

Characteristics of *Tasawwuf* Texts in the Traditional *Pallidars* Curriculum of Malabar

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Abstract

This study examines the characteristics of *Tasawwuf* texts within the curriculum of the Islamic traditional education system in Malabar, South India, known as *Pallidars*. It addresses a scholarly gap concerning both their role in moral and ethical divine education and the significance of the region's traditional Islamic education system. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study combines content analysis of multiple key *Tasawwuf* works with interviews of expert scholars, drawing from local vernacular sources. The study centres on the research question "How does *Pallidars* curriculum fix the *Tasawwuf* texts for moral and ethical divine education in Malabar regions?" to comprehensively examine the characteristics, teaching methods, and effectiveness of the *Tasawwuf* texts which is categorized into foundational, intermediate, and advanced levels, each featuring distinct texts that progressively deepen spiritual knowledge and practice. Findings reveal that the *Pallidars* curriculum effectively promotes applied spirituality and ethical living rather than rote memorization, supported by pedagogical methods emphasizing practical implementation. Biographical insights into the authors enrich understanding of the intellectual heritage underpinning the curriculum. Overall, the study highlights the *Pallidars* system's enduring contribution to sustaining spiritual and ethical values in Malabar's Muslim community through a structured, multi-text *Tasawwuf* education.

Keywords: *Islamic Education, Tasawwuf Texts, Pallidars Curriculum, Traditional Learning, Malabar.*

Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji karakteristik teks-teks tasawuf dalam kurikulum sistem pendidikan Islam tradisional di Malabar, India Selatan, yang dikenal sebagai *Pallidars*. Penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan akademik terkait peran teks-teks tersebut dalam pendidikan moral, etika, dan ketuhanan, sekaligus menyoroti pentingnya sistem pendidikan Islam tradisional di kawasan tersebut. Dengan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif, penelitian ini menggabungkan analisis isi terhadap sejumlah karya utama tasawuf dengan wawancara para ulama ahli, serta memanfaatkan sumber-sumber lokal berbahasa vernakular. Penelitian ini berpusat pada pertanyaan: "Bagaimana kurikulum *Pallidars* menetapkan teks-teks tasawuf untuk pendidikan moral, etika, dan ketuhanan di wilayah Malabar?" Pertanyaan ini digunakan untuk mengkaji secara komprehensif karakteristik, metode pengajaran, dan efektivitas teks-teks tasawuf yang diklasifikasikan ke dalam tiga tingkatan, yaitu dasar, menengah, dan lanjutan. Setiap tingkatan menggunakan teks yang berbeda dan dirancang untuk memperdalam pengetahuan serta praktik spiritual secara bertahap. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kurikulum *Pallidars* secara efektif mendorong spiritualitas yang aplikatif dan kehidupan yang beretika, alih-alih sekadar menghafal teks, melalui metode pedagogis yang menekankan penerapan praktis. Uraian biografis mengenai para penulis karya-karya tersebut juga memperkaya pemahaman

tentang warisan intelektual yang menjadi landasan kurikulum. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menegaskan kontribusi berkelanjutan sistem Pallidars dalam mempertahankan nilai-nilai spiritual dan etika di kalangan komunitas Muslim Malabar melalui pendidikan tasawuf yang terstruktur dan berbasis pada berbagai teks.

Keywords: *Pendidikan Islam, Teks Tasawuf, Kurikulum Pallidars, Pembelajaran Tradisional, Malabar*

INTRODUCTION

Tasawwuf is a widespread and extensive educational discipline in modern Islamic academia and in comparative studies. This route of knowledge plays a tremendous role in shaping cultural and religious coexistence worldwide. Cultures, spiritual thoughts, and linguistic and literary works were transmitted to a new society through the presence of different mystic saints from various parts of the world. In India, specifically in Malabar, a plethora of divergent Sufi orders have existed since the arrival of spiritual leaders and merchants' missionaries by ships accompanying the Arab caravans that came to Malabar for their commercial needs¹. Like elsewhere in the world, Malabar has a long history of Sufism that has spread intensively throughout the centuries. It is believed that Sufism reached the coasts of Malabar with the arrival of Sufi saints such as Malik ibn Dinar (d. 748 AD), a disciple of Hasan Al Basari, and his followers from Khurasan². Gradually, Malabar witnessed a multitude of Sufi orders and their branches, which led the non-Muslims to embrace Islam, and Muslims were culturally well and educationally developed.

