COLONIAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY TOWARDS THE MAPPILAS OF MALABAR

PROF. MUSTAFA KAMAL PASHA

Mappilas are defined in the Census Report of 1871 as the hybrid Mohamedan race of the Western Coast. At the outset of 20th century Mappilas numbered one third of the population of Malabar.[1]

Mappilas had a important position in the political history of Malabar.When Vasco da Gama visited Calicut during the closing years of the fifteenth century their influence at the court of Zamoorin was so powerful that the Portuguese could not achieve a commercial footing there.[2] Gradually they began to lose their position. When the British established their power in Malabar they lost their status completely. The loss of Malabar trade and the loss of political importance had turned the Mappilas into staunch opponents of the British.[3] Sir T. Munro described the Mappilas as "the worst race in Malabar and the most hostile to our domination"[4].

There were many outbreaks in Malabar, immediately after the occupation of Malabar by the British. Twentytwo such riots were reported from different parts of Malabar during 1836-53.[5] The Mappilas believed that they could go to paradise by courting death in the fight against the British. Such martyrs were called *shahid*. In 1843 and 1849 well armed sepoys in overwhelming numbers refused to face a handful of *shahids* armed only with war knives and in 1851 even British troops recoiled in temporary confusion before their onslaught.[6] The rebels who were ready to die were called *shahids*. Before the fight they set their houses in order, divorced their wives and clad in the white robes of martyrs and went out to die fighting against the British. In 1894 volleys from Lee-Metford and Snider rifles failed to stop them and some of the Mappilas reached the bayonets 'ere meeting with what they sought, death and entrance into paradise'.[7]

Such revolts became common in various parts of Malabar so much so that the British appointed a commission to report on the outbreaks in 1852. Mr.Strange was appointed as Commission. He recommended a policy of repression. At his suggestion a special force of police was raised and Acts XXIII and XXIV of 1854 passed into law. Notwithstanding the heavy penalties of the Mappila Acts, outbreaks continued. On Feb. 15th 1881 Logan was appointed as Commission. In his view the mistaken revenue policy of the British was the reason for revolts. A time of excitement succeeded Logan's Commission and between 1883 and 1885 no less than five outrages took place.[8] The outbreaks culminated in 1921.

The British Government tried to use education as an instrument to pacify the

rebellious Mappilas. They adopted various methods to attract Mappilas to Western education.

In the beginning, Mappilas kept aloof from British institutions including those of education. They also developed an anticulture or paraculture. Mappilas could manage their affairs with their own device, Arabi-Malayalam. So they were not particular about getting Western education.[9] Garthwaite, the Inspector of Schools of Malbar had mentioned this difficulty in his report 1871-72. He elaborates the Mappilas as "possessing a rude alphabet of their own, and also using freely the Arabic character for Malayalam. In spite of its utter want of adaptation they are satisfied with the means of reading and writing, however imperfect these means may be".

The British tried to attract the Mappilas to Western education. Munro had recommended one Muslim school for each collectorate.[10] But no such school was established in Malabar. A Talook school was started in 1856 at Malappuram and it was the first of its kind in Malabar. It was established with special object of providing instruction for the Mappilas.[11]

In their order No.288, of the 7th October 1872 the Government decided that elementary schools for Muslims should be established at chief centres of Muslim population in order to qualify the pupils for admission into higher classes of zilla and provincial schools. The Government also stated that they agreed with Colonel Macdonald in regarding it necessary that Muslims should be taught separately from Hindus upto a certain point. Inducement was given to *Mullas* to combine religious instruction with elementary instruction in vernacular. Grants were given to the *Mullas* in order to pay salaries to the vernacular teachers.[12] When the result system[13] was introduced Muslim teachers, did not come forward for Government aid[14].

To Garthwaite, the Inspector of Schools, goes the credit of organising a system of Mappila education in Malabar.[15]

In November 1885 Grigg submitted his views on the proposals of the District Board, Malabar, for the improvement of Mappila education. He suggested the payment of grants to Mappila schools could be made a provincial charge. It was approved by the Government. Since 1886, all result grants to Mappila schools which were formerly met from local funds were made payable from provincial funds.[16] The remarkable advance of Mappila education in Malabar was to great extent due to that change.

After the Mappila outbreak of 1894, H.Bradley, Acting Magistrate of Malabar recommended that Mappilas should be declared as an educationally backward community.[18] Thus after the outbreak of 1894 the Mappilas of Ernad and Wolluvanad were officially recognized as a backward caste, and grants at a rate 75 per cent higher than those of the standard

scale were provided for them in the Grant-in-Aid Code.[19]

In order to imbibe reading habit among the Mappilas, the Department of Public Instruction took initiative to start a magazine named 'The Mappila Friend'. It was a quarterly magazine in Malayalam. It was started in 1901.[20]

In 1890, a few scholarships were instituted to encourage Mappila boys who had passed the Upper Primary examination to pursue their studies.[21]

The Government introduced compulsory education in the municipalities of Calicut and Tellicherry and in the selected areas of the Eranad, Malluvanad and Ponnani Taluks. It is interesting to find that upto 1927, the only areas in which compulsion was introduced in the Madras Presidency were these thaluks.[22]

In March 1926 the Government created a temporary post of Special Assistant to the District Educational Officer, Malabar. The duty of the Special Assistant was to give special attention to the needs of Mappila education.[23] Twelve Deputy Inspectors were posted to manage Mappila education.[24] A special assistant to the inspectrss of Girls schools was sanctioned in 1942-43 for the organisation and development of education, Mappila girls in Malabar.[25] A secondary school for Mappilas was opened at Malappuram in 1936-37.[26]

As a result of continuous efforts the British Government could influence Mappila community. Mappila resistance to modern education was decreasing. Many educated Muslims, themselves began to work for popularisation of modern education. Sayyid Sanaullah Maktithangal was one of the pioneers in this field. He was born in 1847. He was an excise inspector. He resigned from government service and started his social reform activities.[27] He started a weekly named *Sathyaprakasam* in 1899.[28] Then the started a monthly named *paropakari*.[29] He wrote a book named "Muslinkalum Vidyabhasavum" (Muslims and education). He wrote another book *Narinarabhichari* regarding womens' education. He wrote more than 35 books aimed at social reform. Monapat Kunhahamed Haji and K.M.Moulavi started an organization named Aikya Sanagam in 1922. It worked for the spread of education. Khan Bahadur Muhammad Sahib of Chawghat, who had his education in England became the first special officer for Mappila education. For popularisation of education he started a periodical namely "Mappila Review".[30] He wrote a book named 'Mappilamar Engottu'. K.M.Seethi Sahib, a product of Trivendrum Law College was another social reformer and educationist. Under his guidance many schools were founded in Malabar. There were many others who tried to popularise education.

Thus it is clear from the foregoing analysis that British Government took persuasive methods along with oppressive measures to deal with Mappila

revolts. At first the Mappilas took a negative attitude to Western education supported by their religious leaders. The colonial rulers instead of antagonising the spiritual leaders of the community tried to accomodate their strong religious sentiments towards Western education. This important shift in the educational policy was dictated by political expediency. Education was used as an instrument to counteract the resistance from Mappilas to British authority in Malabar.

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