

Emergence of Tableegh Jamaath in Kerala and the Role of Kanjar Moosa Maulana

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Introduction

Tableegh Jamaath is an Islamic Movement founded by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas in 1927 at a public meeting at *Nuh* in the present state of Haryana. The term *Tabligh* is an Arabic word which literally means to convey the message or information. In Islamic Terminology it means the preaching of Islam. It is the primary duty of the Prophets. As the chain of Prophets were ceased after Prophet Muhammad It is the Duty of his followers to perform this duty. The first *Jamaat* was formed at the *Nuh* convention. Small groups of Muslims moving from one village to another preaching the fundamentals of Islam. The rapid change brought among the Mewati Muslims gained the movement widespread popularity all over India. Now it is the most widely followed movement in the Islamic world.

Maulana Muhammad Ilyas identified the root cause of Muslim backwardness in India is the lack of Islamic knowledge. Therefore, he gave incitation to educate the community about the basic principles of Islam.¹ According to him it is the duty of all Muslims to participate in this mission irrespective of learned *Ulama* or ordinary people. It is the collective responsibility of the *Ummah*. Conversion of non-Muslims was never being the aim of this movement, but it aimed at purifying the Muslim mass by imparting Islamic knowledge and making them pious Muslims in letter and spirit.²

The *Thabligh Jamaath* is a mobile madrasah.³ The members of each *Jamaath* (group) often engaged in mutual study and practice of the fundamentals of Islam. It is like an adult continuing education center, a common man can attain sufficient basic knowledge about Islam through participating in *Thableegh Jamaath*. There are six fundamental ideas for the functioning of this movement.

1. Kalimah: To witness that there is no God but Allah and Prophet Muhammad is His messenger (*La Ilaha Illallah Muhammad Rasulallah*). For the perfection of one's belief one should full fill four conditions that is

the wording of the Kalimah should be correct, understanding the meaning, realization of its implications and complete faith in God and strict following of the traditions of the Prophet.

2. *Namaz*: To perform five times prayer without fail in congregation. It is the second pillar of Islam and should not be discarded at any circumstances.

3. *Ilm and Zikr*: To acquire true knowledge of the Quran and Hadith. One must know the ways of living and how to earn ones living and how to deal with others. Every Muslim must spend some part of his life for the propagation of knowledge. According to Maulana Ilyas “No person can succeed in acquiring knowledge unless he transmits to others, especially to those who are less learned”

Zikr means remembering the Almighty in praise and glorification. One must keep God in his heart as it helps to purify the heart. This can be done by recitation of Quran and by offering Prayers

4. *Ikram*: Respect for human beings in General and Muslims in particular. An important element of *Ikram* is the recognition of the rights of others, the rights of seniors, the rights of parents, the rights of neighbors, the rights of the poor etc. The idea was to bring back the society to the real Islamic Brotherhood.

5. *Ikhlas- e – Niyyat* (Sincerity of intention: Action must be performed with the sole intention of pleasing the Almighty God. Anything which is performed with impious intention is not accepted.

6. *Tableegh*: Preaching the teachings of Islam among the people. Travelling far and wide for the propagation of Islam. Every Muslim must perform these duties and according to Maulana Muhammad Ilyas it is the only way to educate the large majority of people about Islam. The above mentioned six articles are known as *Che Bath* or six matters forms the basic principles of *Tableegh Jamaath*.⁴

The Spread of *Thableegh Jamaath* in Kerala

The *Tableegh Jamaath* started its work in Kerala before the formation of the state of Kerala. It was in *Karikkode Nainar Masjid* near *Thodupuzha* in the Idukki district its first appearance. A *Jamaath* from Nizamuddin, Delhi came to *Karikkode* and the then Imam of *Karikkode* Shaikh Ahmad Koothari received them and he was selected as the first Amir of *Thableegh Jamaath* in

Kerala. Under the leadership of Shaikh Ahmad Koothari the movement gained wide acceptance in *Karikkode* and the nearby places. During this time Kanjar Moosa Maulana joined the movement and became one of the dedicated members of the movement. Then the history of *Tableegh Jamaath* in Kerala became the History of Kanjar Moosa Maulana until his death in the year 2002. Here I am trying to highlight the life and mission of Kanjar Moosa Maulana as the Ameer of *Thableegh Jamaath* in Kerala.

