate this, likewise the non-Muslims are celebrating their own festivals. No need to mix up others'

⁴³¹ Abdu Rahiman, O. 1998. *Islam, Islamika Prasthanam: Chodhyangalkk Marupadi*. Kozhikode: Islamic Publishing House.

⁴³² Interview with Abdu Mash on 29 January at Calicut city.

⁴³³ The role of Muslim Educational Society is significant in the widespread emergence of Mujahid movement in Kerala, especially in Malabar. The education played a major role to think young about the traditional practices and they inspired new movements in the name of purification of Islam. Meanwhile, in MES journal published in September 1970, there was a news about the 'written copy' of Quran by Said Ibn Sabith who was the disciple and private secretary of Prophet Mohammed that is now kept in the Thashkent Usback museum. After the death of last Prophet, the third Caliph of Islam, Usman, ordered to his colleagues to collect all Quran verses from different sources and produce an essential model, in which the chapters are in a new form. This was the news in the journal and it provoked the Samastha leaders all over Kerala. They preached the message that MES questioned the essentials of Islam and they cannot cooperate and accommodate with the latter since they created tensions and conflicts in the society through such news.

⁴³⁴ Islam Online, 01 September 2012.

celebrations with our celebrations. It is not at all a matter of discussion for us; it will create tensions and polarization among the religious communities.⁴³⁵ However Samastha body asked MES to apologise for their intervention and false interpretations over the religious practices.

I had a long discussion with a Quran Sunnath Society Kerala state leader, Basheer Tanalur. While discussing about the Onam, Christmas celebrations and opinions from his group, he told me that “Well Christmas over the years has lost its religious connotation and become more of a celebration and family occasion where people gather to give out gifts to each other so we think some Muslims do celebrate Christmas. Do not worry about it too much there is nothing religious about giving out gifts and goodwill to all it is a universal thing. Actually the paradox is that the Muslims all over the world believe that a Muslim man can marry a Christian woman. The actual questions is not about the celebration, because celebrating Christmas is not a part of Islam but marrying the Christian girls is part of Islam. Here we can see their actual intention. Accepting plurality in the name of Islam and it shows their agenda of conversion. Also they are not ready to send their daughters to Christian houses because Muslims will lose their numerical strength. For this, the clever idea for Jamaat is that they says that Islam believes in patriarchy and decedents and lineage is also patriarchal not matrilineal. Then why they are not taking any approach against the Muslims still who follow the matrilineal family system in the costal lines of Malabar. As a Muslim we strictly believe that the true Muslim has to follow Quran and Sunnah. First we see revelations for a certain matter in Quran. If we do not found it, we should look into Sunnah. Regarding the celebration of Christmas we do not find any commandment in Quran directly. We are not believing that hadith will give us the right directions”.⁴³⁶ The group is very famous for its demand to open up the right to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) in the Muslim community. Even they are rejecting all the hadith as human construction and follow only Quran and other than that ready for *ijtihad*.

⁴³⁵ Ibid, pp.01.

⁴³⁶ Personal interview with Basheer Tanalur, state leader of Quran Sunnath Society. It was in 12/ 13 January 2013.

There will be a variety of opinions rather than being uniform conclusion for the public sphere discussions. Dialogues in public sphere do not necessarily end in consensus; they often reaffirm or redefine differences. The Muslim religious groups in Malabar, Kerala that are involved in the discussions and debates often seem to ready for making changes in the interpretations of the text to suit them for public discussions. To explore the politics of the public sphere, one needs to understand not only how the consensus on issues is reached and the collective-will seemingly forged, but also how dialogues across incommensurable frameworks persistently break down, negotiations and persuasions fail, and how the different languages of debate remain mutually incomprehensible to participants. These breakdowns and collapse of dialogues, characterize the politics of our times.

The contemporary discourses in the everyday life of Muslims based on the question of true practices and the contestations to garb the right of 'true' culture for the Muslim groups, the public life of Malabar questioning the very idea of homogeneity and the uniqueness in the everyday life of a Mappila. The Islamic explanations are sometimes just antithetical to others' views but the followers keep it as the right interpretation. The question of whether such interpretations are correct or not becomes irrelevant in a sociological enquiry and it becomes sensible to ask under what circumstances that a particular kind of theological explanation is adopted and why.

The Muslim religious group's objectives and theological understandings are not stable and if it is flexible, the politicisation may occur and the radical transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami, espousing a visibly secular posture and entering into a novel form of Islamic activism is also an illustration of the increasing secularisation of the religious groups in Kerala. By way of conclusion I would say that the history of the Muslim League and Jamaat-e-Islami are very essential for one to understand the Muslim community as a separate identity. The demand for the separate autonomous region later became a controversy and League was subjected to harsh criticism from the others (Muslim and non-Muslim) mainstream. After independence gradually League won the confidence of the other communities. As a result they won some seats in the state elections. But the activities and approaches taken by the Muslim League at different times are being subjected to severe monitoring from the right wing forces. It has created in them a dilemma for their approach towards their community cause and

most of the time they were compelled to show their loyalty to the nation than the community. The reformism and revivalist tendencies became powerful only after the 1950s in Kerala. The Jamaat's opposition to the democratic values of the country alienated them further from the public sphere, but later they changed their vision and entered into the public political system which once considered casting vote for taghoot government as sin and against the Islamic belief. I can see that the religious groups of Kerala keep changing their strategies to fit in the changing context and for that they are ready to make the interpretations of the text to suit their strategic needs. The process of secularisation made them more aware about their identity articulations in the public sphere and keeping the religiousness (Islam) in mind these groups are posturing themselves as secular.

The relationship between secularism as a state project and secularisation as a social process unfurls accommodation, appropriations and rejections across Muslim groups. An important implication of the contestation between Muslim groups is the 'objectification' and 'rationalisation of religion'. A key element of the activities of each group is its differentiating beliefs and practices from those of competing groups. Building on my ethnographic work, I show how the Muslim groups are increasingly having to choose and explaining their choice of practices, beliefs and associations. This, I content, is an important aspect of "objectification of religion"⁴³⁷ in which religion is not emptied out of its transcendent value but is transformed into a more historically situated, critically analysed set of values and practices. Increasing familiarity to the doctrinal concepts and forms of religious reasoning that had previously been the domain of religious scholars alone but often entails even on the part of lay practitioners, some familiarity with doctrinal assumptions and theological reasoning involved in religious rights and rituals.

As we pay attention to practices in order to understand what is unique about the contemporary focus on Muslim arguments and practices, I suggest that each of these views needs further to be analysed at the level of micro-practices in terms of larger goals towards which it is oriented, the different practical context in which each type

⁴³⁷ Eickelman, Dale & James Piscatori. 1996. *Muslim Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

of reflection is located, and the consequences each form of understanding as for how one lives practically, both in relationship to oneself and to others.

4.7 Islamophobia and Counter Propaganda

The terms and characteristics of islamophobia are still debated. The general understanding over the meaning of the term is the practice of discrimination against the Muslims by making exclusions from the socio-cultural and economic life of the nation. The concept also encompasses another ideology that Islam does not have any values in common with other cultures and is inferior to the other cultures, it has a violent political ideology rather than a normal practice. The idea of islamophobia and its affects are being discussed in the public sphere in Kerala. Discussion in the media, especially the Muslim owned media to counter the right wing and its ideas created polarization between Hindus and Muslims. However, what is of interest is the polarisation among the religious groups in Malabar in Kerala, it is alleged that young Muslim boys and men reportedly target college girls belonging to non-Muslim communities for conversion to Islam in the name of love. In Kerala, allegations mainly come from Hindu and Christian communities. While the Muslim groups in Kerala have denied that they are true and Muslim groups such as Sunni A.P, E.K, Mujahid, Quran Sunnath Society criticized the polarisation being caused by groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami and National Democratic Front (NDF) in the community in the name of pan-Islamism. The controversial issue love jihad was garnered international attention during the first decades of the 21 century. It was in January 2012, that Kerala police after an extensive study declared that love jihad was a campaign with no substance.

Different groups marked their comments against this perceived campaign. Christian groups, such as Christian Association for Social Action and Kerala Catholic Bishop Council is concerned about this alleged phenomenon and raised an alert for the Catholic community against the practice. The right wing groups including Shri Ram Sena and Vishwa Hindu Parishat (VHP) announced that it would launch a nationwide 'save our daughters, save India' campaign to combat 'love jihad'. Here in this section, I draw the different responses and approach from the Muslim groups regarding the issue of islamophobia. I shall sketch out how these groups define the term islamophobia in their own language. During 2009-10 Kerala witnessed a massive hate

campaign against the Muslim community alleging that they are in the name of love jihad and converting the Hindu girls to Islam. The issue of love jihad was first reported by the websites such as Haindava Keralam and Jagrithi (under the control of Christians). Later the newspapers in Kerala especially, Kerala Kaumudi and Malayala Manorama also reported the same issue in their newspapers based on the web reports. The social media were very sensitive while discussing it in the web. The groups within the Muslim communities started to make allegations over the others that they are reason as to why this issue cropped up. The groups such as NDF and Jamaat-e-Islami faced criticism from the other folds within and outside Islam. As mentioned earlier, the leaders of political parties made the derogatory comments against these young people. The communist leader V.S Achudanandan openly criticized the ‘islamisation’ process of the NDF group in Kerala where certain media celebrated his comments as directed against all Muslims. It was in July, that the former chief minister of Kerala, V.S Achudanandan referenced the alleged matrimonial conversion of non-Muslim girls as part of an effort to make Kerala a Muslim majority state. The Muslim groups of Kerala have different views towards the issue of love jihad. Muslim religious groups advocate the idea of universal and single Islam talk of islamophobia and the major criticism against this pan-Islamic group is that they are promoting a kind of psycho phobia among the Muslims itself that make them vulnerable. I had a discussion with my friend regarding the issue of love jihad in Kerala. He works as a school teacher in a well-known Jamaat-e-Islami institute.⁴³⁸

He said that: “it was all false, the love jihad issue in Kerala, which had been debated in Kerala for several months in 2009-2010, the vicious campaign unleashed by the mainstream media against the Muslim community. According to the reports, certain Muslim fundamentalist groups had instigated Muslim youngsters to fall in love with Hindu and Christian girls to marry and convert to Islam. Later, these girls were, according to certain media reports, either sold in the flesh market or trained to be militants. It was a Keralaites manifestation of ‘islamophobia’. He said, for the first time in India, it showed a unique alliance between two totally opposing parties: the Church and the Sangh. He said this provided a golden opportunity to tarnish

⁴³⁸ Interview with O Safarulla on 6 February 2014.

the image of educated and accomplished Muslims in the state, the foes united and found a common target: Muslim youngsters in professional campuses”.

He said that even the schools became a target of this right wing group, he reminded that there are pamphlets distributed by the Christian brothers to their girls to be aware of the issue. Even the universities became a place for division between two big minority communities.

During the love jihad issue, the Muslim groups such as Sunni, Mujahid and Quran Sunnath Society severely criticized NDF for their attitude towards other communities. The major allegations against the NDF was that they are promoting a kind of fear among the Muslims itself by propagating that Muslims are under threat from the right wing and by doing this they tried to justify NDF ideology that ‘defence is not an offence’. The same criticism prevails against the Jamaat-e-Islami also in this matter. Both Jamaat-e-Islami and NDF propagate the idea of universal Islam with rejection of the notion of pluralism in the community. Both right wing media and Muslim and non-Muslim owned media have taken up the issue. A kind of polarization between the media occurred in Kerala.

There are counter movements which happened among the educated Muslims to counter the arguments against love jihad. One among them is a Malayalam satirical short film ‘*Al-Moidu*’ is about the media manufacturing sensational stories of love jihad and terrorism around peaceful Muslim neighbourhoods. It talks about the islamophobia among the media and how the media is manufacturing the false news. Malappuram, the Muslim majority district of Kerala has recently been an easy scape goat for many a such targeted propaganda insults like ‘love jihad’, ‘centre of passport scams⁴³⁹’, ‘a place where the less brainy school children get through the exams taking habitual short cuts like ‘copying⁴⁴⁰’. We can see hundreds of examples for this bias against the Muslim community in Kerala. Recently, a group of Muslim school children reportedly tasted direct verbal abuse in the state schools youth festival, by a

⁴³⁹ The former chief minister of Kerala, V.S Achudanandan had alleged that the new appointment of Abdul Rasheed as passport officer in Malappuram raised suspicion. He alleged a former gun-man of state Industries Minister, for human trafficking and passport tampering that happened under his patronage.

⁴⁴⁰ Former Chief Minister of Kerala, V.S Achudanandan was alleged by his opponents to have made the statement that the children of Malappuram were winning exams by copying. The statement had raised much criticism then and even now.

police officer of the rank of DGP! While the children were trying to register their protest against the bias of judges against their performance, the officer reportedly abused them saying 'you terrorists are making trouble'. The issue became a major discussion among the Malayalis in Kerala.⁴⁴¹ In yet another incident reported in the media that, a young group owned by Zakeen Production TV made an 18 minute satire documentary regarding the islamophobia and the resultant allegations against the Muslims about fake 'love jihad'. The documentary can be summarized like this;

“A newspaper editor is worried of his falling readership. Discusses with his friend and colleagues. The latter advise him to manufacture and sell some new- generation sensational script/features based on 'terrorist activity growing' in the Muslim-dominated district. The story, however, is as ridiculous as a Muslim toddy shop owner selling some new formula toddy giving more booze and thus the village toddy shop in Malappuram attracts more and more people. The non-Muslim customers while get too severely inebriated unable to stand up and return to their homes, the protagonist Al-Moidu , in the dead of night converts them to Islam by putting on their heads special white caps brought from Ponnani (a destination associated with converting to Islam, where non-Muslims of Kerala get initiated). The newspaper owner finds the terror-jihad story meeting the needed requirements of sensationalism; nevertheless, he asks if people are such dimwits to digest such a fantastic story. His friend reassures: If love jihad stories were believed by them and had worked, anything would work”.⁴⁴²

The response from the wider society was different, one of my friends, Jafar, a supporter of A.P Sunni group, now working in the Gulf for more than 5 years, responded to the issue thus:

“The real problem creators are a few minority sections among the Muslims. Jamaat-e-Islami and NDF are propagating false ideology of Islam, they are always reminding us about the threat and not the peace. They think that a kind of insecurity among the Muslim youth will help them to spread their ideology. I am a Muslim, and I am proud to say so. However, whenever I see

⁴⁴¹ Reporter live, 14 January 2013, pp.4.

