Role of *Kutub Khanas* in spreading religious literature with special reference to *Kutub Khana* of *Tanur Valiyakulangara palli*

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Introduction

The history of Kerala Muslims has passed through tremendous evolutions during last 14 centuries. It is recorded that the message of Islam has spread in the coastal areas of Kerala within the first decade of Islam. The evolution Kerala Muslim community from a finger counted group in to a mass is the result of continues activities through various methods for centuries. According to reliable sources the history of Muslims in Kerala starts from the 7th century AD[2] and it had passed through many socio-political and religious circumstances with in 14 centuries.

This paper intends to make a short study about the literary activism of Kerala Muslims through the ways of collecting or copying valuable texts and keeping it in public places to increase its accessibility to the scholars and students. Especially how

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[2] Muhammad Said P A, Kerala Muslim Charithram,

the common people viewed it as a religious virtue to keep and hand over religious literature from generation to generation.

Islamic Perspective on spreading Knowledge

According to the view point of Islam spreading of knowledge is a virtue in its all ways and means. The prophet declared that the acquisition of knowledge is an obligation on all Muslims. Thus he declared "wisdom is like the lost animal of believer, where ever he finds it, catches hold of it [3]. This prophetic tradition is sufficient to understand the view point of Islam for the spreading of knowledge without any differentiation between religious and material. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has maximum encouraged his followers to learn the verses of Quran and his traditions by heart. It was spread among literate companions of Prophet (most of them were illiterate) to document the verses of Quran in the leaf of trees and bones of animals. Within the first and second centuries of Islam narration of Prophetic tradition and other branches of knowledge widely spread among all Muslims. Thousands of Muslim scholars were living during the first centuries of Islam in the important centers of Islam like Mecca, Madeena and Syria and they were conducting religious classes based in Masjids and their personal houses.

[3] Momin, A R, Islam and promotion of Knowledge, Islamic Objective Studies, page XV

The culture of book writing among Muslims

The first religious text compiled in Islam was Quran itself. During the life time of the prophet, the written fragments of the Quran were scattered. They were collected together in one volume for the first time at the instance of Caliph Abu Bakr. When seventy companions of the prophet were killed in the battle of Yamamah in 633 AD, Umar(R.A) became apprehensive about the preservation of the text of the Quran and suggested to Abu Bakr that he should get the fragments of the Quran collected in one volume. He appointed Zayd bin Thabith (RA) to compile the Quran and it completed in about a year[4].

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has encouraged the art of writing among his followers. He appointed Abdullahi-bin-Sayd ibn Al-As who was an accomplished calligrapher to teach the art of writing to the inmates of Al-Sufah. The prophet declared that teaching the art of writing is the duty of a father towards his son[5].

History of Libraries In Muslim World

Libraries are the most important media of spreading knowledge in all societies. In the early records of history There were some important libraries like the Alexandria library of Egypt and some others even in the pre- time of Islam. After the spreading of Islam in Asia and Africa book writing and keeping it in public and private places became a fashion. Islamic rulers were giving patronage to whom, who are interested in making libraries. Rulers of Umayyad and Abbasids made their own huge libraries in their palaces and made it available for one who wants to refer it. One of the

[4] Momin, A R, Islam and promotion of Knowledge, Islamic Objective Studies, page no 5
[5] Ibid page 7

European Historian has written that in 18th century that even the big libraries in Europe may not be equal for a home library in Arab world. That is small description about the libraries in Islamic world. Shortly in the period of Islam keeping the books even in the private places as homes became part of a culture and the rulers gave unconditioned supports for like this activities.

Muslims of Kerala and Islamic world

Muslims of Kerala were connected with the Islamic world in all most all movements. Major progresses in the Islamic world were influencing the Muslims of Kerala in any of its way. It can be found hundreds of examples for this historical fact from the pages of History. Major reason for this was the healthy relation of Keralites with the Islamic world. There are hundreds of graves in the soil of Kerala of the Arab trades, scholars and leaders like Sayyid Alavi of Mamburam in Malappuram district, Shamsudheen Al Himsi of Idiynagara in Calicut , many graves in the graveyard of Nilamuttam in Kannur and the grave of Habeeb bin Malik in Talankara in Kasargod. The culture of literary awareness among Muslims in other parts of Muslim world has a great influence in Kerala too. We are not getting solid proofs about the literary activities of Kerala Muslims during the time of 7th -12th centuries but never we cannot say that Muslims of Kerala were Isolated from Islamic world. The continues transactions of rituals and cultures were going on through traders and merchants coming from the various parts of Islamic world. Many persons as merchants and scholars were travelling throughout Islamic world and were becoming the main agents of cultural and educational exchange during that time. Sea ports of Kerala like *Kochi* and *Kozhikkode* was among the main destination of Arab scholars and traders.

