



CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM ENCOUNTERS IN KERALA: A
STUDY OF THE VIEWS OF ABUL KAMÓL KADERI

BY

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ABSTRACT

This research elaborates and analyses the views of Muġammad Abul KamĒl Kaderi a South Indian scholar of twentieth century Kerala, on Christianity. This attempt is important not least because the Sunni Muslims of Kerala mainly tend to concentrate on the mystical and charismatic features of their scholars. The study looks to fulfill a void of academic studies on the intellectual contributions of traditional Sunni *MuġlamĒ* of Kerala particularly in the field of comparative religion. The study, having focussed on Kaderi's two works *Naqd al-AnĒjil* (1937) and *al-xusĒm al-MashĒĒdh*, written against the background of an active presence of protestant missionaries in Kerala, has employed a textual analysis of the two books. It also outlines his life, career, intellectual background and contributions, using historical analysis. The study further expounds and assesses his views on Christian theology and distortion of the Bible and discloses his methodology of encountering Christianity. As a result, it is argued that Kaderi's discussion of Christian theology substantially imbibes from the arguments of medieval Muslim apologetic and polemical writings, while his discussion of inauthenticity of the Bible relies upon modern Biblical criticism. Both of his works predominantly follow the polemical method despite containing a minuscule proportion of apologetic arguments, while they also inherently carry an anti-colonial thread. This study further reveals that a key area of Kaderi's intellectual background was constituted by two factors. Firstly, his criticism of certain social customs, which were remarked by him to have deviated from the Sunnah and justified by some contemporary traditional *MuġlamĒ*. Secondly, the disputes that occurred between the traditional Sunni group of *MuġlamĒ* and the modernists. Maintaining his capacity as a central executive in Samastha Kerala JamĒ'iyyat al-MuġlamĒ, one of the most influential *MuġlamĒ* organizations of Kerala, Kaderi represented the traditional group of Sunni scholars throughout his life. On the other hand, he often remained a critical insider of the same group, using those arguments, which were incidentally parallel to that of the modernist group of *MuġlamĒ*, a fact that led to the marginalisation of his works.

ملخص البحث

هذا البحث يتعلق بدراسة آراء محمد أبو الكمال كاديري وتحليلها، وهو أحد أشهر علماء ولاية كيرالا بجنوب الهند في القرن العشرين الميلادي. تُعدّ هذه المحاولة مهمة لأسباب عديدة منها أن المسلمين السنين في ولاية كيرالا يميلون أساساً إلى التركيز على الأبعاد التصوفية والمميزات الكاريزمية لعلمائهم. وآمل أن يملأ هذا البحث فراغاً في الدراسات الأكاديمية المختصة بالمساهمات الفكرية للعلماء السنين التقليديين في ولاية كيرالا، ولا سيما في مجال مقارنة الأديان. وقد ركزت هذه الدراسة على اثنين من أعمال الشيخ كاديري، وهما كتاب "نقد الأناجيل في رد النصارى" وكتاب "الحسام المشحوذ على أهل الصليب والهنود" واللذين كُتبا على خلفية وجود المبشرين المسيحيين البروتستانت الأكثر نشاطاً في ولاية كيرالا. وتستخدم الدراسة منهج التحليل النصي للكتابين والتحليل التاريخي لمجمل حياته، ومهنته، والخلفية الفكرية له ومساهماته. كما تعرض وتقيم آرائه حول اللاهوت المسيحي ومغالطة الكتاب المقدس وتكشف عن منهجيته في مواجهة المسيحية. بناءً على ذلك يؤخذ على مناقشة كاديري للاهوت المسيحي تشربه إلى حد كبير بحجج كتابات المسلمين الدفاعية والجدلية في القرون الوسطى، في حين أن نقاشه حول عدم صحة الكتاب المقدس يعتمد على النقد الكتابي الحديث الأوروبي. في كلا العملين يتبع الشيخ كاديري في الغالب أسلوب الجدل على الرغم من احتوائهما على نسبة ضئيلة من الحجج الدفاعية، في حين أنها أيضاً بطبيعتهما يحملان موضوعاً لمكافحة الاستعمار. وتكشف هذه الدراسة أيضاً مجالاً رئيساً عن خلفية كاديري الفكرية والتي تشكلت من أمرين هما، الأول: إنتقاده العادات التي تُهجمها الناس مع أنها وصفها الشيخ كاديري منحرفة عن طريق السنة الصحيحة والتي كان يبررها بعض العلماء من معاصريه، والثاني: المناقشات التي جرت بين منظمات العلماء المختلفة والتي انقسمت إلى "التقليدية السننية" و"الحداثية". بما أنه كان واحداً من أعضاء هيئة المشاورة المركزية في "جمعية العلماء لعموم كيرالا" والتي تُعدّ بوصفها واحدةً من أهم تلك المنظمات الأكثر تأثيراً في ولاية كيرالا، مثل كاديري المجموعة التقليدية طوال حياته. من ناحية أخرى كان في كثير من الأحيان ناقداً للمجموعة نفسها من الداخل من حيث القضايا التي كانت موازية لقضايا المجموعة الحداثية، الأمر الذي أدّى إلى تهميش أعماله.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed knowledge and Heritage (UĪĒI al-DĒn and Comparative Religion).

