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Research Article

An Intellectual Legacy: Chalilakath Kunjahammed Haji's Role in Modernizing Madrasa Education

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Abstract. The paper analyzes the development and modern features of Religious Education particularly Islamic Education in Kerala paying considerable attention to the pioneer Chalilakath Kunjahammad Haji in changing Islamic Education system in Malabar. The study also explores the roots of religious education in Kerala and findings methods in practice for a long time from a traditional method called dars pre-scheduling an important knowledge about religion to Muslim community. In such a context, the research explores if and how Haji has tried to change his practices and introduce new methods of education and teaching/learning practices such as curriculum teaching, examination system, classroom teaching learning inspired by the more advanced system of education like Bakhiatul Swalihah in Vellore. The former domain of Haji shows an important future of secular sciences with religious education, where in inserted astronomy and mathematics, became a specialization of knowledge in madrasas of Kerala. The paper also situates Haji aim and struggle towards putting the plan of education reform in the context of sociopolitical context of the Malabar

in the century end that received him both the support and opposition for his measures towards modernizing the Muslim education. The paper also explores a significant period in Haji's life, namely the invitation to reinvent the educational institutions with the support of such civic patrons as Koyappathodi Ahmed Kutti Haji based on cooperation principles. Finally, being one of the most important theological controversies, Ainal Qibla Debate prompts the consideration of the correlation between theology and progressive/sustainable educational development in Kerala; it also demonstrates how contributive Haji's thoughts have been to the creation of the progressive but at the same time traditional model of Islamic schooling. This research helps to fill the gap in the literature regarding religious reform and the ways scholars navigated between the poles of change and tradition in the implementation of the Islamic education.

Keywords : Chalilakath Kunjahammed Haji, Intellectual Legacy, Madrasa Education

INTRODUCTION

Chalilakath Kunjahammed Haji was the main pioneer of the progressive change within the Kerala Muslim religious education sector by demanding it become more scientific to guide it towards the bold new future. His arrival was at a time characterized by heightened theoretical, analytical, and discursive activities on the issue of incorporating new technologies into conventional learning systems. Earlier to his influence, any knowledge acquired and spread in Kerala was restricted to traditional and traditional forms only.

Though the present-day culture would consider these forms of education as primitive, these practices were real representation of black and white era of education where students had poor resources for education and /or sometimes no educational buildings at all. In this regard the process of seeking knowledge became a divine and an intervention of Ikhlās. By virtue of environment of this early age scholars however managed to master religious learning to the extent that modern day scholars may consider as unbelievable. Their main focus was literacy as a way of preparing a society with the acquisition of knowledge as its main aim. Therefore, they practiced towards the attainment of this mental task, sometimes discarded other education type that did not fit in their purpose. It should be mentioned that with the appearance of Kunjahammed Haji, the mentioned education system shifted towards a new more creative approach, far from the traditions of school, to learning. The feedback that he has given not only caused reinstatement to quit the status quo and perturbed enriched the methodologies that formed a basis for a fresher and more versatile framework that would dictate the revolutionary changes that would ultimately define the future of religious education within the Kerala Muslim community.¹

¹ Madeenathul Uloom Arabic College Souvenir, Pulikkal, 1981

Foundations of Religious Education in Kerala

After the revolutionary period of religious education initiatives that were centered around Ponnani, we can separate the religious education activities that were mainly carried out at social levels into three. They are Outhupallis, and Madrasas. These three initiatives were considered as fundamental and basic systems of religious education among Kerala Muslims. Through this, the believers learned the basic lessons of life. We can distinguish between these three initiatives based on the knowledge imparted and the people involved.

Mosques are centers where basic knowledge about Islam is imparted which every Muslim must know. The study of the Qur'an and the study of basic Islamic matters were mainly held here. These were held near churches or in teachers' homes. The main method of learning here was that the Ustad would read and the students would listen. The history of this initiative can be traced back to the advent of Islam.

