

Chapter-1

Development of Islamic Studies in Kerala: A General Survey

CHAPTER – I

DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC STUDIES IN KERALA : A GENERAL SURVEY

It has now been indisputably proved that Arabia had trade relations with Indian ports long before the establishment of the Roman Empire¹. The vast stretched beautiful coast of Malabar extending from Kasargod to Kanyakumari fascinated the foreigners especially the Arabs to have trade contacts with this land from several millennia ago. These trade contacts helped immensely for the mutual co-operation between the two subcontinents and the advent of Islam in Malabar during the lifetime of the Prophet itself and the formation of an innate cultural entity. Malabar had an important place in the mercantile world map from the unknown time. Historical evidences show that the *Arabs* were the controlling force of the world trade in those ages. The quintessential feature of this commercial development was the bliss of the region with natural resources and spices. The Arabs were taking the commodities like pepper, ginger, sandalwood, lemon, tamarind, camphor, cloves, teakwood etc from India, China and Sri Lanka in order to store them in the large godowns of Yemen and to re-transport to Syria on caravans numbering more than 2800 to 3000. They had transported one part thereof to Egypt

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See Sayed Sulaiman Nadavi, *Indo Arab Relation*, Institute of Indo-Middle East Cultural Studies Hyderabad , 1962., Roland E. Miller, *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, Orient Longman 1976., Tarachand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, the Indian Press Ltd, Allahabad., Sastri K.A.N., *Foreign Notice of South India*, Madras, 1959., Ishtiaq Husain Querishi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610-1947)*, Montan and Company S. Graven Hage, 1982.

and Alexandria and another part to Rome and take from those countries commodities like dates and other things to this land. Besides, the geographical proximity of the region with coastal area certainly boosted the commercial activities. Commenting on the Indo-Arab relation in the ancient period, an eminent historian Sayed Sulaiman Nadvi (1884-1953) states with reference to Al Masudi that “Arab-merchants obtain camphor, coconut, sappan wood, cane and gold from Maldeep, Sangai deep and other islands of the Indian Ocean². In addition to this Dr. Tarachand opines that “the Arab vessels started either from the Coast of the Red sea or from the southern coast, and their objective was to disembark either at the mouth of the Indus and in the Gulf of Cambay by sailing along the coast or on the Malabar Coast, in which case they profited by the *Monsoon* to proceed to Koulam (in Malabar) and the other ports directly. The ship starting from the Persian Gulf followed the same course, and by the help of the *Monsoon* reached Koulam, the Malay Peninsula, the Eastern archipelago and China’’³.

It is Roland E. Miller who also accredits the same fact by stating that “Kerala holds an all important position on the trading map of the ancient world. Its port of *Muziris* (Kodungallur in Malabar), was one of the greatest commercial emporia of the world, challenged in India only by Quilon (a Southern city in Malabar), which lay 110 miles Southward on the same coast. Muziris was a meeting place of the east and the west. From the East came Chinese and probably East Indies traders, while from

² Ibn Masudi, *Muruj al Zahab*, p.16., quoted by Sayed Sulaiman Nadvi op.cit. p.40.

³ Tarachand, op.cit. p. 31.

⁴ Roland E. Miller op.cit. pp.39-40.

the West came the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, Persians, East Africans, and others to exchange goods and draw on the treasures of India”⁴.

Considering the ancient Indo-Malabar commercial relations, a number of Socio-political factors had their role in the expansion of commercial relationship between the Arabs and Coastal towns of South India. These include the co-operation of the local rulers like a *Zamorin of Calicut*, *Kolathiri Rajas* to the north, *Cochin Rajas* to the south and the inland *Valluvanad Rajas* who ruled over the region from 11th to 16th centuries, provided them protection and had given full support for their commercial settlement and activities in their territories⁵. Commenting on Indo-Arab relation in the ancient period, a modern scholar rightly observes that “It was natural for the Arabs to make Kerala coast their first and chief port of call Not only was it the nearest halting place, but it was also the source of pepper, the black gold, as well as many other valuable products. The local Hindus warmly accepted the Arabs as they accepted merchants and sailors of other nationalities, and the Arabs in turn reciprocated by a non-aggressive policy, thus there were Arabs sailing back and forth between Arabia and Kerala at the time of the Prophet (pbuh), some of them were domiciled in major ports and intermarriage was going on. Although some of these Arabs may have come from the Hijaz, Oman and Bahrain, they were chiefly businessmen from Yemen and Hadramaut. Many Mappila families particularly those known as ‘*Tangal*’⁶ families trace their origin to the latter areas”⁷

⁵ Roland E. Miller op.cit. pp.53-54.

⁶ The Malayalam word ‘*Tangal*’ is used as an equivalent to the ‘*Sayyid*’ in Arabic form. It signifies those who trace their descent to the Prophet’s family.

⁷ Vander Meulen, *Aden to the Hadramaut*, London (John Murray), 1947, quoted by Roland E. Miller, op.cit. pp. 41-42.

