

Mala-Literature's Influence on the Socio-Political Landscape of Mappila Muslims: A Study

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Abstract

This article deals with the profound influence of *Mala* literature on the socio-political fabric of the Mappila Muslim community. Through an exploration of its historical roots, particularly focusing on eminent works such as *Muhyudheen Mala*, *Nafeesat Mala*, and *Rifai Mala*, this paper elucidates the transformative roles that *Mala* literatures have played in shaping the collective consciousness and political engagement of Mappila Muslims. By examining the themes, narratives, and societal impacts of these seminal works, this study unveils the intricate interplay between literature, culture, and politics within the Mappila Muslim context. Through a nuanced analysis, it highlights the enduring significance of *Mala* literature as a catalyst for social change and political mobilization, offering valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of identity, agency, and power within marginalized communities.

Keywords: *Mala* Literatures, Mappila Muslim community, *Muhyudheen Mala*, *Nafeesat Mala*, and *Rifai Mala*

Mala songs hold immense cultural significance as a cherished heritage among Mappila Muslims, posing a challenge in chronicling the history of this community. These songs have played a pivotal role in facilitating spirituality and fostering progressive movements within the Mappila Muslim community. Notably, they occupy a distinct place within the realms of the

Malayalam language, literature, and *Arabi Malayalam*. *Mala* songs serve as a means to express unwavering devotion and profound love towards the revered souls who are regarded as esteemed servants of Allah, the Almighty. By vividly portraying the depth of the devotees' emotional connection with their spiritual guides through narration and storytelling, *Mala songs* effectively captivate readers, enabling them to experience an intimate connection with these luminous souls. Consequently, these songs evoke spiritual energy and forge a profound bond between the readers and the venerated souls, thereby accompanying them on their spiritual journey. Esteemed spiritual leaders like 'Asshabul Badar, Abdul Kadir Jilani, Ahmadul Kabeer Rifae, and Nafeesathul Missriyya' have provided solace, guidance, and fortitude to the lives of Mappila Muslims, profoundly shaping their existence. The conviction that the influence of these spiritual leaders continues even after their demise and permeates the lives of their followers instills a sense of self-assurance, inspiring Mappila Muslims to demonstrate unwavering commitment and courage in their actions. The term *Mala* finds its etymological roots in the Arabic word *Mawlid*, which originally referred to the celebration of prophet Muhammad's birthday but gradually evolved to encompass the commemoration of the birthdays of Sufi saints. It is important to highlight that the Malayalam word *Mala* holds distinct meanings such as 'garland', 'lineage', or 'group', and does not directly correspond to its Arabic counterpart. Hussain Randathani, in his book titled *A Study on Society and Anti-Colonial Struggles*, characterizes *Malas* as 'Sufi devotional songs', indicating their prominent role in devotional practices within the Mappila Muslim community as he notes, "many Mala songs indeed fulfill this devotional purpose" (Randathani 96).

Although *Mala* songs share common thematic elements with *Mawlids*, such as accounts of miraculous occurrences surrounding the saint's births, their performance of miracles, and the inclusion of biographical information, they diverge in terms of structural composition, language usage and intended function.

While examining the influence of *Mala literature* on socio-political landscape of Mappila Muslims, one first understands the background of this literary genre. This literary tradition finds its origins in the historical context of major upheavals experienced by Muslims in Malabar. The arrival of Portuguese traders, who established a dominant economic presence, had a profound impact on the Mappila community, coinciding with the arrival of Arab merchants. The Portuguese colonization and their hostile actions towards Arab traders had extensive and lasting consequences, it is the reason for the war against Portuguese by Mappila Muslims along with Zamorians. Herman Gundert, a renowned scholar, documented the brutal mistreatment and killings inflicted by the Portuguese on Mappila Muslims, also about the