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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*This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved Umma Sabita and Uppa Abdussamad for
laying the foundation of my all achievements.*

رَبِّهِمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْتَنِي صَغِيرًا (الإسراء: ٢٤)

“My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was small.”

(Al- 'isrÉ': 24)

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|----|----|---|
| ء | ‘ | خ | kh | ش | Sh | غ | Gh | ن | N |
| ب | B | د | D | ص | ṣ | ف | F | هـ | H |
| ت | T | ذ | dh | ض | ḍ | ق | Q | و | W |
| ث | Th | ر | r | ط | ṭ | ك | K | ي | Y |
| ج | J | ز | z | ظ | ẓ | ل | L | | |
| ح | ḥ | س | s | ع | ‘ | م | M | | |

| Short Vowels | |
|--------------|---|
| ـَ | a |
| ـِ | i |
| ـُ | u |

| Long Vowels | |
|-------------|---|
| ا + ـَ | ā |
| ي + ـِ | ī |
| و + ـُ | ū |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Abul KamÉl Kaderi (1906-1985) is a South Indian scholar who lived in Malappuram district of Kerala, the southern Indian state. He was born to Hasan Musliyar (1875-1956), a Sufi and scholar who lived in Melmuri, a village in the Malappuram district. Unlike many other scholars of his time, Kaderi managed to master certain non-Keralite languages, and held different views and visions regarding the Muslim *ummah* and its perception of the world, which invariably made him distinctive from other scholars of his time.¹ Nevertheless, the actual Abul KamÉl and his contributions can never be assessed by disregarding certain historical phases of the state of Kerala.

Although Portuguese Catholic missionaries had been active in the northern Kerala, it was at the time of Dutch and British colonisation that Protestant missionaries rushed to Kerala as they did in many other parts of the world.² In the first half of the 19th century, the Church Missionary Society camped at Travancore in southern Kerala. Meanwhile, The Basel Evangelical Lutheran Mission started missionary activities in northern Kerala in their headquarters at Talasseri under the leadership of Hermann Gundert,³ a German Protestant of the British period.⁴

¹ K.M. Bahauddeen Hudawi, *Maulawi Kaderi Muhammad Abul Kamal* (Camp sayyid: Grace Educational Association, 2016), 28.

² Abu Thameem, "Sayyid Sanauilla Makthi Thangal; Missionary Nabi Nindakkethiril Malayali Musliminte Cheruthuniip," *Sneha Samvadam*, 13 (11), (November 11, 2015), 30.

³ Hermann Gundert (1814-1893) was a German Missionary who mastered Malayalam, the vernacular language of Kerala. In 1859, he translated the Bible into Malayalam. He is renowned for having published *Rajyasamacharam*, the first Malayalam newspaper of Kerala in 1847, the first history of Kerala in Malayalam language in 1868 and the first Malayalam dictionary in 1872. See Abu Thameem, 37.

⁴ Abu Thameem, 37.