As far as the advent of Islam in Kerala is concerned the local tradition may be scrutinised. This tradition has also been recorded in '*Keralolpathi*'⁸. Commenting on this issue a noted scholar S.M.Mohammed Koya quotes that 'the advent of Islam in Kerala is attributed some historians to conversion of the last Chera emperor, *Cheraman Perumal* into Islam, a legend deeply embedded in the local tradition prevailing the Muslim as well as Hindu Society. Though the legend is very popular, as it is pleasing to the religious sentiment of the Muslims, it is not corroborated by any contemporary record or evidence. It has been suggested by a historian of Mappila community that the growth of Islam might have received an added encouragement through the conversion of a *Malayali* ruler'⁹.

According to the traditional account his conversion was due to a dream in which he saw the splitting of the moon. Just then he happened to meet a party of Muslims who were returning from Ceylon, their leader Shaikh Sekkeuddin interpreted the dream, admitted him into the Muslim fold and gave him the name Abdul Rahman Samiri. After his conversion the king left Malabar for Arabia and landed at Shahr where he died four years later. He sent Malik bin Habib, Malik bin Dinar, Sharf bin Malik and their family to Malabar with a letter of instruction to the then ruler regarding the government of his dominion and reception of Muslims. They were treated hospitably and permitted to build mosques. As a consequence mosques were erected at eleven places on the Malabar Coast¹⁰.

⁸ Hermond Gundert, *Keralolpathi*, Balan publication, 1961 pp. 66-78.

⁹ S.M.Mohammed Koya, *Mappilas of Malabar: Studies in Social and Cultural History*, Sandhya Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1983, p.6.

¹⁰ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. 1, Superintendent of Government Press, Madras, 1951, p. 245.

Regarding the same incident a noted modern scholar Roland E. Miller adds that “according to the first of the two Mappila forms of traditions, the conversion process began when *Cheraman Perumal*, who was reigning at Kodungallur, experienced an unusual dream. The new moon at Mecca split into two, one half remaining in the heavens, the other half falling to the ground; thereafter the two halves joined again, and the moon set. Some months later a party of Muslim Pilgrims on their way to visit the foot print shrine at Adam’s Peak in Ceylon stopped at Kodungallur. There they narrated to the Perumal the story of how Prophet Muhammad had converted some unbelievers by the miracle of the moon. On the basis of this experience the *Perumal* reached a decision to become a Muslim. He secretly determined to join the pilgrims on their return to Makka. Disposing of his business he assigned various territories to local rulers, recording the assignments in a written deed. Having left the impression that he would return soon he travelled to Arabia with the Arab Pilgrims. There he settled, changing his name to Abdurahman Samiri¹¹. Another form of tradition positions the dream of the Perumal at the exact time of the Prophet’s miracle. When the king went to Arabia he personally met the Prophet, who taught him *Kalim-i- Shahada*. The new Muslim adopted the name Thajud-Din and he died in Makkah 624 A.D.”¹².

Considering all versions of opinions it could be proved that the Islamic propagation has been strengthened in the region after the conversion of any Perumal probably may Cheraman Perumal into Islam. The term ‘*Perumal*’ denotes the king who ruled over this region from 216 A.D to 825 A.D. In this series of Rajas includes *Keya Perumal*, *Bhana*

¹¹ The rulers of Malabar were called *Samiri* by the Arabs . *Samiri*’s origin of ‘*Samudiri*’ in Sanskrit and generally called *Zamorins* in English.

¹² Roland E. Miller, op.cit. pp. 47-48.

Shasnas, Stanu Ravi Gupta, Bhaskaravarma Perumal, Pallibana Perumal, Harichandar Perumal and Cheraman Perumal who is considered to be the last of them and the one embraced Islam.

Commenting on the same conversion of Perumal, eminent scholar Tarachand asserts that “The south of India was then greatly agitated by the conflict of religions, for neo Hinduism was struggling with Buddhism and Jainism for the upper hand. Politically too, it was a period of unsettlement and upheavals. The *Cheras* were losing power and new dynasties were emerging into power. Naturally, the minds of the people were perturbed and they were prone to accept new ideas from whatever quarter they came. Islam appeared upon the scene with simple formula of faith, well defined dogmas and rites, and democratic theories of social organisation. It produced a tremendous effect and before the first quarter of the ninth century was over, the last of Cheruman Perumal, king of Malabar who reigned at *Kodungallur* had become a convert to the new religion”¹³.

The delegates sent by the Cheraman Perumal under the leadership of Malik Ibn Habib landed in *Kodungallur* (Malabar) in 642 A.D. These delegates are considered as the earliest ones who arrived in the region. Keeping in view of their religious cause these people obviously have done great work for the introduction and spread of Islam in the region. The delegates consisted of Malik bin Dinar, Malik bin Habib, his wife Qamariyya and their nine sons, Muhammad Habib, Abdul Rahman, Tiquuddin Hasan, Saeeduddin, Musa, Ibrahim, Ali and five daughters Fathima, Ayisha, Zainab, Tahira, and Haleema, Saifuddin Mohammed Ali, Haji Mustha Maddukat Ali Kwaja, Haji Neeli Nishad, Ahmad Kwaja, Haji Neeli Nishad Othman Kwaja, Haji Shajibad Husain Kwaja

¹³ William Logan, op.cit. Vol.1, p. 245.

