

# SOCIO-CULTURAL INTERVENTIONS OF JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI IN KERALA THROUGH ITS ORGANS

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## **Abstract**

*An attempt is made here to evaluate and determine the socio-cultural interventions of Islamic social reform movement, the Jamaat-e-Islami, which have been taking place in Kerala at present. It is but natural that Islam exerted its influence most on the reform movements working among its own adherent i.e., Muslims so will start with the Muslim reform movements such as, Jamaat-e-Islami, Mujahid movement, the Sunnis, the Tabligh Jamaat, Ahmadiya movement etc. A modern reformist organization based on Islamic ideology, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind has developed a distinctive style and methodology in its whole activities in throughout the country. In Kerala its endeavours under socio-cultural section includes, Ideal Relief Wing (IRW), KIM postal Library, Kerala Masjid Council, People's Foundation, AICL, Islamic Marriage Bureau (IMB), etc. and also aims the role of literary works and contribution of Jamaat-e-Islami through its literary agents like Prabhodanam weekly, Madhyamam monthly, Aaramam weekly, Madhyamam weekly, Malarvadi monthly, Madhyamam daily news, Media One Television Channel etc. The role Islamic Publishing House (IPH) and its published works is very unique stand in the cultural scenario of the Muslim community in Kerala society. Descriptive and analytical methodology was adopted in this study for analysing the collected data.*

**Index Terms:** *Jamaat-e-Islami; Mujahid; Sunni; Iqamaat-e-Deen; Mufasssir.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The contribution of Islam to the social and cultural transformation of India and Kerala are valuable and well-known. In Kerala, the influence of Islam on the socio-cultural reformation was more powerful than its influence in any other part of the country. Jamaat-e-Islami was founded in 1941 by Abul Ala Moududi, one of the foremost Islamic theologians, Philosopher, Mufasssir, Muhadith and theoreticians of political Islam. V.P. Muhammad Ali generally known as 'Haji Sahib' was the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind in Kerala. A decisive meeting held at Valanchery in 1948 took up the historic decision to convert 'Jamiyath-ul-Mustarshidin' into the first unit of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind in Kerala [M. Abdul Samad, p-121] The basic creed of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind is 'La Ilaha Illa Allah Muhammadur Rasulullah'. The objective of Jamaat-e-Islami is 'Iqamaat-e-Deen', the real motive of which is solely the achievement of Divine pleasure and success in the hereafter [The Constitution of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, p-1]

The present study aims at analysing the working of the movement of Indian Jamaat-e-Islami and its socio-cultural activities in Kerala. The importance of the present study is very vast, because of its fact that Muslim community is in search for an identity, an ideology under the banner of Islam. Now the Muslim community is facing globally numerous problems in all fields of social life. Thanks to the creative intervention of

Jamaat-e-Islami in Kerala, through its activities, the Kerala Muslims transformed very much in their socio-cultural, religious, economic and even the political field of human life.

Islam reached in Kerala during the period of Prophet Muhammad himself in the seventh century [Roland. E. Millar, p-39]. The torch bearers of Islam in Kerala were the Arab merchants who conducted brisk trade relations between these parts of the world. The famous Cheraman Perumal legend of Kerala is in connection with Islam. Cheraman Perumal, the last ruler of the whole Kerala embraced Islam and went to Mecca to meet Prophet Muhammad in his last years [Ibrahim Kunju A.P, p-19]. This is well proved by Shaik Zainuddin in his '*Tuhfat-al-Mujahidin*' [Muhammad Husayn Nainar, pp53-66]. After these developments in Kerala, the religion of Islam faced many historic and dramatic incidents, both socio-cultural and religious fields. In this situation by the mid of 20 century one of the leading revivalist movement founded in undivided India and after the partition of Pakistan, the movement also divided into two, the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind and the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan. In 1948 this movement reached in Kerala also with activities of V.P. Muhammad Ali (Haji Sahib).

### *Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Kerala*

Prior to the formation of Jamaat-e-Islami and its activities in Kerala, in 1946 V.P. Muhammad Ali founded an organization under the title '*Jamiyath-ul-Mustarshidin*' at Valanchery, Malappuram where he was working as an Imam (Prayer leader) in a mosque [Abdul Jalal Movlavi.P.M, pp100-106]. The first annual meeting of this organization was held at the house of C.M. Moidin Kutty Sahib and the house later witnessed important lectures and discussions on various topics. This meeting decided to convert the '*Jamiyath-ul-Mustarshidin*' in to the first unit of Jamaat-e-Islami in Kerala on 21 August 1948. Haji Sahib was the first leader of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind in Kerala and he was elected as the 'Qayyim' of the organization. Later this post was renamed as 'Amir' (President) and he became the Amir until his death in 1959 [Abdul Rahman O, pp241-250]. The spread and development of Jamaat-e-Islami in Kerala is very rapid in its all phases. So many causes and factors, directly or indirectly, helped to the spread of Jamaat-e-Islami.