Many historical accounts of Kerala show that the Protestant missionaries unscrupulously engaged in spreading denigrative literatures about Prophet Muġammad (p.b.u.h).⁵ A defamatory biography of Prophet Muġammad (p.b.u.h) namely *Muhammad Charithram* was published under the auspices of Hermann Gundert in Malayalam, inspired by the Orientalist denigrative literature of the century.⁶ The composite culture of Kerala could have been severely endangered if Sanaulla Makthi Thangal⁷ had not inexhaustibly undertaken the mission of clarifying the misunderstandings spread by the missionaries.

It seems to be an essential continuation of Makthi Thangal that Abul Kamġl Kaderi started writing on the same issues with a significant focus on Hinduism too. He simultaneously came out against Christian missionaries and Hindu polemics who kept on vilifying Prophet Muġammad (p.b.u.h), the Qurġn and the creeds of Islam. In his first work *Naqd al-Anġjl fġ Radd al-Naġġrġ*, he stressed on the inauthentic status of the whole Bible whereas the second work named *al-Husġm al-Mashġġdh Alġ ahl al-ġalġb wa al-Hunġd* discloses the questionable canonicity of Hindu scriptures. The first work has been totally devoted to criticize Christianity whereas the second one contains criticism of both Christianity and Hindu Vedantic philosophers as well. The second book also addresses those Muslims who, according to him, allegedly stayed indifferent towards the denigrative propaganda of missionaries at that time.⁸

⁵ M. Gangadharan, "Sanaullah Makthi Thangal; Jnanam Kond Poruthiya Parishkarthavu" in *Makthi Thangal Samboorna Krithikal*, edited by K.K. Muhammad Abdul Kareem (Kozhikode: Vachanam books, 2006), 13.

⁶ Abu Thameem, 47.

⁷ Makthi Thangal was a Keralite Muslim scholar with Prophetic lineage who resigned as excise inspector of British government protesting against its rule and seeking more free time to engage in anti-missionary activities that were urgently needed according to him.

⁸ Indicating to the collective apathy of Malabar Muslims towards the vilification and missionary activities, Abul Kamġl wrote in the preface of *al-Husġm al-Masġġd* as following: "...then I prepared this short yet precise monograph in a way which is conducive to be memorized for anyone who wants, even though I am not resourceful enough and I am not among great intellectuals of the Muslim world

Furthermore, an unpublished book of Abul Kamāl, named *al-Muġġarġeth al-ġilmiyyah*, has comparatively analysed the concept of polity in Islam and in ancient Chinese religions like Confucianism.⁹ Given that the idea of vilification of Prophet Muġammad (p.b.u.h) was perceived as the backbone of the Christian missions by many famous Keralite historians like Gangadharan, Abul Kamāl's works were a necessity of his time, premised on the idea of a 'mission' as characterised by himself.¹⁰

However, since the outset of the 20th century, Kerala Muslims' scholarly and public discourses often appear to have focussed mainly on two areas. Firstly, the intra-religious conflicts which are happening between the Sunni, Salafi and Jamġath-i-Islamġ factions. The conflicts between AP and EK factions,¹¹ which are within the Sunnis themselves significantly add to this schismatic scenario. Secondly, the mystical features of their *ġulamġ* disregarding most of their other contributions.¹² Many voluminous books meant to highlight the historical role of Kerala Muslims have noticeably overlooked the field of comparative religion in general, and the role of

and not a an excellent orator. But still, the laxity and indifference from the part of Malabar Muslims persuaded me to write this book".

⁹ Hudawi, 50.

¹⁰ He warned susceptible Muslim youth and gullible parents of the then Kerala, who were attracted to the Christian missionary schools, about the appeasing methods of missionaries at the end of *al-xusġm al-Mashġġd* saying: "what you are really accountable for as a Muslim is to nurture your students based on the principles of Islam. But it impossible to expect your children follow Islamic doctrines if you tend to to send them in the missionary schools and Hindu Schools..." See Abul Kamāl Kaderi *al-xusġm al-Mashġġd ġalġ Ahl al-ġalġb wa al-Hunġd*. (n.p., n.d.), 80-81.

