

## Morning and Evening *Madrastas* of District Thiruvananthapuram of Kerala: A Case Study

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### INTRODUCTION

In Muslim community, religious education is a means of acquiring values, norms, a meaning of life, a purpose of social relationship and identity. Primary level *Madrassa* education helps children to develop personality and better understanding of their religious faith. The connotation of the term *Madrassa* in Kerala is different from its North Indian counterparts. In North, Islamic education is generally called *Maktab* or *Madrassa* education. *Maktab* stands for the centres imparting basic religious knowledge and *Madrastas* for higher Islamic learning or religious seminars. In south, especially in Kerala, the term *Madrassa* is used to explain the institutions providing basic religious knowledge and the terms Arabic/ Islamiya colleges and *Jamias* used for higher Islamic learning centres.

### *Othupallies* and their Evolution

Primary level religious education of Kerala Muslims is generally known as *Othupallies*. The term is derived from the two Malayalam words *Othu* and *Palli*. *Othu* means reciting the holy books like *Vedas* as Namboothiri brahmins are generally doing, while *Palli* means place of worship. The *Moulavi-Mullakka*, chief priest of the mosque recites from the Quran and teaches the basic lessons of Islamic knowledge and repeats it till the students memorise. They were imparted basic or primary religious teachings like how to recite holy Quran and how to perform religious rituals like ablution and *Namaz*. *Othupallies* were specially dedicated for religious studies and there were no material or school subjects incorporated. The 'syllabus' of the *Othupallies* covered *Amaliyath* (Islamic Practices), *Deeniyath* (Islamic Beliefs),

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and *Sabeena* (collection of prayers and hagiographic songs). These Othupallies were served as beckons of Islamic knowledge to the generation at that time.

Later on changes began to happen in the system. Since 1871 Britishers had introduced 'inclusive policies' to attract Muslim children to secular schools and sanctioned special funds for those *Madrasas* incorporating material subjects in their syllabus with the support of the British. During 1947, in Madras Presidency, state schools did not support religious education. This dilemma put the Ulemas to ponder about further ways to effectively impart religious education to the Muslim community.



*Students of Al Madrasathul Islamiya  
Karakkamandapam Colony*

Starting of the twentieth century witnessed emergence of the *Madrasa* movement by eminent personalities and organisations. Chalilakath Kunjahammed Haji is known as the founder of *Madrasa* movement in Kerala. He brought radical changes in

the syllabus and infrastructures of the *Madrasas*. Similar kind of changes also took place in southern Kerala at Travencore and Cochin by the efforts made by Vakkam Abdul Khadir *Moulvi* and Sanaullah Makti Thangal, respectively. During the course of time Othupalli system of education became a school supporting one, which facilitated students to attend *Madrasas* and regular schools at a time. Othupalli system became morning or evening *Madrasas*.

### **Case Study**

During the field work in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala, two *Madrasas*— one each of morning and evening— were visited. They are: (i) *Al Madrasathul Islamiya Karakkamandapam*, (ii) *Al Madrasathul Islamiya Karimatom Colony*. An in-depth interaction was undertaken with the teachers and also the students both girls and boys aged five to fourteen years.

***Al Madrasathul Islamiya Karakkamandapam: the morning Madrasa, the centre of primary years' religious education*** was started under the supervision of Islamic Service Trust (IST) in 1982 at Islamic Cultural Centre Pottavila. The centre was established by a group of Muslim well wishers of the same locality Karakkamandapam with an objective to create an environment of religious harmony, social service mindset among the people and to manage the students' guidance centre. The trust had started

the *Madrasa* because of the immense pressure from the people of the surroundings of the centre. As the centre is situated in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation and NH-47 is passing nearby, the parents realised that the urban life lacks certain



*Main building of the Madrasathul Islamiya Karakkamandapam*

kinds of moral and religious education for their children. This led to the establishment of a religious study centre called *Madrasathul Islamiya* in 1982. Most of the families in the area belong to the middle income group but families belonging to higher and lower income groups are also there. This comprises organised and unorganised sector labourers. Government employees, big and small businessmen, wage workers and manual labourers are among them. Parents are literate, educated minimum up to the level of matriculation and have capacity to guide their children in the educational arena. Children coming to the *Madrasa* are enrolled in government aided and private schools covering state and central syllabi. Apart from the *Madrasa*, the centre also runs a study

circle, mutual aid fund and an Ideal Public School.