Birth and education of Kanjar Moosa Maulana

Kanjar Moosa Maulana was born in the year 1930 at *Kanjar* in Idukki District of Kerala. His father Muhammad was an Islamic Scholar and his mother Fathima was a pious lady. His father wanted his son to follow his own footsteps as an Islamic scholar. In his early age he joined in the *Dars* (Islamic school attached to mosque) at Earattupetta, a well-known center of Islamic learning under the first Deobandi Scholar of Kerala Maulana Mustafa Alim Sahib. After the preliminary study for years he joined the Manbaul Anwar Arabic college of *Lalpettah* in Tamil Nadu. There his teacher was the famous Scholar of South India Siyauddin Ahmad Amani Hazrath. He completed his Graduation in *Darse Nizami* system of Islamic Learning and gained the title Maulavi Fadil Manbai.⁵

Moosa Maulana and *Thableegh Jamaath* in Kerala

After returning to his native place *Kanjar* his people received him with great respect and they compelled him to start a *Dars* in the Mosque of *Kanjar*. Thus he started a *Dars* at *Kanjar*. But when the *Tableegh* Movement started its work in *Karikkode* he was attracted to it and went on a *Jamaath* to Nizamuddin for Four months. During this time he get married with Aisha Beevi Daughter of Ahmad Sahib of *Kanjar*. After the first four months *Jamaath* Maulana fully engaged in *Tableegh Jamaath* and appointed Fathuddin Tangal as the *Mudarris* (Teacher) of the *Dars* started by him.

He worked in his village and neighboring places among the people for the propagation of the movement gradually the movement gained followers and after a short period he again went to Nizamuddeen and met Hazrathji Maulana Muhammad Yusuf the then Ameer of *Thableegh Jamaath*. He stayed there in the company of Yusuf Hazrathji and the Ameer recognized his zeal and

dedication to the movement. Then Hazrathji Yusuf sent him to Mewat on a four month *Jamaath*. After the completion of the *Jamaath* he returned to Nizamuddin, there Hazrathji received him with great pleasure and appointed him as the Ameer of the *Tableegh Jamaath* in Kerala. Thus Kanjar Moosa Maulana became the Ameer of *Tableegh Jamaath* in Kerala in the Year 1950.⁶

Moosa Maulana the Ameer of Kerala *Thableegh Jamaath*

As appointed as the Ameer of the movement Moosa Maulana came back to his native place Kanjar and strived hard for spreading the work of the movement to more areas. During that time the movement in Kerala was under the *Dindigal Markaz* of Tamil Nadu. In March 1955 Moosa Maulana, Pareeth Bava Haji and Ramla Haji went on Hajj Pilgrimage with a group of 25 people from *Thodupuzha*. After the Hajj he came back to *Thodupuzha* and it became the center of *Tableegh Jamaath*. Many people from all walks of life joined the *Thableegh* movement. Ramla Haji was his colleague at *Erattupetta Dars*, who later became the chief companion of Moosa Maulana. Pareeth Bava Haji, a rich business man of *Thodupuzha*, Mundakkal M. M. Abdul Khadar Haji Retd. Village Extension Officer of *Thodupuzha*, etc. were the notable early workers of *Thableegh Jamaath*⁷.

The annual summit of *Tableegh Jamaath* was held at *Kanjar* in 1962. Hazrathji Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Sahib attended this conference. Many *Jamaaths* were sent from this summit. By this time the well-known industrialist Zubair Haji of Ernakulam joined the *Tableegh* movement and became one of the close friends of Maulana. Another important person who joined *Thableegh* at this time was Muhammad Haji the son in law of the Cashew king of Kerala Tangal Kumju Musliar. He was immensely rich and he spend a lot of money for the development of the movement. He built a Mosque known as Masjid al Noor in Ernakulam and it became a center of *Tableegh Jamaath* in Ernakulam. In Trivandrum many notable personalities came to join *Tableegh Jamaath*. Dr.M Kamaludeen was one among them. He was an educationist and established many schools and colleges. In *Kollam*, *Pathanamthitta*, and *Alappuzha* many people joined the Movement. Many Professors and students of T.K.M College, Kollam were attracted to the movement. In short the growth of *Tableegh Jamaath* didn't faced any serious blockade in its way in South Kerala. It was mainly because of the friendly attitude of *Dakshina Kerala Jamiyathul*

Ulama and the cordial relationship maintained by Moosa Maulana with them. With great pain and effort Maulana spread the movement all over South Kerala. Then his attention turned to the Malabar region.