Muslim women and children who embarked on their journeys to Mecca for Hajj, finding themselves captive alongside Vasco da Gama's crew. The Portuguese invasion, the atrocities committed against both Hindus and Muslims, the desecration of temples, and the propagation of malicious rumors incited significant unrest among the common people. Arab traders, who had engaged in commercial activities and established thriving markets, were compelled to leave Kerala due to Portuguese aggression. Consequently, ordinary Mappila individuals migrated from coastal areas to inland regions. This mass migration dealt a severe blow to the social fabric of Mappila society, resulting in a diminished status within the broader political landscape and subjecting them to the arbitrary rule of monarchs and the upper-class elites. E. Shreedharan Menon notes that the common people were treated as mere pawns in a socio-political power struggle. The loss of their lands, the destruction of their temples, and the suppression of their cultural practices had a profound impact on the livelihoods of ordinary individuals, exacerbating social inequalities and creating a disconnect between the ruling class and the general populace. The repercussions of Portuguese colonialism and subsequent social disintegration had significant socio-political implications among the Mappila Muslim community, resulting in substantial disturbances. It is in this unfavorable context that the waves of the Bhakti movement reached Kerala, guiding people towards spiritual and divine contemplation. *Mala literature* emerges as a means to provide solace and deliverance by directing individuals towards the contemplation of the divine and the exploration of their inner selves.

The earliest known surviving *Mala* song is the *Muhiddin Mala*, which dates back to 1607. Prior to this period, between 1350 and 1450 C.E., Malayalam literature witnessed two significant developments. Firstly, the language itself was undergoing a transformative process, gradually evolving into what we now recognize as modern Malayalam. Secondly, there was a notable emergence of *bhakti literature*¹, within the Malayalam language. This genre of literature encompassed devotional works composed by the Niranam poets (known as the Kannassan poets, were three poets from the same family by the names of Madhava Panikkar, Sankara Panikkar, and Rama Panikkar. They hailed from Niranam, a small village in southern Kerala, India, near the town of Thiruvalla), such as the *Bharata Mala* and the *Ramayana Mala*, both of which demonstrated the intertwining of spiritual devotion and literary expression.

It was during the latter half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century that *bhakti literature* in Kerala reached its zenith, and during this era that the esteemed

¹ Literary movement, it liberated poetry from singing the praises of kings and introduced spiritual themes.

poet Thunjathu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, widely acclaimed as one of the During the Portuguese invasion, the Mappila Muslims were displaced from the Indian maritime trade, resulting in a loss of their self-confidence. At that time, Qadi Muhammed introduced Shaik Jilani in the *Muhyudheen Mala*, with an aim that extended beyond mere literary emancipation. Since the 17th century, when individuals from the coastal regions began retreating to villages, there has been a shift among Muslims towards a more vernacular understanding of Islam, distinct from pure Textual Islam. Scholars sought to address this cultural challenge by presenting 'men of salvation' in indigenous dialects. Through The *Muhyudheen Mala*, Qadi Muhammad facilitated the integration of a deeply religious persona into the socio-religious and moral fabric of a significant portion of the Mappila Muslim community, which was not strongly connected to pure Textual Islam. The *Muhyudheen Mala* can be regarded as an example of vernacular textual engagement in the common Mappila language in response to the prevailing socio-cultural crisis. (Arafath 7)

The term *Thasawuf*² holds great significance in the Islamic technical language as it represents spiritual knowledge. Unlike conventional teaching methods, *Thasawuf* emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge through personal experience. This approach has been subject to profound studies and investigations in the Islamic world since the 9th century. Distinguished scholars dedicated their efforts to exploring various dimensions of *Thasawuf*, leading to the categorization of these theories into distinct sections. Each section then went on to develop its own practical paths of *Thasawuf*, commonly referred to as *Tariqat* or Spiritual Path. Over time, these *Tariqats* witnessed the emergence of sub-divisions, often named after their respective founders. For instance, within the *Madabi Tariqat*, established by Abu Madyan Shuhaib Hussein, the *Shadili Tariqat* emerged, named in honor of Abu Hassan Ali Shadili, a disciple within Abu Madyan's lineage. Similarly, the *Qadiriyya Tariqat*, established in the name of Shaik Muhyudheen Abdul Kabir Jilani, gave rise to sub-divisions like Rifae and Ba Alavi *Tariqat*. Practitioners of each *Tariqat* profoundly extolled the virtues of their respective Shaiks or spiritual teachers, effectively conveying their significance through the medium of *Mala songs*. Notably, the *Muhyudheen Mala* and *Rifai Mala* serve as examples of such expressions. Through the pathways of *Thasawuf* and *Tariqat*, *Mala* songs played a pivotal role in intersecting with the socio-political lives of Malabar Mappila Muslims, offering them solace and relief from the pressures they faced through the spiritual pathways. It was widely believed