¹¹ EK and AP are two Sunni factions named after the two scholars E.K Abu Bakr Musliyar and A.P Abu Bakr Musliyar. In 1989, six including A.P Abu Bakr Musliyar were expelled from among the forty central executives of Samastha, in the wake of A.P's involvement with certain schismatic activities. He accused the Samastha leaders including E.K Abu Bakr Musliyar to have sit together with the modernist groups in order to defend the *sharġġa* law when the Indian government planned to apply a Uniform Civil Code. A.P has been also contemptuous of Samastha's soft relationship with Indian Union Muslim League (IUML). See Umar Faizy Mukkam, "Enpathi Ompath: Prashnangalum Ananthara Sambhavangalum" in *Paithrikathinte Pathinanchaam Noottand*, edited by P.A Sadiq Faizy (Manjeri: Sunni Yuvajana Sangham, 2014), 588.

¹² This is much significant to notice because non-Sunni factions of Kerala are quite indifferent and essentially disdainful of mystical features of their leaders. See Caroline Osella, "Debating Shirk in Keralam, South India: Monotheism between Tradition, Text and Performance", vol.1, no. 1 (2015): *Open Library of Humanities*, 8-24. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.16995/olh.22>>

Abul Kamál Kaderi, in particular. That *Naqd al-AnÉjÉl* was published only one time in 1937 also indicates this indifference towards his works.¹³ Therefore, the researcher attempts to study the contributions of Kaderi and evaluate his methodology.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

During 19th century, Christian missionaries in Kerala engaged in vilification of Islam and Prophet Muáammad (p.b.u.h) using the denigrative literature of Europe. Meanwhile, the Hindu Vedantic scholars also took part in blaming Muslims for professing 'less reasonable religious creeds'. It was against this backdrop that Abul Kamál Kaderi ventured to reasonably and convincingly defend the real image and creeds of Islam and Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) and authored his two books entitled *Naqd al-AnÉjÉl* and *Al-HusÉm al-MashÍÉdh*, with the former focussing on Biblical religions and the latter on Hinduism.

Since Muslims of Kerala often tend to appreciate mystical and charismatic features of their *ÁulamÉ´* apart from other types of contributions, many areas like comparative religion still remain unattended and underestimated. Moreover, the works of Abul Kamál Kaderi consequently happen to be telling examples of those literatures that were overlooked due this collective apathy. Hence, this research is an effort to highlight his contributions to the field of Comparative Religion, to elaborate the major themes of Christianity discussed by him and to analyse and evaluate his methodology of encounter.

¹³ The cover of *Naqd al-AnÉjÉl* provides the date of its publication which is 1937, while *al-HusÉm al-MashÍÉdh* does not.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the intellectual background and contributions of Kaderi in the context of Kerala?
2. What are the major themes and issues of Christianity examined by Kaderi in the context of Kerala?
3. What is Kaderi's methodology of encountering Christianity?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Based on the questions stated above, the research will elaborate and present the following objectives:

1. To explore the intellectual background and contributions of Kaderi in the context of Kerala.
2. To study the major themes and issues of Christianity examined by Kaderi in the context of Kerala.
3. To analyse and evaluate Kaderi's methodology of encountering Christianity.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The following are some of the major factors that make this research significant:

Firstly, according to the extant available sources, the works of Kaderi are the first critiques of Christianity in Arabic language written in Kerala. His works clearly illustrate to what extent religious encounters were relevant in the mid-20th century and afterwards when the disfigurement of Islamic doctrines and Muslim bashing were dangerously prevalent in the public mass of Kerala. Even though not a single study