**Al Madrasathul Islamiya Karimatom Colony: the evening Madrasa, Attakkulangara** was established in 1970 by Ideal Charitable Trust under the supervision of Islamic Cultural Centre. Attakkulangara *Madrasa* is located less than a kilometre away from the two historical landmarks, East Fort and the Padmanabha Swami Temple of Thiruvananthapuram Municipal Corporation. Karimatom Colony is 87 years old settlement with more than 600 families and 3100 inhabitants. The area of settlement is spread over 10 acres. It was a good initiative taken by the Islamic cultural centre to establish a religious study centre in such a place, where deprived sections of people live. The slum comprises 50 per cent Hindu, 40 per cent Muslim and 10 per cent Christian population.



*Madrasathul Islamiya, Karimatom Colony: Children peeping through the window*

Most of the people are manual labourers and working at Chalai and Manacaud main markets. Women making sweets at their houses and selling them to the nearby shops are seen in the colony. Few decades back, the colony was notorious for its anti-social activities, but now-a-days things have come back in the right place. As the parents are not well-educated, their children are going to school up to secondary or higher secondary level, later they start to work for their families.



*A Galli of Karimatom Colony where the evening Madrasa is located*



*Interaction with the teachers and students of Al Madrasathul Islamiya Karakkamandapam*

The *Madrasa* plays a major role in imparting moral education to the children of the slum and their parents. It helps them to live a religious life to a great extent. It was very interesting that one of the students of the *Madrasa* was conveying his ideas in English as he is studying in an English medium School while other students were not able to communicate in English as they are studying in state-run Malayalam-medium schools. The cultural centre conducts different social service activities such as medical camps, free distribution of food materials, etc.

### **Syllabus**

Both the *Madrasas* are following the syllabus of Majlisu Ta'aleemil Islami, Kerala from Classes I to X. This *Madrasa* board was established in 1979 by Jamat-E-Islami in Kozhikode district of Kerala. Othupallies adopted *Arabi Malayalam* (writing Malayalam in Arabic script) as medium of instruction and taught basic lessons of the Islamic religion in the same script. Advent of reformist movements altered the situation and the Majlisu Ta'aleemil Islami introduced *Madrasa* textbooks in local language Malayalam and incorporated translations of the lessons from holy *Quran* and *Hadith*, Arabic and English language and General Knowledge.

Both the *Madrasas* are providing two kinds of degrees to their students. First one is primary certificate course, wherein students appear for public examinations in Class VII . The second

### Textbooks for the Academic Session 2010-11

Class	Subject	Text	Publishers
I	Arabic	Arabic Language Studies Part I	Majlis
II	Arabic Islamic Studies	Arabic Language Studies Part II Islamic Studies Part I	Majlis Majlis
III	Arabic Islamic Studies	Arabic Language Studies Part III Islamic Studies Part II	Majlis Majlis
IV	Arabic Islamic Studies	Arabic Language Studies Part IV Islamic Studies Part III	Majlis Majlis
V	Arabic <i>Quran</i> Prophetic tradition History Jurisprudence	Arabic Language Studies Part V <i>Quranic</i> Studies Part I Prophetic Tradition Studies Part I Islamic History Studies Part I Jurisprudence Studies Part III	Majlis Majlis Majlis Majlis Majlis
VI	Arabic <i>Quran</i> Prophetic tradition History Jurisprudence Art of Recitation of <i>Quran</i>	Arabic Language Studies Part VI <i>Quranic</i> Studies Part II Prophetic Tradition Studies Part II Islamic History Studies Part II Jurisprudence Studies Part IV Art of recitation of <i>Quran</i>	Majlis Majlis Majlis Majlis Majlis Majlis
VII	Arabic <i>Quran</i> Prophetic tradition History Jurisprudence Art of recitation of <i>Quran</i>	Arabic Language Studies Part VII <i>Quranic</i> Studies Part III Prophetic Tradition Studies Part III Islamic History Studies Part III Jurisprudence Studies Part V Art of recitation of <i>Quran</i>	Majlis Majlis Majlis Majlis Majlis Majlis
VIII	Arabic <i>Quran</i> Prophetic tradition History Jurisprudence	Kerala Arabic Reader VIII <i>Quranic</i> Studies Part IV Prophetic Tradition Studies Part IV Islamic History Studies Part IV Jurisprudence Studies Part VI	SCERT Majlis Majlis Majlis Majlis
IX	Arabic <i>Quran</i> Prophetic tradition History Discussion ( <i>Buhooth</i> )	Kerala Arabic Reader IX <i>Quranic</i> Studies Part IV Prophetic Tradition Studies Part V Islamic History Studies Part VII Praksha Deepam Part I	SCERT Majlis Majlis Majlis Majlis
X	Discussion ( <i>Buhooth</i> ) Arabic	Praksha Deepam Part II Kerala Arabic Reader Class X	Majlis SCERT