² Is a mystic body of religious practice found within Islam which is characterized by a focus on Islamic purification, spirituality, ritualism, asceticism, and esotericism.

that the recitation or hearing of such compositions had the power to cultivate and nourish the religious fervor within ordinary individuals, leading to a heightened sense of sanctity. In the context of Kerala, Hindu households often engaged in daily recitations of revered works such as Thunjathu Ezhuthachan's *AdhyathmaRamayanam* and Cherusseri's *Krishna Ghada*. These compositions served as a spiritual anchorage, providing solace and a means of connection to the divine, amidst the chaos and challenges of both the internal and external worlds. Similarly, *Mala* songs held significant importance among Muslim households, where they were recited daily. The recitation of these songs offered a sense of tranquility and respite, enabling individuals to find inner peace amidst the trials and tribulations of life.

The use of *Mala* extends to a wide range of contexts, encompassing diverse settings such as festive occasions, communal gatherings, and domestic environments. Within the private sphere of one's home, families devote themselves to the solemn recitation of the holy Quran and various religious texts, wherein the *Malas* hold a position of utmost importance. Particularly notable is their melodic presence during *Nerchas*, ceremonial assemblies characterized by their commemoration of revered Sufi saints or their solemn tribute to the memory of *Shahids*³, valiant martyrs who bravely laid down their lives in various historical battles.

Significantly, the *Malas* have also played a vital role within the traditional educational framework of the community until the advent of the twentieth century. Students diligently undertook the arduous task of committing to memory and eloquently reciting not only the verses of the Quran but also the sacred words encapsulated within the *Malas*. Furthermore, a distinctive custom observed during marriage celebrations involved the groom's female relatives paying a visit to the bride before the official engagement. Inquiring about the bride's educational accomplishments, it was customary for her to proudly assert her proficiency in the Quran as well as her familiarity with the revered *Muhyudheen Mala*, symbolizing her spiritual knowledge and devout upbringing. Dr.V. Kunhali writes in his book titled, *Sufisam in Kerala.*, that "There is the custom of the bride being visited by the elder ladies of the groom's house before her betrothal. On being questioned of her education the girl was expected to say that she had learnt the Quran and *Muhyudheen Mala*" (Kunhali 108).

Throughout the hours of each night, the captivating melodies of the *Muhyidin Mala* permeated the domestic spaces, resounding harmoniously within the walls of every household. These enchanting compositions were performed by the inhabitants of these homes in unison,

³ Muslims who dead while fulfilling a religious commandment, including jihad.

creating a profound sense of unity and shared purpose. Within this collective expression of devotion, the figure of Shaykh Muhyudheen transcended the realm of an individual and ascended to become the personification of the multifaceted aspirations and yearnings of humanity towards the ethereal and spiritual dimensions. Through the verses and rhythms of this *Mala*, Shaykh Muhyudheen became a symbol of the human quest for transcendence, enlightenment, and a connection to the divine realm, embodying the highest ideals and longings that resonate within the hearts and minds of individuals across cultures and generations. As the melodies filled the night air, they carried with them a collective yearning for spiritual enlightenment, inspiring and captivating the imaginations of those who embraced the *Malas* as a conduit to transcendental experiences and a deeper understanding of the mysteries of existence. In this way, Shaykh Muhiudheen spiritual presence transcended the boundaries of time and space, offering solace, inspiration, and a profound connection to the celestial realm for those who found solace and meaning in the entrancing melodies of the *Malas*.

