

# Genesis of Ideological conflict among the Muslims of Malabar

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**ABSTRACT:** In the history of Muslims of Malabar, <sup>1</sup>no renowned ideological conflicts can be seen till 1921, except Ponnani–Kondotty dispute. Muslims in Malabar were followers of Jurisprudence of Imam Shafi'i. Some of them had been following way of Twarīqah order which was constituted by different Sufis in the spiritual realm. Makhdoom in Ponnani were leader of both spiritual and juristically spheres nearly four centuries. The glory of spiritual realm of Ponnani was unprecedentedly proliferated by the arrival of Sayyid Abdul Rahman Hydrous (1751) from Hadhramout to the Ponnani. Islamic leadership and moral practices were led by both Makhdoom scholars and Sayyids. Mohammed Shah migrated to Malabar from Mumbai and concentrated his spiritual mission in Kondotty. His ancestors caused to emerge ideological conflicts among Muslims of Malabar and they known as Kondotty Kaikar (fraction). This was first renowned ideological conflict among them before 1921.

Key words: ideological conflict, religiosity, Kaitharkkam, Ponnani fraction, Kondotty Fraction, prostration and Kalifa.

## Kondotty Thangal

Sayyid Sheikh Jifri arrived in Malabar from Hadhramout. He was born in 1726-27 C.E. He accepted Qadiri Twarīqah from Muhammad Hamid Ba Alavi and its khilafah from Abdulla Al Haddad. He arrived at Calicut after his visit holy places in Islamic world. Zamorin warmly welcomed him and allowed a place which named Thekkum Thala. Sheikh Jifri started his mission by concentrating on Calicut. Tipu Sultan visited him and offered all kinds of help and facilities. Within few days more people became followers of Jifri. An interplay relation among Makhdoom and Sayyid Jifri was taken place. Both reached in Malabar from

Hadhramout. This relation was additionally conformed and strengthened after the marriage of Sayed Abdul Rahmman Aydarus from the family of Makhdoom. Makhdooms and those who were influenced by them recognized moral leadership of Jifri. The fame of Jifri extended through them all over the Malabar.

Muhammad Shah was born in AD 1687 January 29. He was native of Kardan near to Mumbai. His traditional lineage ending to Abu Bakr Siddique. It is told that his birth was in lineage of Sheikh Jeelani. Mohammed Shah accepted mysticism from Karum Ali. It is reported that he lived in forests for some days, made friendship with tigers and lived with wild animals for twelve years. After that he visited many of Darghah all over India. He performed Hajj in 30<sup>th</sup> of his age. He returned to Malabar. He got down in Cochin and reached in Mullyakurisi in Perinthalmanna by passing through Pudunagaram near to Palakkad. From there he returned to Areekod. He started meditation in an uphill. When hunters reached in forest, they saw Muhammad Shah, taking meditation among tigers. This news spread over the town and also reached in ears of Makhdoom Abdul Aziz who was then Qazi of Kondotty. Makhdoom with Kunjaramuty and Manysseri Koyammu invited Mohammed Shah, accordingly, Shah arrived Kondotty in 1717-18<sup>2</sup>. When Shah reached Kondotty his fame extended over the town. People were gathered and crowded to see the charismatic saint. He was the guide for the Qadiri Twarīqah, Chisti order and he built a Khanqah as centre for his spiritual activities. He died in 1766 C.E. Then the Muslims continued to follow Shafi jurisprudence in religious sphere and Qadiri, Chisti, Nakshbandi in spiritual sphere.

<sup>1</sup> Malabar situate in north side of Kerala which includes present districts of Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Palakkad.

<sup>2</sup> Husain Rndathani. *Makhdoomum ponnaniyum*, Malayalam, (Kozhikode: Punkavanam Books, 2010), 371-382

Sheikh Zainuddin Makhdoom First was the reformer through the Qadiri, Chisti guide lines<sup>3</sup>.

### Controversy

After the period of Muhammad Shah, activities of his son Aftab Shah and his supporters argued and manifested anti-Islamic rituals with highly vigorous. The Islamic scholars hardly exposed their resistance in scene of their arguments. When Tipu Sulthan conquered Malabar, people aroused this problem. Then he invited both scholars and fakir (nick name of Kondotty Shah) and arranged an open debate among them while proclaimed himself as a mystic of Qadiri way. Nevertheless, the number of followers of fakir increased. Kunjaramuty was one of the important followers and stewards of fakir.

Tipu Sultan invited the Islamic scholars and mystics to Feroke after he built a habitation there. Tipu Sultan respected the fakir by giving the grade of Enam Dar. He facilitated the maximum means for the preaching of Islam. There were also other lands offered for free by his followers. All properties were registered in the name of sheikh Jeelani by saying he was his grandfather. In the period of British rule, the position of Enam Dar of Kondotty Tangal was retained and continued. The loyalty to British rule and Shia-centered customs were the main cause of scholar's hostility to Shah. But the popularity of Shah diminished when the scholars of Ponnani proclaimed them strayed.