⁴⁴² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLgr3hbMirI>

Muslims committing terror acts across the world or trying to force sharia law on others, I can understand why people (especially in the west) get angry and consider it barbaric! How do you expect a non-Muslim to act if they are being treated this way?! I am from Kuwait, and even though Kuwait is ruled by sharia Law, men and/or women are not forced to do anything they do not want! Women can vote, they are not forced to wear the hijab, they are well educated and they play a vital role in society! Same goes with men, of course. There is no such thing as the death penalty for someone who converted from Islam. There are millions of non-Muslims living and working peacefully in Kuwait and across the Arabian Gulf! So what are those 'Muslims' who are part of Jamaat-e-Islami and NDF in Kerala trying to spread?! They are not spreading Islam, they are spreading hate and they are using Islam as a cover to justify their own agendas! Why do you think so many people who emigrated from Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, the Arab World, etc., still practice Islam in those countries that they have emigrated to? It is because they know that Islam is not the problem, it is those minority of 'Muslims' in those terrorist groups that are the problem.⁴⁴³

4.8 Summary

The questions raised against the NDF are much debatable. The question of authenticity of love jihad does not make any differential opinion among the Muslim groups of Kerala. The Muslim religious groups are united about the totality of love jihad. However, the differences among them predicated as the perspectives of Islam/Muslim communities they offer. The counter approach taken by the Muslim groups as in the name of defence, has become more problematic in the prevailing situation.

The above pages delineated the claims and counter claims among different Muslims groups on representing true Islam. The claims of representing true Islam is also evident in the contestation over Theological issues among these groups. The next chapter give an account of the theological debates as well as the varied practices

⁴⁴³ Interview with Jafar through Web on 6 February 2014.

among Muslims of Kerala. Accounts from the field about the practices of these groups has added solidity to different claim that we are trying to capture.

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 qutba⁴⁴⁴. 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 path 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 Kerala⁴⁴⁵. The Friday prayer or jumua salat is an important *ibadah* (obedience, submission to Allah) for each Muslim, because it is a weekly salat, 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).

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 Friday⁴⁴⁶. 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 group⁴⁴⁷. 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,

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 Zuhur a Muslim has to follow four raka’ats every day. The specialty of the Friday prayer, i.e. Qutba is that a Muslim is required to follow only two raka’ats and the other two raka’ats 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* (prayer 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*,”⁴⁴⁸ despite saying that “when there is a call for prayer, rush for the prayer”.
- 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

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.⁴⁴⁹ 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.⁴⁵⁰

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 zuhr⁴⁵¹ 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.

⁴⁴⁹ Zaraboso, Jamal al-Din. 1994. *The Friday prayer: The fiqh of the prayer*. Mississippi: Islamic Assembly of North American Publishers, pp. 514.

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.

⁴⁵³ Ibid, pp.19.

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*⁴⁵⁴ 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.

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 Abdul 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 '*fatihah*' (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 remarkable".⁴⁵⁶

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

⁴⁵⁵ He was a Khazi of Cheruvadi/Kodiyathur area and he introduced Malayalam qutba in the mahal.

⁴⁵⁶ *Samastha* 80th Anniversary Booklet, 2009, pp. 33.

⁴⁵⁷ The term '*kalam*' means speech or wording.

remarkable point is that most of the imams of Sunni masjids follow and read “Nabathiya qutba”.⁴⁵⁸ 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*’⁴⁵⁹ for qutba. It begins with ‘*ma’shara*’⁴⁶⁰ by the mulla⁴⁶¹ 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*”⁴⁶², 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.⁴⁶³

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 ‘*farzs*’. 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

⁴⁶³ Sal-sabeel Monthly, 1927, Feb.-20, book-2, vol-09, p-9.

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*⁴⁶⁴ 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*⁴⁶⁵ 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*⁴⁶⁶ 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

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 Ikwanul 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.⁴⁶⁷ 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’⁴⁶⁸, 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

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,⁴⁶⁹ 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

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-Akhir 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 Mamburam⁴⁷⁰ 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

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 himself. 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 20 century. It was in 1940s that the Jamaat-e-Islami activism reached Kodyathur, in the Cheruvadi area. K.C Abdulla Moulavi introduced this Jamaat-e-Islami ideology in Kodyathur, 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”.⁴⁷¹

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

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 purathakkal*⁴⁷² 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 Kodyathur 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 Kodyathur Khazi and Mushavara appointed E.K Aboobakar Musliyar to give appropriate answer to the fatwa and the issue. Later a debate took place between Kodyathur 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 Kodyathur 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.⁴⁷³ 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.⁴⁷⁴

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*⁴⁷⁵ 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*⁴⁷⁶” for Madrasa, dars⁴⁷⁷, and othupalli⁴⁷⁸ 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.⁴⁷⁹ 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

⁴⁷³ Gafoor, Abdul. Justice-Mathrubhumi Newspaper, 6 April Saturday 2000, pp. 8.

⁴⁷⁴ Prabhodhanam Weekly, 15 October 2012, P-18.

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.

⁴⁷⁶ Moulavi Muhammed. 1955. *Kifayathul Vildhan Fee Thwahathir Rahman*. Madrasa text book. pp. 40.

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 be 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 in to 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.⁴⁸⁰ 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

⁴⁸⁰ Samastha 60 Varshika Smaranika. 1985. (republished in 1 January 2012). Kozhikode: Heritage Publications.

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 Quran⁴⁸¹, 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.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 lillah (الحمد لله) translated into English or any other language as 'All Praise to be God'.

⁴⁸² Personal interview with historian Abdurrahman Mangad, was on 9 August 2013.

Now the *al* (ال) conveys different meanings when we translate into English or any other languages. This *al* (ال) 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 *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 in his Fatha-ul-Bari 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*⁴⁸³ 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.

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 numitu* 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 Musliyers 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 Musliyers 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 Musliyers opposed English education and modern scientific education in the name of haram”.⁴⁸⁴

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

⁴⁸⁴ Extracts from an interview with Abdu master on 20 August 2013.

scholars entered in to the field of translation. But whether it is Muslim or non-Muslims and perhaps women⁴⁸⁵ 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 Kodyathur 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”.⁴⁸⁶

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

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 Musliyar's opinion.

Criticizing K.V Musliyar so severely, E.K Hassan Musliyar authored a book titled "*Thahdeer-ul-Ikhvan 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.⁴⁸⁷

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

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”.⁴⁸⁸ 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.⁴⁸⁹ 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

⁴⁸⁸ Sadhakathulla Musliyar, K.K. 2002. *Samboorna Fatwa*, Vandoor.pp.312.

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 Moulavis 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”.⁴⁹⁰ 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. Cheriya mundam 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 from 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.

Chapter VI

Gender, State and Religion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter mainly discusses the questions related to gender and community rights in Islam and it begins by a description of *adab*⁴⁹¹ and *akhlaq* (which literally means ethics), and different directives that Muslims, especially Muslim women, need to comply with, in their everyday lives. The first part of the chapter explains the ethics and appropriate behaviour in the daily life of a Muslim and through this understanding it sketches out the differences in ethics and behaviour among Muslims at the level of practices. There is widespread disbelief and distrust regarding moral degeneration associated with the influence of western values and modernisation. Therefore, the notion of appropriate behaviour has variety of meanings.

I would like to pursue a somewhat different approach to ethics; showing here the way is the work of Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*. She writes, “originally grounded in the tradition of ancient Greek philosophy, and more recently expanded by Michel Foucault, ethics in this formulation is founded upon particular forms of discursive practice, instantiated through specific sets of procedures, techniques, and exercises, through which highly specific ethical moral subjects come to be formed”.⁴⁹² An inquiry into ethics from this perspective requires that one examines not simply the values enshrined in moral codes, but the different ways in which people follow these codes, something anthropologists are uniquely situated to observe. What is consequential in this framework is not necessarily whether people follow the moral norms or not, but what relationships they establish between the diverse constitutive elements of the self (body, reason, emotion, volition, and so on) and a particular norm. In this view, the specific gestures, styles, and formal expressions that characterize one’s relationship to a moral code are not a contingent but a necessary means to understand the kind of relationship that is established between the self and structures of social authority, and between what one is, what one wants, and what

⁴⁹¹ The word ‘adab’ literally means civility and decorum. It indicates modes of behaviour and the discipline of the mind and the manner of conduct of one’s life by which one is trained in any excellence or profession.

⁴⁹² Mahmood, Saba. 2005. *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

kind of work one performs on oneself in order to realize a particular modality of being and personhood. The approach I have outlined here does not assume a homogeneous notion of a self that is coextensive with a given culture or temporality. Rather, as I will show, very different configurations of personhood can cohabit the same cultural and historical space, with each configuration being the product of a specific discursive formation rather than of the culture at large. I do not begin my inquiry from the vantage point of an individuated consciousness that uses various corporeal techniques to acquire a cultural specificity. Rather, my investigation treats the empirical character of bodily practices as the terrain upon which the topography of a subject comes to be mapped.

The second part of the chapter discusses about gender related issues that concern Muslim women. Due to the strong connection with the gulf, the Mappila Muslims adopted the cultural identity of the pan-Islamism and started to practice it here with variations. The pan-Islamists in Kerala supported this initiative and advocated for those cultural adaptations such as wearing veil etc., Along with this, the chapter discusses the recent debate in Kerala about a government circular on Muslim girl's age of marriage. It recommended to reduction of the marriageable age of Muslim girls from 18 to 16. For the first time, a group of Muslim women came out with the protest against the ulama and they burned the effigy of the religious scholars in public due to their disputed comments against women. In the final section of the chapter, I shall draw in the different approaches taken by Muslim and non-Muslim groups towards this issue.

6.2 Adab and Akhlaq

The major questions that arise amongst the scholars regarding the teachings of Islam is either one or many. Why do the differences arise from a single text? If it is single, there is no differences the ways to attain salvation through different paths of action, of knowledge, and of devotion. According to Burgel, here in Islam one can define three domains, *sharia* (the law), *tariqa* (the way of the Sufis and saints), and *adab*; these are analytically distinguishable and have their respective specialists seen in tension with each other. Yet they all emerge at the core, as attempts to codify and embody the practice of the Prophet, so in some way they remain ultimately the same in

mainstream Islam.⁴⁹³ The Prophet Mohammed, once passing the responsibilities of rules and conduct of people of Yemen to his follower Mua'd, inquired of him as to how he would proceed with the decisions in cases before him. As Islam sets defined rules and regulations to the followers, Mua'd replied to the Prophet that he would depend on the guidance of *Kitab Allah* (Quran), then Prophet said to Mua'd that, if you do not find anything to guide you in Kitab Allah and you feel like you failed to get the path to solve the problem, what would you do then? He replied that he would depend upon the guidance and the way of life that he had learned from our last Prophet. The Prophet asked again-“in that case what would you do if you do not find anything from both the Quran and the sunnah of your Prophet?” Then Mua'd replied that “I would then come to a decision through my own understanding”. It is said that the Prophet placed his hand on his chest and said, “Praise be to Allah who showed the true light to my representative and made him adhere to the principles to which I am agreeable”.⁴⁹⁴ In this context we can say, that the adab is different from the sunnah of the Prophet. The adab is something that we have to follow for good things. It is not the way of life of the Prophet as sunnah, but a tradition that every Muslim has to follow. The word adab and its implications are not of a religious origin but have some religious experiences within them.⁴⁹⁵ It sets forth praiseworthy qualities and dispositions of a man in profusion and demands of him to shun those aspects of conduct that are evil.

Since adab first emerged as a non-religious code⁴⁹⁶ of moral and social behaviour, professional knowledge, etc. anyone can follow it in their life as a tradition. The term, which is not mentioned in the Quran, comes from other sources, is used as a translation for both the Greek *paideia* and Persian *farhang* (culture). Due to varying interpretations of sharia laws, people believe that they were misled and they troubled to get the original sources, and due to the unavailability of original texts the adab received a prominent place in the Muslim community. The word *akhlaq* (the singular

⁴⁹³ Burgel J. C. 1987. Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 107, No. 1, pp.187.

⁴⁹⁴ Tanzil, Rahman.1966. Adab Al-Qadi. *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 5, No.2, pp.200.

⁴⁹⁵ Burgel J. C. 1987. Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 107, No. 1, pp.187.

⁴⁹⁶ The word adab and its usage were a non-religious code of norms based on the Persian tradition of court ethics and Greek philosophy. Adab is an authentic alternative to the sharia, where an accurate distinction to the latter is not available.

word of akhlaq is *khuluq*) is interchangeable to adab. The term akhlaq, can be literally translated into English as ethics. The word khuluq is mentioned in the Quran two times, (al-Shura: 137 and al-Qalam: 4). Here, below I shall explain the very idea of daily routine that every Muslim has to follow in their daily routine.

6.3 Moral Conduct of a Muslim

We can see adab as something that every Muslim should follow in his every day behaviour. The communities are in debate about the proper behaviour of a Muslim. Each and every group has its own understandings about the appropriate behaviour of a normal Muslim. For every appropriate manner followed through customs through generations became a subject of censorship from the different movements such as Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami etc. Here in this section, I am going to explain some of the etiquettes that the Muslim community should abide. The appropriate behaviour may be varied from one religious group to another, most of the time differences in practices will be based on law of the community and not the religion. I sketch out the diversities in approach by the communities towards the appropriate behaviour.

The concept of personal hygiene is given importance because of the belief that God's favourites are those who make efforts to be neat and pure. The purity of soul implies cleansing it of all impurities, infidelity, polytheism, sin and vice. So every Muslim has to keep certain kinds of ethics throughout his life. There are many daily routines a Muslim has to follow. In the early morning, he has to wake up. The purpose of waking up early in the morning should be for *namaz* (prayer). Before starts namaz a Muslim has some duties. It is prescribed through the manners and deeds of Prophet and valid through the authentic hadith. After waking up, the people will pass urine in the specified place. Another appropriate behaviour is that do not discharge the urine on the floor of the toilet. So one has to sit in the toilet to pass the urine. And when passing the urine, do not sit on the direction of *Qibla*⁴⁹⁷, nor with back to the Qibla. A Muslim has to use water or stone to clean or purify the private parts. Enter into the lavatory using the left leg and pray to God to protect from both male and female devils. Pass urine on soft ground, so that its drops do not splash around. This is a small description about the practices that a Muslim has to do in the morning as part of

⁴⁹⁷ Qibla is the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays during salat. It is fixed in the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca.

the daily routine. This kind of daily routine is very significant for the Muslim to fulfil the appropriate code of conduct as an Individual. In the modern context Muslim men are also wearing pants and are facing difficulties in sitting while passing urine. Previously the Sunni mosques in Kerala catered to the needs of people who wore the traditional *mundu* (dhoti). The Sunnis strongly believe that Muslims should sit while they urinate in the lavatory. The emergence of new movements such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahids started to construct the lavatory besides the mosques with the purpose of urinating in standing posture. The justification is that, through the words of Siraj; “nowadays, we cannot say that people should not wear pants. People working in professional and technical companies should wear pants. We cannot put pressure upon them, so the best possible way to solve the issue is to allow them urinate in standing posture”.⁴⁹⁸ The mosques run under the control of Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahids in Kerala have the facility to urinate in standing posture. Even the pressure from the modern scenario, E.K Sunni Muslims also started to provide the facility in their mosques to consider the problems faced by the students and elderly people who were compelled to wear pants due to their profession. It was in the last decade of the 20 century, along with the demand for the women-only mosque from the feeder organization of E.K Sunnis, accepted this idea. For them, if the condition of the place or any real hardship prevents the people from sitting down, they can urinate in a standing posture. Regarding this the approach taken by the A.P Sunni Muslims are completely different from all other groups. The mosques under the aegis of A.P Sunnis do not have the facility to discharge urine in standing posture. For them it considered as very dirty and not a part of good behaviour, and it will cause the losing of one’s personal modesty while standing in the public and urinating. A.P Sunni Muslims considered that one of the common habits among people who regularly use urinals is that they also stand up while using a European closet/lavatory. This can result in an unsanitary seat covered with urine and germs. Ayisha the wife of Prophet Mohammed said “if some relates to you that Allah’s messenger urinated while standing, do not believe him. He only urinated while sitting”.⁴⁹⁹ So one can see that Islam generally does not permit people to stand while urinating. The hadith of Muslim

⁴⁹⁸ Interview with Siraj, a social worker from a non-governmental organisation. The interview was through a telephonic conversation on 6 January 2014.