### *Societal interventions of Jamaat-e-Islami*

Societal interventions of Jamaat-e-Islami in Kerala through its endeavours are noted here. The Jamaat-e-Islami emphasizes that service to humanity is complementary to and the extension of the worship of the Lord of the universe. All the local, area, district units of the Jamaat-e-Islami spread all over the cities and villages of the State dutifully engaged in social service activities, even rendering the financial assistance to the deprived classes of the society. They help them to meet their essential needs for medical treatments, children's education, marriages of dependents, house construction, ensuring regular income through small and medium range business enterprises etc. The societal interventions of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind in Kerala are discussed here irrespective of caste, colour, creed or any other matter. Some of the interventions invited mass criticism from the public and government; some of them are highly appreciated and imitated by the others, and put up by the concerned authorities.

### *Ideal Relief Wing (IRW)*

During the time of natural disasters and calamities, systematic relief and rehabilitation works are undertaken by a purposely organized and trained group of volunteers named as Ideal Relief Wing (IRW) [Abdulla T.K, Vol. XI, p-387]. Cleaning public places like hospitals, schools, roads, ponds, etc. repairing or constructing the houses, conducting medical camps when necessary, serving the people in need, attending to the ill, counselling, legal help, organic farming etc. are the part of the IRW programmes.

When the Tsunami waves that divested many districts in the state along with many other coastal areas in South Asia, extensive relief works were carried out by IRW volunteers and medical teams belonging to the Ethical Medical Forum (EMF), Madhyamam Health Care Programme (MHCP), and Association of Ideal

Medical Services (AIMS), all these three endeavours serving under the guidance of Jamaat-e-Islami. The public response to its call for contribution to the relief fund was quite overwhelming and the sum of Rs. 2.35 cores, so collected has been utilized on short-term relief and long-term rehabilitation purpose. During the earthquakes that resulted in extensive loss of life, injuries to tens of thousands of people and tremendous damage of properties in Lathur (Maharashtra), Gujarat, India, the Jamaat-e-Islami undertook large-scale relief and rehabilitation work. The last earthquake, which caused unprecedented damage in Kashmir region, a team consisting of doctors and other relief workers from Kerala visited the quake-hit areas and offered their comprehensive service to the suffering inhabitants. Now-a-days these activities are partially imitated by other Muslim organizations.

### *Kerala Hajj Group*

Kerala Hajj Group was inaugurated in 1996 to provide guidelines and assistance of Hajj pilgrims [Abdul Hakim P.A, p-34]. Besides giving necessary instructions as to how to perform the pilgrimage in advance with Islamic teachings, the Hajj group also arranges satisfactory food and accommodation, besides serving the people in need, attending to the ill, and giving counselling, legal help to the Hajj pilgrims. Every year the volunteers are willing to do this activity without fail without any monetary benefit from the parent organization.

### *Kerala Masjid Council*

It is the federation of the mosques headed by the well-wishers of Jamaat-e-Islami. The main objectives of Masjid Council are to bring up the Muslims as a model society wedded to Islamic culture and discipline, turn them into good citizen of religious tolerance, moral awareness, piety and service mentally and spread the message as well as moral teachings of Islam. The activities of Kerala Masjid Council include giving guidance for finding suitable locations for building mosques, increasing efficiency of administration and maintenance of mosques under the council making arrangements for distribution of Zakath, Fithr Zakath, organising Ifthar meet, unifying the declaration of Eids, arranging classes to the Imams and spreading awareness programmes against extravagance in wedding and dowry [<http://www.jihkerala.org>].

### *Alternative Investments and Credit Limited (AICL)*

Alternative Investments and Credits Limited (AICL), is an important socio-economic field of Jamaat-e-Islami, which encourages people to invest their savings in various business enterprises to secure 'Halal' (lawful) earning without any involvement of interest that is forbidden in Islam. AICL has invested in trading, manufacturing and service sectors, and gives out a reasonable dividend to its shareholders [Abdullah T.K, p-385] Indian Association For Islamic Economics (IAFIE) is an association for encouraging studies in Islamic Economics and Banking and its rule and regulations. The objectives of the Economic Forum were:

- Give encouragements and economic assistance for research in Islamic Economics.
- Create opportunity for studies in Islamic Economics and Finance and try to find out new currents of thought and innovative methods.
- Publish research papers and books in this regard.
- Arrange a reference library.