Allegations and accusations against way of Shah led to break out the fire of controversy among Kondotty and Ponnani all over Malabar. Initially Sayed Jifri warned the fakir in his book 'Kenzul-Barahin' as a fake mystic and he was misleading people, discouraging them towards hajj and prayer and giving chances to mingle together among men and women. Sayyid Jifri accused those who were following the path of Kondotty like Abdul Aziz, Koyamutty and those had the leadership of religious duties in Kondotty Taqiya<sup>4</sup>. According Ronald E Miller, He carried on many disputations on religious issues with Muhammad Shah Tangal of Kondotty through his work entitled Kenzul-Barahin. The root cause of Ponnani-Kondotty dispute was the fatwa issued by Sayyid Jifri against the alleged anti-Islamic

practices of the Kondotty Tangal<sup>5</sup>. Sayyid Jifri writes that, "look at the fakir like in Kondotty, they were strayed and intoxicated by consuming Hashish<sup>6</sup>. They will be never seen yet except being intoxicated. They were propagating that exposing 'nakedness' leads to Almighty Allah (Kenz, p: 463).

Abdul Aziz was Qazi in Taqiya, wrote against Sayyid Jifri. He justified the way of fakir in Kondotty and argued that Jurisprudential scholars do not have the right to opine in the matter of mystics and their activities are beyond the Sharia. But Sayyid Jifri again proclaimed that he deviated by the causes of his irreligious activities and interrogated how it would be justified those who are consuming Hashish, avoiding Masjid, rejecting prayer and fast and refusing other compulsory duties. Moreover, he claimed they had embraced the devil (Iblis).

Makhdoom scholars accused them that they had been following Shia customs. But the Successors of Shah continuously refused the relation with Shia meanwhile their Muharram festival conducted in Taqiya had similarity with Shia customs. They were using flags, Tabooth (such of coffins) and practicing special worship on that time. They used to jump into fire which was named

<sup>5</sup> Ronald E. Miller *Mappilas of Malabar: A study of Islamic Trends* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1976), 217.

<sup>6</sup> Hashish is one of items of intoxicants. Use of all types of intoxicants is prohibited by Quran. The paths of Sufism require strict adherence to the Sharia to the ascend stages of spirituality and proximity to God as anthropologist Jurgen Frembgen observes that well-established mystical paths implying the close relationship between observance of law and institutional Sufism. Historian Nile Green pointed that hashish "was lent religious value as evidence for renouncing the world and as an instrument for reaching the other world". It was "attributed with moral value and epistemological meaning". But some Sufi school legitimate use of Hashish and argue that it will turn the man away from the passions of this world, and elevated his concerns to matters of spiritual importance (<https://scroll.in/magazine/883094/pass-that-chillum-why-is-pot-smoking-so-common-at-sufi-shrines-and-why-is-it-frowned-upon>).

<sup>3</sup>Sainudheen Mannalamkunnu. *Kerala Muslim charithram nirmitha sathyangalum yadharthyangulam*, Malayalam (Calicut: Capital international publishers, 2012),92.

<sup>4</sup> Taqiya is the name for the place of worship or shrine or holy place in Kondotty.

–Jafoos and shouted like ‘Oh Ali, Oh Husain’ etc. They had conducted tiger play, chicken hock and other such amusements. Another practice was named Jookiya. Scholars in Ponnani refused the fakir by these causes and activities. Sayyid Mampuram Tungal proclaimed the Fakir is Shia belonging to the group of Boro; they were called as Rawafiz.

### Prostration (Sujood) Allegation

According to Islamic law, prostration in front of creatures is prohibited. But the followers used practicing prostration in front of their Sheikh. Fakir Ishtiyahq wrote a letter to Makhdum Bava Musliyar justifying the prostration that is allowed as part of admiration and Kunjeedhu (the supporters of fakir) wrote that there are two types of prostration i.e. legally ordered by Almighty Allah and linguistically. The legally also sub-divided into three, ordered, forbidden, and allowed. The prostration to Sheikh comes under the third category and the forbidden is to prostrate to a statue and common people.