and other twenty two scholars were also accompanied with them¹⁴. On account of their dedicated effort they have been able to set up ten mosques which also became centres of religious teaching and learning. Shaikh Zinuddin Makhdum Saghir (1539-1581 A.D) has given full account of these ten mosques, which were constructed in Kodangallur, Kollam, Ezhimala-Madayi, Shrikandapuram, Dharmmandam, Panthalayani, Chaliyam, Mangalapuram, Kasargod and Fakanore¹⁵. Besides, Umar bin Muhammed Suhrawardi has made reference to eight more mosques and has given the list of Qazis appointed by Malik bin Habib as Jafar bin Sulaiman (Chaliyam), Abdulla bin Dinar (Panthalayani-Kollam), Jafar bin Malik (Mahi- Chombal), Ali bin Jabir (Tanur) Habib bin Malik (*Mahi*), Hassan bin Malik (Dharmapatanam), Abdulla bin Malik (Ezhimala), Jabir bin Malik (Ullalam-Kasargod), Hamid bin malik (*Mangalapuram*), Qazi Hammad (Kochi- Palluruthi) Qazi Musa (Alappuzha) Qazi Abdul Majeed bin Malik (Ponnani), Qazi Aasi (Kollam), Qazi Buraidah (Tiruvanthapuram), Qazi Zubair (Puvar) Qazim (Kavilpattanam) and Jabir bin Malik (Chavakkad)¹⁶.

Commenting on the roles of early Qazis and missionaries I.H Qureshi quotes that “Every settlement had atleast a mosque and generally a well trained scholar was attached to it as *Imam*¹⁷. Though Islam does not require any priesthood to lead the religious and traditional services, and yet for the sake of convenience, it has been customary to have small staff attached to every mosque so that it may be kept in good order and the needs of the worshippers may be catered to. The head of this staff is Imam, whose main function is to lead congregation in prayers at the

¹⁴ Muhammad Ibn Umar Suhrawardi, *Rihlat al Muluk*, p.18., Quoted by C.N Ahmed Maulavi, K..K Muhamad Abdul Kareem ‘*Mahattaya Mappila Sahitya Parabharayam*’ (*Glorious Heritage of Mappilas*), Al Huda Book Stall, Kozhikode, 1970, p.127.

¹⁵ Shaikh Zainuddin, *Tuhfat al Mujahideen*, p.21.

¹⁶ Muhammad bin Umar Suhrawardi op.cit. p.41.

¹⁷ Ibn Batuta, Vol.111p.56.

appointed times. He is also generally consulted by the people living in the vicinity on points of theology and even the Islamic law. The autonomous settlements of the Muslim traders maintained their own *Qazis* or judges, who disposed of cases involving their personal or civil law. The more prosperous settlement had also their *Muftis*, who pronounced authoritative opinion on legal and theological matters. They played an important role in the religious life of the community and some were endowed with missionary zeal''¹⁸.

The second group of Muslim delegates comprising of twenty one members landed at Calicut, a coastal town in Malabar in 27A.H, under the leadership of Mugirah bin Shua'ba during the Caliphate Hazrat Uthman bin Affan (644-680 A.D), and continued their religious mission here up to Hijra 41 and built a mosque at Calicut commonly known as *Moodakkara mosque*¹⁹. As a result of their efforts hundreds of non Muslims are reported to have embraced Islam including Abdurahman Samiri, Abdulla Samiri who belonged to the Hindu Brahmin or Samudiri family in the region²⁰.

There are enough evidence to suggest that Islam was introduced in Kerala before the end of the seventh century A.D, which could also be cited in the light of the documents of the special grants to Christians at the St.Terese church by the king Sthanu-Quilon, (*Tarishapalli Shasanas* 849 A.D) which includes the names of eleven Muslims, Matimu b Ibrahim, Mohammed bin Mami, Salih bin Ali, Uthman al Marsiban, Muhammad bin Yahya, Amar bin Ibrahim, Ibrahim bin Alfari, Bakar b

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Mammed Koya Parappil, *Kozhikote Muslingalude Charitram (History of Muslims in Calicut)*, Focus Publication, Kozhikode, 1998, p. 90.

²⁰ Ibid.

Mansur, Alsam bin Hamid, Mansur bin Isa, and Ismayil bin Yaqub²¹. These documents throw light on the strength of Muslims and that how they developed as a community by the time of 849 A.D.

While considering, the progress of Muslim community from 7th to 12th century in Kerala, Roland E. Miller writes that “Islam grew as it began, peacefully and it grew steadily. The first eight centuries of Mappila growth following the establishment of Islam in Kerala were marked by a calm forward movement. The peaceful contact and development stand in sharp contrast to the progress of Islam in north India”²². Commenting on the same Nafis Ahmad also writes that ‘Islam has come to these region without any political help whatsoever and remained rooted in the soil for centuries away from the turmoil of Mahmud’s invasion of India, and the struggle between the cross and crescent in the world of West’²³. Prominent local historian K .M Panicker (1896-1963) also accredits this fact by stating that “Malabar was leading a comparatively happy though politically isolated life. In many her organization was primitive, but she had evolved a system in which trade flourished, different communities lived together without fraction and absolute religious toleration existed”²⁴.