Non-Interest Fund is a financial establishment of Jamaat-e-Islami. Interest Free Establishment and Co-ordination Committee (INFEC) is an organization. This committee handled 227 non-interest funds and all these funds are operating at local level. INFACC and SANGAMAM are the other significant economic interventions of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

### *KIM Postal Library*

With the express aim of spreading the message of Islam among the masses, Kerala Islamic Mission (KIM) was set up in Malappuram district in 1976. Fifty odd books and thirty odd pamphlets that introduce Islam

have so far been published [*Ibid*, p-385]. It had a wide range of followers; they belonged to heterogeneous group of the society.

### *Islamic Marriage Bureau (IMB)*

Islamic Marriage Bureau (IMB) was formed in 1988 for making weddings as Islamic as possible, free from extravaganza and alien customs [*Ibid*,p-387] IMB conducted many campaigns and classes against the social evils which in course of time become part and parcel of the Islamic marriage system.

### *People's Foundation*

People's Foundation is a social service initiative that works with the aim of an innovative change in society. Individual social problems and stalemates do not need a temporary solution. People's foundation aims for a permanent development by equipping individuals and society to use their talents and opportunities for the same. Resources must be available for the backward individuals and social groups of different areas in the society in a manner that it helps in a permanent change and transformation. People's foundation makes arrangements to make the maximum use of all the talents of every section in the society for the nation's progress. People's foundation's way of operation is such that it fastens an individual's social, spiritual and cultural developments. It strives to take Kerala's social service activities into a new direction that is more effective.

The mission and vision of People's foundation is to promote professional social work by chalking out need-based, result-oriented, research-driven programmes updating technology, with goal-centred administration, beneficiary-friendly approach, partnering with social work organizations and community itself mobilizing a pool of morally committed human resources. Standardization of social and human welfare programmes with development centred social work policy, augmenting resources, creative methodology and sustainable projects for enhancing the quality of individuals and society.

Projects and programmes of People's foundation are: affiliation of voluntary organizations, legal aid, counselling centres, disaster management, self-help groups and Ayalkootam, micro finance, medical aids, higher education scholarships, housing projects, blood donation forum and employment schemes, public relations, guidance and counselling, training, financial resource collection, documentation, partnership scheme, research and evaluation, planning and implementation of schemes and preparation of human resources. Housing Scheme - According to the scheme, houses costing rupees sixty thousand to one lakh are built for deserving people at the expense and supervision of Jamaat-e-Islami activities. In the current term 159 such houses have been constructed and given in the Kerala state by the Jamaat-e-Islami [*Ibid*, p-387].

### *Cultural interventions of Jamaat-e-Islami*

Culture is not something which can be formulated in some office, or in some meeting or conferences, it is invariably the result of a long and natural process of social action, reaction and interaction. Far from being the instant fallout of some political resolution, it is the culmination of a time-honor, historical accretion [Khan Wahiduddin Maulana, p-32]. So culture is one of the most decisive factors of the measure of the development of a society. In this segment the Jamaat-e-Islami intervenes through its literature in the cultural field of Kerala society.

### *Islamic Publishing House (IPH)*

Islamic Publishing House (IPH) is the official publishing house of Jamaat-e-Islami in Kerala which was founded in 1954. '*Thafim-ul-Quran*' (six Volumes, Maududi), '*Swahih-ul-Bukhari*', '*Swahih-ul-Muslim*', '*Fiqh Sunna*' (Syed Sabiq), compilation of the history of Islamic community (four volumes, Sarvad

Sawlath), ‘*Undercurrents of Indian Culture*’ (T. Mohammad), *Road to Mecca* (Translation, Mohammed Assad), ‘*Social Justice in Islam*’ (Syed Qutub), ‘*Biography of Malcom X*’, ‘*Islam Between East and West*’ (Translation, Alija Izetbegovic) ‘*Sachar Committee Report*’, ‘*Liberham Commission Report*’, are among the important publications of IPH. More than 800 books have already been published by IPH [ Karmakalam, p-258]. Islamic Publishing House publishes books with International Standard Book Number (ISBN). IPH have branches in Kozhikode, Trivandrum, Ernakulam, Trissur, Kannur, Malapuram and Palakkad. The IPH intend through its publications to bring hence to the Malayali Muslims and non-Muslims the real meaning of Islam. Islamika Sarvavijana Kosham is the remarkable work done by the IPH. The following table shows the categorized list of periodicals and others by the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind in Kerala.