course is titled as Islamic Oriented Secondary Course (IOSC), which is a four-year course after completing primary certificate course. In IOSC students are imparted an elaborated version of the basic Islamic teachings. Generally very few students like to choose the second course. For example, only one student is studying for IOSC in *Madrasathul Islamiya Karakkamandapam*. Following are the details of the syllabus taught by these *Madrasas*.

The syllabus for the *Madrasas* is prepared by academic council for *Madrasas* of *Majlis*. According to the teachers of *Madrasas* that were visited, while a student completes her or his study on the basis of this syllabus, she or he will be aware of the right religious practices, rituals and ideology. A student studies Arabic language from Classes I to X, in which Classes VII to X covers Kerala Arabic Reader textbook of SCERT. Rest of the textbooks are prepared by academic council of *Majlis* itself. Islamic studies textbooks cover basic Islamic beliefs and practices. *Quranic* studies textbooks cover selected lessons from the *Quran* with its word meaning translation and little bit explanation. Prophetic tradition studies texts also cover selected teachings of Prophet Mohammad from prominent Hadith texts with its word meaning translation and explanation. Islamic history studies texts explain the history of the lives of different prophets with special focus on the life of Prophet Mohammad and followers.

Jurisprudence texts cover the rules and laws of Islamic life. Class VI and VII students study *Tajveed*, i.e. art of recitation of *Quran*. In Classes IX and X *Buhooth* (discussion) is another subject. In which *Prakasha Deepam* is the book to study which is a book with full of stories from Islamic history.

### **Madrasa Timing**

Most of the Muslim children are going to *Madrasas* because their parents understand that religious awareness should be given right from their childhood itself. While they are studying in regular schools, simultaneously they may be enrolled in any of the morning or evening *Madrasas*. Morning *Madrasa* starts from 7:00 am to 9:00 am, after that students move to regular schools. Evening *Madrasas* are arranged for those students who are not comfortable to attend the *Madrasas* in the morning session. Evening *Madrasas* start from 4:30 pm to 6:00



*Professor Sushma Jaireth with the students and teacher of Karimatom Colony Madrasa*

## Majlis Fest Items

Daph Muttu (a traditional Mappila art)	Hifz (Memorising Quran)	Action song traditional (Malayalam and English)	Kolkali (a traditional Mappila art)
Islamic song (Malayalam)	Group song (Malayalam and Arabic)	Reading (Arabic English)	Antakshri (the game of the ending letter)
Poem writing (Malayalam, Arabic and English)	Poem reading (Malayalam, Arabic, English and Hindi)	Story telling (Malayalam and English)	Oration (Malayalam, Arabic and English)
Essay writing (Malayalam, Arabic and English)	Sangeeta Shilpam (ideal sculpture creation with the support of background music)	Story-writing (Malayalam and English)	Katha Prasangam (presenting an issue with the support of the prose and the poems)
Memory test	Atham (call for prayer)	Pencil drawing	Crayon colouring
Poster making (Malayalam)	Cartoon drawing	Hand-writing (Arabic and English)	Water colour painting
Mono act	Caption making	Quran Recitation	Arabic song
Mime	Play	mimicry	Light music
Monologue	Marching song	Musical display	Mappila song
Folk song			