A short History of *Tanur Valiya kulangara palli Dars*

The Arabic word *Dars* means to study or to learn and it is used for the traditional conventional method of Islamic religious education. The methods adopted in *Dars* system was from the religious teaching method of Prophet Muhammad followed in his *Masjid*, *Masjid* al Nabavi for his regular students *Ashabul Suffa*. *Dars* was established and maintained in all most all *Masjids* in previous time and so many students from out said the locality of *Masjid* were coming to the *Dars* and staying there as students. Local people were helping them by fulfilling all of their needs like food and cloth. *Dars* system was the only way of Islamic higher education up to the second half of 20th century. Even new methods were adopted in the field of Islamic higher education *Dars* has its acceptance among the public and it is existing in many places now a days also. As an annexure to the *Dars* there in all most all *Masjids* there will be a collection of Islamic traditional texts for the educational needs of *Mudarris* and students.

First institutionalized learning centre(*Dars*) and library(*Kutub Khana*) in Kerala history was established and maintained in *Valiyakulangara palli* of *Tanur*. According to the proofs written in the books kept in the library of *Tanur Valiya kulangara palli* the institutionalized method of religious education in *Tanur* started to function in 675 Hijra(A D 1253). Before this the *Masjid* was the centre of worship as the first role of a *Masjid* then it became a centre of religious education. The first man who started his religious teaching was Shaikhul Imam Muhammed Abdillah hazrami as the name indicates he was a scholar from Yeman. Later so many scholars from India and outer India became teachers of This *Masjid*. Renewed scholars like *Aukkoya Musliar*

(contemporary and famous student of *Sayyid Alavi Mamburam* died in 1853.) and *Aminunmmantakath Pareekutty Musliar*(Author anti colonial book *Muhimmath*) have served there as teachers[6]. *Pangil Ahmed Kutty Musliar* one of the famous scholar and social reformer of 20th century gave a modern face to the religious system in *Tanur* and he started a compiled form of religion and material education and he gave the name *Islwahul Uloom* (Revival of Knowledges) and his activities were full filling the name[7]. *Shamsul Ulama* E. K *Aboobakr Musliar*(famous Islamic scholar of 20th century) has served there as a teacher for some years[8]. When the *Dars* developed students from various parts started to come there and attend *Dars* of Great Scholars. With the emergence of *Dars* as an necessity of *Dars* Library Also Started to develop

Library of *Tanur Valiyakulangara Palli*

With the development of *Dars* in *valiya kulangara palli* as an annex for it there developed a sufficient Islamic library. Main objective of this paper is to bring out some details about that library and manuscripts kept there. The library was main reference centre of scholars and students in the traditional literatures of various branches of Islamic knowledge. The books kept in this library was not collected by providing a huge fund from any agencies or within a short period. But at first one famous scholar from Yemen started his *Dars* here and gradually as the need of students coming to fulfill their educational dreams there developed a big treasury of Knowledge. The analyze on the texts kept in the library gives the result that *Tanur*

[6] Pathayam, souvenir edited by Tanur C K,
[7] Musafar Yunus, Pangil Ahmed Kutty Mullavi,vidyabyasa parishkarahinu oru punarvayana, article,
[8] Shamsul Ulama, Smaranika, Samastha Kerala Jamiyyahul Ulama publishing.

valiyakulangara palli was the centre for the students from primary level to the higher education level. Religious texts for all this categories are found in the library

The Books Kept in the Masjid has classified in to different Islamic disciplines. In total there are 554 books from various Islamic and other disciplines. The classification of books are in to Tafseer(Exegesis of Quran), Hadees(Traditions of Prophet Muhammed (pbuh)), Fiqh(Islamic Jurisprudence), Tasawwuf(Misticism), Luga(Language), Tareeq(History), Aqeeda(faith),Mantiq, Tibb(Medicine) and Ulumul Quran(Knowledge of Quran).