Table. No: 1  
List of periodicals and others by JIH, Kerala

Name	Frequency	Publisher/Ownership	Nature
Aaramam	Weekly	GIO	Women and society
Arogya Madhyamam	Monthly	Madhyamam	Health
Bodhanam	Quarterly	Ideal Publication Trust	Spiritual
Madhyamam	Daily	Ideal Publication Trust	Daily newspaper
Madhyamam	Weekly	Madhyamam Group	Cultural magazine
Madhyamam Griham	Yearly	Madhyamam	Home
Madhyamam Healthcare	Project	Madhyamam	Societal
Madhyamam Kudumbam	Monthly	Madhyamam	Family
Madhyamam Velicham	Weekly	Madhyamam	School Supplement
Madhyamam Vidhya	Yearly	Madhyamam	Education and career
Malarvadi	Monthly	Prabodhanam	Children’s magazine
Prabodhanam	Weekly	Ideal Publication Trust	Socio-religious

### *Prabodhanam weekly*

Prabodhanam is an official mouthpiece of Kerala Jamaat-e-Islami. Regular columns on Quran, Hadith (teachings of the Prophet Muhammad), Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) and history along with articles relating to subjects like environment, family, woman, politics, education and society form the content of the magazine. Prabodhanam is the highest circulated Islamic publication in Kerala. It was first published in 1 August 1949 [Ibid, p-240].

### *Bodhanam quarterly*

In-depth research in the Islamic subjects is the content of Bodhanam. It introduces the Malayalam readers to the contemporary schools of thought and knowledge trends in the Muslim world. It is also widely used by the Muslims in its early phase. It covers a varied subject of Islamic Ideologies.

### *Aaramam weekly (women’s magazine)*

Aaramam women’s magazine is intended to ensure justice and well-being irrespective of caste and religion, to address issues affecting the socio-cultural, political, human rights and moral areas of women, and to bring

about empowerment of women. In 1984, under the initiative of Girls Islamic Organization (GIO) it founded its face book magazine, named 'Aaramam' in Kozhikode. From the very start, the women worked in the editorial board. K.K Sreedevi, Aysha, Hamshina, Rajinah and Khasidha Kalam, etc. were the editorial board of various times and they worked for the popularization of the magazine.

P.T Abdu Rahman Mohammed, Khadir Kutty Merekad, Basheer Thodiyil, N.N Gafoor, Anwar Paleri, Dr. Abdul Salam Vaniyambalam, Param Hafeef and others were also present at various times. But today, from 2004 onwards, the editorial board has been comprised of women only and under the supervision of K.K. Fathima Suhara, sub-editors Fauzia Shams, Bishara Mujeeb. [Ibid, p-246]. Since it is completely handled by women, the magazine has been able to air the varied matters of women in the public forum and start an active dialogue among the community. The articles, discourses and interviews on the women's private constituencies and the appearance of the sovereigns have made light on the matters that touch women in society.

Trying to repeat the glamor of magic, trying to reconcile the light and spaciousness of women, was trying to reconcile the great institute of the 'family'. Prominent writers motivate the campuses, new writers and students to promote female writers as readers are familiar with the pages of the shrine. It is a great thing for worship to embrace family, society and woman through the Islamic enfranchisement of women by introducing women's rights to Islam as well as the intricacies of women's emancipation. Within such a goal, each month's pages of entrance to the readers reach the readers.

#### *Malarvadi monthly (Children's magazine)*

In November, 1980, a publication was started in Cochin. It was owned by Islam Trust which had its centre at Kodungallur. E.V. Abdu (Chief Editor), P.D. Abdul Razak (Editor), T.K. Ubaid, V.A. Kabir, V.K. Jaleel, K.C. Salim and V.S. Salim were the members of the panel. Malarvadi was intended to take care of the children's reading seriously. Cartoonist B.M Gafoor was the brainchild of the first draft. Artists like Vaikkam Muhammad Basheer, M.T Vasudevan Nair, C. Radhakrishnan, N.P. Mohamed, Thakazhi, etc. interacted with children through Malarvadi.

Within a short span of period, it becomes one of the prominent Malayalam publications in Kerala. The narratives of the Malarvadi do not give space to the stories and frightening genres that propagate misconceptions and customs. It did not go behind commercials. 'Kunjuni Maashum Kathil' was a poet who had been the poet Kunjuni Mash in the minds of Malayalee children. M.T has been published in Malarvadi as a 'girl'. The film is a novel by Vasudevan Nair. From 1986, the ownership of the magazine was taken over by Malarvadi Publications Trust and its headquarters was moved to Thrissur. From July 2002, it has been published from Kozhikode. From 2007 onwards, P.A Nazimudheen has been its executive Editor and T.K Ubaid, its chief editor.