The process of conversion to Islam played a major role in the development of Muslim community in the region especially from seventh century A.D onwards: Roland E. Miller states, “the conversions not limited to the fishermen, but included other low castes. The reasons were partly the attractions of the influential and wealthy Arabs. But there was also a utilitarian aspect, since Muslims would be able to transport goods

²¹ Tarisapally Copper Plate, Kerala Society paper, Tiruvananthapuram, 1913, VI/323.

²² R.E.Miller op.cit. p. 51.

²³ Nafis Ahmed, *Arabs Knowledge of Ceylon*, Islamic Culture, XIV, (1945), p. 226.

²⁴ K.M.Panikkar, *Malabar and Portuguese*, Bombay,, 1923, p. 24.

for trade with less restriction than outcastes. The sixteenth century Portuguese Gaspar Correa reported that ‘No one of the Nairs ever turned Moor; only the lower people turned Moors. By becoming Moors they could go wherever they liked and eat as they pleased, when they became Moors, the Moors gave them clothes and robes with which to clothe themselves²⁵. In addition to these the words of Shaikh Zainuddin, the local and contemporary historian seems to be more credible. He reports that ‘the Nairs do not molest their countrymen who have abjured idolatry and come over to the Muslim religion. But treated them with same consideration and respect that they evince towards all other Muslims, although the persons who have thus apostatized be of the lowest grade’²⁶.

The factors that led to the spread of Islam in Kerala can be classified under four heads; social, intellectual, political and religious. Considering the social factor Prof. Sayed Mohideen Shah (1907-1988) a distinguished author writes “it is believed that the spread of Islam in Kerala was the effort of immigrant Arab traders who were constantly being reinforced by new arrivals. Their settlement gradually brought about establishment of their faith among the inhabitants of this land”²⁷. In this context Prof. Humayun Kabir’s words are note worthy. “There was a willing acceptance of new faith by large numbers on whom the existing social order pressed heavily²⁸. The lower castes welcomed Islam as a chance to win some degree of social freedom denied to them by Hinduism on account of its cruel and rigid caste system. The second cause was the attraction of Islam to those who had developed a sense of

²⁵ G. Correa, *The Three Voyages of Vascoda Gamma*, Trans .by Henry Stanley, London Hakluyt Society, 1849, p. 155.

²⁶ *Tuhfat al Mujahidin* p. 56.

²⁷ Prof. Mohydeen Shah , *Islam in Kerala*, The Muslim Educational Association, 1972, Trichur, p.32.

²⁸ Prof. Humayun Kabir , “*Cultural Heritage of India*”, p.584.,quoted by Prof. Sayed Mohiyuddin Shah,op.cit.p.32.

dissatisfaction with the prevailing religion of the country, as was the case in the early thirties of the century. It was therefore not only oppressed and unprivileged who accepted the new faith, but also a section of intelligentsia fascinated by its simplicity and vigour”²⁹.

Considering the political factor, the warm reception that the Muslim Arabs received by local Hindu rulers may also be taken into consideration. The religious teachings of Muslim scholars and appreciation of Islam by Hindu kings also played their part. The native kings not only respected the new faith, but also rendered all possible help and protection for its propagation. For example the *Zamorin* of Calicut deliberately encouraged the lower castes to become Muslims in order to have sufficient sailors to man his warships and to this end he ordered, that in every family of fishermen in his dominion one or more male members should be brought up as Muhammadans³⁰.

In view of the religious and intellectual factors that led to the spread of Islam, the intentional attempt brought about by scholars and *Qazis* appointed in various mosques may also be taken into prime consideration. In addition to this the series of *Qazis* of Calicut is quite remarkable. The great Arab traveller Ibn Batuta has recorded in his travelogue about Fakkruddin Uthman (d. 1370 A.D) as the *Qazi* of Calicut and Shaikh Shihabuddin Kasaruni the great Sufi who enlightened the region with spiritual leadership³¹. After the demise of *Qazi* Fakhruddin Uthman (d. 1370 A.D), Shaikh Muhammad Livauddin became the *Qazi* of Kozhikode who worked whole heartedly for the propagation of Islam. The noble works were further carried by his own son, grandsons other descendents including Ramzan alias Zainuddin (d.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, Law price Publication, Delhi, 1913, p.266.

³¹ Ibn Batuta, p. 84 .

1451 A.D) an eminent scholar of that period. He is reported to have compiled a *Fiqh* work in Arabic called '*Umdat al Ashab*' which may be considered as one of the earliest religious produced works in the region. The period of Ramzan Zainuddin is well-known for remarkable development in the field of Islamic sciences.

