

SOCIO-POLITICAL RESURGENCE OF MAPPILA MUSLIMS UNDER THE SAMASTHA KERALA JAMIYATHUL ULEMA- A Revisit

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Abstract

The Malabar rebellion was a critical period in the history of Malabar especially of the Muslims. It was the Congress, which brought the Mappilas into the forefront of mainstream politics against the British. It ensured the Mappila participation in this concern through the Khilafath issue. But during and after the rebellion the Congress had done nothing in favor of the Mappila Community. They never tried to address the requirement of the Mappilas and betrayed the community. Thus the community fell down without a strong leadership and organization. As a result a number of Organizations emerged in Malabar for the socio-political and religious regeneration of the Mappila community. One Such organization is the Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema which played an important role in the socio-political resurgence of Mappila Muslims. This paper is a study in this regard.

KEY WORDS

Mappila- Muslim Resurgence- Ulema- Islahi-Mappila Outbreaks, Outrageous Act-Mushawara-Sunni-Jamiyathul Ulema- Kerala Muslim Majlis- Islahi- Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Muallamin- Mahallu Federation- Sunni Student Federation

INTRODUCTION

The Muslims of Malabar, generally known as Mappilas, have played an important role in the socio-political scenario of Kerala. In the past also they had a substantial role, especially in the anti colonial struggle both against the Portuguese and the British. The centuries long struggle led them into miserable condition. Since the British occupation of Malabar the Mappilas had become their main target owing to the support rendered by the Mappilas in favor of Tippu Sultan. Series of agrarian reforms were introduced by the British in Malabar, which directly or indirectly affected the Mappila peasants. Many of the Mappilas, as a result were evicted from their land. Naturally the Mappilas responded against the policies of British and thus a number of uprisings were conducted by the Mappilas in different part of Malabar, which were generally termed as the Mappila Outbreaks. From 1836 to 1919, Malabar witnessed

32 such major outbreaks. All these uprisings were suppressed brutally by the British with an iron hand. They introduced the Mappila Outrageous Act against the Mappila community in order to curtail these uprisings.. When the activities of Congress against the British were conducted in Malabar the Mappilas showed little interest until 1921.

In this circumstance that the Khilafat- Non Co-operation movement was introduced in the soil of Malabar. Owing to its religious concern the Mappilas wholeheartedly accepted the programme and became its full-time workers. The nationalist leaders like Muhammed Abdurrahman Sahib and E. Moidu Maulavi also played an important role in mobilizing the community towards the nationalist movement. The Congress found the Khilafat movement as a means to ensure the Muslim participation in their activities. (K.K.N,Kurup. et.al, P.20).

The period of Khilafath -Non co-operation Movement of 1921 was a crucial period in the history of the Mappila community. The Congress, which brought the Mappila community into the mainstream politics failed miserably to redress their grievances and betrayed them in times of crises. The community fell into isolation and was thrown into oblivion. In these circumstances a number of Muslim organizations emerged among the Mappilas namely the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam , Kerala Muslim Majlis, The Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema whose activities together formed the Islahi movement as Islahi Movement, The other organization were Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema, The Jamaat e Islami and the Tabligue movement. All these organizations played great role in the socio-political resurgence of the Mappila Community.

The Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema

The all Kerala Muslim Organization named Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema known as Samastha is an association of eminent Sunni scholars which was formed against the activities of Islahi movement also played an important role in the socio-political resurgence of Mappila community. Many scholars and leaders came forward for the mobilization of Mappila community from its miserable condition. One such group headed by K.M Seethi gave birth to an organization which later became known as the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam. In this session the leaders of the Sangam tried to make an understanding with the Orthodox group. Under the Sangam an organization was formed named the Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema under the leadership of K.M Maulavi and E.K.Maulavi in 1924.(Souvenir of Samastha,. P. 190). Vakkom Abdul Khader Maulavi was elected as the President and C. Abdullah Koya Tangal and K.K Muhammed Musaliyar were elected as Vice Presidents. C.K Moideen Kutti Maulavi was elected as the Secretary and E.K Moulavi as Joint Secretary. Scholars from different part of India reached here to attend

the Annual Meeting. This Ulema organization got the support of the traditional Ulema group also (Muhmmmed Kunju, See pp.55-56). The Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema acted as an advisory body of Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangam from 1924 to 1933. Later it became a well - structured religious organization with strong determination