Islam spread across regions through the missionary expeditions of Sufi saints from one region to another³. Malabar is a southern part of India with a major Muslim population. Islam entered Malabar through the arrival of Sufi saints on Arab merchant trade ships starting in the 12th century. Since then, different Sufi orders have come to Malabar and peacefully influenced local traditional customs. Apart from the oral transmission of Islamic spiritual thoughts, they established educational institutions, applying Sufism as an integrated part of the curriculum. The lives and culture of people in Malabar are rooted in Sufism, which is evident from their current lifestyles and customs.

Sufism has a historical trajectory in Malabar, beginning with its emergence on the shores of Malabar in the early stages and later becoming a systematic, integrated discipline. Sufism has spread in Malabar mainly through four different modes, although its contents are the same. The initial category refers to Sufis who came to Malabar seeking peaceful and noiseless spaces. They did not practice missionary work or spread their Sufi orders here. The second category encompasses those who received permission from their *shaikh* to spread different Sufi orders and commissioned the propagation as well. Thirdly, the expansion of Sufism through a systematic curriculum centralizing Masjids and

¹ Dr.Moyin Malayamma, *Malayalathile Sufism;Shadili Saraniyum Athippatta Muohyidheen Kutti Musliyarum*, second (Athippetta: Shadili Books, 2020), 47.

² Parappu Kadavath Matra Abdul Jaleel, "Sacred Immigrants and Travelling Rituals: Malabar in the Sufi Cosmopolis of the Indian Ocean," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 35, no. 2 (April 2025): 349–68, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186324000221>.

³ Jahfar Shareef Pokkanali., "Sailing across Duniyāw: Sufi Ship–Body Symbolism from the Malabar Coast, South India," *South Asian Studies* 36, no. 2 (July 2020): 125–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666030.2018.1495872>.

Pallidars by *Makhdooms*, the great scholarly family of Ponnani, in Malabar⁴. Through this, Sufism gained acceptance among religious people. By the 18th century, *Hadrami* Sufi relations had created a new phase for Sufism in Malabar⁵.

Pallidars is the traditional mosque-centred educational institutions for Islamic studies in Malabar, India⁶. It is a Malabar model *Ahlussuffa* of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Sufism is an Islamic discipline that was systematized as a traditional subject in the early Islamic period. After the formation of the *Pallidars* system in Malabar, Sufism has been included to transform the lifestyle of locals into a divine presence. This study focuses on the characteristics of *Tasawwuf* textbooks studied in the traditional curriculum of *Pallidars* education in Malabar. The *Pallidars* system has flourished in Malabar by the initiation of Shaikh Zainuddin Makhdoom I, soon after graduating from Al Azhar University⁷ under the renowned Islamic scholars like Shaikh Zakariyya al Ansari.