The topics of these religious sermons were things that every believer must know and copy in their daily life. The rituals, judgments, prohibitions, rituals and styles of daily life were discussed in the Vaal Sadas that lasted for days. Therefore, even the local people of that time were well aware of Karma Shastra. By this means they acquired the competence and energy to judge an issue authoritatively. The Darsas were great centers of knowledge that molded scholars capable of preserving the Islamic faith in Kerala. Deep learning and insightful discussions took place here. The lectures were conducted under the leadership of profound and learned scholars. All the scholars who have emerged in Kerala have emerged through such initiatives. Darsas set a great example in imparting comprehensive education at low cost. An absolutely amazing system of learning also existed in the Dars since ancient times. Children and adults had different learning methods and texts. The style of teaching them was also different. Dars systems can be read as a miniature form of college education that came much later.²

Adoption of New Teaching Methods

Chalilakat comes at a time when remarkable steps and changes in religious and physical education levels have started to appear. At that time, many people had started thinking about the various centers where material education was combined with religion. It was a time when deep discussions and investigations were going on in the northern parts of India to impart religious education and physical education in a systematic and progressive manner. As English educational initiatives spread throughout the country, many of the styles that seemed good in them did not fail to excite the Muslims. It was the open wars they declared against the Islamic culture that motivated the Muslims to maintain their unquenchable animosity towards

² Marhoom chalilakath kunjahammed haji , M.A Thirurangadi

them. When this antagonism was strong in the matter of religion, the Muslim thought of those days reached a point where none of their thoughts, styles or approaches should be accepted. This was an expression of strong disapproval and opposition to them. Some people were thinking about the improvement of the Muslim religious physical education scene. The Muslim scholars of that time had a fear that this style would upset the unique Islamic thought of Kerala. However, despite the ongoing debates, inquiries, objections and disagreements, the Kerala Muslim education sector was slowly adopting the necessary changes. Scholars were convinced that such a change was necessary without any loss of value.

Gradually they accepted it. Darul Uloom, which started in 1867 in Deobant, was the first to start an educational enterprise that was somewhat systematic but contained some modern innovations. Systems like chalk, black board, bench, desk, examination and certificate were implemented there. Such initiatives that simplify the educational process have been widely accepted everywhere. Bakhiyat Swalihah, which started in 1883 in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, also came with many innovations. There were all kinds of systems that would attract knowledge junkies. During this time, people from Malabar came here seeking information. It was a leading institution in South India then. It was through this institution that South India came to know about many educational movements that took place in North India. The students who came out from here spread such advanced styles to different parts of the country. A valuable and simple educational style is ensured. With this, new movements in the field of religious education started appearing in Malabar as well. A few isolated initiatives have also emerged unofficially. In 1871, the Koyappathodi family, who were the rulers of Vazhakkad, actively entered this field. They started an institution called Tanmiyatul Uloom Madrasa. There was a new system different from the usual Dars arrangements. The change was mainly evident in the spatial and stylistic arrangements.³

There was no significant change in the subjects. Instead of the mosque, a classroom and a qualified Ustad were assigned to oversee everything. There were quite optimistic movements through this. In general, all the people used to live dependent on the scholars of the community.

With the involvement of scholars and leaders in such initiatives, the activities became more successful. During this time there was an institution in Kozhikode called Madrasatul Jifriyyah. Valakkulam Abdul Bari Musliyar, who was one of the prominent scholars of that time, served in it for some time. Many new initiatives were started during this time to divert the Muslims who had turned away from the educational initiatives of the British to physical education. Muslims did not go directly to their institutions due to anti-British sentiments. Meanwhile, many centers providing religious and physical education came up. Many institutions appeared in

³ Zubair Hudawi. 2008. New models of Islamic Education In Kerala.

Muslim names. The main objective was to attract Muslims. In 1893, a madrasa came up under the Himayatul Islam Committee at Kozhikode. It was run by a sub-committee called Intisharul Islam. At that time, the Qur'an study program that was usually held in the countryside was called Outhupalli. Madrasahs were the name proudly applied to somewhat efficient and systematic institutions. As madrasahs began to rise, Muslims sought them out. In 1912, Himayatul Islam Madrasah evolved into Himayatul Islam Anglo-Arabic School. This was the first Muslim school in Kerala. In 1894 Syed Muhammad Haji of Pullithodi started a madrasa in the Farooq market. That too later evolved into a Mappila school. In short, Chalilakat Kunjahammad Haji comes in at this time when many people were talking and discussing about madrasahs and Muslim education. Thoughts to make the religious education sector efficient without ingredients were also going well during this time. In isolation, there were secret attempts to do so in many places. The Madinul Uloom Madrasah built by Koyakunji Sahib in Kannur in 1911 is very notable. Another is the Quwwatul Islam Madrasa which came up in 1915 at Thaliparamb.⁴

