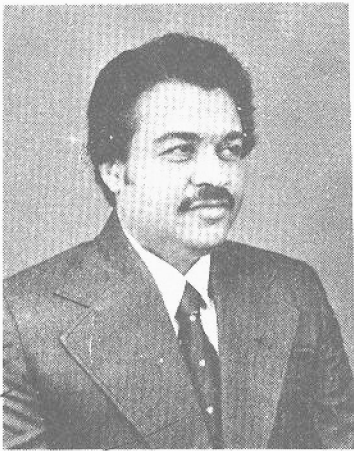


*That the followers of a religion
which has encouraged education,
should be educationally
'back ward' is an irony of history.*

*A look at this paradox would bring to focus several socio-cultural features
of the present day Malabar, including the
movement that led to
the founding of Farook College.*



THE MAPPILAS AND WESTERN EDUCATION.

DR. K.T. MUHAMMED ALI

Western education began to spread in Malabar during the first half of the nineteenth century. But the Mappilas had opposed English education from the very start. In their aversion to western education the Mappilas were not behind their North Indian brethren. The uncompromising opposition towards the British rulers was the main reason for their apathy and indifference to secular education and western culture. Prior to the British rule the Mappilas of Malabar supported the Mysore rulers in their endeavour to conquer the country, and the Mysore rulers supported the Mappilas as co-religionists and supporters in the conquered land. Naturally, therefore, after the British occupation of Malabar (1792) Mappilas became a special target of British hatred and they adopted measures, both economic and administrative, detrimental to the Mappila interests. The Mappilas now took up arms to secure the redressal of their grievances. The discontent of Mappilas culminated in a series of violent outbreaks that occurred intermittently throughout the nineteenth century. Failure of the British Government to solve the problem increased the tension which actually triggered off the Rebellion of 1921.

The Rebellion of 1921 was a great tragedy for the Mappilas. This helped to re-inforce the British belief that the Mappilas were by nature fanatical and irreconcilable and could be contained only by drastic measures. The British characterised the Mappila as an uncivilized person and a 'Pukka brute'. Therefore they chose to be very severe and took repressive measures against them. The conflict with and hatred towards the British rulers who were trying to persecute and annihilate the Mappilas created in their minds an unyielding opposition to all things western. It was this opposition that developed in them a deep hatred towards the English language and Western education.

The Mappilas, like the other Muslims in the rest of India, could not reconcile themselves to the 'new education'. They feared that western education would weaken the faith of the young boys and girls in their religion and also open the way for the propagation of Christianity among them. The spread of western ideas and expansion of western culture, they believed, threatened to subvert the very basis of the Islamic faith. Tarachand observes, "The Muslim mind was soaked in medievalism and it was intellectually quite unprepared to withstand the attack from the West." Moreover they would not accept western education because no provision was being made for teaching religion. The Muslims, in general, were particular about Islamic upbringing and the learning of the language of their holy book (Arabic). They insisted on the teaching of a Muslim boy or girl and they would not consent to its supersession by a foreign system of a secular nature. In the beginning nothing was done by the new system to their susceptibilities and to meet their requirements. They, therefore, remained attached to their traditional culture and desired to study only the literature, law and theology of Islam. The system of education introduced by the British was, thus, considered prejudicial to Muslim interests. W.W. Hunter himself affirms that "Our system of public instruction which has awakened the Hindus from the sleep of centuries and quickened their inert masses with some of the noble impulses of a nation, is opposed to the traditions, unsuited to the requirements and hateful to the religion of the Mussalmans." The Mappilas, therefore, wanted to have no truck with western culture or Government. English language was dubbed as the language of hell and western education was considered a passport to hell.

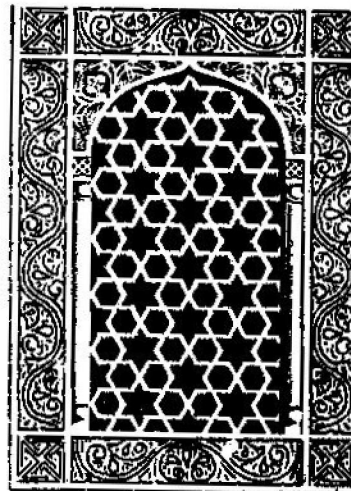
Islam misinterpreted:-

The wrong understanding of religion combined with their superstitious beliefs and the opposition of the orthodox Ulama to things western also stood in the way of modern secular education. In the religious field superstitious beliefs and practices alien to Islam held sway. Reverence for holiness bordering on worship, seeking their intercession with God, worship at their tombs, offering 'nerccas' at their shrines holding celebrations on their death anniversaries etc. were patently un-Islamic, but these practices were encouraged by a section of the Ulama whose motives, it is thought, were not always unselfish.

Muslims who had been the torch-bearers of learning in the Middle Ages had lost their vitality and progressiveness as a result of the obscurantism of the orthodox Ulama; they had fallen into the abyss of ignorance and superstition.