Qadi Muhammad, beyond his role in spreading and advancing the *Qadiriyya Tariqat*, made a profound impact through his poetic masterpiece, the *Muhyiddin Mala*. This poetic work served as a powerful medium through which he conveyed his profound spiritual teachings and grappled with the societal challenges of his time. Rather than solely focusing on the expansion of the *Qadiriyya Tariqat*, Qadi Muhammad recognized the broader significance of his poetic compositions in addressing the multifaceted issues and concerns that permeated his era. With the *Muhyudheen Mala* as his vehicle, he skillfully wove together intricate verses, employing poetic devices, metaphors, and symbolism to encapsulate his profound spiritual insights. Through his poetry, Qadi Muhammad not only aimed to illuminate the hearts and minds of his followers but also to engage with the prevailing social issues of the time, such as moral decay, social inequality, and ethical dilemmas. The *Muhyudheen Mala* thus became a powerful tool through which Qadi Muhammad communicated his spiritual teachings, fostering introspection, and prompting individuals to critically reflect upon their own lives and the society in which they lived. By integrating spiritual guidance with social commentary, Qadi Muhammad's poetic work transcended mere literary artistry, resonating deeply with individuals and communities, and offering a path towards personal transformation and societal betterment.

Kaniyilla kalam kaniye kodythubar

Karinja marathummal kayal nirachovar

(Muhyudheen Mala 11)

[In times there is no food

He gave food

In a dry tree

He filled fruits] (Sutton 88)

These verses of *Muhyudheen Mala* encompass three distinct levels of meaning, each contributing to a deeper understanding of their significance. At the literal level, the verses vividly describe a palm tree adorned with the blessed verses of Shaik Jilani, serving as a metaphorical representation of the spiritual nourishment and guidance they offer. Moving beyond their historical context, these verses carry a profound message, emphasizing the transformative power of immersing oneself in the love and devotion to the Divine. By embracing this spiritual connection, individuals can overcome the challenges of poverty and scarcity, and cultivate a life of abundance and fulfillment. On a metaphorical level, the verses assume a transcendent quality, acting as potent incantations capable of awakening dormant spiritual energies within the individual. Through the masterful use of language, the poet guides the seeker on a transformative journey of self-realization, enabling them to transcend the limitations of the physical world and attain spiritual heights. The life history of Shaik Jilani serves as an inspirational framework, offering practical insights and guidance to expedite the process of self-transformation through the power of poetry. In the broader context of cultural revival, Qadi Muhammad, as the custodian of Shaik Jilani's teachings, played a pivotal role in the socio-cultural rejuvenation of the Kerala community. At a time when the community faced economic, political, and cultural marginalization, Qadi Muhammad's *Mala* recitation served as a catalyst for societal resurgence. Through the profound insights and messages embedded within the verses, Qadi Muhammad captivated the imagination of the Kerala society, igniting a movement for revival and inspiring individuals to reclaim their cultural heritage. The *Mala* recitation not only provided spiritual solace and guidance but also instigated a renewed sense of identity, pride, and empowerment among the community members.

Thus, Qadi Muhammad's utilization of the *Muhyiddin Mala* proved instrumental in reviving and revitalizing the socio-cultural fabric of the Malabar Mappila Muslim community, leaving an indelible mark on its history. The verses of *Muhyiddin Mala* hold within them an energy that resonates with the community, standing tall amidst the raging storms and blazing fires that threaten to engulf society. They provide a source of strength and protection, empowering individuals to navigate through the challenges of life without succumbing to the pitfalls of deception and falsehood. By presenting the embodiment of truth and integrity in the form of a model individual, the poet offers a guiding light, a beacon of hope for the Mappila Muslim community to confront any adversities they may encounter on their spiritual journey.

It is through this belief that the *Muhyudheen Mala* has gained a stronghold and influenced the Mappila Muslim community, offering them solace and direction in times of hardship.