has been conducted on the works of Kaderi, something that actually makes this study relevant. Therefore, this study would appreciate the attempts of Kaderi to come to terms with the predicament which was about to jeopardise the social fabric of the state. Secondly, as Kaderi prepared his works in the context of certain special socio-religious conditions of Kerala, this research is particularly relevant given that the researcher comes from Kerala, knows the native language of the region and is relatively well-exposed to its socio-religious milieu.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Kaderi has authored about 20 published and unpublished books dealing with numerous issues and disciplines. However, the researcher will limit the scope to his two key works; *Naqd al-AnÉjÉl* and *Al-xusÉm al-MashÉdh* to study his views on other religions focussing on his methodology. Since the research is centered on Kaderi's views on Christianity, the study will focus on the contents related only to Christianity, although *al-xusÉm al-MashÉdh* deals with Hinduism too.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research follows a qualitative method focussing on textual analysis. It has also applied historical, evaluative and elaborative approaches in dealing with the two books of Abul KamÉl Kaderi: *Naqd al-AnÉjÉl fÉ Radd al-NaÉÉrÉ* and *Al-xusÉm al-MashÉdh ÉalÉ Ahl al-ØalÉb wa al-HunÉd*.

The historical method is used in the second chapter to discuss the life, career, intellectual background, and intellectual contributions of Kaderi. The same method has been applied in the fifth chapter that discusses Kaderi's methodology and his historical role in the British India. The elaborative and evaluative methods have been

applied in the third and fourth chapters that deal with the Christian theological doctrines and Biblical authenticity respectively.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

The most beneficial works for this research were *Naqd al-AnÉjÉl* and *al-×usÉm al-MashÉdh* of Kaderi. For purpose of this research, the scanned facsimiles of a rare printed versions of both *Naqd al-AnÉjÉl* and *al-×usÉm* were sent to the researcher on 27 May 2016, by K.M. Bahauddin Hudawi, the grandson of Kaderi. Hudawi is the author of the first comprehensive work on Kaderi's biography and intellectual contributions.

The only book that deals with the life of MuÉammad Abul KamÉl Kaderi was written in the Malayalam language by K.M Bahauddin Hudawi, his grandson. The book, titled *Maulawi Kaderi Muhammad Abul Kamal*,¹⁴ and published in March 2016, can be considered as the first and the most authentic work on his life, thought and scholarly contributions. Hudawi categorises Abul KamÉl's complete works into five, which are: books written in the Arabic language, in the Malayalam language, in Arabi-Malayalam,¹⁵ translated books, and books dealing with Moulid literature.¹⁶ He gives a short introduction on approximately 20 books of Abul KamÉl, on many areas including Comparative Religion, Islamic Jurisprudence, *mawlid* (Prophetic panegyrics), history, Arabic poetry and elegies. He also acknowledges that some of

¹⁴ K.M. Bahaudeen Hudawi, *Maulawi Kaderi Muhammad Abul Kamal* (Camp sayyid: Grace Educational Association, 2016).

¹⁵ Arabic Malayalam is an early common language of Kerala Muslims that differs with a style of writing the Malayalam language using Arabic script and Malayalam grammar and syntax at the same time with special orthographic features. The style has been invented and used by Kerala Muslims even before a systematic Malayalam language had come into existence in the 16th century. According to reliable sources, Arabic Malayalam predates even the advent of Islam in Kerala as Arab traders kept vibrant communication with Kerala coasts. Arabi Malayalam was also inclusive of vocabularies of many other Indian languages other than Malayalam like Tamil and Urdu.

¹⁶ Hudawi, 46.

them are not published yet. The book covers a complete outline of Abul Kamāl's life, thoughts, social interventions and the views that made him unique among other traditional scholars. Therefore, this work has been extensively used in the second chapter of this research to endorse the researcher's arguments regarding his life and contributions. However, it has used only a single page on *Naqd al-AnĒjġl* and two pages on *Al-~~x~~usĒm al-MashĒĒdh*, overlooking a considerable area of their analyses and evaluations and his methodology.

A special souvenir, having about a thousand pages, published in connection with the 85th annual ceremony of Samastha Kerala JamĒĒyyatul ĒUlamĒĒ (Henceforth Samastha¹⁷) also introduces the two books of Kaderi in some lines less than one page.¹⁸ The souvenir, named *Sathya Saraniyude Charithra Sakshyam* (History Witnesses the True Path) is meant to espouse the revolutionary historical course of Samastha since its origin in 1926 until 2012. In this souvenir, an article written by Muhammad Rahmani, titled *Samasthayude Akshara Mudrakal* (The Great Literary Marks of Samastha) particularly highlights the literary contributions of scholars who were loyal to the traditional approach of Samastha. However, it does not particularly deal with Kaderi's life or works, something that make this study necessary.