Of the written accounts we have of Sufi saints and missionaries in Malabar the earliest is the account left by Ibn Batuta (1304-1368A.D) who was in Kerala between 1342 and 1345A.D. He mentioned that he came across at Hily (Ezhimala), a virtuous theologian, Sayed by name, a native of *Maddashan* at Cannanore. Ibn Batuta visited a famous theologian from Baghdad a man of great merit named Sirsary, after a village 10 miles from Baghdad, on the road to Kufah. He met at Calicut Shaikh Shahabuddin of Qazarun, a great saint at the hermitage. The people of India and China vow and send offerings to him. The *Qazi* of *Kulaum* (Quilon) was a distinguished man from Quazwin. Ibn Batuta spent some days at Quilon in the hermitage of Shaikh Fakhruddin, son of Shaikh Shahabuddin al Qazaruni, the superior of the hermitage of Calicut³². Any how the Sufis have played a prominent role in the spread of Islam and the creativity cherished by them certainly contributed a considerable development to the Islamic Studies and literature.³³

Abubakr b Ramzan Shaliyati (d. 1500 A.D) was also known for his great contribution to Islamic studies. He has written a commentary of *Qazidat al Burda* and *Banat Sua'da* entitled '*Takhmis al Burda*' and '*Takhmis al Banat Sua'da*'. In the later period Shihabuddin Ahamad Kalikooti (d. 1566 A.D) and his son *Qazi* Abdul Aziz (1578 -1606 A.D) worked for the development of Islamic learning and upliftment of the

³² K.A.N Sastri, *Foreign Notice of South India*, Madras, 1939, pp. 239-246.

³³ See for more details, Chapter VI, pp.181-192.

Muslim society. They also resisted the rising of the Portuguese power in the region. From the last decade of the 16th century onwards *Ulama* of the region not only focused their attention to the upliftment of the Muslim society but also struggled for checking the Portuguese power in the region.

Qazi Muhammed I (1579-1615A.D), son of Qazi Abdul Aziz (d. 1600D), a celebrated poet and noted scholar, was also known for his contribution to Islamic studies. He was well acquainted with *Quranic* Sciences, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Tasawwuf*, and rational sciences like Mathematics and Astrology. He was considered to be an exponent of *Qadiriya* order and composed a long ode in Arabic Malayalam medium about Shaikh Abdul Kader Jilani entitled as '*Muhyiuddin Mala*' which is considered as the first work in *Arabic-Malayalam*³⁴. This ode was given great respect and importance by the saintly Muslims and they used to recite it daily in the evening especially after the *maghrib* prayer³⁵. The other works of Qazi Muhammad I are '*Maqasid al Nikah*' (*Fiqh*), '*Multaqatul Faraed*' (*Fiqh*), '*Nasihah al Mumineen*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Mukhlid al Jinan*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Ayyuhal Ikhwan*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Durrat al Faseeha fil Va'ileen al Naseeh*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Tanbih al Ikhwan fi Ahwali al Zaman*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Silsalah al Qadiriyyah*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Silsalat al Hamadaniyyah*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Zubdat al Mafakhir fi Manaqibi Shaikh Abdul Qader*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Nalum al Ajnas*' (*grammar*), '*Nalum al Qatarnida*' (*grammar*), '*Nalumu al Avamil*' (*Grammar*), '*Manzumat fi Ilm al Aflaki wal Nujum*' (*Astrology*) and '*Mandumat fi Ilm al Hisab*' (*Mathematics*).

³⁴ '*Muhyiuddin Mala*' firstly published in 1939 in Talassery and it has republished in several times. See for details Chapter, VI, pp.193-197.

³⁵ Ibid.

Qazi Muhiyuddin I (1595-1656 A.D), son of Qazi Muhammad also played an important role in the development of Islamic studies. His main teachers included Shaikh Allama Makki and Habibullah Aziz Ibn Bakari. He was appointed the *Qazi* when the Dutch and other colonial powers were competing with each other to establish their colonies in the region. Any how the ardent scholar Qazi Muhiyuddin openly showed his resentment against the colonial powers in the region. He issued many *Fatwa* in local Arabic- Malayalam and compiled some works in Arabic such as ‘*Qasidah fi Madhi Mahmud khan Khakan*’ (Poetry), ‘*Marthiyah ala Shaikh Muhammad al Jifri*’ (Elegy), ‘*Qasidah fi Madhi Mohamad Salih al Mashhur*’ (Poetry), ‘*Qasidah fi Nahs al Ayyam*’ (Poetry), ‘*Qasidah Basharat al Ali Mahi fi Qissah Nusrat al Ali Mahi*’ (Poetry) and ‘*Vellati Masala*’ in Arabic- Malayalam (*Fiqh*). After the demise of Qazi Muhiyuddin in 1656 A.D, Abdul Salam I (d. 1700) and Sadaqatulla (d. 1630-1701 A.D) along with their successors followed the same glorious tradition subsequently.

As far as the spread of Islamic learning and development of Islamic studies in Kerala the role of Makhdum Family in Ponnani³⁶ cannot be overlooked. The significance of the Makhdum family is evident from the fact that modern scholars and researchers have shown great interest in the study of the works of Islamic culture. It is an established fact that the *Makhdum* Family was migrated from Malabar (Yemen) in the ninth year of Hijra and propagated Islam in Keelakkara, Kayalpattanam, Madhura, Tanjavoor, Tiruchirapally and Nagore in Tamilnadu and then came to

³⁶ Ponnani is situated at west southern part of Kerala, being a meeting place of Ponnani river and Bharata river. In 1861 Ponnani Taluk was constituted and in 1907 Ponnani village Panchayat and subsequently got the status of Municipality in 1977.

Malabar in the same year and settled at Kochi where Ali al Ma'bar did his best for the spread of Islam in the region³⁷.