Specialization in Astronomy and Mathematics

Kunjahammad Haji was born in Chalilakat into a traditionally scholarly family. The mother was Fatima, the daughter of Chalilakat Khuswai Haji, who was their disciple. Adriseri Moideen Kutty Haji and father. Chalilakat Ali Hasan Musliyar and Chalilakat Abdullah Musliyar, who were prominent scholars, were uncles. It was this family system with a tradition of reform steeped in spirituality that produced a reform leader named Chalilakat Kunjahammad Haji. To understand its background and era one must really understand this family, its growth and learning styles. Kunjahammad Haji is known to have joined the family of Chalilakat Khuswai Haji, who received their blessings from Mamburam. Or, short of being known by adding to his mother's name. The reason for this is that he lived in this ancestral house from his childhood.

Kunjahammad Haji's destiny was to stay with Umma when the marriage relationship between Umma and Umma was in trouble. This was a great fortune for him. He had the opportunity to receive the constant tutelage of his great grandfather, Khuswai Haji, who had a scholarly tradition. He was nurtured and nurtured by the occasional advice and instructions of Valiyuppa and Umma. This relationship and Peruma was shadowed throughout his life. Khuswai Haji's daughter Fatima was a religious woman. Therefore, Mahathi raised his son very carefully. At a very young age, she trained her son to recite the Qur'an according to Tajweed. Even then every step was taken with great care. Now, listen to Kunjahammad Haji's major Ustads here. Kotancheri Ahmad Kutti Musliyar, the disciple of Allama Saini Dahlan, who was the apple of the eye of the generation, and Abdul Aziz Musliyar, the lord

⁴ Chalilakat Kunjahammad Haji was the architect of the madrasa movement, Harun Kakkad

of Badr Maulid. And Ali Hasan Musliyar, his own mother, Chalilakat. Taking fundamental lessons from all of them, Chalilakat Kunjahammad Haji lays the ideal foundation for his reformation process. He attended the dars held at the Mudakkara Jumu'at mosque in Kozhikode and later attended the large Jumu'at mosque dars at Ponnani.. For him, the foundations of knowledge are laid from all these centers. This was the spiritual strength of his life which was based on Tasawwuf. They showed him where to study and whose discipleship he needed. It was their imperative to make Kunjahammad Haji a recognized scholar like the traditional scholars. That is why they were constantly trying to guide him through the familiar ways of Kerala. In 1887, Kunjahammad Haji joined the Vellore Bakhyatu Sswalihat. Gave new knowledge and deep understanding to his world of knowledge. It was a journey that taught him more lessons in life. This gave him an opportunity for new equations in his life journey as he was attuned only to the environment and surroundings of Kerala. Maulana Abdul Jabbar Musliyar, the founder and principal of the college, was the teacher there. He spent a year there absorbing the wealth of knowledge. Later, he moved to another institute, Latheefiya College in Vellore. Immersed myself in various branches of knowledge and spent six years there. Syed Ruknuddin Qadiri was the principal there. Received various knowledge from Shaikh Muhammad Abdul Jalil, Shaikh Muhammad Hasan, Shaikh Muhammad Afhamullah etc. Graduated in 1893 and came out. Kunjahammed decided after Haji to become proficient in astronomy and mathematics. Accordingly Ahmad Salim Sahib was approached by the name of Sheikh Ahmad Al Adrami of the town of Adram. He studied 'Risalatul Maradeeni' from him and mastered Ilmul Falak. After completing all the studies as expected, Kunjahammad Haji returned to his native Malabar with profound knowledge and many dreams.⁵

The Vision for Reform in Malabar

Having received many new lessons and experiences, Kunjahammad Haji had a great desire to implement all these in his own country. These will help the religious education sector to improve and become more systematic. But later his thought was how to implement all these. Kunjahammed Haji got an invitation to become a teacher there after learning from Latifiya. But his sense of responsibility to his country kept him from accepting it. So he drove home dreaming of a new dawn of Malabar. Where to start his new yajna? He thought. It must begin without questioning the wisdom tradition of Malabar. Because that is strength.