The orthodox who wielded great influence with the ignorant population put every kind of obstacle in the way of the education of the Muslim masses. Modern education was declared an anathema. Education of Muslim girls was interdicted and they carried on deliberate propaganda against secular education.

The hatred of western education extended even to the study of Malayalam, the regional language. From very early times Muslims of Kerala had their religious studies through the medium of Arabic. They were indifferent to the study of Malayalam, their mother tongue. They were biased against Malayalam because it was fraught with the idolatry and superstition of the Hindus. Moreover the religious scholars (Ulama), who were well-versed in Arabic, were not proficient in Malayalam and they discouraged the study of that language. Some of them declared that even the learning of the local language (Malayalam) was taboo and the credulous common Muslims believed them. E.K. Moulavi, an outstanding 'Mujahid' scholar mentions in his memories the typical prayer of the orthodox Muslim alim, "Oh Lord, God, make us not of those who speak the Malayalam language well." Thus even the study of Malayalam which they designated as 'Aryaneluttu' was treated as anathema. Their love for Arabic and indifference to Malayalam led to the development of a new script called 'Arabi-Malayalam' (utilising Arabic script to transliterate Malayalam) and was used in the place of Malayalam. Thus for a long period, the Mappilas were getting only truncated and mutilated education.



Educational factors:-

Apart from the historical and social factors there were also causes of a strictly educational character. For the Muslims the teaching of the 'Othupalli' (elementary religious school) must precede the lessons of the school. The Muslim boy or girl used to spend the whole morning from 7 to 10 in reciting the Quran. The parent was not anxious to send the child again to the school for secular instruction and the pupil also felt tired after the irksome task of learning by heart and vociferous recitations and that on an empty stomach. The Mulla, to earn his living, tried to lengthen the child's stay in the Quran school; and anything said or even entertained against the Mulla was considered sacrilegious. The Muslim boy, therefore, enters school later than the Hindus.

Secondly the Muslim children often left the school at an earlier age. The majority of them did not stay long enough at school to remain literate. Most Mappila families were poor; even if the parents desired the education of their children, the services of the children were too valuable to be spared. The boys were wanted to look after the cattle and to guard the crops. The girls were wanted to mind the babies and to help their mothers. This could better be explained in the remarks made in 1921 by the Indian Superintendent of the Census; "What determines literacy in any community is in the first instance, the nature of the occupations it usually follows, that is, whether they are such as require a knowledge of reading



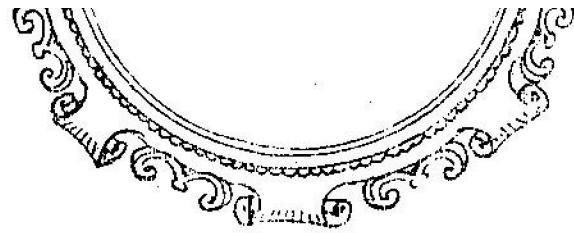
and writing and in the second instance, whether there are any special facilities within reach which attract the members of the community to learn, though there be no great need for the learning. The pursuit of letters purely as a means of intellectual growth is mostly a figment of the theorist.... the object of learning is, in brief, earning and it is desired by only a minority of those who have no such incentives. Reading, writing and arithmetic are accomplishments which are neither valued for their own sakes nor thought to be necessary for agriculture and labour, the occupations of the great majority." Education, further, was an expensive luxury. Even free education cost money and money was scarce in the country side. It was not only that the child had to be supplied with books, slates and other school materials, the cost rising with the stage of advancement. The poor Mappila child who would at home spend most of his days in a loin-cloth had to be much more expensively equipped for school-going.

The result of these was while other communities greedily rushed in to reap the benefit of the western education, the Mappilas for long remained educationally backward and gradually they were rendered ignorant and illiterate.

How they wooed the Muslims:-

But despite the opposition and indifference of the Mappilas to secular education, the British Government tried different methods to educate them, for the British assumed that the solution of what they termed the Mappila problem lay in secular education on the western pattern; the Government tried to achieve this through a series of educational measures. As early as 1871 arrangements were made by the Government to popularise among the Mappilas the study of Malayalam (reading and writing) and arithmetic. This was done with the help of Mullas who were given special instructions to teach the children elementary lessons in the regional languages (Malayalam) along with religious training. The Government gave incentives to the Mulla in the form of small salaries and grants for each child successful at an inspection held annually by two Muslim Inspectors who were specially appointed for the popularisation of the scheme. The official recognition of the Mappilas as a backward class (1894) for educational purpose, a measure which made the Mappila pupils eligible for free education in elementary Mappila Schools under public management and entitled managers of aided schools to receive capitation grant at 50 per cent above the ordinary rates; sanctioning of results grant at 75% per cent higher than the standard rates; the separation of vernacular schools from the mosques free