Abu Yahya Zainuddin Ibn Shaikh Ali Ibn Shaikh Ahamad al Ma'bari popularly known as Shaikh Zainuddin al Kabir, born in 1467 and later settled in Ponnani, was taught by Abubakr Ramzan al Shaliyati (d. 1500 A.D), Imam Jalaluddin al Suyuti (d. 911 AH/1512 A.D), Imam Muhammad Assamhud (d. 911 A.H/1512 A.D) and Imam Sayyid Abubakkar al Hazrami Makki (d. 914 A.H / 1525). He has contributed twenty works on different subjects. These are, '*Shua'b al Iman*' (*Aquaid*), '*Kifat al Faraid fi Iktisar al Kafi*' (*Fiqh*), '*Kitab Safi Min Shafi*' (*Fiqh*), '*Hashiyat ala Irshad*' (*Fiqh*), '*Sharh al Tuhfah al Ibn Wardi*' (*Fiqh*), '*Sharh Ala Alfiyah Ibn Malik*' (*Grammar*), '*Tahreed Ahl al Iman ala Jihadi Abdat al Sulban*' (*Poetry*), '*Murshid al Tullab Ila Kareem al Wahab*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Siraj al Quloob*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Siraj al Muneer*' (*Tasawwuff*), '*Al Masa'd fi dikr al Maut*' (*Tasawwuff*), '*Shamsul Huda*' (*Tasawwuf*), '*Qasas al Anbiyah*' (*History*) and '*Seerat al Nabi*' (*Biography*). The book '*Tahridh Ahl al Iman ala Jihad Abdat al Sulban*' considered as the masterpiece of the Zinuddin Makhdum al Kabir, consisting of 135 lines and the heroic poem declares '*Jihad*' against the Portuguese which is considered as the first anti colonial literature of the region³⁸. This work throws light on the sense of patriotism and national sentiments of early Indian *Ulama*.

Shaikh Abdul Azeez Makhdum (1515-1584 A.D), the elder son of Shaikh Zainuddin Makhdum Kabir was a well-known writer and scholar. He contributed eleven works on different subjects of Islamic studies

³⁷ See for more details Prof .K.V Abdulrahman's *Islam in Ponnani*, p.23., *Makhdumum Ponnaiyum (Historical Studies)*, Edited by Dr.Husain, Ponnani Juma Masjid Committee,1988, pp. 33-62., Konkanam Veetil Ibrahim, *Qasidah al Makhdumiyya*, Ponnani, 1924. p.8.

³⁸ Hamza C "*Adhinivesha Virudha Sahithyangal*" (*Anti Colonial Literature*) Prabodhanam Special Issue on '*History of Kerala Muslim Renaissance*', Kozhikode, 1998, p. 34.

including Fiqh, Ilm al Kalam, tasawwuf, grammar and medicine. These works may be mentioned as '*Sharh Alifiyah Ibn Malik*' (Grammar), '*Al Mutafarriid*' (Fiqh), '*Arkan al Salah*' (Fiqh), '*Arkan al Iman*' (Ilm al Kalam), '*Mirqat al Quloob*' (Tasawwuf) '*Maslak al Azkiyah*' (Tasawwuf), '*Irshad al Ahibbah*' (Tasawwuf) '*Qasidah al Aqdam fi shifa al Asqam*' (medicine) , '*Babu Ma'rifah al Kubra*' (Tasawwuf) and '*Babu Ma'rifah al Saghir*' (Tasawwuf).³⁹

Allama Zainuddin Makhdum Saghir (1532-1618A.D) the second son of Shaikh Zainuddin Makhdum Kabir, was a prolific writer, gifted teacher and eminent historian. He showed keen interest in Islamic learning and worked for its transmission to the entire region. His *Dars* (lectures) in Ponnani mosque in those days was very popular and students and scholars flocked to his centre from far away places including even Indonesia and Malaysia⁴⁰. Shaikh Zainuddin al Makhdum Saghir had written ten books on various subjects such as '*Tuhfat al Mujahideen*' (History), '*Ahkam al Nikah*' (Fiqh), '*Qurrat al Ain*' (Fiqh), '*Fathul Mui'n*' (Fiqh) '*Irshad al Ibad ala Sabeel al Rashad*' (Fiqh and Tasawwuf), '*Al Fatawa al Hindiyya*' (Fatawa), '*Al Manhaj al Valih*' (Tasawwuf) and '*Sharh al Sudur*' (Tasawwuf). Of these, the most important one was '*Tuhfat al Mujahidin*' which is considered as an authentic historical work. It takes into account the social, political, cultural and religious condition of Kerala from 1498 to 1583 A.D. As a first hand pioneering historical manual this celebrated work got a due attention and special study by various scholars. It is therefore the same has been translated into many Indian languages and European as well. It is translated into English by Lieut. M.J.Rowlandson as early in

³⁹³⁹ A.P Muhammed Ali Musliar, *Tuhfat al Akhyar an Tarikah al Ulama al Malaibar*, M.S. ,pp. 23-24.

⁴⁰ *Makhdumum Ponnaniyum*, op.cit. pp. 68 -69.