The field of religious education should be further improved without losing that strength and recognition. It will certainly be beneficial to his community. His uncles and grandfathers sent him to study for this responsibility. Don't waste any time. The sooner you start the better. It is also not right to jump in and introduce

⁵ Samastha at A Glance, Published by Samastha Kerala Jam-iiyyathul Ulama

new styles. So let's slowly enter that field. Kunjahammad Haji came up with new concepts and equations in his mind. He chose Tirurangadi, the city of knowledge, for his activities. So Tirurangadi Tharmamal Church was built and a thatched shed was built there and dars started.

He had a good knowledge of the educational systems and teaching areas of Kerala. He was also aware of the shortcomings in this area as he was brought up in the same way. Therefore, his classes filled such deficiencies and introduced innovations. His discussions were scholarly and profound. He took special care to know the minds of the students and impart knowledge. The changes in the students were not immediately apparent as Dars' early style and manner was outwardly similar to his class. Deep experiences and consciousness could only be imparted to children. He opined that if a major transformation is brought about in this area, the children of the new age will show more excitement and comfort in learning. In the new age, the mind of the new children should be read and the learning environments and interiors should be arranged. Classes should be the same. That will be more effective. He later thought so. Later he moved from Thirurangadi to Mayyazhi. He conducted dars there for some time. During this time he was able to mold many eminent and prominent scholars. Qutubi Muhammad Musliyar, Chalilakat Muhammad Haji and others studied under his teaching here. Kunjahammad Haji came to Pulikal from Mayyazhi. Pulikal served as the main mudaris in the Jumu'at Mosque. By that time Kunjahammed Haji's fame and reputation had spread all over Kerala. He was known by all to be a scholar of deep erudition, insight and perspective on all subjects. It was during this time that the famous Qibla dispute took place. With that, his fame became more widespread. Every institution gave Kunjahammed Haji new experiences and lessons. In the light of all this he was keen to open new doors of learning and teaching. The thrust of his work was to provide opportunities and facilities for such a systematic and quality system of religious education.

An Invitation to Transform the Muslim Education Landscape

Kunjahammad Haji was dreaming of a new religious education arrangement based on the experiences he had gained by going to Bakhiyat and other places. It was then that Baba Sahib, then the Deputy Inspector of Education in Malabar, convened a meeting at Kutichira in Kozhikode to discuss the problems of Muslim education. Kunjahammad Haji also participated in it as a conscientious scholar. Kunjahammad Haji also put his dreams and precious opinions in front of them among many who spoke a lot. Many felt it was beautiful. Koyappathodi Ahmed Kutti Haji, who was the civic leader of Vazhakkad, was also present in the meeting. He was very happy to hear the opinion of Kunjahammad Haji. Then he decided to reorganize the dars in his country. There was a lesson that had been going on for ages in the banana grove. The Koyappathodi family looked after and took care of all its affairs.

Koyappathodi Ahmed Kutti Haji and Moideen Kutti Haji had endowed many lands for its maintenance. Moin Kutty Haji also contributed his own. That's how it went. Eminent scholars and sages used to conduct dars there. Musliyarakat Zainuddin Musliyar, Chaliyam Kunhalikutty Musliyar, Ponnani Bawa Musliyar, Keezhuparam Ibrahim Kutti Musliyar, Cheruvadi Mammad Musliyar, Vazhakad Ahmad Kutti Musliyar and others were the leaders of it. The time when Kunjahammad Haji was giving a practical face to his activities by focusing on his teachings. Cherussery Ahmad Kutti Musliyar taught this lesson in Vazhakkad. He was well aware of Chalilaka. He was well impressed and satisfied with his knowledge and learning. This is when Kunjahammad Haji came out of the Dars in Mayyazhi. The information quickly reached Koyappathodi Moideen Kutti Haji. He felt that it would be better to bring him to the banana grove immediately. Immediately, Cherushery sent Ahmad Kutti Musliyar to Thirurangadi and made all arrangements to bring him as the head teacher. This new invitation was promising for Kunjahammad Haji. Therefore, he accepted it. He assured that he will try to raise the organization to the heights as he can.