In all most all books it is written the date of writing or issuing in to the library. The oldest book as record is *Kitabul Raula* of *Imam Navavi* in *Shafi* Jurisprudence and it was issued in library in 884 AH. So the library started to develop before 551 years as records. Another thing should be mentioned here is that *Kitabul Raula* is a reference book in *Shafi* school of Thought and possibility to be it as part of syllabus is rare. So the students have reached sufficient maturity in religious education and referring high level religious texts for knowledge was the need of time. According to the need of Students the teachers and locals were interested to contribute for them books as Waqf in to the library. The books which's printed copy is not available they were hiring excellent scribes to prepare for them manuscripts.

In the section of Tafseer all traditional Quranic exegesis are available. Many of the Tafseer which is considered as part of syllabus were written by hand like *Tafseerul Jalalaini* of *Jalaludhin Mahalli* and *Jalaludhin Suyuthi*, *Tafseerul Baidawi* of *Al-Imam Al- Qazi Nasirudhin*, *Tafseerul Jamal* of *Sulaiman Al Jamal* and two volumes

of *Tafseer Jami Al Bayan* of *Al- Imam Muhammad Bin Jareer Al Tabri*. Many hand written copies of *Quran* itself is found in the library

In the section of *Hadees*(Traditions of Prophet) The most important collection of Prophetic tradition *Saheeh Al bukhari* of *Imam Al- Bukhari* has a hand written copy in the library. Beyond this famous text in *Hadees* literature like *Sharh Al- Arbaeen* of *Ismael Haqi* also is kept here as a hand written copy.

In the section of *Fiqh* famous books of *Shafi* jurisprudence like *Tuhfahul Muhthaj* of *Al Imam Ibn Hajar Al Haithami*, *Kitabul Raula* of *Imam Navavi*, *Imdad of Ibn Hajaril Haithami*, *Kithabu tanbeeh* of *Ibrahim bin Ali Yusuf*, it is written by *Muhammed bin Abdillah Al- Hadrami*, *Fatawe- Alamkiri*, it is a famous text in *Hanafi* Jurisprudence in 6 volumes, *Jawahirul Khams* it is a text in five disciplines in same time and it is available only in this library , *Fathhul Mueen* of *Zainudheen Maqdoom* II and *Sharhu ba Fadl* of *Shaikh Said bin Muhammad Ba Ashan* kept as hand written copies.

In the section of *Tasawwuf* the classical text in the field of *Tasawwuf* is *Ihya ulumudhin* of *Imam Muhammed Al- Gazali* and is kept here as hand written copy. *Tasawwuf* books like *Murshidul- Thullab* of *Maqdoom* I, *Irshadul Yafi* of *Imam Yafi* , *Al Salathul Kubra* and many famous books of *Tasawwuf* is kept as hand written copies.

In the language section *Lamiyathul Afal* of *Abdu Rahman bin Muhammad*, *Sharhu Thafthazani Ala Zanjan* by *Sa'dudhin Umarul Qazi*, *Mujeeb ul Nada* a commentary on *Qatar nada* of *Yaseen bin Zainudheen*, *Mukhtasarul Nahvu*, *Sharhu Qafiyathu Ibn*

Hajib, *Qamsul Muhees* (Arabic Dictionary), *Kutub Majmooa*(a collection of books in Arabic grammar works and many small and big texts are kept here in hand written copies.

In the section of *Tareeqh Qasasul Anbiya* of *Muhammad bin Ahmed Bin Bakr*, *Riyadul Hakam fee Manaqibi Shaikh Ibraheem bin Adham* and some important historical books are kept here is hand written copies.

In the section of *Tasawwuf Sharahu ummil Baraheen* ,*Tha'leemul Muthaallim*, *Daqaiqul Haqaiq fee mawaeedil Qhalaiq* of *Faqrudhin Al Bawazi* and *Kifayathul Awam* of *sheikh Muhammad Al Fudhali* are kept here as hand written copies.