1833A.D.⁴¹ Emerson, Jameson and Briggs also prepared its abridgments in English version and its Urdu-version was performed by Hakim Shamsullah Qadiri⁴².

Among the descendants of Shaikh Zainuddin Saghir, the following are well known for their contribution to Islamic studies. Abdurahman Makhdum (d. 1029 A.D) , Shaikh Uthman Makhdum (d. 1707 A.D), Abdul Azeez Makhdum (d.1723 A.D), Shaikh Nuruddin Makhdum (d. 1735 A.D), Kwaja Ahamad alias Koyamu Makhdum (d. 1742 A.D).

The *Sadat* or *Ahl-Bait Ulama* had also their role in the development of Islamic learning in Kerala. The great traditional scholar of the region Muhammad Ali Musliar Nellikuth⁴³ (d.1932- 2008) has listed out thirty three *Sadat* families who migrated from Hijaz and Yemen during 8th century A.D onwards and settled in various cities of Kerala. These include *Ba Faqih* (Koilandy), *Al Faqih* (Koilandy), *Bil Faqih* (Koilandy), *Idid* (Tirurangadi), *Aydaruse* (Ponnani), *Jilani* (Eranad), *Jamalullaili* (Chaliyam), *al Mashhur* (Eranad), *Ālu Musava* (Ponnani), *Al Habshi* (Kuttipuram), *Al junaid* (Tanur), *Al Manfur*, (Calicut), *Jifri* (Calicut), *Mushayyaq* (Tanur), *Ahdal* (Calicut), *Shihabuddin* (Panakkad), *Ālu ba Hasan* (Koilandy), *Al Saqaf* (Chavakkad), *Alu turab* (Tirurandadi), *Al Haddad* (Kannur), *Al Faqih* (Koilandy), *Al Bashaiban* (Chavakkad), *Ba Hasan* (Chaliyam), *Al Aqil* (Kasargod), *Banu Sahl* (North Malabar), *Ba Salim* (North-Malabar), *Ba Hashim* (Malabar), *Hamdun* (North

⁴¹ Lieut. M.J.Rowlandson, Cor. M.R.A.S., Persian Interpreter to the Head quarters of the army, Fort St.George, Translated the work in to English. It was printed by J.L. Cox& Son, 75, Great Queen Street, London, for the Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, and sold by John Murray, Albemarle Street, and Parbury, Allen &Co, Leaden-hall Street, London, 1833.

⁴² K.K.N. Kurup, *Mappila Parambaryam (The Legacy of Mappilas)*, Irshad Publication, Calicut 1998, p. 18.

⁴³ The author who belongs to Nellikuth in Malappuram district in Kerala preserved a good collection of Historical manuscripts and prepared biographies of 2325 Muslim scholars who lived in the region. This unpublished collection is titled '*Tuhafah al Akhyar fi Tarikh al Ulama al Malaibar*' which has valued and its several parts have been reproduced by the scholars and historians of the region.

Malabar), *Maulu Davila* (Mampuram), *Maula Khaila* (Eranad), *Alu Dhahab* (North Malabar), *Juhum* (Mahi) *Shatiri* (Koilandy) and *Fadhaq* (Kannur)⁴⁴.

Surveying the development of Islamic studies in Kerala before 18th century A.D, it is desirable to study two more issues pertinent to the main subject. The first one is the evolution and development of *Arabic-Malayalam* and its impact among the Mappilas in Kerala. It is an undeniable fact that *Arabic-Malayalam* exerted a profound impact on the cultural life of Kerala Muslims or Mappilas. *Arabic-Malayalam* is a great treasure of literature, folklore, art, music. The Mappila literature is written in mixture of Arabic and Malayalam languages. It is written in Arabic script, which has given the language the name *Arabic-Malayalam*, just as *Arab Tamil*, *Arab Kannada*, *Arab Gujarati*, *Arab Punjabi*. It is said that the new dialect called Arabi-Malayalam was evolved and came into prominence due to the impact of Arabic on Malayalam⁴⁵. The new dialect developed in the 9th or 10th century A.D was used mainly in the Malabar region. This language was mainly used by Mappilas and it came to be known as '*Mappila-Malayalam*'. The language is written in Arabic alphabet with additional letters and dialectical marks to suit the special sounds of the Arabic language. Originally with thirty five letters of the alphabet, *Arabic-Malayalam* has at present fifty letters. Over the years this linguistic form has undergone many changes. Sayed Sanaulla Makti Thangal (1847-1912 A.D) wanted to reform the *Arabic-Malayalam* script and with this purpose he wrote *Mua'llim al Ikhwan*. Chalilakat Kunahammad Haji (d.1919), Vakkam Abdul Qadir Maulavi (1873-1932 A.D) and Shujayi Moidu Musliar (1857-1917 A.D) contributed much to

⁴⁴ Sayyid Muhammad b Ahammad b Umar Shatiri, *Kitab Mujamu Lateefi li Asbab al Alqab wal Kuna fi Nasbi Sharif*, Jeddah, 1982, pp. 201-202., Muhammed Ali Musliar, A.P., *Tuhfah al Akhyar fi Tarikh al Ulama al Malaibar*, M.S., pp.22-25.