Previous studies examining the characteristics of the *Pallidars* curriculum in Malabar are few. Primarily, there are only three works related to the *Pallidars* Curriculum and its transformation. The Traditional Islamic Curriculum of *Pallidars* in Malabar: A Content Analysis of ‘*Min Nawabigi Ulama’i Malaibar*’ is one of them, authored by Dr. Hassan Shareef and Shabeeb Khan P, published in *Al Jadwa Jurnal study Islam*, is a content analysis of Abdu Rahaman Al Azharis’ work, ‘*Min Nawabigi Ulama’i Malaibar*’. It investigates the historical development of the Islamic studies curriculum in the *Pallidars* of Malabar. It has briefly explained the three major curricula used in Malabar, including *Ma’bari*, *Fakhriyya*, and *Nizamiya*⁸. Second, *Dars Kitabukal: Charithram Swadinam*, (The History and Impact of *Dars* Books) authored by PA Swadiq Faisy Tanur, explains the transformational trajectory of Islamic education from the earlier Othupalli to the later Arabic college system, emphasizing its curriculum and subject texts, including the Quran, *Tafsir*, *Fiqh*, *Tasawwuf*, Theology, and Arabic grammar, with a brief sketch of its authors. Third, “Characteristics of Traditional Arabic Grammar Texts in the Curriculum of *Pallidars* Education in Malabar” is a journal article written by Muhammed Harshad Kodassery and Hassan Shareef KP, illustrating the curriculum for Arabic grammar that is systematized in *Pallidars* in Malabar. It clarifies in it the style of teaching and activities that are used for grammatical studies in *Pallidars*⁹.

Other works such as ‘Sacred immigrants and travelling rituals: Malabar in the Sufi

⁴ Dr.Moyin Malayamma, *Malayalathile Sufism;Shadili Saraniyum Athippatta Muohyidheen Kutti Musliyarum*.

⁵ Muhammed Fatheen Mk, “Geographical Determinants and Sacred Topography: Hadhrami Sayyid Migration to Panthalayini and Its Historical-Spatial Impact on Malabar’s Islamic Landscape,” *Maklumat: Journal of Da’wah and Islamic Studies* 3, no. 4 (December 2025): 324–35, <https://doi.org/10.61166/maklumat.v3i4.96>.

⁶ U. Mohammed, *Educational Empowerment of Kerala Muslims: A Socio-Historical Perspective* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 2007).

⁷ MGS Narayanan, KEN Kunhahammed, and AP Kunhamu, *Kerala Muslimkal Nottantinte Charithram* (Kozhikkode: Vachanam Books, 2021), 718.

⁸ Hassan Shareef Kp and Shebeeb Khan P, “The Traditional Islamic Curriculum of *Pallidars* in Malabar: A Content Analysis of ‘*Min Nawabigi Ulama’i Malaibar*,” *Al-Jadwa: Jurnal Studi Islam* 5, no. 1 (September 2025): 25, <https://doi.org/10.38073/aljadwa.3316>.

⁹ Muhammed Harshad Kodassery and Hassan Shareef Kp, “Characteristics of Traditional Arabic Grammar Texts in the Curriculum of *Pallidars* Education in Malabar,” *Lahjatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 5, no. 1 (October 2025): 67–91, <https://doi.org/10.38073/lahjatuna.v5i1.3495>.

cosmopolis of the Indian Ocean’,¹⁰ ‘Sufi-Scholarly Impact of ‘Hadrami Sayyids’ in Malabar’,¹¹ From *Communitas* to the Structure of Islam: The Mappilas of Malabar’,¹² are the scholarly efforts that has a connection with this topic. However, these scholarly discussions have only passed through the historical origin and advent of Sufism and Sufi orders in Malabar. It focuses the rituals that were integrated with the cultures in Malabar by different Sufi orders, such as Haddad Rathib, with chants and prayers in everyday life, invented by the *Alawiyya* Sufi order from *Hadrami Sayyids*. However, the scholarly contributions on the characteristics of Sufi texts in the traditional curriculum of *Pallidars* in Malabar was not discussed adequately.