⁴⁹⁹ Ahmad, Al Tirmizi, Al-Nasahi and Ibn Majah.

reported that once the Prophet had told that “beware of the cursed ones”, and when people asked about those cursed ones, he replied “people who relieve themselves in public pathways or in shaded areas”.⁵⁰⁰ As part of daily routine a Muslim has to observe some activities that should be based on the custom as it is apart from the interpretation of the text.

According to Hafiz Abdul Gaffar Moulavi, “do not take any holy books or materials inside the lavatory. If one is carrying mobile phone with literal account inside the phone, do not take in to inside the lavatory. In modern times the people are carrying the audio Quranic recitation in the phones, so followers should take care about that. So if there is any emergency we can switch off the phone before entering to the toilet or bathroom. After finishing the urination or call of the nature, while returning from the toilet one can turn it on again and but do not forget to use the right leg to step outside the toilet”.⁵⁰¹ As part of daily routine a Muslim can do so many appropriate actions based on his adab and akhlaq. Every morning he has to brush his teeth with *miswak* (twig). There is a story that ‘Once some people arrived to visit Prophet Mohammed. Their teeth were stained with yellow grease. On observing their teeth, Prophet directly asked them to form the habit of using miswak. And along with that we must take bath everyday if the situation forces you to do so. “A Muslim should take bath before attending the Friday congregational prayers and apply non-alcoholic fragrance is sunnah of Prophet Mohammed. The Prophet was very fond of perfume. After performing the toilet and rising from the sleep, he habitually used perfume”.⁵⁰² Muslim has to wear clean and neat dress to attend the Friday prayers. So Islam says to its followers that do not go into or pass a mosque in a state of impurity. And a Muslim has to apply oil and comb the hair. Another suggestion is that to trim the overgrown hair of beard with scissors. Apply Suruma in the eyes, and clip the nails and keep clean inside the finger nails. And a Muslim must use a kerchief or clothes while sneezing, so that excretion may not splashed on to anyone else.

There are many duties and obligations that family members including children, father, and mother have to do for keeping the custom of the families in a proper way. As part

⁵⁰⁰ Hadith Muslim, No. 269.

⁵⁰¹ Moulavi Abdul Gaffar, *Nammude Oru Divasam*. Trivandrum: Knowledge Publishers, PP. 5.

⁵⁰² Mohammed Yusuf Islahi. 1980. *Etiquettes of life in Islam*, Lahore: Islamic Publications Limited. pp. 30.

of my field work, I went to Nadapuram and got a home to stay. I stayed with Hassan Moulavi, his wife and 3 children. Evening I had a long talk with him about his family and his role as the main member of the family. While talking about the youth and their activities he explained to me about his familial condition. Hassan Moulavi says, “When the sun falls, I used to call my children inside the home. He said it is not good sending our children outside in the night. He remembered in Islam, does not allow children to move out in the night. Except for an urgency, I won’t allow my children to go outside”. He further remembered the words of Prophet Mohammed said, ‘when the night falls stop your children at home, for this hour evil spirits stalk the earth. However, after an hour has passed you may permit the children to move out’. I will not allow my children to go bed before doing namaz. Because most of the time they are missing *isha*⁵⁰³ prayer. Most of the days I am busy with my business, and so they are lazy. The proper care of home appliances and premises is the major duty of the family head. He said ‘soon after the fall of night, light up my homes. Most of the time my wife and daughter will be in neighbouring homes in the evenings. There were talking with other neighbours. Sometimes I used to scold them for this because they will miss their prayer times. Now my children have grown up and I think I have won to make them understand that we have to light up our homes soon after the sun sets’. My son was in tenth class, even I used to ask him to sleep early and never allowed him keep awake till late hours in the night. So he can wake up early in the morning. Also I am always remembering my children to take ablution before going to sleep and then only they can sleep in a clean and pure status. When going to bed you have to close the windows and doors, he added.⁵⁰⁴

The primary duty and concern for wearing the dress is to cover the body and to keep the modesty. Islam strictly prohibits silk⁵⁰⁵ dresses. Garments of silks are befitting for females only. A Muslim should wear a dress of the kind which the sharia has prescribed for the believers, which does not display arrogance or pride, which does

⁵⁰³ The *isha* prayer is the night-time daily prayer recited by practising Muslims. It is the fifth of the five daily prayers– (salat).

⁵⁰⁴ Excerpts from the talk with Hassan Moulavi on April 12, 2013. The field work was part of my study about the variations in Qutba practices among the Muslim organisations of Kerala.

⁵⁰⁵ Islam prohibited wearing the silk dresses, once the Prophet got a silk cloth as a gift from another Raja. He ordered Ali to cut the silk cloth and asked them to distribute the piece to Fatima. This incident clearly shows that the silk dresses are prohibited for men. Prophet asked to distribute this to Fatima, which inherently refers to the fact that women can wear silk dresses.

not lend a feminine air to men nor a masculine appearance to women. The dress should be a symbol of Muslims' righteousness to the God. Men and women in Islam should adhere to the prescribed code of conduct in the dress matters. The women should not wear thin dress which should make their forms visible, nor should they put on a tightly fitting dress which might make their figures prominent and alluring. In this way, they would be exposing their bodies, despite having worn garments. T.K Master⁵⁰⁶, a teacher at Quran Learning Centre, Kozhikode, narrated me a story about the importance of dress and its modesty that a Muslim has to do in everyday life. He said, he is very strict about the length of the dress that his students to wear. In between the talk a student came with a book and he kept the book on the table beside me. It was a homework assigned by him for the students. While entering the hall, his student greeted him Asalamu Alaikum, he responded Va alaikum salaam, then the student had submitted the book. While going back moulavi looked at his back and said to me that the modern jeans are very bad, we can see whatever things are there inside. Such types of dresses expose 'jockey' or whatever brand of inner wears use to cover the inner parts. Now it has become an ongoing fashion of the youths to show 'jockey'. He stated that once Prophet had affirmed that there are three types of people with whom God shall not speak on the 'day of Judgment' or not look at them. Hadrath Ghifari asked Prophet that "O Apostle of Allah, Who are these deprived and unfortunate people"? The holy Prophet observed that;

Firstly, he who out of pride and haughtiness lets his 'lower garments fall below the ankles'

Secondly, the men who reminds others of the favours, he has done to them

And thirdly, the one who wishes to promote his business by misrepresentation on oath".

These are the three groups whom on the 'day of judgment' God will reject all their good deeds because of this character.

As I mentioned earlier, Abdul Gaffar Moulavi says about the table manners in his book⁵⁰⁷. According to him, a Muslim has to follow certain manners before taking

⁵⁰⁶ Senior teacher in Quranic Studies at Hira Centre, Kozhikode, excerpts from the talk that I had with him on 24 November 2013.

⁵⁰⁷ Moulavi Abdul Gaffar, *Nammude Oru Divasam*. Trivandrum: Knowledge Publishers, PP. 28-29.

food. The primary thing is that, do not make any kind of negative judgment about the preparation or quality of the food. You can make your judgment and opinion to the concerned people after your food. Do not be late and do not keep food for you. You should not judge the quality of the food because it is not important. If a Muslim forget to say “*Bismillahi Rahmani Raheem*”, in between having food, say *Bismillahi Awwalahu val Akhiru*. Use your teeth to eat properly and do not stand while taking food. A Muslim should clean the plate and vessels with his fingers. Eat gently and do not waste food as it is a disrespect and forgets the starving people. While taking food, in between a Muslim can recite or praise lord by reciting *Alhamdulillah, Subhanallah* etc. to remember the god.

The Muslim religious institutions in Kerala are one of the miniature forms of Mappila Muslim community. Enrooted with several Islamic practices, especially through the orphanages and Arabic colleges, a strict timetable is kept for the daily life. As part of my fieldwork and library work, I visited Chemmad Darul Huda Islamic University and its well-furnished library. It was on 28 April 2013 morning around 8 o'clock I reached at Chemmad. The institute is very famous among the Mappila Muslims. It runs under the aegis of Sunni E.K group. Around seven thousand students are getting religious and secular education from this institute. When I reached in the institution, thousands of students were gathering in front of the institution as part of their daily assembly. A few Musliyers were standing as counter to them and I saw one Musliyar giving directions to the students. He was talking about the cleanness. He reminded the pathetic conditions of lavatory and reminded the Islamic approach about the cleanness and purity. He asked students about their health and stipulated them to attend the health classes. He warned senior secondary students who had failed to attend the health classes. I asked Fahad Hudavi about the health class. He told, previously we had been training in martial arts. But after the demolition of Babri masjid and widespread revolts in the country, almost all the right wing groups in Kerala started to make allegations against us. The allegation was that we are promoting the martial art and this way we are producing Jihadis. We considered the allegation may cause distraction of harmony. Actually our plan was to give good health to our orphan children. We never found anything about communal aspect in the martial art, but several right wing groups attacked us that we are promoting the terrorism in the

community. So we stopped giving the martial arts to the students and now we are giving only the theoretical classes about the health importance. I asked about the daily routine of the students in the university. He told me that they are giving total 2.5 hours for the recreation. At this time students will play either cricket or football. He said, most of them prefer to play volleyball and handball. From morning 7 to 8.30 is the time to play and similarly in the evening from 4.45 to 5.45 every student has to reach the ground for the practice. So he told that we are giving this health consciousness to our children because they are orphans. We have the responsibility to give them the right health for a better future. Morning around 5'oclock they have to wake up and they have to be fresh for namaz. After namaz they have to recite the Quran for another 15 to 20 minutes. Later they will get one cup of tea or coffee. Then they will go to bed again for 30 minutes. They can utilize this time for any other purpose. Some students will have homework, and some students will read the newspaper. Then sharp at 7o'clock, they have to be there in the ground. After the morning practice students have to go for bath. They will get 30 minutes to refresh. Then around 9, they will come for dining. After the breakfast, every day morning they will have assembly. Then around 10 they will move to their respective class rooms. Evening after the recreation they have to take bath. Every day it is very compulsory that they have to take bath twice. After the bath everyone will come to the mosque for the namaz. After the *maghrib*⁵⁰⁸ namaz they will move to their respective class rooms to read whatever the teacher taught that day. Then around 7.30 they have to assemble again in the mosque for isha prayer and after the prayer they will move for the dinner. Again they have to move for reading for another one hour. Then around 9.30 they have to move for bed. This is the daily routine they have to follow in the institute. I was reminded about the health concern that they are giving for their students. He said we are making them to lead a simple life, adopt moderate habits and keep themselves clean because they are coming from different backgrounds. Our concern is to not give more burden to the students than their strength can bear. We do not want to waste their energy and it is obligatory that they have to protect their health and strength and use it for the moderation according to their capability. We are advising them to lead a hard and simple life and always asking them not to fall into ease-loving, careless, delicate,

⁵⁰⁸ Islamic evening begins by the maghrib prayer.

indolent, timid and materialist. We are asking them to be an early riser. This should be so, otherwise they will become very lazy in the future. Morning is the best time for everything, they can read, pray, play etc. He said ‘early to bed and early to rise’ this is the motto that we are teaching the students of this institute.⁵⁰⁹

The Muslim religious groups in Kerala have different approaches as appropriate behaviour for women. For example, related with women’s causes they have multiple interpretation of the text while all are following a single text. First, for the Sunni Muslims, “we cannot accept the public intervention of women, but we believe that the women can have the public intervention only in certain emergency situations. In case of her protector’s, most probably her husband’s absence she can go to public places, but she should keep her modesty to protect herself. At least she should cover her body except hand and face”.⁵¹⁰ Another argument that arises from the Sunni groups is that home is the best place for women and “what would happen if women went outside, who will take care of the family, who will do the household chores. Women are the basic pillar of the family and women can have the authentic power in the family, so it is her responsibility to maintain the familial equilibrium”.⁵¹¹ While protecting women from such a perspective they are opposing Mujahids for their liberal approaches towards women.

Mujahids are mostly against the school of jurisprudence because they considered “these schools are responsible for the false interpretation of the religion”.⁵¹² Hence many evidences came forward in favour of women’s participation in the public sphere. The main argument put forward by the Mujahids for their claim in favour of women’s entry into the mosque is that “chapter two of the Quran explains the believers that ‘preventing anybody from entering the mosque for prayers amounted to the destruction of the mosque itself’. And the women had free access to the mosques in Mecca and Medina from the days of the Prophet and so those who objected the entry of women have failed to pinpoint what is un-Islamic in doing so”.⁵¹³ The

⁵⁰⁹ Excerpts from the conversation with Fahad Hudavi on 28 April 2013.

⁵¹⁰ Hameed Faisi Amabalakkadav, *Islamil Sthree Evide Nilkunnu*. Islamon web. pp.1.

⁵¹¹ Ibid, pp.1.

⁵¹² Ashraf, T.K. 2011. *Islahi Prasthanam: Kazchayum Kazchappadukalum*, MSM Kerala Students Conference Souvenir, Kottakkal. pp. 133.

⁵¹³ Karuvampoyil, Khader, K.P.A. 2011. *Sunnikalum Mujahid Prasthanavum: Oru Tharathmya Padanam*, MSM Kerala Students Conference Souvenir, Kottakkal, pp. 161.