The formation of Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulema

A group of the traditional scholars emerged within the Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema, which resulted in the formation of another organization called Samastha Kerala Jamiathul Ulema (L.R.S Lekshmi. See P.95) with different ideologies and perspectives, under the leadership of Pangil Ahamed Kutty Musaliyar, who once was a strong supporter of Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema. In 1925 under the Presidentship of Varakkal Sayyid Abdurahman Ba Alavi Mullakkoya Tangal a meeting was held at Calicut Valiya Juma Masjid and formed a counter organization bearing the same name as Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema (Sixtieth Anniversary Souvenir Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema, p15). This tentative organization got a full-fledged and well structured character in 1926 at a convention in 1926 held at Calicut town under the chairmanship of Sayyid Shihabuddin Cherukuchikoya Tangal. The Organization was renamed as Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema. Varakkal Mullakkoya Tangal became its first President and Pangil Ahammed Kutti Musaliyar, Muhammed Abdul Bari Musaliyar and Muhammed Meeran Musaliyar were elected as its first Vice Presidents.

Aims and Objectives

1. The propagation of traditional Islamic faith and Customs
2. The Unity of Muslim Community
3. Defence of the activities and ideas of Islahi Movement

Mushawara

The Supreme body of the Samastha is called Mushawara consisting of 40 eminent scholars of the period. As its meaning indicates the Mushawara is a consultative body in which almost all matters concerning the Muslim community of Kerala are discussed, solutions to their problems are found, and fatwas, if needed are issued. (90th anniversary souvenir of Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema, See p.393)

Resolutions of the Samastha

The Samastha conducted a number of public conferences and debates to convince the Mappilas their aims and objectives and to popularize their ideologies among the Mappila masses. Through these conferences, annual sessions and debates the Samastha succeeded in getting popular support to a large extent.

Seventeen such annual conferences were conducted by the Samastha from 1927 to 1945. All these conferences facilitated in the social mobilization of the Mappila community to a large extent.

Sooner than later the Samastha succeeded in gaining public support. It began to interfere in the socio-political affairs of the community along with religious interferences. A number of resolutions were passed by the organization through its annual conferences concerning with the Mappila community. One such resolution was passed in its sixth annual conference against the Mappila participation in the Indian National Congress. (Anvar Sadiq, , P.190). The Samastha firmly stood against the Congress and urged the Mappilas to keep aloof from its activities. They accused the Congress as responsible for the miseries suffered by the Mappilas after the rebellion of 1921. They strongly believed that the Congress failed miserably to address the problems of Mappila community before the authorities and the public. The Congress members were not permitted to be the part of Samastha until they resigned from the Congress. (Prabhodanam special edition.1998 April,28)

These resolutions made a great impact upon the community and subsequently a large section of Mappila youth began to make a move from secular politics to a communal politics ie Muslim League. Thus the Samastha played an important role in the growth of Muslim League in Malabar soil and sometimes its leaders held the leadership of the Muslim League itself. (P.A Sadiq Faizy,. P. 667). The political outlook of the Mappilas changed visibly and it was clear in the Central Assembly Election held in 1934. The election campaign of Abdul Sattar Sait, the Muslim League candidate was led by Pangil Ahammed Kutti Musaliyar, the first Vice President of Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema. The net result was the victory of Abdul Sattar Sait over Muhammed Abdurrahman Sahib, the most influential leader of Congress. (A.K Kodoor, P. 222). This victory succinctly brings out the political influence of Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema among the Mappila Community of Malabar.