The unavailability of sufficient scholarly studies in this area provides an appropriate gap for this study. Focusing on the research question: “How does *Pallidars* curriculum fix the *Tasawwuf* texts for moral and ethical divine education in Malabar regions?” this study is designed around three primary objectives. First, it aims to summarize the importance of textbooks by analyzing their content and methodology. Second, it evaluates the effectiveness of these texts in the lives of Malabar’s individuals. Third, it provides a brief sketch of the authors of each text. By achieving all three goals through an analytical study, this paper offers a scholastic contribution to knowledge seekers and Islamic researchers in Malabar who specialize on the significances of traditional Islamic education of the region. While previous studies have addressed the historical development of the *Pallidars* curriculum, the transformation of Islamic education, and specific subjects such as Arabic grammar, the present work fills the notable gap conducting a comprehensive analysis of multiple *Tasawwuf* texts within the *Pallidars* curriculum and their pedagogical and ethical impact on learners.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method to analyze the *Tasawwuf* texts included in the traditional *Pallidars* curriculum in Malabar. Additionally, the study involves library research that gathers data from academic databases, peer-reviewed scholarly journals, and interviews with expert scholars in the field of *Pallidars*. Unlike the previous work of Hassan Shareef and Shabeeb Khan which studied from an analytical approach on only a single book, namely ‘*Min Nawabigi Ulama ‘i Malaibar*’ authored by Sayyid Abdu-Rahman Al Azhari, this study analysed multiple works encompassing PA. Swadiq Faizy Tanur’s ‘*Dars Kithabukal Charithram Swadinam*’ (‘The History and Impact of *Dars* Books’)¹³, Moyin Malayamma’s ‘*Malayalathile Sufism*’ (‘Sufism in Malayalam’)¹⁴, Shaikh Muhammed Bukhari Al-Faizy Al-Malaibari’s ‘*Tarikh al Abrar Min-Man Tadarassa Kutubuhum fi Diyari Malaibar*’ (‘History of the Pious Scholars whose Works are Taught in Malabar’). Additionally, data were collected from scholars

¹⁰ Jaleel, “Sacred Immigrants and Travelling Rituals.”

¹¹ Abid T. Zainul, “Sufi-Scholarly Impact of ‘Hadrami Sayyids’ in Malabar,” in *Regional Sufi Centres in India* (Routledge, 2023).

¹² P. P. Abdul Razak, “From *Communitas* to the Structure of Islam: The Mappilas of Malabar,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 68 (2007): 895–911.

¹³ PA Sadiq Faizy Tanoor, *Dars Kitabukal Charithram Swadeenam*, First (Calicut: Islamic Sahithya Academy Islamic Centre, 2013), 01–184.

¹⁴ Dr. Moyin Malayamma, *Malayalathile Sufism; Shadili Saraniyum Athippatta Muohyidheen Kutti Musliyarum*.

who are experts in the field of *Pallidars* by interviewing them. Methodologically, the study goes focusing on a primary question: “How does *Pallidars* curriculum fix the *Tasawwuf* texts for moral and ethical divine education in Malabar regions?” to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the specific texts taught in Malabar. This research has three primary objectives. Initially, to analyse the characteristics of the *Tasawwuf* texts included in the traditional *Pallidars* of Malabar with the teaching methods that are used in *Pallidars*. Second, to identify the effectiveness of the texts used in *Pallidars*, analyzing whether it changed the lives of individuals in Malabar. The third aim is to elucidate the biographical information about the authors of these curtailed works.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study’s results demonstrate that the *Pallidars* curriculum in Malabar systematically incorporates multiple *Tasawwuf* texts to deliver moral and ethical divine education. The analysis reveals that these texts significantly influence the spiritual and ethical development of individuals, as evidenced by qualitative data from expert interviews and literature reviews. The effective teaching methods employed in *Pallidars*, which facilitate the integration of *Tasawwuf* principles into learners’ lives, leading to observable positive changes. Moreover, the authors of these *Tasawwuf* works provide important historical and cultural context, enriching the understanding of the curriculum’s foundations. The results can contribute new knowledge about the scope and impact of *Tasawwuf* texts in Malabar’s moral and ethical education, emphasizing a multi-text, qualitative methodology that deepens the understanding of both content and pedagogical practice within *Pallidars*.