Shemithoru sirikk pettu nombalam pidithe

Sheshikett rand nal vare bejaril nilathe

Samayam inthe bibi peril Nercha kupathe

Sadhiyam mozhi mudiyum mun avalum

Pethe

(Nafisat Mala 9)

[A lady with patience came Labour pain

She being in tension for two days

At the time she recites the Mala

She gave birth before ending the Mala]

(Sutton 104)

These verses originate from the *Nafisat Mala*, which holds a significant place in the cultural practices of Malabar. This collection, with its melodic compositions, serves a specific purpose – that of ensuring a seamless and comfortable childbirth experience for women. It is noteworthy that this particular application of *Malas* resonates with the wider usage of these spiritual hymns. However, *Nafisat Mala* distinguishes itself by placing a distinctive emphasis on its capacity to provide invaluable support to women enduring prolonged, demanding, and intricate labors. This essential aspect is not only expressed once but reiterated multiple times throughout the verses, underscoring the profound efficacy of this *Mala* in alleviating the difficulties faced by women during challenging childbirth experiences. The recognition of its unique ability to assist women in such circumstances further enhances the significance and relevance of *Nafisat Mala* within the cultural and social fabric of Malabar.

In the historical context of the Mappila community, a significant tradition known as *Sarpa Shalyam Ozhinjukittan* or the recitation of *Rifai Mala* played a pivotal role in shaping their cultural practices. This tradition revolved around the notion that spotting snakes in one's surroundings could somehow avert the threat of snakebites. The belief in this *Mala* as a protective aspect in encountering snakes was deeply ingrained among the Mappila Muslims, leading them to view the phenomenon with great reverence and adherence. Consequently, whenever any member of the community came across snakes in their homes or nearby areas, they would collectively refer to *Rifai Mala*. The act of reciting *Rifai Mala* together instilled a sense of cohesion and unity among the community members, fostering a shared belief in the power of this tradition to safeguard against potential harm. This practice not only fostered a

sense of security but also engendered mutual support and cooperation among individuals residing in their respective households. The recurrence and perpetuation of *Sarpa Shalyam Ozhinjukittan* or *Rifai Mala* is emphasizing the role of traditional beliefs in shaping and reinforcing social and religious bonds.

Ente Muride perumbamb thindukil

Eethum vishamilla ennu paranjovar (Rifai Mala 5)

These lines shed light on the interpretative significance of the verses presented earlier. Within the context of the Mappila community's cultural practices, these lines portray the ritualistic act of reciting *Mala* as a customary method to avert impending dangers and safeguard individuals from harm. The act of invoking the name of Shaik Rifai and referencing the venomous snake in these verses carries a profound belief that such recitation holds the power to create a protective shield, ensuring the absence of any harm or potential threats. While the verses explicitly reference snakes, their broader implications transcend the boundaries of this particular reptilian context, encapsulating the broader concept of *Mala* as an emblematic shield against the dangers posed by venomous creatures.

This ritualistic practice becomes emblematic of a cultural belief system, rooted in the interplay of faith, folklore and the community's collective understanding of safeguarding against natural hazards. As a subject of scholarly interest, these verses offer valuable insights into the intricate intermingling of religious practices, mythological symbolism, and sociocultural traditions within the tapestry of the Mappila community's heritage. Maude Keely Sutton says in her dissertation titled as "In the Forest of Sand: History, Devotion, and Memory in South Asian Muslim Poetry", that:

The *Malas* are generally both hagiographical and laudatory; they give brief details of a saints' life as well as describe miracles (*Karamat* in Arabic) surrounding the saints or performed by them. These miracles are sometimes related to the particular use for each song, say for example, protection from fire or snakes, ease of childbirth, or help with crops. Examples of these include the *Fatima Bivi Mala*, the *Safala Mala*, the *Ajmir Mala*, the *Siddiq Mala* (in praise of the first Caliph Abubakar Siddiq), and the *Maḥamud Mala* in praise of the Prophet Muhammed, as well as the songs discussed earlier in this chapter, the *Muhyudheen Mala*, the *Rifai Mala*, and the *Nafisat Mala*. There are other *Malas* too on Islamic figures that often focus on figures of martyrdom. The old woman in Moyinkuṭṭi Vaidyar's *Kilatti Mala* (Song of the Old Woman) is revealed to be the angel Gabriel who has come to explain why Husayn must die in the battle of Karbala. The *Kottupalli Mala* is a song that describes a young man named