The activities of Samastha were not concentrated on politics alone. It has made its presence in the educational in the educational sphere also. Even though in the early period its main concern was limited to religious matters, gradually it turned its attention towards the educational development of the community. The Samastha leaders found the absence of a proper education as a hindrance to the spread of their ideologies. Hence they began to introduce systematic Madrassah education. It was Sayyid Abdurahman Bafaqi Tangal, the prominent leader of Samasthakerala Jamiyathul Ulema and Muslim League, who drew the attention of the Ulema in this concern during the 16th annual Conference of Samastha held at Kariyavattom on March 1945. He emphasized the need for the establishment of

Madrassa across the state for the easy mobilization of the Mappila community under the banner of Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema.

Samastha Kerala Islamic Educational Board

The Ulema of Samastha unanimously accepted the proposal and as a result, they passed a historic resolution in its 19th annual held in Vadakara on March 1951 . As per the resolution it was decided to start a centralized Madrassah system. Thus the Samastha Kerala Islamic Educational Board or Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Board came into existence in 1951 (Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Muallamin Golden Jubilee Review. p.136).

In the beginning the educational activities of the Samasthas were limited in its men folk alone. The traditional Ulema group were not in support of women education.(Al Bayan Arabi, ,P.28) A change in this attitude was visible in later period. They revived the community consciousness among the Mappila Community through their activities . Their activities were not merely limited to religious revivalism. Equal importance was given to modern secular education. . They played an important role in the development of secular education also. The third annual meeting of the Tanur Islahul Uloom Arabic college under the Custodianship of Pangil Ahammed kutti Musliyar, , passed a resolution on 1928 April 8 which requested the Ponnani Taluk board to make arrangement for the starting of a night class for Madrassa students for the study of Malayalam, Urdu and English.(Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Muallamin, Golden Jubilee Review,p.50).

Various sub organizations formed under the Samastha

Besides the board a number of sub organizations came into existence under the banner of the Samastha Kerala Jamiyathul Ulema. In 1959 an organization named Jamiyathul Muallamin ,an association of Teachers of the Madrassa was formed which has been doing creative and appreciable services in protecting the interest of the teaching staff. The organization carried out a number of welfare projects for of the benefit of the teachers. A special institute was set up to give training to the Madrassa teachers and an one year course is offering to the needy. For the empowerment of of the womenfolk the Samastha set up a women Shariah college for girls who have completed S.S.L.C. The institution offers a five year course.

For the co-ordination of Muslim Jamaathu or Mahallu the Samastha formed Samastha Kerala Sunni Mahallu Federation in April 1976. Another sub organization functions under the Samastha is the Samastha Kerala Sunni Student Federation(SKSSF) which was founded on 19th February 1989. The

Federation aims to mobilize the Muslim students under the banner of Samastha and to protect the rights of the Students.

Conclusion

Thus, even though the Samastha and its activities focus mainly against the principles and activities of the Islahi movement and its religious revivalism, it played an important role in the socio-political mobilization of the Muslim Community of Kerala especially of Malabar . To the Mappila community the rebellion of 1921 was a crucial and critical period. The community which fell in utter poverty and degeneration as a result of the revolt of 1921 got a momentum through the activities of the Samastha. It played an important role in the socio-political resurgence and the educational development of the Mappilas. It was through their effort the Mappila community got a new political outlook and they began to think of a concept of political identity. The Samastha to a large extent succeeded in fulfilling its founding aims such as the propagation of the ideas of Ahl al Sunath wal Jamaath, defending the traditional Islamic beliefs and customs from the hands of Islahi scholars, protecting the socio-religious and political rights of the Mappila community, providing religious and secular education to the community, eradicating anarchy, inequality and blind beliefs from among the community. In the first two decades the Samastha dedicated its efforts and attention to the propagation of traditional Islamic beliefs and practices . Gradually the Samastha turned its attention towards the non religious issues of the Muslims community too. The Samastha upholds its own principles and ideologies concerning religion, politics, and social reforms . Thus the Samastha succeeded in creating a community feeling among the Mappila community based on traditional beliefs and practices .

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