Furthermore, Pulithodikayil Ali Musliyar, a Qazi in Takiya warmed the situation with his fatwa in favor of prostration in December 1883 by categorizing prostration into two, namely realistic prostration and metaphysical prostration. The first one is by touching the seven organs of the body on earth and the second one is by bowing the body slightly while standing. He proved that in Takiya, only this type of prostration was performed. He also presented some proofs for his arguments. On the contrary, Ponnani Kaikar opposed the argument of Ali Musliyar by describing the event of the camel's kneeling in front of the Prophet. When the camel knelt in front of him, the followers asked him: “Oh Prophet, even an animal would kneel in front of you. Why do people not prostrate in front of you?” Then the Prophet replied: “It is prohibited for anyone to prostrate in front of others except Allah.” The Prophet added, “If it were allowed, I would have ordered to prostrate a bride in front of her bridegroom”.<sup>7</sup>

Veliyamkode Umar Qazi wrote a poem describing that prostration in front of creatures is polytheism and a great sin. Also, Makhdum Bava Musliyar wrote a book against this controversial prostration mentioning that it is forbidden by all aspects of religion. In contrast, Marakkarakath Aaukkoya Musliyar issued a fatwa permitting prostration among creatures and he argued that this

custom continued from the time of the first human being on earth, Adam, to the era of prophet Easa (Jesus Christ), it only prohibited after the prophet hood of Muhammad (PBUH).

There were other allegations against Kondotty Kaikar such as avoiding the obligatory prayers, consuming drugs and mingling with opposite sex. It was also reported that he opposed widow marriage. He argued that Zakat (compulsory charity) and Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) is not compulsory to Muslims. Nadapuram Ahmed Musliyar blamed him as Qutubul Hasheesh (leader of Hasheesh). Kozhikode Kunjamutti Haji reacted against him and called him a co-traveler of Pharaoh. Fakir's strange and illegal activities and customs were equal to those of Rafidhi. They would make a statue of Prophet and of his three successors (Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman), make a hole in it and pour honey to them. Then they would abuse the statue of Prophet by saying Muhammad seized the prophet hood from Hazrat Ali, and the three Khalifas snatched the Khilafat from the hands of Ali.

### Fatwa<sup>8</sup> on social distance (boycotting/dissociation)

Ponnani Kaikar strongly proclaimed the dissociation against Kondotty Kaikar even their entry to Masjid and burying dead bodies in public burial ground attached to Masjid were prohibited. It was banned to eat meat if they slaughtered. It was an existing taboo on inheritance and marriage among Kondotty Kaikar and Ponnani Kaikar each other. When the Ponnani Kaikar and their followers implemented such taboos and dissociation, it caused heavy strain and stress on Kondotty Kaikar and influenced the social life though it reached to disqualifying Imam and his leadership in Marriage function from Kondotty Kaikar.

During the 19th century, a series of fatwas were issued against the Kondotty Tungal. Majmu'athal Fatwa, compiled in 1858 is a collection of fatwas of different muftis of traditional Sunni section against Ishtiyahq Shah of Kondotty, who commended his murids to prostrate before him, at the time of baiat (official pledge). Kunjamutti Haji of Kozhikode (d. 1843), in his fatwa, advised that 'those who are eager to

<sup>7</sup> Muslim, Jamiswahiih, Hadith No 1469, Ahmad, Sunan, No: 19403 & Ibn Maja, Sunan, No: 1853.

<sup>8</sup> Fatwa is a verdict or a decision on a point of law by the learned doctors of Islam. The fatwa document is a conventional form and varied little over the countries. It is headed by a pious invocation in Arabic often written in a very involved and stylized manner and varying from period to period, E.J. Brill, (ed.) Encyclopedia of Islam, Leiden, 1983, Vol. IV, p.867.

enter heaven, ought to keep away from such people (Kondotty Twarīqah) and those who have already fallen in to their trap, have to return to religion'.<sup>9</sup>

After the demise of Sheikh Jifri, the controversies were paused for some periods. However, it broke out after 1835. It aroused severely by prostration of both bride and bridegroom of Vakkal Kunjalan who was one of adherent followers of Fakir. Ponnani scholars declared that this marriage is illegal by the prostration. Even though this strict opposing approach of Ponnani scholars changed the mind of bride, Kunjalan did not accept the act of his son and wife. He challenged the scholars. On account of this issue, Abdulla Musliyar and Ahmed Musliyar wrote to scholars of different part of Malabar and abroad. All of them answered that Fakir is out from the boundary of Islam (Murtadd). The important scholars who issued fatwa on this were Pudiyaqath Bava Musliyar (Ac 1884) from Ponnani, Pudiyaqath Kunjamuty Musliyar (1842) from Ponnani, Kunjamuty Musliyar (1875) from Kozhikode, Abdullah Haji from Thalassery, Nadapuram Ahmed Musliyar, Veliyancode Umer Qazi (1852), pudiyakath Ahmed Musliyar (1875), Mampuram Sayyid Alawi Tangal (1844), Kilsanganeth Abubacker kunji haji (1834) and Nevarakuiaqrakath kunjammed.

Briefly, Ponnani Kondotty Kaitharakkam longed nearly two century in religiosity of Malabar and it ended after 1921.

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<sup>9</sup> Abdul Razack PP. Colonialism and community formation in Malabar: a study of Muslims of Malabar. Thesis, Department of History, University of Calicut, 2007