Kunji Marakkar who leaves his own wedding in order to rescue a Muslim girl from Portuguese abductors. He dies in the attempt, is cut into seven pieces, and his body is cast into the sea. The song then goes on to describe the miracles that took place at the sites where his limbs washed ashore. A *Nercha*, or commemoration in honor of saints or martyrs as offering food for all, is still held annually in Calicut at the tomb where the leg of the above hero is said to rest. *The Shahid Mala*, partially translated and commented on by F. Fawcett in the *Journal Indian Antiquary* praises the men who died in a battle at the Malappuram Mosque, fighting against the warriors of a local chieftain. (Sutton 73)

In the context of cultural and religious practices, *Mala songs* hold a significant place, often being rendered after the evening *maghrib* prayer, and notably, they are memorized with fervor by women. These songs serve as a rich repository of narratives that bear a striking resemblance to *Mawlid*⁴, delving into multifaceted aspects of the revered figures' life journeys, encompassing pivotal events like their birth, educational pursuits, initiation into spiritual matters, demonstration of Karamat or miraculous deeds, and their eventual transition from this earthly existence. Furthermore, a noteworthy dimension of these lyrical expressions is their capacity to shed light on those historical or legendary adversaries who harbored doubts or actively opposed the figure during their mortal sojourn, with specific references made to 'Iblis' or Lucifer. Through these songs, a profound tapestry of cultural heritage and religious beliefs emerges, offering glimpses into the collective memory and identity of the community, while also serving as a conduit for preserving and transmitting cultural wisdom and values from one generation of women to the next.

Mala songs, a literary culture that thrived within the Muslim community of Malabar, were deeply intertwined with religious beliefs and devotion. Traditionally, these songs held a prominent place in the daily practices of Malabar Mappila Muslim households. However, in contemporary times, there has been a significant transformation in the usage and significance of *Mala songs*, relegating them to a niche position primarily within historical studies, academic discussions, and literary writings seeking to explore unique aspects of literature. The once-frequent recitation of *Malas* as part of Mappila households' daily routines has waned and gradually faded from the minds of Mappila Muslims, being remembered now as a historical relic of their ancestors. Various factors contributed to this change, and one notable criticism centered around the perception that *Mala songs* contradicted the Islamic concept of *Thouheed*,

⁴ Another literary genre like Mala literature.

the belief in One God, opposing dualism, polytheism, or atheism. Fahad T Hamza says, “*Mala-Mawlid* literatures along with their collective reciting culture, have played a great role in the formation of sociocultural identity of Kerala Muslims”. More than little religiously or locally considerable composition or presentation, they bridge the gap between Muslim minds and rituals, as these presentations stood as a median for worship itself. Now, there are some newfangled feelings to this, as some Muslim groups of Kerala, such as Mujahids and Jamaa’t-e-Islami, who question the credibility of *Mala- Mawlids*, on the standards of *Shirk* or un-Islamic. Sunni Muslims, a major, prominent group of Kerala Muslims, on the other hand, has retained their ciphers and signs through such ritual practices. The issue has further stretched into the conflict of polytheism (*Shirk*) and monotheism too.

Hamza Further adds that these songs were seen as a form of alternative worship to Allah, as some revered great personalities were featured in them, raising concerns of promoting polytheistic worship or encouraging involvement in a multi-deity worship system, which, in turn, led to a decline in their propagation among Mappila Muslims. According to the scholar Moyin Kutty P.,