In Malabar the *Thableegh Jamaath* faced severe opposition from the Samastha Kerala *Jamiyathul Ulama*. They branded the movement as a new form of Wahabism and claimed that it is a Bid'ah (innovated) movement⁸. Through public speeches, articles in magazines and fatwas, they kept the masses away from the movement. Nattika Moosa Maulavi and Andona Musliyar were the chief campaigners of *Samastha* (Ulama Organization of Kerala) against *Thableegh Jamaath*. Although Moosa Maulana and his movement did not criticize them in public. But they went ahead with their *Jamaath* and gradually they gained considerable number of followers from Malabar. Maulavi Abdul Khair al Qasimi, P.M.Ibrahim Haji *Pallikkara*, Abdullah Haji *Mannamkuzhi*, Dr. A K Shah of *Kozhikkod* and Dr.Mukhtar of *Kannur* are among the early workers of *Thableegh Jamaath* in Malabar.

Contributions of Moosa Maulana to Islamic Learning

Moosa Maulana took special attention in the field of Islamic learning. He felt the importance of education and inspired his followers to start Maktabas, Hifzul Quran colleges and Islamic Colleges all over Kerala. The *Jamia Al Kauthariya Edathala* Founded by Zubair Haji, the close associate of Moosa Maulana was the first of these institutions. It was under the direct control and guidance of Moosa Maulana and it became the *Markaz* (Headquarters) of *Tableegh Jamaath* in Kerala. *Najmul Huda* Arabic College, Manjeri and Sirajul Huda Arabic College, *Pallikkara* were established by P.M.Ibrahim Haji by the advice of Maulana. A group *Thableegh* workers of Trivandrum started *Kashiful Uloom* Arabic College at *Nedumangad*. Kamal Haji started *Manarul Islam* Arabic College at Kollam. Muhammad Haji established a *Hifzul Quran* college at *Masjid al Noor Ernakulam*. Engineer Yaqub established *Baqiyathuswalihat* Arabic College at Kanjar and numerous madrasas Masjids and Hifzul Quran colleges were established by the sole inspiration of Moosa maulana⁹.

The chief work of Moosa Maulana was the book he wrote about Hajj pilgrimage named "*Irshad al Hajj*"¹⁰. It is an authentic work on Hajj pilgrimage. He wrote many articles in magazines

and a number of letters to various *Thableegh* workers explaining the importance of Dawah and the practical ways of doing it in society like us.

Conclusion

After completing fifty years of fruitful life in the field of *Thableegh Jamaath* Moosa Maulana breathed his last on 14th November 2002 at his residence near *Jamia Kauthariya, Edathala, Alway*. His funeral was attended by thousands of peoples from all walks of life. Even though he didn't get any formal modern Education he mastered many languages like Arabic, English, Urdu, Tamil and Malayalam. He headed various *Jamaats* to all states and Union territories of India. He went on *Jamaat* to the countries like Sri Lanka, Indonesia, U.S.A, U.K, K.S.A, U.A.E, Qatar, Bahrain and Iraq. His eloquence influenced thousands of people. He maintained cordial relationships with all. He never engaged in violent criticism of others.

It is an amazing factor that without using any modern propaganda tools, like modern media coverage, advertisements through notice and posters he and his fellow workers developed a notable movement with numerous workers all over Kerala within a short span of time.

End Note

- ¹ Bearman P.J; and Others (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Islam* volume X, Leiden Brill, 2000, p.38.
- ² Marwah.I.S, *Tabligh Movement*, Social movements in India, M.S.A. Rao, (Ed.), New Delhi, 1984, p.298.
- ³ Wahiduddin Khan, *Tabligh Movement*, Kitab Bhavan, New Delhi, 1986, p. 8.
- ⁴ Abdul Samad.M, *Islam in Kerala Groups and Movements in the 20th Century*, Laurel Publications, Kollam, 1998, p.152.
- ⁵ Yoginder Sikand, *The Origin and development of Tablighi Jamaat (1920-2000)*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 82.
- ⁶ Ishaq Maulavi P.P., (Ed.), *Moosa Maulana Smaranika*, (Mal.) Al Kauthar Ulama Council, Aluva, 2003, p.43.
- ⁷ Kamaluddin.M.K., *Moosa Maulana Smaranika*, *Ibid.*, 2003, p.67.
- ⁸ Moosa maulavi V.M., *Moosa Maulana Smaranika*, *op.cit.*, p.229.
- ⁹ Abdul Khadar, *Moosa Maulana Smaranika*, *op.cit.*, p.52.
- ¹⁰ Hafis Abdul Shukkoor, *Moosa Maulana Smaranika*, *op.cit.*, p.156.