A comprehensive work on the origin, history, policy and several other aspects of Samastha has been written by P.A. Sadiq Faizy, named *Samastha: Charithrathinte Naalwazhikal* (The Historical Days of Samastha¹⁹). This work draws a brief outline of Kaderi's life and a list of his works. However, a serious flaw of the work is that it

¹⁷ Samastha Kerala JamĒĒyyatul ĒUlamĒĒ is the most popular *ĒulamĒĒ* organization of Kerala headed by traditional *ĒulamĒĒ* established in 1926. The Malayalam term 'Samastha' signifies 'entire Kerala' to collectively mean '*ulamĒĒ* Association for the Entire Kerala'.

¹⁸ Muhammad Rahmani, "Samasthayude Akshara Mudrakal" in *Sathya Saraniyude Charithra Sakshyam* (Chelari: Samastha Kerala JamĒĒyyatul ĒUlamĒĒ, 2012), 760-761.

¹⁹ P.A. Sadiq Faizy, *Samastha: Charithrathinte Naalwazhikal* (Calicut: Islamic Sahithya Academy, 2016).

provides –under the title ‘Christian missionary’- a short description only on the rebuttal speeches of E.K. Abu Bakr Musliyar (1914-1996²⁰) and does not make a single mention of Kaderi’s move against missionary activities. Nonetheless, the work had been highly beneficial to draw a clear and detailed outline of Kaderi’s intellectual background in the second chapter of this work.

Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti Colonial Struggles by Husain Raṅṅattāṅi is a long historical account of the cultural cults, social mobility, political turmoils and consequent intellectual interventions of Malabar Muslims.²¹ The work gives a clear account of intellectual backgrounds of scholars who lived in Malabar and actively engaged with the colonised political milieu of the British India. The book, however, fails to mark the position of Kaderi among such scholars and is considerably limited to political aspects and war literatures only. Yet, the work is used in the fifth chapter of this research while elucidating the perceptual connection of Kaderi’s works with the war literature of Kerala.

*IdhĒr al-Haqq*²² is a voluminous work by the Indian scholar RaĒmatullah al-KairĒnawĒ. Al-KairĒnawĒ makes use of plenty of Muslim and Christian theologians, interpreters and historians to make his work flawless. He epitomises a typical polemicist of Christianity and thus the book serves as an extension of early classical Muslim polemicists like al-Īabri, Ibn xazm and Ibn Taymiyyah. Therefore, the book is, absolutely helpful to affirm and assess the views held by Abul KamĒl in the proposed research.

²⁰ E.K. Abu Bakr Musliyar, honorarily addressed as *shams al-ĪulamĒ*, was an influential leader and General Secretary of Samastha. It has been reported by many works on Samastha’s historical role in Kerala that Abu Bakr Musliyar had created an indomitable block before the Christian missionaries in Malabar during a period of 1975-83. See Faizy 399.

²¹ Hussain Randathani, *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti-Colonial Struggles* (Calicut: Other Books, 2007).

²² RaĒmatullah al-KairĒnawĒ, *IdhĒr al-xaqq*, trans. Muhammad Wali Raazi (London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd, 1989).

1.9 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Given the literatures that have been reviewed above, a highly noticeable gap is still obvious regarding the academic assessments, researches and studies on the works of Kaderi in general and in the area of Comparative Religion in particular. In the proposed research, the researcher would attempt to fill this void. Therefore, this study could be justified by taking this gap into consideration.

CHAPTER TWO

LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF KADERI

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the early life, career, intellectual background and contributions of Kaderi. Throughout his life, Kaderi continued a member of *mushÉwarah*¹ in Samastha Kerala Jamġiyyat al-ġUlamÉ'. His early life and career was developed in a tranquil setting of Sufi life not least because his father was a Sufi. This chapter reveals that his approach was fairly ambivalent between traditional *ġulamÉ'* and modernist groups when the both were actively present in his intellectual background. The chapter also tries to delineate the status of Kaderi inside and outside the Samastha. Moreover, his works appeared largely reactive in nature, since each of his works was written in the wake of an incident or issue that he thought to be worthy of critical comments. Interestingly, he used the modernist terminology of Kerala, though he remained loyal to the traditional stream.