Mujahids believe that women folk can go to the mosque, but they should keep their decorum and modesty inside the mosque. There are so many hadiths clearly approving entry of the women folk into the mosque. Sometimes the groups try to look to themselves for their clarifications with their own approaches. For example one of the largest Muslim youth organisations of Kerala under E.K Sunnis, Samastha Kerala Sunni Student Federation (SKSSF) made an advice to their parental ulama organization regarding the women's entry into the mosque. They said "in the current scenario we cannot forbid women to go out, for different purposes. Those things are clear to all, even to our previous religious scholars".⁵¹⁴ So we can construct 'women-only mosques' and can prevent the *fitna* (temptation) while entering into the common (men's) mosques.⁵¹⁵ This issue clearly means that they understand the need of women's entry to the mosque but they cannot do anything against their forefathers and their practices. But at the same time the report remind that they cannot allow mixed prayer because the imams of schools discouraged the practices. These groups have their own ideology which varied from groups to groups. The interpretative groups make different interpretation from the same text. Here we can see the varied hadith are used by the groups to stake the claim that they are the real Muslims and call others as false. Here the disagreement is not over the text but it with the various hadith written by companions of Prophet.

The adab has a prominent place among the Muslims all over the world. The problem is not relying on the term, but it is not mentioned in the Quran. But it became a prominent term among the followers of Islam. Due to the un-availability and lack of coordination of sharia, the people faced so many troubles to cater to their daily needs. It is recommended as an appropriate behaviour of a Muslim. Based on the conversation between the Prophet Mohammed and his follower Mua'd, that I have mentioned earlier, I can say that if a Muslim did not reach a proper conclusion from Quran or the way from the Prophet's life, he can do according to his reason for the goodwill of Islam. The Muslim religious groups in Kerala are in constant struggle with other groups for the claim of true Islam. According to them every nook issues are related with their religious notion and all the problems have the solution through their

⁵¹⁴ Abdurahiman O, 1997. Muslim Sthreekalude Palli pravesham. Islamic Publishing House. pp.44.

⁵¹⁵ Chandika News Daily. 9 March 1996. pp.3.

groups. The groups claim that they are the real proponents of true Islam. Here I have been trying to find out what are the basic differentials in the Muslims based on their daily routines. Regarding different matters, these religious groups are in struggle to constitute their claim in Islam. These groups are giving proper directions to its followers as an appropriate behaviour for a Muslim.

6.1.1 The Dress Code Controversy

The veiling of the Muslim women has always generated a storm of controversy whether in India or abroad. Historically, veiling has been seen by feminists as the ultimate symbol, if not tool, of gender oppression in Islamic cultures; yet many Islamic women not only participate voluntarily in the practice but claim it as a mark of resistance, agency, and cultural membership. Many young, well educated women have dismissed or defended the dress code as a matter of personal liberty and freedom and thus invoking a secular sanction. According to this approach, it is underpinned by an unconscious adherence to liberalism and modernization theory.⁵¹⁶ However, this seems to pose a paradox for feminists. On the one hand, there are those who condemn the practice of Islamic veiling invoking the notion of freedom, and therefore a particular understanding of women-hood. There are also those who believe that it is their duty as Muslims to wear the veil, invoking another notion of womanhood. What I want to examine in this thesis is an incident of, a Muslim girl named Rayana, who on completing her graduation in Aeronautics Engineering in Chennai, returned to her home town, Kasargod district in Kerala. As wearing of 'jeans and top' is an inappropriate dress code expected of a Muslim girl, the incident generated a controversy.⁵¹⁷ The issue generated a debate among the Muslim communities that fore-grounded among others a number of theological issues including whether dress code was sanctioned by the Quran/sunnah or not. The different schools of jurisprudence in Islam soon became a part of the controversy, calling each other foul. The controversy also led to the intervention of the secular courts which passed a judgment in favour of Rayana who refused the dress code. What came to be invoked in this judgment was her right as an individual citizen and her freedom.

⁵¹⁶ Bullock, Katherine. *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil Challenging Historical & Modern Stereotypes*. London, pp.14.

⁵¹⁷ Deccan Chronicle; 18 September 2010.

The girl faced opposition from an organization named National Democratic Front (NDF)⁵¹⁸ of her hometown. The staunch support of her parents and family associates reinforced her to wear the jeans and top. So natives started to make false propaganda against Rayana and one of the major accusations was that she had converted to Christianity.⁵¹⁹ Following this she registered a complaint in Kerala State Women's Cell,⁵²⁰ subsequently news spread all over Kerala through media. Activists of National Democratic Front, a part of 'Popular Front of India pressured her to wear hijab and therefore she received calls and letters from anonymous sources containing threats to her and her family's life and finally she received a letter containing their plan to kill her and it clearly mentioned even the date of murder'.⁵²¹ The letter mentions that it is the duty of *ummah* (followers of Islam) to kill her because she violated the Islamic rules. The issue suddenly became very sensitive in and around Kerala society and secular High court intervened in the issue and gave commands to the police for her protection.⁵²² The High court also ordered the police to give her security from her relatives, neighbours and a Muslim groups of the locality, who threatened her with dire consequences if she did not wear the symbol of community dress code. The police did not take this as a serious threat against her but on behalf of Rayana the court; police had already registered cases against three persons for threatening her in the name burqa. The issue became a subject of hot discussion in Kerala and the girl approached media,⁵²³ to explain her position. Rayana told the media that:

“It is my right to wear any dress and the constitution gives the sanctions to me to wear any dress. I do not want to follow the dress code and also I am happy with Islam because Islam is not a strict religion as you people propagated. She added Islam never tells to the followers to wear hijab, the commands are to cover the body only. So there is no need to wear hijab and also I think hijab is not suitable for the environment and my parents have no

⁵¹⁸ This group formed after 1992, inspired by the pan-Islamic movement. The NDF was accused of being a communal outfit and members of the organisation were implicated in violent incidents such as the 2002 Marad communal riot.

⁵¹⁹ Indian Express; 13 August 2010.

⁵²⁰ Kasargod Vartha; 19 August 2010.

⁵²¹ The Hindu, Friday, 13 August 2010.

⁵²² The Pioneer; 16 August 2010.

⁵²³ Kasargod Vartha; 28 September, 2010, pp.3. See also The Indian News; 18 September 2010.

problem to wear the jeans. Although I say you quite frankly, I do not care about anyone's opinion. Seeing me in jeans and shirt, the local people of my community had unleashed a campaign that I had abandoned Islam. I strongly believe that I have the freedom to wear any dress of my choice. The only people whose opinions count are my family and quite fortunately they are with me at this very moment. I make *shukr* (which literally means thanks) and say thank you Allah that I was not brought up in such type of fundamentalist family. My family, especially my dad taught us to never judge anyone and to be good to all people irrespective of religion. I believe, I am a 'true Muslim' offering prayer five times and taking fast every Ramsan and also giving Zakat. Apart from this ritual performance this is my wish to wear the top and jeans so please I am requesting you to not intervene in my rights, I am living in a secularist nation and also my constitution gives me the grant. She added why these terrorists did not consider my parents; my mother gets treatment for the heart problem. If they have the love to the god they will not create tensions and also I am ready to receive the punishment from the God if this is against the tenets of Islamic belief. We should want the right to choose the dress and you cannot have the right to decide our passion and dress code. I am asking the secularist's Muslim brothers and the activists to support me for the fight to right and I believe as a true Muslim this is my responsibility to fight against the fundamentalists and also I am happy to inform you that my mahal committee is supportive for us and they have no problem but the problem is with a few 'moral police' and fundamentalist organizations".⁵²⁴

During my field study, I met an Aalim (religious scholar) and he criticized her approach towards the belief and to the Muslim community, and articulated that Quran orders to the followers through Prophet, 'O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them [when they go abroad]. That will be improved, that so they may be recognized and accepted and not annoyed. Allah is ever pardoning, merciful. So he told me to ask yourself, or ask the next person who asks you that question, if a female judge walked

⁵²⁴ The Indian News; 3 September 2010.

into the courtroom wearing a tight and rigid miniskirt and low-cut blouse, will you take her sincerely? Who would you reverence more, a woman wearing clothes like that or one dressed reasonably? The Quran was exposed for all times, and though conditions and circumstances change, human nature does not. The fact is that men do like to look at women's bodies, so a woman who covers herself is more likely to be respected and appreciated as a person than looked upon as a piece of meat. Wearing the hijab creates more self-respect and security to the women?⁵²⁵ Recent trends in Kerala are the Muslim women whether they are educated or uneducated tend to show a positive approach towards hijab. The groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahids in Kerala are encouraging women to wear hijab in the name of purification and the Saudi Salafian ideology. Feminists are also question the scriptural understandings recycled by Muslim scholars to justify the veil, "according to them Qur'an refers cryptically to a 'curtain' and never directly instructs a woman to wear a veil" (Chapter 4; 01). Obviously, the opinions on both sides go beyond the issue but this debate is beyond the scope of contemporary discourse. Islamic scholar Tabari himself reports that there is a difference of opinion on how to wear the hijab. He writes, "The interpreters have differed in the determination of the style of the wearing of the hijab which women have been directed to do. Some believe that it should cover their faces, and nothing of a woman's body remains visible except her eyes but some interpreted this like – 'draw their hijab close around themselves' means 'she should draw the hijab close to her face without covering it' and Shaykh Albani has graded this report as *sahih* (literally it means genuine or authentic).

A news reporter from Kasargod named Moideen, described the growing tendency of wearing hijab among the Muslims in Kasargod. While he remembered the past in which he reports that, in the after 1980's, especially after the boom of gulf migration the hijab came to Kerala, and also through the contact with the Canara region of Karnataka, in Kasargod a separate culture developed among the Muslims, that is not spread anywhere in Kerala or in Malabar. Also he pointed out the influence of 'hanafi' practices as another reason for it. In the report he distinguished the difference of hijab and *niqab*, niqab covers the entire body even face and hand. He told that the belief in Kasargod that those who wear the hijab are good Muslim women while

⁵²⁵ Interview with Issudheen Saqafi.

others are bad, women and even the young boys also think like this. The image of the veil represents the most visible marker of difference between good veiled Muslim women and the bad non-veiled Muslim women. It is constructed relationally through difference from the other. The social activists like Hameed Chennamangalloor, N.P Hafiz Mohammed and leaders of a few women's organizations gave support to Rayana.

Later I met a lady regarding this matter and asked her about the hijab, she replied me that you know "I am a Muslim women and a 'hijabi' all my life but occasionally I just want to take it off and just feel liberated. Sometimes I know it is incorrect and wrong but I think Islam as a man's religion because of how Muslim men treat women in Islam and how they explain Islam like it revolves around them and us women are created and shaped for them and not the other way around or both. I do not know...! Still proud to be a Muslim but I know a man in today's world has way much more freedom than us women do and it is depressing. I would rather be a man than a woman. I am sure all your intentions in this practice are pure. But you know how society is, and what Islam teaches, you are a covered women, so should follow the rules, others would not look at it as a matter of personal freedom".⁵²⁶

Katherine Bullock states that there are varieties of approaches to look at the veil and how it is subjected to preach a type of a woman. The western mainstream cultural view is that women are completely subjugated by men; also the veil is the symbol of that. This idea underpinned in the modernization and liberalization approaches on women. Another feminist group, including Muslims and non-Muslims argue that Islam is patriarchal in any kind and they do not allow women's liberation. These feminists are very often knowledgeable about Islamic history and its practice in the contextual level. Another feminist group including Muslims and non-Muslims are hearing the voice and experiences of covered women, but they are reaching at the diverse conclusions. Another section by the anthropologists and historians concerned to understand the meaning of social life and they are interesting to look inside. They are standing away from the pop mainstream categories.⁵²⁷ Definitely Islam expects

⁵²⁶ Zuhra, a school teacher, collected these information's through Facebook messaging on 24 January 2013.

⁵²⁷ Bullock, Katherine. 2002. *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical & Modern Stereotypes*, pp. 15.

men and women to dress decently, but the question is the decency and dignified cannot be defined in absolute terms.

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan while looking on the Uniform Civil Code, mentioned about the four fold different positions about the way the others looked up on the issue that is constitutional secularism and religious patriarchy; minority political parties from these diverse positions emerged and became large scale discussions.⁵²⁸ The same occurrence continued for this also as my valuation because here I touched the response of communitarians, liberal secularists/secular court and women's groups. What I propose to do here is to examine the differing positions of community (religion)/ cultural rights and citizenship that engulf women's dress code controversy with differing moral implications. The conflict between the rights of women to break power of traditions which subordinate them to men on the one hand, and the radical recognition of the right of minorities to exist as cultural entities on the other. Finally, it explores what happens to those women who are oppressed by the pathologies of the community, will freedom have to be always sought outside of the community?

The niqab or hijab is a familiar dress code among the early Muslims of Kerala. The history shows that in colonial period the Muslim women wore the covered dress to protect their identity but it was only among the upper class elite Muslims. The Muslims who followed the popular culture of the milieu did not follow the pattern of dress code. It was a prestigious dress style among the middle and upper classes to show their identity as Muslim women. Anna Lindberg noted that 'throughout the first half of the 20 century, the common dress of Mappila women was a long cloth wrapped around the waist and legs, a blouse, and some kind of head covering-usually a small white or black scarf. It was this head covering that mainly distinguished Muslim women from their Hindu counterparts.'⁵²⁹

Jacobus Visscher, a chaplain in Malabar, writing sometime between 1717 and 1723, noted:

Mappila women do not generally seclude themselves and are not held to be ghosha [apart, secluded] like other Mohammedan women. They walk about

⁵²⁸ Rajan Sunder Rajeswari. 2003. *The Scandal of the State: Women, Law and Citizenship in Postcolonial India*, pp.148.

⁵²⁹ Lindberg, Anna. 2009. *Islamisation, Modernisation, or Globalisation? Changed Gender Relations among South Indian Muslims South Asia*. pp. 100.

and do their work like their Hindu sisters. However, women of the higher classes are kept secluded, and hide their faces when they go abroad, holding an umbrella so low as to hide their faces from the vulgar eye.⁵³⁰

Later the dress pattern had changed with the history of Kerala, after 100 years, William Logan in his 'Malabar Manual'⁵³¹, noticed that the Muslim women appear public without having niqab but the upper class women usually envelop the head but not the face.⁵³² Another British officer noted that the 19 century upper class women of both Hindus and Muslims had umbrellas to cover their head. It means that the lifestyle and the pattern of dress had undergone considerable changes.⁵³³ The inspiration for wearing head and face covering must be sought in a particular context. The religion according to the text ordered women to cover her head but it was practiced in different ways in different places. It is set to the importance and peculiarities of that particular context. Among the Mappila Muslims of the last few generations, class and the educational status and the social status are the prime importance in understanding their dress code. Anna Lindberg noticed that the social contexts of Malabar, with men migrating to the gulf region for their livelihood and to care for their dependents. Normally women are compelled to go outside for their movements of daily lives. Their husbands are away in the gulf and so they have little freedom to go outside if other male members are not available. But always this is a freedom with constraints and restrictions under the strict surveillance of other relatives and the neighbours.⁵³⁴ So these married women are obliged to wear the dress what the husband prescribed, which may or may not be often covering the face. Presently most of the women are not covering their face except in places like Kasargod, but recently the practice has noticeably increased. There are so many different views regarding the dress pattern. The middle and upper class women were more secluded than those women who followed popular culture, we cannot say fully as secluded but they were kept apart

⁵³⁰ Menon, Sreedhara. 1967. *A Survey of Kerala History*. Kottayam: CMSP, pp. 561.