The Ainul Qibla Debate

The Ainul Qibla debate represents a significant intellectual discourse between Chalilakat Kunjahammad Haji and the esteemed ulama of Kerala during a pivotal period in Islamic scholarship. This debate was characterized not by animosity but by a constructive exchange of ideas among scholars who shared a common commitment to knowledge and research. Central to the discussion was the contention surrounding the necessity of facing the 'Ain of the Qiblah during prayer, with Kunjahammad Haji asserting its importance while the majority of ulama countered that simply facing the general direction of the Qiblah sufficed. Kunjahammad Haji's insights were notably influenced by his readings of Risalatul Maradini, as reflected in his annotations, which underscored his scholarly rigor.

The scholarly engagement deepened after Maulana Chalilakat Kunjahammad Haji departed from his teaching position in Mayyazhi and joined the Jamaat Mosque as a Mudaris, following an invitation from Koyakutty Sahib, a disciple of the Maulana himself. During his time at Pulikal, Maulana Chalilakat meticulously examined the Qibla direction of the mosque and concluded that it did not align with Ainul Qibla, prompting him to investigate the Qibla orientations of numerous surrounding mosques. His findings indicated that several mosques were misaligned, setting the stage for a broader Qibla dispute. The crux of Kunjahammad Haji's argument was based on the geographical positioning of the Kaaba, located 22 degrees northwest of Kozhikode, which he contended necessitated a precise alignment during prayer for its validity. This position, heavily influenced by Risalatul Maradini, stood in

opposition to the prevailing perspective among the majority, who maintained that facing the Kaaba in a general sense was adequate.⁶

The debate culminated in a formal gathering on September 2, 1908, at Pulikal, where various scholars, including Qazi Abdullah Maulavi of Kasaragod and his followers, championed the doctrine of Qibla Ain, while others, including Kolloli Ahmedkutty Musliyar and Yusuf Musliyar, sided with Kunjahammad Haji's interpretation. In response to the ongoing discourse, Kunjahammad Haji authored a concise Arabic treatise titled *Adda'wa*, articulating the rationale behind the Qibla Ain argument. Additionally, Maulana Chalilakat and his contemporaries produced fatwas that were subsequently compiled and published under the title *Tuhfatul Ahbab*, addressing the intricacies of the Qibla dispute from both local and international perspectives. The academic legacy of Maulana Chalilakat was further solidified on January 1, 1913, when he developed a comprehensive curriculum titled *Vazhakad Madrasa Darul Uloom*, delineating the educational reforms he sought to implement.

CONCLUSION

The historical analysis on the development of religious education in Kerala indicate a positive change process depicted by scholar such as Chalilakath Kunjahammad Haji who helped to introduced modern methods of Islamic education while at the same time embracing its religious nature. The Traditions of religious education for the Muslims in kerala were greatly influenced by the traditional dars system of imparting knowledge or teachings. Yet on this front,

Kunjahammad Haji's work also reflected his understanding of the modernisation of educational paradigms that were being proposed. His modifications like the structural classroom learning, examination and other; increased interaction as compared to the older techniques of teachings established the errors of the previous policies and helped to convince the developments Muslim education.

Kunjahammad Haji's choice of astronomy and mathematics fields departs him as the progressive scholar of the time by making connections with secular sciences and religious education – the critical process in the development of more progressive curricula in Islam. They were academic and spiritual that visioned reforms in Malabar for effecting major change in the educational system of the time, while respecting the culture and faith that comprised the ethos of the was model Muslims of Kerala.

This was also a moment of partnership for the advancement of Muslim education as he readily accepted the challenge to change the Muslim education system at the instance of leaders such as Koyappathodi Ahmed Kutti Haji. This collaborative spirit become important in achieving

⁶ The Ain al-Qibla Controversy: A Convergence of Religion and Science, M.K Noushad Kalikavu

Kunjahammad Haji's educational agenda which was echoed during the Ainul Qibla Debate. The talk brought a historical view to child education basically giving an insight to the conflict between religion and modern means of learning as a challenge that was creatively solved by Kunjahammad Haji through integration of innovative education within the religious models.

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