There is only one book in the field of *Mantiq* that is *Al- Risala Al- Shamsiyya* of *Quthubudhin Muhammed Razi* is kept here as hand written copy

Making a survey on different texts on various disciplines we can understand the development of Islamic education in previous *Dars* System. Never it was not limited in *Quran* or *Hadees*. It was spread in to the various branches of knowledge not only in religion but also to the scientific education. There is the collection of books in philosophy, zoology and medicine from which it is under stood the capacity of scholars to refer and understand various branches of education. Analyzing the texts and branches of education covered in the library it is reaching to some important findings should be mentioned. Some important features among this are.

Hanafi Fiqh in Kerala education

According to the contemporary Islamic education system existing in Kerala the Jurisprudence is focused on *Shafi* School of thoughts. The major education boards in primary and higher education level preparing their texts only on the basis of *Shafi* School of thoughts. Only a small introduction is conveyed to the students about another school of thoughts by introducing small texts or public lectures.

When we analyze the texts kept in *Tanur Kutub Khana* it is understood that *hanafi fiqh* was also interest of students and they were studying or reading the major texts of *Hanafi fiqh*. *Fatawe- Alamgiri* is a famous book on *Hanafi* jurisprudence and it is compiled in big six volumes. All copies were kept in *Tanur Kutub Khana* and that is a handwritten copy. Another famous Hanafi text is *Fatawa Hamadiyya* written by *Abul Fathah Rukn bin Husam AL Nakuri* and one hand written copy of this book is also among the treasuries of Tanur Kutub Khana. From this we can understand that *Hanafi Fiqh* was thought in previous *dars* system than now a days. The total pages of Fatawe-alamgiri reaches in to 3282. As a conclusion in analyzing this existing proofs we can reach to the finding that the education system existed in previous *dars* system was not focusing only a single way of thoughts but it was vast to include all other school of thoughts with its respect.

Language education in *Dars* system

In the Islamic education system not only in Kerala but all over the world language education is an inevitable part of religious education especially Arabic language. There may many causes for that, mainly all most all Islamic traditions and its

descriptions were written in Arabic language. The basic source of Islam Quran is an Arabic language text and it is with all its miracles it is a wonderful treasury of Arabic language. So to interpret Quran the high level capacity in Arabic language is inevitable. In *Tanur Kutub khana* there is 92 books in the field of Arabic language. It Is included one copy of an Urdu- Arabic dictionary in the name Nafeesul Lugath. Another small Urdu book also found in the library n the name *Slsile- Halath e Nazeer Bandan*.

Attention of scholars on some different disciplines.

When we analyze the books in the *Tanur Kutub Khana* there are collections of different disciplines and it is not included in contemporary Islamic education and now it is not considered as a syllabus in religious education but now it is only as scientific like zoology, hagiography and philosophy. *Kithabul Hayawan* is a text by *Kamaludheen Dareemi* on the Animal kingdom in about 900 pages. One copy of this book is kept in this library. *Falsafathul Qadi* of *Ibn Rushed* is a famous book of great philosopher *Ibn-al-Rushd* and Al Raddu Ala Falsafathi Ibnu Rushd is another book written as a counter to the ideologies of Ibn-Rushd. Middle age Muslim scholars were famous for their medical experiments and findings. They have contributed a treasury of valuable text in the field of medical science. The books written in the field of medical science were kept and referred by the scholars and students in the *Kutub khana* of *Tanur*. Medical references in the library are Minhaju Dukkan in medicines, *Upakaram Tarjama* in *Asma'* and *Talsamath*, *Mujarrabathu al- Dairami* of *Dairami* in *Asma*' and *Talsamath,* and *Kitabul Rahmath fi Tibb* of *Jalaludhin al Suyuthi* In

short the branches of education now it is considered a scientific knowledge were considered before as a inevitable material for the students of religion.

Conclusion

The study about the *Kutub Khana* of *Tanur valiyakulnagara pally* opens new doors to the attempts of previous scholars for the possession of knowledge and sharing it to their students. Most of the books here was printed from Egypt and other Arab countries. This proofs that scholars were coming from distances even from out of India as teachers and students and this *Dars* was one of the famous religious centre for centuries. It again is a proof for the previous relation of Malabar and Arab countries, and it was not limited in commercial area but it was spread in all cultural and educational fields.