More than a simple devotional genre, *Malas* were a particular item related to the various situations of its composer”. To its origin might have particular reasons related to its social, political, religious and cultural background. At the same time, it had certain social functions and communal responsibilities. *Muhyudheen Mala* was a big resistance as well as a great remedy for its followers. In another hand, *Malas* are very comprehensive and all-encompassing system of educating Mappilas, which worked among them very effectively since the seventeenth century. Composing notable works on various subjects such as Islamic history, biography, religious advice, social criticism, spirituality, etc. Mappila could engage in society seriously and create a distinguished identity in Kerala milieu. As a system of education and awareness, the sections like women and children also got due considerations in this cognitive literary movement. By the early decades of twentieth century, *Mala* underwent a considerable transformation in its composition and contents. The factors like modernity, reformism, and postmodernism were the major reasons for this shift. By then *Malas* came out of its devotional and informative typical format to a liberal and entertaining mode. It was a big turning point in *Malas'* so-called development. Instead of its Sufistic and religious allegories, trends of Western literature were got dominance in its contents and expression. However, it was a great setback to its prestigious identity. (Kutty 2)

The diminishing popularity of *Mala songs* has sparked debates among scholars, with some viewing this shift as contrary to Islamic principles. The once-prominent literary tradition in the *Arabi Malayalam* language faced various criticisms, further contributing to its decline. As a result, the values encompassing the social and historical significance of *Mala songs* and their contribution to the cultural heritage of Mappila Muslims have been overshadowed and lost over time. The writer O. Abu discusses the current state of *Mala songs* in Malayalam literature and expresses his thoughts as follows:

The current situation of *Mala songs* in the literature of Arabic Malayalam, which is the artistic hub of the intellectual achievements of the Muslim community in Kerala, has faced a deplorable fate. Those who once took pride in discarding the quintessential elements of *Mala songs*, particularly the powerful poems known as *Malappattukal*, must now bear the burden of the consequences of their unwise actions. It is a matter of great distress that they failed to realize the loss suffered by the *Arabi Malayalam* tradition and its significant components due to their lack of foresight and courage. (Abu 88)

During the 1920s, the emergence of reformist ideologies within the Mappila Muslim community in Malabar triggered profound discussions and controversies regarding their literary endeavors. The traditional stance of *Mala* poets revolved around addressing religious themes and disseminating ideological messages; however, some reformists vehemently criticized their works, deeming them to be associated with misinterpreted religious concepts known as *Kurafaath*. Nonetheless, as the twentieth century unfolded, the concept of *Mala* retained its significance, serving as a symbol of the resilient socio-cultural identity treasured by Mappila Muslims. It continued to be subject to exploration and redefinition in diverse contexts. Notably, literary experimentation introduced intriguing names such as *Parishkara Mala*, *Durajara Mala*, *Vellapokka Mala*, and *Kathukuthu Mala*. A prominent illustration of such reinterpretations can be seen in the *Vaikom Muhammad Basheer Mala*. Despite these transformations in literary expressions, the genre of *Mala songs* steadfastly held its position as the most popular and enriching form of literary expression among the Mappila Muslim community. Despite the passing of time and the challenges faced by the community, the enduring influence of *Mala*-literature in Mappila households remains evident. While it is true that the number of households carrying on this cultural tradition has decreased over the years, the significance of *Mala*-literature in providing emotional support and reassurance during times of difficulty remains resolute. This finding emphasizes the resilience of *Mala*-literature as an

enduring cultural practice, maintaining its impact on the lives of the Mappila Muslim community. Nonetheless, this study brings the need for concerted efforts to preserve and revitalize *Mala*-Literature and its cultural significance among the Mappila Muslims. As the tradition of reciting *Mala* songs faces the risk of fading away, it is imperative for scholars, cultural enthusiasts, and the community itself to work together to safeguard and promote this invaluable cultural heritage. Preserving the practice of *Mala*-Literature is essential to ensure that future generations recognize and celebrate the distinct contributions and identity of the Mappila Muslim community.

In conclusion, this analytical study can serve as a scholarly discourse on Mala songs to create societal awareness of the Mappila community's literary and cultural heritage. By understanding and appreciating the profound influence of *Mala*-literature, the broader community and society can foster a renewed sense of pride in their rich cultural traditions which will to the country's rich cultural tapestry too.

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