⁵³¹ The 'Malabar Manual' was an 1887 CE publication by William Logan, a British officer of the Madras Civil Service under the British Government, appointed as the Collector of Malabar. The work was commissioned by the Government of Madras, and originally published in two volumes.

⁵³² W. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, 1887. 1995. Vol. I and II, Asian Educational Services. New Delhi. pp. 198.

⁵³³ Lindberg, Anna. 2009. *Islamisation, Modernisation, or Globalisation? Changed Gender Relations among South Indian Muslims South Asia*. pp. 101.

⁵³⁴ *Ibid*, pp.101.

from the public. Lindberg noticed that because of the education, Muslim women in Malabar has been able to get the access to education in colleges and largest universities. At the same time some classes of women still prefer a secluded way of life, cover themselves entirely, not as a mark of religious identity but as a symbol of their status.⁵³⁵

Looking back to the early 20 century, we find that majority of Muslim women wore sari as Hindu women did, as Kathleen Gough states that the lower class women were less constrained in their dress and they enjoyed much freedom in deciding their dress pattern. Anna Lindbergh noticed that the Muslim women dressed in sari or later *salwar* and *khamiz* that was the preferred dress for the Hindu women and so Muslim women add a *dupatta* and a *mafta* (scarf) over their heads, but they did not cover their face. Later they started wearing pardha, a long dress covering entire body except face and so they covered their head with a scarf. Later another type of dress pattern came out with a *half-niqab* (a piece of elastic cloth worn around the head) to cover a woman's hair and forehead, but not her face; or a *full-niqab* (half-niqab with an additional veil concealing the whole face, except the eyes). In Malabar, the half-niqab is known as a hijab, and for the full niqab an English neologism, 'face-cut', has been coined. Today, a small portion of Muslim women in Malabar, especially in the northern part of Malabar such as Kasargod⁵³⁶, adorn their bodies and faces. Lindberg noticed that in Malabar those who wore hijab (with or without covering the face) are at the insistence of their husbands or other relatives. Also the educated urban class women of Calicut deliberately choose this dress pattern as a political symbol and they considered themselves as 'proud Muslims'.⁵³⁷

These incidents amount to a fully naked violation of rejecting civic and democratic rights of a citizen but to follow the religious instruction as Muslim women must do. There has been clear-cut growth of fundamentalist and identity-based politics during the past two decades all over the country especially after Babri and unfortunately it has gone almost unrestricted and subsequently it started to construct Muslims as a

⁵³⁵ Ibis, pp. 102.

⁵³⁶ Previously it was part of Dhakshin Kanara region, and after the state formation of Kerala became a part of it assuming the name of Kasargode.

⁵³⁷ Lindberg, Anna. 2009. Islamisation, Modernisation, or Globalisation? Changed Gender Relations among south Indian Muslims south Asia. pp. 102.

separate identity or category with a set of restricted norms. Recently Kerala has witnessed counter agitations by Muslim groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Mujahid for new pattern of dress code, and with the idea of pan-Islamism addressed the issues of compulsory hijab or niqab and demanding that Muslim girls be allowed to wear headscarves at school. The politics deeply rooted in communal-hate politics and patriarchy must be countered strongly. From the feminist angle we can touch the issue as a violation of fundamental rights and human rights of a woman, but as a Muslim woman who supports the wearing of hijab propagates another notion of womanhood.

Shamsad Hussain and J Devika state that the “Malayali renaissance in the first decade of the 19 century in Kerala produced new community leadership with a patriarchal kind of attitude and sought to control the bodies of women, with a colonial modernity made women as an object and her modesty and chastity is under the control of a men who construct a set of norms and values and moreover the patriarchal ideology played big role in the renaissance”.⁵³⁸ Dress maintains cultural differences of a given community and this maintenance generally falls on the shoulders of women because the culture is created by the ‘patriarchal’ men. Abdurraqib states that the “veil thus becomes the visual repository for the Muslim identity that is being conserved and veiling shifts from being construed as somewhat normal behaviour into an action that proclaims identity and (sometimes) allegiances. In the context of Muslim communities, it is easier to understand the multifarious nature of Muslim identity. In Muslim countries, the debate about hijab becomes a discussion about oppression or modernization rather than a debate about allegiance”.⁵³⁹ Many strict rules are observed in the communities, most of them remain as unwritten laws that regulate and command a woman to appear in a space with how they should dress, especially in the secular public. Now in Kerala apart from the personal choices of women, despite a secular state, certain institutions are controlled by the religious groups and these groups stipulate the teachers and students to wear some specific dress codes on account of decency. Despite the legal sanction to wear clothes of their choice, several schools and colleges in Kerala assert that the teachers should wear only the Saree,

⁵³⁸ Kafil.org. September Month, pp.1.

⁵³⁹ Abdurraqib, Samaa. 2006. Hijab Scenes: Muslim Women, Migration, and Hijab in Immigrant Muslim Literature *Melus*. Vol. 31, No.4, pp. 59.

claiming that it conveys female decency.⁵⁴⁰ Decency overcomes all other concerns like comfort, health and hygiene. The burden of bearing the symbol of belief and religion falls on women. Many different ways exist to look upon the issue; some women considered the wearing of veil as a part of self-esteem and taken as granted. There are several criticisms that are confronted by the women's movement and the feminist groups for their refusal of recognition to differences among women deriving from their community identities, especially religious ones. Agnes pointed out that, the criticism that they represented only the mainstream society and for an implicit secularism they disavow and refuse recognition of diversities within women.⁵⁴¹ Pat Mule and Diane Barthel state that "rejecting the negative image of women's pseudo-liberation associated with westernization, young women find in the veil a powerful alternative: a positive identity and source of esteem sanctioned by Islam. The dramatic symbol of the veil thus serves to refocus discussion of women's status, which, we argue, is more complex and contradictory than has heretofore been recognized".⁵⁴² And also Islamists and those who considered the veil as not a symbol of oppression put forward another notion of womanhood. Pat Mule and Diane Barthel state that "traditionally Islamic countries with new gender ideologies put forward another image of a new woman: a western-style woman whose life is free of the chador and, supposedly, of social constraints. It became increasingly apparent, however, that women's freedom actually facilitated their exploitation by men. Women themselves will be disposed to give space for the oppressors and the freedom from the veil meant that women "could display themselves as attractive objects, with the aids of cosmetics, elaborate hair styles and fashionable clothing".⁵⁴³ So according to them the veil is their part of life as a cultural preservation and it is the symbol of Muslim women's silent protest against the imposition of alien cultural constructs and ideologies that threaten to alienate them from their own heritage and to result in a loss of esteem within the patriarchal system. So the women Islamist's take the veil as an opposition to the western cultural imposition over them and for preserving and

⁵⁴⁰ Indian Express, 15 August 2010.

⁵⁴¹ Rajan Sunder Rajeswari.2003. *The Scandal of the State: Women, Law and Citizenship in Postcolonial India*, pp. 159.

⁵⁴² Mule, Pat and Barthel, Diane. 1992. The Return to the Veil: Individual Autonomy vs. Social Esteem, pp. 323-332.

⁵⁴³ Ibid, pp. 333.

promoting the veil as a symbol to protect and to preserve their own cultural heritage.⁵⁴⁴

But why and how is the veil a mark of modesty, how can we define the modesty, how through veil a woman can protect her modesty. These are the questions raised by the secular feminists. Can a woman not dress modestly without wearing veil? How can a woman reconcile the modesty of the veil with the modesty of character, this discussion is necessary in the secular spaces. Critics say that verses in the Quran referring to dress code does not mention ‘modesty,’ for which the Arabic word is *istihsham*. However, different translations have consistently used the concept ‘modest’ to render the meaning of the expression ‘preserve [protect or guard] your pudenda [in Arabic *furuj*]’. Similarly, the Arabic words *khimar*, referring to a piece of clothing, possibly a kerchief, worn by women in the 7 century, and *jilbab*, another garment that clothes the body, have been often translated as ‘veil.’ Since full details of how women dressed in the heroic period of Islam are not known with accuracy, the terms used for their clothing remain open to interpretations, as does ‘modesty’. There are varieties of theological interpretations in existence about the Quranic verses. One interpretation is that “tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands’ fathers, or their sons or their husbands’ sons, or their brothers’ sons or sisters’ sons, or their women or their slaves, or male attendants who lack vigour, or children who know naught of women’s nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah together, oh believers, in order that ye may succeed”.⁵⁴⁵ But another interpretation regarding the women dress completely avoids the translation of the word ‘modesty’ but introduces other certainties. i.e. “tell the believing women to lower their eyes, guard their private parts, and not display their charms except what is apparent outwardly, and cover their bosoms with their veils and not show their finery except to...”⁵⁴⁶ History also clearly mentioned the role of women in Islam, for example Prophet Mohammed said about an Ansari woman, Nasiba Bint Ka’ab that “whenever I turned right or left, I saw her

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 327.

⁵⁴⁵ Lazeg, Marnia.2009. Questioning the veil: Open letters to Muslims women, pp. 16.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 16.

fighting to defend me”.⁵⁴⁷ Women were an integral part of Islamic military such as Ummu Aiman, Ummu Haram, Khawla Bint AL-Azwar, prominently active participants in the military.⁵⁴⁸

Coming back to the issue, Riyana stood her ground arguing that the Quran had not made veil mandatory for Muslim women. She claimed that the women of Arabia were wearing it because of the climatic peculiarities and that it was in no way a symbol of Islam. Her firm stand infuriated the traditionalists, fundamentalists and the threats intensified. Arabian Muslims came to Kerala as traders buying spices and sending them to Europe and Cairo.⁵⁴⁹ The Muslims were there in Kerala from the Prophets time itself and so the followers came to Kerala to preach the Islamic tenet and they constructed the mosques throughout Kerala but they had never taught such a dress code. The Kerala Muslims had direct contact with Arabia; the scholars noticed that the Indian Muslims, except Kerala Muslims, reached India through invasion. When the Arabians came here as traders, the Zamorin raja accommodated them and gave all types of help to promote trade. As a result the Arabs started to settle here and they married higher caste women i.e. Nair women and they continued the matrilineal system as the early Hindu Nair still follow. It showed the cultural adaptation of the early Muslims from the Hindu community. But nobody opposed the matrilineal system in the name of teaching of Islam, but after the introduction of Salafi movement and its patriarchal male leaders stipulated women to wear the veil as a symbol of Islam, and later the gulf migration accelerated this process. In the matrilineal system women enjoyed more power and vested some headship over them in this system. Women were the heads of the family and the property was inherited on the basis of women's lineage. It proved that in Kerala, Muslim women had enjoyed equal status with men in the early centuries. The new form of revivalist movements in the name of purification of religion imposed strict ways of life in the religion and so women became the bearers of these strict disciplines due to the patriarchal kind of leadership of these new movements. So Malayali Muslims have much historical peculiarities and

⁵⁴⁷ Fath-ul-Bari Vol.6, pp.80. It is the most valued Sunni commentary written by Ibn Hajr Asqalani. See also, Arif Mohammed Khan. 2010. *Text and Context: Quran and Contemporary Challenges*. New Delhi, pp.203-204.

⁵⁴⁸ Arif Mohammed Khan. 2010. Can Veil Alone Guard Modesty, *Text and Context: Quran and Contemporary Challenges*, pp. 205.

⁵⁴⁹ The Daily News and Analysis; Saturday 18 September 2010.

specificities, a direct cultural assimilation of Islamic ways occurred among the Malayali Muslims through their direct contact with Arabia. But the hijab and veil was not a dress for the women in those periods.

The Islamists believes that our society has been captured by western modern values and those who wear and support the hijab or veil are targeted and rejected from the mainstream and keeping away from the mainstream, are considered as extremists. So those who support the hijab, says that this is not only their religious regulation but also a fundamental right and a protective shield of a woman. Writer Thasleema Nasrin says Islamists are claiming that hijab is a choice. But my question is, ‘if hijab is a choice, then why it is necessary to make it compulsory⁵⁵⁰?’, so the western scholars also say that this right is like the Catholic birth control coverage, it is a choice. A choice the church makes for you. The assembly for the protection of hijab, decided to celebrate the right to wear the hijab decreed on 4 September 2004, to protest the hijab ban in France; and it was decided that the date should become ‘World Hijab Day’ to mark the death of the martyr “Marwa Al-Sherbani”, who was from Egypt, brutally killed by German extremist in the court room. Later she became the symbol of perceived Islamophobia in the west. The federation for the Islamic groups accepted this decision and from 2004 onwards it has been celebrated all around the world. In 2012, Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islami decided to celebrate the World Hijab Day to protect the right of women to wear hijab. Later hijab day was celebrated in all the institutions all over the world. An organisation was formed as result of the conference held at London, January 2004, under the supervision of great Islamic leader Yousuf-al-Qaradavi, in which more than 300 scholars from several Islamic countries participated and decided unanimously to observe the International Hijab Day on 4 September every year as a day of solidarity with all women around the world who face religious intolerance, and being part of the rejection from the mainstream and this day was selected as the day for the tribute of Marwa-al-Sharbani.

The Islamists and other extreme Islamic groups want to stand against the western dominance and what they mean as globalization against the Islam. Still some women think that covering themselves will give them more personal comfort and they are against showing their body to unknown persons; and not ready to become a

⁵⁵⁰ Thasleema Nasrin, Freethoughts.com. 4 September 2012.

commodity so that they are arguing it is her decision and choice of what she wants to wear and so they could move in public without having to do their hair or put on jewels. These hijabi women felt empowered dressing since it gained them the respect. The fashion industry in Kerala had cherished and boosted their selling and distributing hijab with inspiration from Gulf and it was largely through advertising in Muslim owned publications. And it was marked that the percentage of women who use hijab has increased from 3.5 around 1990's to 32.5 percentage in 2002.⁵⁵¹ It has become a political identity among those women who felt this as a personal right and it intended them to assure anonymity and privacy. Another level of discussion is related with an increased polarisation of religious identities in Kerala due to the Gulf migration, it has contributed enormous prosperity to a husband's status, and power to seclude his wife either in public or in home has become another symbol of masculine status.