## Nursery Fest Items

Action song	Poem reading (Malayalam, English and Arabic)	Islamic song (Malayalam)	Story telling (Malayalam and English)
Group song (Malayalam)	Memory test	Crayon colouring	Mono act
Marching song	Musical display	Fancy dress	



<b>Sports Items</b>		
<b>Age</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
Under 9	50 mtr, 100 mtr Standing board jump	50 mtr, 100 mtr Standing board jump
Under 12	100 mtr, 200 mtr, long jump, 4 × 100 mtr relay	100 mtr, 200 mtr long jump, 4 × 100 mtr relay
Under 14	100 mtr, 200 mtr, 400 mtr long jump, shot put, 4 × 100 mtr relay	100 mtr, 200 mtr long jump, shot put, 4 × 100 mtr relay

pm or 6:30 pm. Students attending the evening session are coming after completing their regular school classes. Number of students in the morning session will be less because of the different timings of schools to start their morning classes.

### **Co-curricular/Extracurricular Activities**

Students of both the *Madrasas* are participating in the *Madrasa* Boards' annual *Majlis* and sports and games meet and getting prizes.

#### **(i) Majlis Fest**

The *Majlis* gives special focus on curricular and co-curricular activities with a view to encourage institutions develop programmes for promoting talent among students. These fests have three tiers—the first level is the institutional level followed by the regional and then the state level competitions. There are thirty-seven items for competitions which include:

#### **Majlis Sports**

##### **(ii) Majlis Sports Meet**

Students of both the *Madrasas* are also participating in the sports and games meet of the *Majlis*. Teacher of the

Karimatom Colony *Madrasa* shared that it is important to conduct and participate in sports meets that will energise the physical and mental ability of students. It also promotes togetherness and strengthens their self confidence. Boys and girls are participating and competing separately for the items mentioned below under three age categories.

They also participate in manuscript magazine, wall magazines and printed magazine competitions of the *Majlis*. *Majlis* conducts science, art and craft exhibitions for students to show case their creativeness and talent.

Both the *Madrasas* visited are being run in a big hall in which students are sitting classwise in separate rows and studying together. Though this is an easy way to pay attention to all the students by the teacher, it negatively affects the classroom practice. Attention of the students may be diverted to the teacher while she/he is managing learning process for other classes. It was also observed that in the morning *Madrasa* there were two teachers, one male and one female; while in the evening *Madrasa* there was only one



male teacher. In both the *Madrasas* it is the teacher who attends the students classes-wise and covers the portions of the day. Both the *Madrasas* suffer from lack of infrastructure. Teachers are paid low scale salary and there is no yardstick to fix the qualification of teachers too.

### **Conclusion**

Morning and evening *Madrasas* are playing an important role in imparting the basic religious education to the Muslim children of Kerala. These *Madrasas* are moving forward under different organisational *Madrasa* Boards in a centralised manner. However, while considering the students, especially after Class VII public examination, it has been observed that their dropout rates are high. It is because parents and students are paying more attention to the school subjects rather than *Madrasa* education. Another thing is that different religious groups are running private English-medium schools in Kerala, in which they incorporated their

religious education too. Likewise some of the Muslim-private-management schools have also incorporated *Madrasa* subjects along with secular subjects and parents opted the system and decided to drop morning or evening *Madrasas* for their children. Though this was one of the major reasons behind the dropout rate in *Madrasas* in general, it was not a sufficient alternative to replace the existing one. In order to make *Madrasas*'s education effective and supportive to the overall education of children within the framework of secular, democratic fabric of Indian polity, teacher training will be an important aspect. Teachers should be given pre-service and in-service trainings to support the educational needs of children and needs of the community as it is a system by the community and for the community. Teachers have to pay special attention to the age differentiation of students sitting in the same class because students are studying in a class on the basis of their understanding of the religion.