⁴⁵ S.M.Muhammed Koya, op.cit. , p.95.

this language and reformed it. Apart from the Mappilapattu a large number of books including the translation of Holy Qur'an in *Arabic-Malayalam* came in to being. A complete translation of the Qur'an was written in *Arabic- Malayalam* by Arakkal Mahinkutty Elaya a hundred year ago⁴⁶.

Any how the *Arabic- Malayalam* was used as the medium of instruction in those days. The script was the chief medium of education for the Malabar Muslims till recent times. It helped them to preserve, through indirectly, the purity attributed to Arabic. Matters related to religious belief and codes of conduct were taught and assimilated in this medium. *Arabic- Malayalam* is written in sophisticated Arabic script. The mode of writing can be explained with a few illustrations. There is no 'pa' sound in Arabic; instead there is only 'ba'. When 'ba' is written a dot is usually marked below the letter. 'Ba' is read as 'pa' when instead of one dot three dots are marked. By adding lines and dots to consonants and vowels, the script is thus modified so that it can represent all the sounds of the Malayalam language.

Regarding the origin of *Arabic-Malayalam* it is difficult to give any exact date of its genesis. Commenting on the issue R. E Miller writes that 'the special *Mappila* literary achievement was *Arabic-Malayalam* which was the vehicle of religious materials and Mappila songs. It emerged on the scene about five centuries ago as a blend of a Malayalam grammatical base, Arabic script, and Malayalam plus some Arabic, Tamil, Urdu, and Persian vocabulary, a few additional orthographic symbols being utilized according to need⁴⁷'. However, from the light of available information it may be surmised that it might have been

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ R .E Miller Op.cit, p. 288.

introduced sometimes before the dawn of 16th century A.D because the ‘*Muhyuddin mala*’⁴⁸ the well-known ode on Shaikh Abdul Qadar Jilani, compiled by Qazi Muhammed I (1579-1615A.D) is considered as the first work in *Arabic-Malayalam*. The work itself mentions the author to be Qazi Muhammad of Calicut and the year of composition as 1607 A.D. The popular work ‘*Nool Madhu*’⁴⁹ compiled by Kuhayin Musliar (d.1700A.D) is reported to be the second in this regard.

In fact the *Arabic-Malayalam* medium has played a distinct role in shaping the Muslim culture and identity. Revealing the same matter a modern researcher M.N. Karassery writes that “the use of this script was not confined to religious instruction. In due course it entered into the daily life of the people. As the Mappilas began to express their thoughts and feelings in this medium, it acquired a literary dimension”.

Many words alien to the spoken language of the *Mappilas* can be encountered in these literary writings. The literature of *Arabic-Malayalam*, divided into prose and verse, merits greater attention. Generally known as Mappila songs, this verse tradition includes hymns elegy and eulogies holy marshal song, ballads, moral lessons, songs of praise addressed to God, verses, love lyrics and wedding songs⁵⁰.

Describing both the scope and comprehensiveness of *Arabic-Malayalam* literary scholars like T.Ubaid, (1908-1972) C.N Ahmed Maulavi (d. 1993) and K.K Muhammad Abdul Karim (1932-2005) who have made lengthy investigation in this field. There are about six thousand works written in this script on different subjects including *Tafsir*, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, *Tasawwuf*, history, astrology, astronomy and

⁴⁸ See for more details, Chapter VI, pp.193-197.

⁴⁹ See for more details, Chapter VI, pp.201-203.

⁵⁰ Karassery, M.N, *Arabic Malayalam Kerala Muslims; A Historical Perspectives*, edited by. Asghar Ali Engineer, Ajanta publication, New Delhi, 1995, pp.170-171.

medicine.⁵¹ The same thing has been accredited by P.K Muhammad Kunhi an eminent regional scholar who has further classified the total literature of *Arabic- Malayalam* into eight categories. They are Translation and interpretation of Holy *Quran*, *Hadith* collections and its interpretations, philosophy of Islam, ethics of Islam, traditions of Islam, history, stories, criticism, dictionaries and miscellaneous works⁵².

In view of the above information it can certainly be stated that the medium of *Arabic- Malayalam* had been deliberately developed by the early Muslim scholars in order to impart the Islamic belief and rules to the laymen Muslims as well as the converted new Muslims.

Before concluding the general survey regarding the development of Islamic studies in Kerala the genesis and progress of *Dars* system may rightly be mentioned. This institution can certainly be considered as the second significant mechanism in the way of transmission of Islamic learning during the earlier times⁵³.

To put it in a nut shell by considering all facts it can rightly be assumed that the role played by the Arab traders, missionaries, co-operation of the local rulers, migrated scholars and *Qazis*, role of *Sufis* and *Sadat*, genesis and development of *Arabic-Malayalam* script, service rendered by *Dars* are significant landmarks in the history of the development of Islamic studies in Kerala.

⁵¹ Muhammad Abdul Kareem K.K., "*Arabic Malayalam*" Published in Golden Jubilee Souvenir, Rauzat al Uloom Arabic College, Feroke 1998, p.157.

⁵² Muhammad Kunchi P.K., *Muslingalum Kerala Samaskaravum (Kerala Culture and Muslims)*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Trissur, 1982, p.221.

⁵³ See for more details, Chapter II, pp.32-37.