The renaissance activities with a notion of colonial modernisation in 1920s' in Kerala and subsequent progressive movements among the Muslims in Malabar with a Salafi inspired ideology promoted strict ideological practices to the Muslims. Before these movements the Muslims had known such a dress code but it was without having a stringent stipulation over women to wear a particular dress code. The Arabian traders were welcomed by the local kings and provided shelter and food, allowed to construct the mosque at Kodungallore, the oldest mosque in India. Following this, later they constructed ten mosques throughout Malabar and along with that they propagated the Islamic culture and practices. Muslims have been living in Kerala over 1400 years and women never used to wear burkha or veil and were differentiated from Hindus only by a piece of cloth covering part of their head, and wearing colour *lungi* (dhoti) and longer sleeved blouses. Then, were they not Muslims all these millennia living in harmony with others in Kerala? The Imams and some fundamentalist leaders under the influence of pan-Islamist ideology from north now assert on Muslim women wearing veils covering even the face. In Kerala, one cannot differentiate a Muslim from others and is exactly like Hindus or Christians. Only recently, pan-Islamism spread through fundamentalists group through NDF and ally Popular Front of India by introducing sharia court, veils for women etc. But things changed since past three decades of strong commands, especially after the gulf migration, of the

⁵⁵¹ M.P. Basheer. 2003. 'Behind the Veil', in *Communalism Combat*, Vol.9, No.83, pp.36.

fundamentalist organizations growing around in Kerala with stipulation that women wear hijab. It questions the right of women to choose the applicable dress for her body and a certain kind of code compels her through the belief and practices over the affairs of her personal interests. Along with that, from the viewpoint of believers, the problems of the intervention of a secular state over the religious practices, because the secular states and laws are without knowing the tradition, belief and practices of the particular community makes intervention, creates more alienation and incredulity over the secular laws among religious followers. As a believer the ultimate aim is to follow the religious practices, also as an individual all have their own personal choices. The religious belts are making them more constraints but as a believer or a follower he is thinking that it the word of God.

6.2.1 Controversial Circular on Muslim Marriageable Age

Razak, a 22 year old orphan boy from Koduvally Village of Kozhikode District got married to Sajna on 12 January 2013 at his native place, where his parents once lived. As a gulf migrant, after 2 years of continuous service in the company he got two months leave. His spouse, Sajna, a 17 year old girl, just after her plus two education to satisfy her parents wish, was ready to become a housewife. Razak got a family visa through his company, where he planned to go to the gulf with his wife. Just after the marriage he approached the mahal committee secretary to get the letter issued mentioning the date of the marriage, so that he can produce it in the Panchayat office to get the marriage certificate, which is necessary to take her to the gulf. He understood the difficulties of getting the marriage certificate if the girl has not fulfilled the age criterion directed by the Supreme Court and of the Indian constitution. Then the secretary of the mahal committee reminded him that you can receive the marriage certificate producing a letter with wrong date of marriage after one year. For getting the marriage certificate one has to produce his Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) and the other identification cards like Voter identification card, Aadhaar, National Population Register (NPR) etc. Continuous journey through the constitutional provisions to search for any kind of possibilities to get the marriage certificate was time consuming and useless, then Razak realised that he would not get the marriage certificate and he would not be able to take her to gulf. Finally after 60 days of enjoyable life he had returned to gulf leaving his wife alone in his home.

The circular, issued by local administration department principal secretary, directs secretaries of civic bodies to register marriages of Muslim girls and men who have not attained the mandatory age limit of 18 and 21 respectively on production of a certificate from the religious regulatory institution. The circular was issued following complaints that secretaries of civic bodies, functioning as registrars, were not ready to register such marriages, causing difficulties for those who want to migrate to Gulf countries which insisted on marriage certificates from the local civic bodies. It was on 14 June 2013 the circular has come out to the public to solve the problem of those who got married already to register their marriages, even after producing full evidence that local bodies are not putting signature. Even after the Muslims producing the letter from the mahal committee secretary, mentioning the age of the spouse, the registrars show reluctance to put the signature for the marriage registration certificate. To resolve this problem the principal secretary of the state local self-government prepared the circular directed to the local bodies to register marriages of Muslim girls above the age of 16 and men who have not attained the age of 21 years. The Mathrubumi newspaper reported that the “the issue had kicked up a row with the state. Political parties, pro-left women’s groups, religious groups made their comments both disavouring and in favour to the new circular on marriages age. Due to the large scale family migration to the gulf countries, the migrants need passport with family status, causing difficulties for the registration for those who want to go which insisted on marriage certificates from civic bodies”.⁵⁵²

The issue became a focus of debate when the local body registrars refused to sign the marriage certificates even when the men and women produced the marriage evidence from the concerned religious bodies. The Mathrubumi reported that, Kerala Institute of Local Administration director P.P Balan has also sought a clarification from government on registering such marriages under the provisions of Kerala Registration of Marriages (common) Rules. The government’s clarification is that Muslim Marriage Rules, 1957, did not insist on age limit and the Child marriage Prevention Act, 2006 did not specify that marriage between men below 21 and girls below 18

⁵⁵² Mathrubumi Daily, Circular on Muslim marriages kicks up row in Kerala, 24 June 2013, pp. 5.

years as invalid. Hence marriages of Muslims who have not attained the mandatory age could be registered.⁵⁵³

The circular came out to the public discussion as well as legal discourses in the country. The circular mentioned that “the Muslim Marriage Act of 1957 does not stipulate that the Muslim spouses should attain the age of 18 and the Muslim boy must be over 21 years at the time of their marriage. The legal experts started to criticise the law as well as the circular. The law professionals later found out a serious mistake in the circular, that there is no such act existing in the country. The government was wrongly advised in the matter. The legal experts found out that it relied on a law prevailing in the country of Jamaica by mistake the ministry of the Kerala state and the principal secretary to the government understood that the law is applicable to all the Muslims in the world. In Indian conditions, the Mohammedan law still not codified and the Mohammedan law of colonial time, especially the ‘Dissolution of Muslim Marriage act of 1939’, vide S.2 (vii) mentions that the possibilities of getting married below the age of 15 years. The Indian parliament has not passed any law or recommendation that girls in the Muslim community can get married while they are minors.

The left organisations severely criticised government for their attitude towards the child marriage. ‘Child marriage has been banned by law. The secular forces criticised that the government is under the control of religious groups. The decision taken under pressure from conservative sections should be repealed,’ said V.N Murali, president of pro-CPI (M) cultural outfit 'Purogamana Kala Sahitya Sangham'.⁵⁵⁴ ‘Also the opposition leader of Kerala state V.S Achudanandan has sought action against the principal secretary in charge of local administration department, who had issued a controversial circular on Muslim marriages. The leftist organisations condemned the circular that it is against the rights of women. Achudanandan said, “The circular is against the Supreme court order. It does not even have the value of a paper, the circular directs the registrars and the concerned bodies to accept the marriages with special provisions to the Muslims, it is against the verdict of Supreme court and it is regarding the State Legislative Assembly without having any kind of discussions at

⁵⁵³ Ibid, pp.5.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid, pp.5.

the state level and the circular is completely against the secular decorum of the Malayali community”.⁵⁵⁵ Three different organizations had registered a petition in the High court of Kerala regarding the issue of circular made by the Kerala state and the petition demanded the High court to intervene in the issue, because the circular was against the existing laws and it went against the provisions of the prohibition of the child marriage act. A Kozhikode based Punarjani Charitable Trust; Viswa Hindu Parishad and Kerala Yukthivadi Sangham, were the three groups that approached to the court. The Hindu newspaper reported that, the study conducted by a Kozhikode based non-governmental organization, named Punarjani Charitable Trust, shows that as many as 26,442 marriages between girls aged between 13 and 18 took place in Malappuram district during 2001-02 while a total of 17,026 marriages between the same age group were held in Malappuram district during 2002-2003. However, during 2007-2009, 5,829 marriages took place in Malappuram. Community wise figures were not available.⁵⁵⁶

The legal expert Kaleeshwaram Raj of Kerala High court added that the effect of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 on Muslim personal law was “a grey area where different High courts have taken different views”. Karnataka and Bombay High courts had said that the 2006 enactment would override the Muslim personal law. This means that if a Muslim woman below 18 years gets married, it would be against the provisions of the enactment. However, the Delhi High court in the Tahra Begum v/s state of Delhi case had held that a Muslim girl who had attained puberty could marry and such a marriage will not be void, but only voidable. The matter requires to be clarified either by the Supreme court or by the Parliament.⁵⁵⁷ Adding a new twist to the controversy about the circular issued by the government of Kerala regarding the age of marriage for the Muslim boys and girls, the legal view has emerged that the order was issued based on a ‘non-existing provision in a non-existing law’. It is said that the controversial order was based on a law that was never enacted in India and was liable to be recalled and cancelled. The advocate general made the assurance that the government will look over the matter and will make a new circular. The Hindu

⁵⁵⁵ Mathrubumi Daily, *Controversial circular: VS seeks action against Principal Secretary Saturday*, 22 June 2013.

⁵⁵⁶ The Hindu, Kerala High Court moved against marriage circular, Kochi, 27 June 2013.

⁵⁵⁷ The Hindu, Legal experts condemn circular on Muslim marriages, Kochi, 22 June 2013.

newspaper reported that the ‘the contention that personal laws of Muslims, Christians, and those in other communities that allowed such kind of marriages was untenable after the enactment of the act which fixed the marriageable age of a person. All India lawyers’ union state committee secretaries B. Rajendran had also filed a petition challenging the circular’.⁵⁵⁸

Due to the intense pressure from the progressive corners, the state government got into trouble over the circular. The lawyer for the state Dhandapani agreed in the High court of Kerala for a new circular and it would amend the circular directing marriages between males aged below 21 and girls aged below 18 but over 16 belonging to the Muslim community. The government also decided to make cut-off date for registration for those who already got married. The government had also considered the problems faced by couples who had been living together for years without registering their marriage. Since there were some factual errors in the first circular, the government sought to clarify its stance. The groups took different stances over the issue, the multiple stances made them more in conflict with each other. The leaders of the groups interpreted and made the opinion according to the view of the groups. For the first time in the history of Kerala Muslims, the Muslim women activists other than the followers of left orientation came out to the public and made serious criticism against the ‘unwanted’ clutches of religious leaders over the community.

The Muslim groups such as Sunni A.P and E.K groups, Jamaat-e-Islami, Mujahid Madavoor group and Mujahid A.P group announced their approach towards the new circular. The pro-left cultural organizations, women’s groups also came out with their opinions. Along with this, the political movement of Muslim, Muslim League of Kerala also opined its views over the issue. The Muslim groups expressed their views which were different but unanimously agreed that the new circular was good. Also the Muslim women of Kerala came out for showing their disunity and anger against the community leaders due to their patriarchal viewpoints regarding the issue.

The leader Kanthapuram A.P Aboobakar Musliyar of A.P Sunni group, had made a controversial dialogue about the age of marriage of girls. He told the media that girls

⁵⁵⁸ The Hindu, Legal experts condemn circular on Muslim marriages, Kochi, 22 June 2013.

should be married off by the time they are 16 to prevent them from going wayward.⁵⁵⁹ Also he told that we are ready to accept the constitution of the country, as a secular nation providing our own personal laws that should extend to this also. Apart from accepting the marriage age at 16, if the government or constitution is going to legalize the marriage age as 18, we are ready to accept. He mentioned that the chance is more for being unruly or being loose women if they are not getting married early. The parents have to do their duty for daughter's protection and wellbeing. The comment of the leader caused strong opposition from the women's groups in Malabar. The pro-left movements criticized the government of Kerala for their appeasement policy towards the religious leaders and for acting according to the diktats of religious groups. The comments from the leaders about their organizational perspectives with interpreting Quran and hadith made more chaos in the society. The Siraj daily, of A.P Sunni section is normally not giving space for the other Muslim community leaders because of the constant conflict over the religious ideology with other groups of the Muslims in the community. It was the first time the official newspaper of A.P Sunni Muslims, 'Siraj daily' collected the opinions of their rival Muslim leaders to defend their argument in the public caused much criticism from the public spheres of the Malayali community. E.K Sunni leaders also made comments about the age at marriage, K. Alikutti Musliyar had said that girls who had reached physical maturity could be married off. His comment caused large controversy among the Muslim activists and left organizations.

I had a discussion with Onampalli Mohammed Faisi, the state leader of Samastha Kerala Sunni Student Federation (SKSSF) regarding this issue. As the parental organization (E.K Sunni) said, he told me that we should consider the social situation that the Muslims are facing. Actually the situation is different from one family to another family. It has nothing to do with the religion, even though religion allows us to marry after puberty. Actually the situation of Muslim families are a cause for the early marriage. As an organization for the youngsters, we know the difficulties of girls for getting married in the younger years. But actually the family situations are the real enemy for girls, not the ulama. The people who protested against the ulama

⁵⁵⁹ Praveen, S.R. The Hindu, Muslim women protest stand of religious leaders, Kozhikode, 30 June 2013.

should be aware of this. They are just protesting and burning the effigy of Islamic scholars without knowing the reality. Actually most of the men during 70 and 80's migrated to gulf region to feed their women and children. Most of them were illiterate people who continued manual job in gulf. They saved money to cater to their families. Their main aims are to construct a good safe home for the family and afterwards to send their beloved daughter to a good family. They just wanted to get a good family for their daughter even still most of the parents, education of boys are not that much relevant. The situation in Kerala is such that the Muslim boys do not show much interest to get into institutions of higher education when compared with girls. Even if the girls get higher education, she will face difficulty to find out a suitable boy. The normal marriage for boys is near 23-24 among the Muslims. Normally they prefer a girl who is four or five years younger to them. Then the problem is not with the clergy, we can give directions for that, other than that what we can do? The problem is with the social situation, we hope that will change through time. We support the parents who want the marriage of their daughters before 18, otherwise what will happen to them. Most of the parents are coming for one or two months leave, after that they will go back to the gulf to serve the family. So we should support their cause, which is the prime reason to support the new circular. Even we believe that the early marriage and pregnancy is good for girls. From a strictly biological perspective, the 20s is the best decade for conceiving and carrying a baby. Also the right time to start a family but definitely there are advantages and disadvantages for that, in their 20's girls would have more energy to run after and care for the child but less personal experiences.⁵⁶⁰

The media extensively discussed this issue, the publications under the control of Muslim groups also started to debate this issue to claim that their opinion is true and valid. One among them was 'Sneha Samvadham' monthly, ran under the control of official Mujahid group. "...for each and every discussion the right wing sections of Kerala say the Muslims are still in 'middle age' in all matters. They are suggesting us to learn from Europe in all matters, especially over the modernisation issues, based on cultural and civilizational issues. Even the right wing is seeing us through the prism of the 'western' and degrading us in all matters. A kind of stereotypic approach they

⁵⁶⁰ Excerpts from the interview with Onampally on 21 November 2013.

have against us, but when discussing about the issue of age of marriage for girls, these so called right wing media are not discussing or mentioning about situation of so-called well developed Europe. We can see, in England the age at marriage for girls and boys are 16 with the consent of parents and the same law prevails in Scotland and Ireland. European nations like Spain follows fourteen as their age at marriage for girls. In Vatican, according to the code of canon law, the age at marriage for boys are 16 and the 14 for girls. Here the state is suppressing the right to enjoy the sexual desires of the people. But at the same time the right wing groups are fighting with the government for lowering the age of consent for girls from 18 to 16. Parliament also prepared a law on the basis of 16 but later the objections raised by different political parties over lowering the age of consent from 18 to 16 in a proposed anti-rape law, the government has agreed to raise it back to 18. It means girls can have sexual relationship with boys at the age of 16 but they cannot marry at 16 even though they have consent from the parents. The Muslims of India have been enjoying the right to follow the Islamic customs and practices according to the sharia law in so many matters including succession, marriage, Waqf etc. The Muslim Personal Law (sharia) Application Act 1937 gave us all the permissions regarding this matter. It was introduced in 7 October 1937, then onwards the Muslims are enjoying their sharia rights with acceptance of the democratic values of the nation. So as part of this, government should allow the Muslims to follow sharia besides following the secular court verdicts. Muslims are enjoying this right even before writing our constitution of the nation. So the request is that it should not violate the religious rights of Muslims. The interesting part is that the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006, the girls who are under the age of 21 is considered as 'child' and under this act the boys who are under 21 is considered as 'child'. As a Muslim group we wanted to ask the government of India to allow us to the application of sharia in this matter also while accepting the democratic principles of the nation".⁵⁶¹

The Jamaat-e-Islami took another stand, by which the leaders asked the judiciary and the state to look into the matter as equal rights that a new circular must be issued for all the communities irrespective of the religion. The feeder organisation of Jamaat-e-

⁵⁶¹ Akbar, M.M. 2013, *Vivaha Prayavum Lainkika Avakashangalum*. Sneha Samvadham. Cochin: Niche of Truth, pp.6-20.