from the influence of the Mullahs and placing them under local boards and bringing them under Grant - in - Aid Scheme; the provision for religious instruction for Muslim pupils within school hours and appointment of instructors for the purpose; strengthening of the Mappila Inspecting Agency by the appointment of more inspecting school masters to supervise the education of Mappilas; the introduction of a special Mappila scholarship scheme; the opening of a special commercial class for the Mappilas in the School of Commerce, Calicut for instruction in Commercial subjects, the running of special night schools for the Mappila adults; starting of an additional lower elementary training class for Mappilas in the Government Training School, Malappuram, setting up of education committees at select centres for forming agencies of local supervision and for conducting propaganda against noted prejudices, etc were other significant measures of the Government in this direction. Besides through a system of special reports from the District Educational Officer, Malabar and the Inspectors of schools the Government kept close watch over the progress made from year to year in the spread of education among the Mappilas. An illustrated quarterly Magazine in Malayalam was brought out with a view to providing healthy literature for the reading section of the Mappila community in Malabar. Associations for the promotion of Mappila education were constituted and the Government persuaded the Muslim leaders to run educational institutions in different parts of Malabar. Though these efforts met with stiff



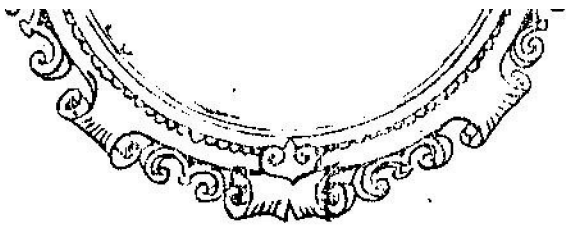
resistance from the conservative section of the Mappilas, in the long run these measures definitely influenced the Mappilas in accepting modern education .

The uprising of 1921:-

The Rebellion of 1921 was both an end point and a turning point in the life of the Muslim community of Malabar. It was the last Mappila outbreak and at the same time the first stage of a new development. The British suppression of the Rebellion and the repressive measures that followed the Rebellion forced several en-

"....The most outstanding achievement of this year is the electrification of the College buildings. The College lines were energised on 17th October 1956."

Annual Report for 1956-57



lightened Muslim leaders to realise the seriousness of the situation. The leaders of the community realised that traditional opposition to the Government and refusal to be benefited by modern education had placed the Mappilas in an impossible situation. The abject condition of the community called for social reforms through educational activities. Educated Mappila leaders like K.M. Seethi Sahib and others were of the view that special schools were required for the uplift of the community and for safeguarding the cultural integrity of the Muslims. Under their inspiring leadership several voluntary agencies were formed which established numerous primary and secondary schools in different parts of Malabar. This dispelled the apprehension of a cultural threat posed by modern education and in due course brought about a salutary change in the attitude of the Mappilas towards secular education. This gave an impetus to Mappila higher education too.

The birth of Farook College (1948) was a singularly important event in the Mappila Muslim educational progress. The College symbolised the desire of a significant proportion of the Mappila Community to unfurl itself to the caressing touch of modern education. The admission of girls to this college (1959) proved a turning point in the history of women's higher education in general and Muslim Women's in particular.

Farook College came to have the distinction of being the fore-most residential institution in the state owing mainly to the unstinted liberality of an enlightened management eager to serve the cause of Muslim education and also in no small measure to the farsighted and devoted efforts of its long-time Principal Prof. K.A. Jaleel (who later became Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calicut), who through planned, systematic and dedicated work gave new dimensions to the curricular and co-curricular activities. The magnificent grants of the University Grants Commission also went a long way in the manifold development of this College. The acceptance of the State Programme of universal secular education of the

lower level by the community in the 1950s was made possible by the silent and unostentatious service rendered by voluntary agencies. They tried to remove the prejudice of Muslim parents against secular education through personal contact. This crucial step, no wonder, anticipated spectacular developments.

The community wakes up:-

By 1960s, it was estimated, 47.3 per cent of Muslim children of school-going age in Kerala were attending schools. The general awakening of the Mappilas in the 1960s led to the formation of several big agencies like the Muslim Educational Society, Calicut.; Muslim Educational Association at Cannanore, Trichur and Emakulam and the Central Travancore Muslim Educational Trust at Alleppey signifying a definite advance towards higher education. By 1970, 30 per cent of the College students in Malappuram and Kozhikode districts were Mappilas, a development of major significance. Almost all eligible Mappila children were enrolled in elementary schools by 1972. Although they continue to leave schools in large numbers after the first compulsory five years of education, the community had taken a definite turn on a new road. At the beginning of 1974, there were about 700 lower and upper primary schools run by various Muslim managements. About 36 high schools for Muslims had come into existence. In the whole state Muslims had 9 first grade colleges and several technical institutions with other establishments in the planning stage. Their widespread involvement in education that followed would have been impossible but for the yeomen service rendered by voluntary agencies. The dynamic activities of voluntary agencies were a pace-setter for the Community in educational advancement. Thus a gradual movement of Mappilas into higher education had begun which led to a stream of Mappila students entering colleges.

While the situation has greatly improved over the last one decade, the Mappilas still remain backward in education. They started well back and remain well back. The other communities, the Hindus and the Christians who had adopted a more open and positive approach have not been standing still as the Mappilas strove to catch up. Thus they left the Mappilas far behind educationally and economically.