#### *The Madhyamam daily news (Malayalam)*

The Madhyamam saga began in 1987 at Silver Hills near Calicut, Kerala. It was inaugurated by Kuldip Nair, a veteran Indian journalist. Vaikom Muhammed Basheer, the notable of modern Malayalam litterateur, saw in it the birth of a silver star-a prophecy that lent substance to the evolution of the paper. The daily was led in its beginning by personalities like K. C. Abdullah, P. K. Balakrishnan and K. A. Kodungallur. Madhyamam is run by the Ideal Publications Trust, which aims at providing non-partisan and value-based journalistic service beyond considerations of profit and the demeaning compulsions of the market. Its policy emphasises the need for the media to rise above sectarianism and market driven profiteering pressures that

have beset the post-Independence Indian journalism. It calls for lending voice to the voiceless majority in the society. Madhyamam set new trends in news content, advertisements, visuals and social commitment [Aaramam Magazine, pp22-25]

Madhyamam has in its own small way prepared the reading habits of the discerning Malayalee readers, setting the agenda for serious debates through its editorials, features and the Madhyamam Weekly magazine. The growth of Madhyamam has been impressive. Within mere two decades, it has grown into nine editions at Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Kannur, Malappuram, Kottayam, Trichur and Bangalore besides Kozhikode, and nine overseas editions for Gulf Madhyamam, at Bahrain, Dubai, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia (four editions). It is the largest circulated Asian Daily in the Gulf, and the first International Indian Daily.

Madhyamam Weekly is one among the most influential periodicals in Kerala, providing in-depth reports of socio-cultural and political issues. It has brought into focus many political, cultural and literary issues that concern the society. Madhyamam Weekly has, since its launch in 1998, set the terms for informed debates within the society, firmly located on the side of the common and disadvantaged people. It has restyled the reading habits of the Malayali by focusing on real issues instead of the sensational sob stuff and soft porn carried by the mainstream media. Endosulfan issue, Kinaloor issue, Plachimad Coca-Cola issue, Muthanga issue, express highway in Kerala, etc. are some of them.

### *Media One Television*

Media One is a Malayalam news-cum-entertainment television channel that was started under the aegis of Madhyamam Broadcasting Limited. Office of Media One is in Kozhikode and has bureaus and studios spread throughout the Kerala. It was licenced in September 2011 and was officially launched on 10 February 2013. Through its programmes it highlights the cultural values in media field.

### *Thanima Art Forum (Thanima Samskarika Vedi)*

The forum was constituted in late 1980s in order to systematize the efforts. When its activities slacked after the initial enthusiasm, Thanima was reconstituted in 2002. Thanima tries to foster Islamic awareness and perspectives in the people with artistic and literary disposition and give them necessary training and produce good artistic works that are in sync with Islamic principles and values.

### *Justitia*

Jamaat-e-Islami set up a lawyers' forum which is called 'Justitia', which was formally launched in December 2007. Its main aim is to enlighten the public on issues related to law and justice, and provides them legal support as far possible. The intervention of this forum is only in the field of law and other legal issues faced by the society especially the Muslim community in Kerala.

### *Conclusion*

Jamaat-e-Islami is a premier organization working in the Indian sub-continent for the purpose of Islamic renaissance. In India and particularly in Kerala, there are a number of organizations functioning for the welfare of the Islamic community. Among these, Jamaat-e-Islami stands distinct with its unique creative endeavours and down to earth approaches. The mission and vision of this organization is firmly founded in the Islamic principles. It seeks to enlighten the people through the Islamic understanding of human life in consonance with the changing life situations in the universe. In this context Jamaat-e-Islami has risen to the

occasion and paved way for a meaningful social life to the people, enabling them to establish this identity deeply-rooted in Islamic values. The Jamaat-e-Islami tries to implement the real message of Islam through preaching and Dawah activities. Jamaat-e-Islami believes that the welfare and prosperity of man is not limited to this world but it actually dawns in hereafter. For the past six decades, the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Kerala has been considerably contributing to cultural and social up-liftment of the state. In a society, various social service activities are executed by the members of the community. As these activities are instructed by Islamic canonical texts, a Muslim's religious life is seen incomplete if not attended by service to humanity. In fact, in Islamic tradition, the idea of social welfare has been presented as one of its principle values. Although this organization had faced many criticisms from outside and within the Muslim community, it is trying to rectify the mistakes and justify its real ideology.

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