Islami, Solidarity Youth Movement asked to apply the new circular to all, not only the Muslim girls but the entire community. One has to decide their fate and ways, the well-known democratic country has no right to make such stipulations to its citizens. As a citizen he/she must have the right to select her choice and officially they asked that, it was not right to fix the age for marriage in a democratic country like India.⁵⁶² The Kerala Nadvathul Mujahidin (official Mujahid or A.P Mujahid) had publically come out with support for the new circular. The president Abdulla Koya Madani said that there is no negative relationship between the girl's education and their age at marriage, now the people are more progressive for getting education to the women, that is good. Along with giving proper education, the parents have to find out a partner for them as early as possible for their protection.⁵⁶³ Mujahid Madavoor group also took their approach in favour for the new circular. The group opined that there was no need of any circular, in a democratic country like India, the family can decide their marriage age. The leader Hussain Madavoor said to the media that physical and mental maturity of a girl and boy can determine their marriageable age.⁵⁶⁴ The decision taken by the Mujahid group was a shock for the other sectors in the Kerala. This was for the first time ever in the history of Kerala Muslims, all the groups were standing together. This was a joint movement from the community organizations for the new circular and against the amendment of the new circular. But the comment made by the leaders caused mass protests among the women's organizations against this clergy leader of the community.

Quran Sunnath Society came out with harsh criticism against all other Muslim groups. They said, 6 century Islamic context is different and now we are in the 21 century and people are more progressive and educated. The age at marriage should be above 20 because many Muslim women are not getting chance for higher education because of their early marriage. Islam does not permit to follow only the past and we have to obey Allah only, need not to follow the human command. God will grace us if we fit Islam to the modern context rightly, removing the *Jahiliya*⁵⁶⁵ laws that intruded into sharia. The organizations demanded the reformulation of sharia because it said that it

⁵⁶² Dool News.com 30 June 2013.

⁵⁶³ Reporter Live Story 24 June 2013, pp.1.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, pp.1

⁵⁶⁵ It means ignorance. It is an Islamic concept of 'ignorance of divine guidance' or 'the state of ignorance of the guidance from God'.

is polluted because of the human intervention. We are in a democratic country, but the Muslim religious groups and communities are not ready to accept the democratic principles even though they are talking about the democratic principles for their gains. We are against this new circular because it questioned the very idea of secularism of our nation. If it allows, tomorrow all other groups and communities will start to ask government to practice their own religious beliefs and the result will be a chaos for the secular principles of the country. The organization questioned that why such circulars that violate our constitutional provisions? The governments must be disciplined and forced to follow the constitution in word and spirit. There is a limit beyond which all appeasement should stop. By this circular Kerala has crossed the limits and undermined the welfare of all teen-adolescents. The teens of the state should rise against such blatant violations of their childhood by the state machinery. Otherwise it becomes meaningless to claim they are the most literate state in the country. Also the ulama should think about the reformulations of sharia, Shia Muslims are ready to make a few reformulations in the sharia to fit in the context, then why Sunni Muslims are following the sharia without any changes. Marriage requires mental maturity from an individual, not just the ability to produce children. Hence, a minimum age limit of 20 for marriage is set for women and 23 for men. Especially in our society where divorce is not seen as an easy alternative, the prospective groom and bride must be capable of understanding each other and the consequences of their marriage on them. Therefore, for the welfare of those entering into the marriage, this rule must be respected.⁵⁶⁶

As earlier said for the first time in the history of Mappila Muslims, a group of Muslim women activists came out with the protest. On 29 June 2013, The Hindu newspaper reported that “in an unprecedented protest programme here at Mananchira, a group of Muslim women burned the All-India Sunni Jamhiyathul Ulama general secretary Kanthapuram A.P Aboobakar Musliyar in effigy for his recent comments in support of reducing the legal marriage age for Muslim women”.⁵⁶⁷ The Muslim women who joined the protest said that they were forced to protest against the community leaders

⁵⁶⁶ Aboobakar Muthur. 2013. Editorial. *Veda Dharshanam*. July Vol. 4, No. 1, Tirur: Quran Sunnath Society. pp.3.

⁵⁶⁷ Praveen, S.R. The Hindu, Muslim women protest stand of religious leaders, Kozhikode, 30 June 2013.

because of the regressive comment in the name of women's needs through the clerics' support for the new circular to legalize the marriage of Muslim girls who had completed 16. The women activists commented that the idea was laughable and shocking that as a girl did not mature even at the age of 18, which is actually what the constitution says the minimum legal age to get married is and so what would happen with a girl who got married at the age of 16, still growing; so that is why we are saying that it is unjust to push them into the marriage while they are child and being a mother at such a young period.

The protesters soundly argued that their stand against the community leaders was not against the religion, but it is against the unwanted clutches of the religious leaders. They said the approach taken by these religious group leaders is not just against the Muslim society but it is against the whole humanity. Rajeena, a reporter says that "they (community leaders) are trying to see women as pieces of flesh and not as independent citizens. Marriage at such an age will curtail the mental growth of girls. It is also an age when they should be gaining better education and widening their horizon".⁵⁶⁸ The protesters demanded the community leaders to withdraw their commands and asked to apologise to the entire society for their rounded comment. The circular was issued keeping in mind the interests of a few people in the community and this will lead to the child marriage and once again community will lose all gained prestige and will hark to middle ages. This will tarnish the image of the community, so it is better to withdraw their false comments.

The protesters said that the new circular promoting child marriage is an encroachment on children's rights to live as children. It is against their basic rights of getting education and their right against being children and it will destroy their growing personality and a woman should accumulate life skills before getting married, the protesters said. The Muslim community in Kozhikode and Malappuram was aware of the legal age of maturity, but the order would give a negative message and promote child marriage. It is not against a particular community, it is against the humanity. The response from wider society was different, the Kerala State Women's Development Corporation P. Kulsu, an active leader of Muslim League ladies wing "responded that in Hindu Daily the recent controversy was uncalled for. According to

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid, 30 June 2013.

her, it is not against the community or humanity; actually it is for the Kerala society. It was just a helping hand to legalize marriages for the past that took place when the girls were 16. Several couples around Kerala faced so many problems in registering their marriages in Panchayat and municipalities because of the stipulation that a marriage was not valid before the girl turned 18. They approached government for solving their problems. However, registration was necessary for travelling abroad with their husbands or claiming their property rights. These couples were facing trouble in registering their marriage in Panchayats and municipalities because of the stipulation that the marriage was not valid before the girl turned 18”.⁵⁶⁹ The wider society was waiting to get the response from the Muslim League, the ruling ally in the UDF government of Kerala state, all other political parties including BJP and CPI (M) severely condemned the new circular for degrading the girl child and they opined that it is a child rape not child marriage. The Muslim League general secretary, P.K Kunjalikutty opined that we are against the child marriage and the same opinion is prevailed in the party. The circular is helping those people who got married before 18 and are facing difficulties to get registration.⁵⁷⁰

The social activist and writer M.N Karassery responded to the issue of the age of marriage. He severely criticized the new circular. He also said, “After the independence when Nehru became the Prime Minister, he introduced Hindu Marriages Act and similarly Muslim Marriage Act to prevent the child marriages in India. Actually the supporters of this new circular says there no references about the marriage age in the 1957 act. But there it clearly mentioned that the marriage under 16 is illegal. The supporters of new circular made the false allegations due to their patriarchal mind-set. In 1978, government of India made another act, which says the marriage age for men is 21 and the marriage age for women of 18 irrespective of any caste, creed or religion. But the Muslim League of Kerala opposed this in the name of religion. Actually we cannot call them as secular, because in each and every step that they had/have something religious in it. Like that due to the increase in the rate of divorce, government of Kerala had introduced a new law that all the couples should register their names in the concerned bodies after their marriage. It was in 1998, when

⁵⁶⁹ The Hindu, Kozhikode, They find the circular ‘laughable’, 24 June 2013.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid, pp.5.

the new law came out, the Muslim League made the protest against it, saying that the new law against the Islamic sharia. But they did not get much support from the masses even from within the community. Now they came up with this new circular that Muslim girls can marry even before 18. To show to the public, they are against the new circular but actually the department of local legislative is under the control of Muslim League. So we can say that actually Muslim League is playing politics over this issue. Even we have a good example related with marriage age of a girl. In 1986, the irrigation minister of the Kerala had resigned from his job due to the child marriage of his daughter. The famous social activist late Navab Rajendran went to High court of Kerala and made complaint that Bindhu, daughter of M.P Gangadharan, had not reach the age 18 at her marriage. Later due to the mass criticism from the left and right wing organizations of Kerala, he resigned the job as minister.⁵⁷¹

As a result of the mass protests from different corners other than the religious belts, especially from the secular terrain and the women activists of Kerala, the government finally decided to make amendment in the law. The Solicitor General, Dhandapani, informed the High court about the mistakes committed in the circular and clarified that the government is going to publish a new one while avoiding the controversial issue of reducing the age limit for marriage. According to reports, the new circular will give strict orders for the secretaries of local self-government to prevent child-marriages. However, the government will not withdraw previous circular. Faced with severe criticism, Indian National Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) government in Kerala on 27 June, 2013 made some modification in the controversial circular which came out from the principal secretary of the state to legalise the marriages of Muslim girls in age group of 16 to 18 and men below 21, making it clear that the order will not have prospective effect. The new circular issued by the local self-government department clearly mentioned the marriages of women in the age of 16 to 18 and men under 21 took place till June 27 would be valid but the weddings of women below 18 and men 21 from Fridays onward would be invalid. In respect to the frequent application and complaints received from the people, who got married before the age of 18, the Kerala government has given the cut-off date for the marriage and this new amendment may prevent the child marriage in the future. The government

⁵⁷¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaanq3zMbo8>.

also wanted to end the growing tensions among the groups who were stand with favour or against favour towards the circular.

6.2.2 Summary

By conclusion the writings seeks different viewpoints from the Muslim groups such as Sunni, Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami, Quran Sunnath Society of Kerala and by finding their positions, I reach to a conclusion that the religious authority is not singular and unitary. The question of religious authority whether it is singular or plural is very relevant. The debate over the age of marriage for boys and girls among the Muslims of Kerala are very relevant. One can see the approach taken by each group, those approaches were highly touched with their so called ideologies for the constitution of true Islam. As an exception, Quran Sunnath Society has gone its extreme level against all other groups. Even this group asked for the reformulation of sharia while the world Sunni Muslims considered the reformulation of sharia is against the Islamic belief. The Sunni Muslims curse the Mujahids and Jamaat's on this, criticising that the *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) is the main reason for these kinds of disputes among the Muslims. The Sunni Muslims argued that the independent reasoning will give us the way to go outside the fold of the Islam. By taking such a stance, the Sunni Muslims considered the Quran Sunnath Society deviated from the real path of Islam. Even they did not hesitate to say this. By conclusion I can see that the different approaches and ideologies have for all the groups but there will be certain limits for all. Everyone will come under the circle of basic tenet of Islam. The diversities make them more powerful and giving them more stringent ideology to hang over the idea. Due to the intense pressure from the secular fold and the women folk, the government agreed to make changes in the circular. The court itself questioned the authenticity of the Law. Later, according to the government sources, they submitted the same circular with little change. This was the first time ever in the history of Kerala Muslims, a group of Muslim women came out with the protest against the ulama and they burned the effigy of the religious scholars in public due to their disputed comments against women. Also in the organisational history it marked for another version, which all the interpretative traditions came together in one platform to support a circular. Once again it questioned the single aspect of Islamic teachings and while I go through this I can see that they are varied and diverse

views that mostly prevail among the Muslim groups and each one tries to claim that they are the original proponents of Islam and consider all the groups as deviants from the real path.

In the concluding chapter I would comment on the interplay between the community and the larger socio-political context. This interplay determines the belief system of the groups which is exhibited in the ways different Muslim groups have been hailing their identities in the context of Kerala.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY: TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

The academic study of religion is fundamentally concerned with studying people, their beliefs, practices, behaviors rather than assessing the truth or truths of their beliefs or practices. An anthropological approach to the study of religion is distinguished from a confessional, religious, or theological approach which is generally concerned with determining the nature, will, or wishes of a god or the gods. An anthropologically based approach would bracket out and set aside all normative judgments and theorize that the difference in beliefs might have something to do with the psychology of people involved, their method of social organization, their mode of economic activity, etc.

The present study makes an attempt to understand the Muslim groups in Malabar with practices of self-conduct undergoing a process of adaptation and modification in different historical circumstances. The study unfolds different discourses among the Muslim groups, calling in to question the understanding of 'tradition(s)' as an unchanging set of cultural prescriptions that stand in contrast to what is changing, contemporary or modern. While certain continuities in earlier practices are evident, it is also clear that the modern adaptations of classical Islamic notions are modulated by, and refracted through contemporary social and historical conditions.