2.2 EARLY LIFE, EDUCATION AND CAREER

Kaderi was born to xasan MusliyÉr² (1875-1956), and Fathimakkutty in 1906.³ His father xasan Musliyar, a shaikh of *QÉdiriyah* Sufi order, had an odd personality.

¹ This term -popularly remarked as *mushÉwarah member* by the laity and scholars as well- stands for an executive member in the central committee of Samstha Kerala Jamġiyyatul ġUlamÉ'.

² Musliyar is an Arabi Malayalam term derived from the Arabic term '*muġallġ'* (one who performs prayer) and the Malayalam honorific suffix 'yar'. The term was originally used for those scholars who were awarded a degree from a Masjid located in Ponnani, which was one of the most famous Islamic higher learning centres on the Kerala coast. The term is still used for a religious scholar. See Hussain Randathani, *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti-Colonial Struggles* (Calicut: Other Books, 2007), 250; Roland Miller, *Mappila Muslim Culture: How a Historic Muslim Community in India Has Blended Tradition and Modernity* (New York: SUNY Press 2015), 294.

³ K.M. Bahaudheen Hudawi, *Maulavi Kaderi Muhammad Abul Kamal* (Camp sayyid: Grace Educational Association, 2016), 22.

An incident that reflects this oddity is that he became blind when he was 55 years old. However, he outrightly preferred to continue living in blindness and rejected a cataract surgery suggested by the doctors

The oddity becomes much more striking when we look at the reasons he gave for the rejection of surgery. He explained that: firstly, the surgery will retard the regularity of his performing the ablution before daily prayers. Secondly, the returning of sight would be possibly instrumental to look at prohibited sights.⁴ Another oddity of his personal life was that he fasted throughout his life except on the days of *ĪEĒd*. This personal practice was not disrupted even when he participated in festive occasions such as the wedding ceremony of his daughters.⁵

Kaderi was one of the three siblings of *×asan MusliyĒr*. Starting his primary education in *Othupalli*,⁶ he continued his further studies in Dars system.⁷ Like many of his contemporaries preferred after their primary education, Kaderi also joined al-BĒqiyĒth al-ØĒliĪĒth, a renowned Muslim seminary in the Indian state of Tamilnad and was awarded the degree of al-BĒqawĒ in 1931.⁸ C.N. AĪmad MaulawĒ (1905-1993⁹), one of the pioneers of QurĒĒnic translation to Malayalam and a leader of the

⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁶ *Othupalli*, was a system of primary religious education that existed among Kerala Muslims until the first half of 20th century. Later, it also served as schools to learn both preliminary religious and secular subjects. In the course of time, this system was superseded by madrasa, a modified and modernized form which was pioneered by Chalilakath Kunjahammad Haji (1879-1919), who introduced modern equipments of schooling such as text books, black boards. See Zubair, K, "Religious higher education in Kerala and Java province of Indonesia: a Comparative Study (PhD thesis Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2010), 138-142.

⁷ Dars, popularly known as *pallidars* in Malayam, is a secondary learning system that exists throughout Kerala centred in the mosques. The term can be directly translated as 'mosque-college' which is also comparable to the 'Pesantren' of Indonesia. See Zubair, K, 132-242.

⁸ Hudawi 28.

⁹ C.N Ahmad Maulawi has been remarked to be the first Muslim scholar of Kerala to create non-Muslim readership in Kerala for the Islamic philosophy and ideology. He was also preeminent among those scholars who took over the challenge raised by Kerala Communists to present a financial program which is equal or better than Communism. In 1953, He published a book in Malayalam on economic principles of Islam which was later translated and published again in 1964 titled: *Principles & Practices of Islamic Economy*. See P. Zubair, "C.N. Ahmad Moulawi", Kerala Muslim History Conference, <<http://muslimheritage.in/innermore.php?arid=69>> (accessed 30 July, 2017).