The study unfolds to show how the changing nature of Islamic practices, temporally and spatially, are entrenched in different discourses among the Muslim groups. It draws upon the scholarship on the diversities among the Muslims brought through contextual analyses and empirical studies embarking a review of available literature. Thereby, the thesis attempts to problematize the unchanging nature of Muslim practices and questions the view that Islam is unitary. Drawing upon the diversities in the field, it rejects the understanding of tradition as a set of beliefs and practices flowing down from the past to the present. It reveals that each religious group has its own ways of understanding the beliefs and practices, and even those understandings are widely different and keep on changing which further lead to the separate identities among them. The Muslim religious groups in Malabar enter the complex process of

upholding and justifying their own theological positions by rejecting the concept of universal Islamic brotherhood. Such intense debates have made the Islamic public life resonate with the claims and counter claims of authentic Islam.

The British reign in the country and the ‘anti-Muslim’ policies such as their approach to Khilafat movement, ‘faulty’ tenant laws that were clamped on the Mappilas created hostility against colonialism. The anti-colonial struggles further triggered the introduction of the notion of universal Islamism and pan-Islamism among the Indian Muslims. Paradoxically, instead of unifying the Muslim community, the thesis delineates the creation of further divisions among the Muslim groups in Kerala, particularly in Malabar.

Unlike the Islamists and a few historians, the anthropologists and sociologists, in the field of sociology of religion, reached a consensus that the Islam is not unitary. To constitute the idea of ‘universal Islam’, the historians and Islamists measured up all the popular practices of Muslim community against the norms and prescriptions of single text and trashed the rest into the dust of folk Islam calling it un-Islamic. The different models: Islamisation thesis of Francis Robinson, co-existence thesis of Imtiaz Ahmed, syncretistic model of Azim Roy and hierarchical model of Madan, too, to a large extent, did not reject the idea of dialectics between the two spheres i.e. scriptural and lived Islam. Yet, they failed to understand the complex dynamics and ever-changing nature of the Islamic traditions and groups. In a bid to overcome this impasse, I draw extensively from Talal Asad’s work on Islam wherein the theoretical beginnings of overcoming is an instituted practice (set in a particular context and having particular history) into which Muslims are inducted as Muslims. This point of departure accounts for the monopolistic claims of learned elites but also villagers, local people, and outsiders who believe it as true. The idea of Asad’s discursive tradition is very helpful in this regard to understand the complex dynamics among the Mappila Muslims of Malabar.

The study begins by addressing the contestations against the colonialism and its repercussions of Mappila Muslims of Malabar. Embarking on the debate over the voyage of the King Cheraman Perumal, I draw attention to the diverse positions taken by different groups in approaching the story of his life and voyage. Based on the

available readings, it can safely be said that Islam came at the time or just after the death of Prophet and it preached the message through peaceful means. Unlike other places, Islam came to Kerala through 'trade', and not the 'sword'. The peaceful arrival makes the Muslims take a stronger and more stringent approach over the religious practices along with the cultural sharing with non-Muslims. One of the major reasons for the emergence of Salafi-pan-Islamic movements was due to the high integration with the indigenous people that Muslims had in the past. Through an intense study of the Mappila Muslim groups of Malabar in Kerala, the thesis attempts to address a number of aspects including the origin and evolution of Islam in Kerala and the debates between the religious groups in the public sphere towards issues such as Khilafat movement, Mappila revolt, response of Mappila to colonialism, debates about religious and non-religious issues, the politicization of religious groups and the resultant secularization process among the groups and the process of Indianisation of the Muslim League of Malabar after independence and participation of Jamaat-e-Islami in the democratic elections in India etc. As part of this historical evolution the Muslim groups in Malabar have been participants and privy to intense theological debates that have taken place in the name of true Islam and corresponding practices of self-conduct.

The Mappila Muslims responded differently to each of the issues, for example, the Khilafat movement of the 1920s saw a plethora of responses from among the community. Such that a single homogenized conception about movement may not be alluded to. Ulama used 'texts' to authenticate the relevance and irrelevance of participation in the movements along with fatwas. Joining the nationalist struggle against the British brought forth the dilemma of supporting a non-Semitic idolatrous government against 'Semitic' rule. The ulama did not reach consensus regarding the Khilafat movement. Differing understanding and knowledge about religious beliefs and practices made it difficult to come to a collective agreement. They experienced divisions on issues such as hijrath (migration) to Afghanistan and non-cooperation with the British government and cooperation with the Hindus. This idea of pan-Islamism, hijrath later became one of the reasons for the emergence of Pakistan.

The divergent understandings of Islam from the different corners of Malabar cannot be addressed through the categorization of the binary idea of ‘textual’ and ‘lived’ Islam. This binary conception undermines the complexity involved in multiplicities not only in the practice but also in the interpretation of the text. So the idea of discursive tradition was very useful for me to understand the complex dynamics of the Mappila Muslim groups.

The thesis also addresses the claims among certain historians and theologians that the changes in religious practice were due to the influence of Salafyian and Moududian ideologies. Of course one cannot deny the role of these new movements but what is important to consider is the innovation and change that occurred within the Sunni Muslims in a bid to take on the new ideologies. This influence brought forth multiple interpretations of religious practices among the Muslim groups. These tendencies of reflection were existent among the Sunni Muslims much before the emergence of new Mujahid and Jamaat movements. Nonetheless, the multiple interpretations and understandings of Islam reach dynamic and complex levels with the changes in the socio-political circumstances in the post-independence period.

Going forward, I introduce the different religious groups among the Mappila Muslims of Malabar. Here, following the description, I go on to make way for the need to move beyond the available registers of reformist vs. revivalist, scriptural vs. lived Islam etc., arguing how even a cursory analysis through the pages of history and the present debates of these groups makes it difficult to put them squarely in any of these folds. For example, even though both Jamaat-e-Islami and Mujahid represent and claim themselves to be the true proponents of Islam, there are irresolvable differences and disputes over many issues between them made evident in their differing theological positions. The positions once taken by these groups are not stagnant; there is shift that one may note caused by their contestations in relation to other groups and changing historical circumstances. The study therefore demands a conceptual approach that brings into focus ‘what they do’ rather than what ‘they profess’. For this reason, the study examines the new tendencies in Islam brought forth by the groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami, who in the name of pan-Islamism and through their claims and stipulations over ‘un-Islamic’ practices envisage the requisites of Muslim self-

conduct. It seems after the long cultural and civilizational contact with the Hindu community, the Muslims adopted practices and beliefs, which came to be considered as threatening elements in Islam for the new movements such as Jamaat, Mujahid, while other groups considered it as a binding factor in Hindu-Muslim unity. Hence, the study analyzed the local level manifestations of religion to understand the grassroots level religious expressions of the Muslims with respect to rituals and practices. Albeit, the debates between the groups of the Muslims of Kerala are in themselves not new; their emergence may be traced back to the beginnings of the 20th century. However, public debates in Kerala between the religious groups produced shifts in practice and worked continually to generate and redefine the focus of true Islam. The impulse of pan-Islamism to eradicate the evil practices and work towards purification is also deeply rooted as it reproduces itself through practice and dialogue with Muslim, and other political groups.

The place Kodianthur justifies its meaning of being a confluence of plurality of religions. Kodianthur has been a witness to a plethora of religious groups claiming their proclivity to true Islam. Each group has their own mosques including Tablighi-Jamaat which has only a few mosques in Kerala. The Mujahid and Jamaat-e-Islami movement came into the region at the time of their inception. This is also the place where the Sunni leaders separated out from the Samastha ulama forum and promoted Malayalam qutba. The introduction of Malayalam qutba became a major controversy among the religious groups in Islam. That was one of the reasons for the strong opposition to the growth of Mujahid/Jamaat movement in Kodianthur. Later all groups marked themselves against a 'common enemy', the Ahmadiyahs, which subsequently led to Mubahila debates. The convergences of these happenings in Kodianthur rightfully justify the location of the study.

With the changing political situation in the country, particularly, after the Emergency in 1975, Jamaat-e-Islami decided to enter into the political democratic politics. Today, it has formed a separate political party at the all National level. While scholars debate the influence of the Saudi Salafian inspiration of Mujahid movement in Kerala, Jamaat-e-Islami refuses to align themselves with all available schools of jurisprudence in Islam.

The entry of Jammat into electoral politics paved way to many interesting paradoxes in the political field. Jamaat-e-Islami of Kerala has consistently been supporting the Communist Party, who claim to be upholders of secular values. Likewise A.P Sunni Muslims have taken sides with CPI (M), especially after 1990. The politicization of the Sunni group resulted in CPI (M)'s coming back to power; following which Sunnis were named as 'sickle Sunnis' for their open support to the left party. Apart from the political domain, a number of changes in the theological approach have occurred among the Sunni Muslims in matters related to girls' education, strict ban over the entry of women into mosques and many other issues ushering in a process of secularization. Debate over the Prophet's hair is an example in this direction. The debate started in 2010 and continuous to be kept alive despite the court directive to the government to intervene on the issue. Meetings and counter meetings of each group have precipitated matters further, and seem to have acquired a heightened pitch after the controversial opinion of CPI (M) state secretary Pinarayi Vijayan questioning the 'relevance' of Prophet's hair in today's world. For the first time the Malayali land witnessed the differences between the CPI (M) and A.P Sunnis.

Malabar has suffered heavily on account of communal polarization ensuing debates on pan-Islamism. Additionally, the question of Mappilastan, the creation of separate district of Malappuram, a Muslim-dominated area, has furthered politico-religious polarizations in Malabar. New divisions between communities based on religion have also emerged in Kerala after the demolition of Babri mosque. The entry of Jamaat-e-Islami into party politics, once considered un-Islamic, has found credence among the Muslims. Similarly, role of the Muslim League in the formation of Muslim groups has been very crucial before as well as after independence. The demand for the Mappilastan alienated the League from the nationalist movement and support for the Pakistan on religious basis further tainted them as anti-national. The Mappila revolt had raised the aspirations of the Muslims; the dissatisfied educated Muslim youth with the support and inspiration from the Muslim League took to political activism to overcome the socio-political backwardness of the Mappila Muslims. The intensity of the conflict between the Mujahid and Sunni group in Malabar was much evident during one of the phases of my fieldwork (December 2011 to February 2012). The Mujahids were discernable because of the variations in belief over the power of

'jinnu'. The public discussion of Mappila Muslims reached a heightened pitch; it even led to physical attacks in many places including the mosques. The contestation was over the claim of reformism in the Muslim community and led to the counter attack by the Sunnis against their claims of reformism.

The study, thus, concerns itself with theological explanations became the site of many a contestation among the Mappila Muslims in the given historical circumstances. To lay bare these processes I select two issues that articulate the difference and diversities among the Mappila religious groups of Malabar. I prefer to understand the discursive practices put forward by the religious groups rather than harping back on the veracity of their claims or professed ideologies. Thus, the use of qutba and translation of Quran controversy should be seen as seeking to draw Muslims into divinely ordained life. According to this view, the question posed by the use of translation of Quran or delivering qutba in vernacular language etc. is not whether they are a correct representation of Islam; it is rather an examination of Muslim groups' claims to 'right bodily and spiritual attitude'. The Quran translation and delivering of qutba in Malayalam were taken up by the Sunni Muslims way back even before the Mujahids with pan-Islamic ideology begin to address them in the 20 century. After the Khilafat and Mappila rebellion the new movements (pan-Islamism, Salafism) spread among Mappila Muslims. As a result, to stop the growing acceptance of these new movements, Sunni ulama banned the translation of Quran and delivering of qutba practice in vernacular languages. The new Mujahid, Jamaat-e-Islami ideologies interpreted the same texts with different meanings thus, establishing new arguments about Islamic practices, or so they claimed. An examination of this contestation suggests that Muslim groups are varied in their methods of interpretation of texts, and thus arrive at plurality of opinions. As mentioned earlier, the history of Kerala Muslims itself comes with an account of many opinions in the domain of religion and religious issues. In the context of religious practices in Kerala, every Muslim group has a justifiable position and is keen on protecting them.

The idea of the intervention of the state into the practices of religious groups finds discussion in my study. Additionally, I discuss the ethics that every believing Muslim has to follow, through the stipulations of the do's and don'ts of religious practice,

particularly the women. The emphasis here is on the question of ethics or appropriate behavior. There are multiple designs dictating the ways of behavior in each Muslim group. The concern is the applicability of morals and ethics within each group; the self and structures of social authority, and between what one is, what one wants in order to realize a particular modality of being and personhood, a Muslim self. However, I do not concern myself to look out for whether the morals and ethics are widely followed by each group or its members. Here, I submit that what amounts to 'right conduct' among Mappila Muslims in their everyday lives remains plural mediated by historical circumstances.

The study also attempts to discuss the gender related issues with regard to the Muslim community in Malabar. This was demonstrated in the context of the two issue that raised gender questions and community freedom in the recent times. Through the women-only magazines, all the groups stipulate *adab*. In regard to the discussion about the circular regarding the Muslim girls' marriage age, I sketch out the different approaches of the Muslim groups which again remain embedded in their constitution of true Islam. For the first time ever in the history, this debate marked a unity among all Muslim religious groups except Quran Sunnath Society. Quran Sunnath Society asked the reformulation of sharia law while the Sunni Muslims considered it un-Islamic. The Sunni Muslims accuse the Mujahid-Jamaat-e-Islami movements, criticizing that the promotion of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) as the main reason for the kind of disputes that have erupted among the Muslims. The changes occurring among the Sunni Muslims are very significant; the Mujahid, Jamaat groups take credit for reforming and modernising the Sunni Muslims. Due to the new links that have now come to be established with migration to the gulf countries, the Muslims of Malabar have begin to adapt numerous cultural practices that are borrowed from these places; pan-Islamism and Salafian influence has further accelerated this process. The pan-Islamists support these initiatives and now advocate cultural adaptations such as wearing of the veil, thus, creating codes of conduct that have given rise to queries on the gender question in Islam. Strong advocacy for a unitary Islamic worldview and concomitant Muslim self by the pan-Islamist groups have not remained at the level of debates but given rise to more violent conflicts in the community.

The study also attempts to pose a challenge to an aspect of what has come to be known as the secularization thesis; how with modernization, the influence of religion would be curtailed or/and set aside to those aspects of modern life that are deemed either 'private' or 'moral'. In this sense the debates among the Muslim groups to introduce a set of shared norms or standards by which one is to judge one's conduct, be it in the context of domestic life, education, familial, legal, or other social activities including the national and cultural identity, take place in the public realm. To conclude, this thesis describes the dynamics of transformation within Islam through the organisational debates among the Muslim groups in Malabar, Kerala. The Muslim groups, with community support, and political engagement, offer competing claims of legitimacy and authenticity, in their claims in/of Islam for Muslims in Malabar. It is tensions among these groups that create unexpected alliances in political sphere. The dynamics that ensue from this remain circumscribed by historical circumstances that keep religious practices in state of flux, thus, making them transitory. In such a scenario of volatile reformulations what is Islam and its concomitant Muslim self remains highly contested and unstable.

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