Trajectory of *Pallidars* Education in Malabar

Malabar witnessed Islamic education even during the early days of the Prophet (PBUH). Historical events, such as the arrival of Malik ibn Dinar and twelve trade associates with him, paved the way for the rise of Islam in Malabar. Due to the geographical significance of Malabar, numerous Sufi saints landed and settled there for decades. All of them preached Islam and practiced missionary activities with peace and prosperity. Primary sources such as ‘*Tuhfatul Mujahidin*’ by Zainuddin Makhdoom II and other academic scholarly works point out that Islam arose in Malabar with the arrival of Malik ibn Dinar and his associates in the seventh century. Subsequently, they built mosques in certain places, appointing qualified scholars as *Qazis* in each mosque. As a mosque-centred educational system, they embarked on teaching ordinary people the fundamentals of Islamic rules and laws and embraced them into the shore of Islam. Later, when everyone acquired the basics of Islam, mosques were facilitated for higher education, replacing the *Othuppalli*¹⁵ beside mosques, which provided the basics of Islamic studies. There are no accurate sources that prove the origin of *Pallidars* system in Malabar. However, the most renowned traveller of the fourteenth century, Ibn Battuta, states in his work ‘*Rihla*’ that *Pallidars* system remained active in Madayi and some other

¹⁵ Hassan Shareef Kp and Jafar Paramboor, “Tracing the Connections between Othupalli of Malabar and Kuttab of the Muslim World,” *Adabuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran* 5, no. 1 (December 2025): 16–17, <https://doi.org/10.38073/adabuna.v5i1.3468>.

mosques¹⁶.

The Ponnani *Pallidars*, of the greatest centre of Islamic higher education in medieval period developed under the leadership of renowned scholars from *Makhdoom* family, especially Makhdoom I & II. After completing his studies at Al-Azhar University, Egypt, Zainuddin Makhdoom I rendered a structure and systemized mosque-centred *Pallidars* system in Ponnani. ‘*Vilakkathirikkal*’¹⁷, the traditional ceremony of securing seats around the famous lamp of Ponnani Big Juna Masjid, was considered as pursuing higher studies, and those who finished the course was identified as ‘*Musliyar*’¹⁸. It is said that students from Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Syria, Baghdad, and Yemen continued their studies in Ponnani.¹⁹

***Tasawwuf* Texts in the *Pallidars* Curriculum**

The *Pallidars* system is a traditional educational endeavour in the Malabar region of Southern India, considered an avenue for advanced studies of *Tasawwuf* in the region. The system began in this region through the relentless efforts and immense strides of Sufi saints who arrived in Malabar in the early period and the systematization of the educational curriculum by Shaikh Zainuddin Makhdoom I, through the construction of a mosque-based *Pallidars* system in Ponnani. Although different types of curricula were followed in Malabar, the Ponnani curriculum in *Pallidars* was based on *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* prominently²⁰. It follows a descending system in texts that range from basic to advance in all subjects. *Tasawwuf* texts start from the foundation level, like ‘*Muriqa ’tul Qulub*’ in *Asharat Kutub*, ‘*Ta’lim al Muta’lilim*, ‘ ‘*Hidayat al Azkiya*, ‘ and ‘*Bidayat al Hidayat*, ‘ which provide meaningful insights into the divine thoughts. In the intermediate level, “*Irshadul Ibad*,” “*Murshid al Tullab*,” and “*Irshadul Yafi*” were included. In the higher stages of the *Pallidars* curriculum, “*Ihya ’ul Uloom*” and “*Hikam al Ata ’iyya*” were taught at an advanced level. Once a student completes their studies by going through these levels simultaneously, they may achieve the divine path by bringing it into daily life practice.

Apart from mechanical memorization without understanding, Malabar has received a common method to teach, including memorization of rhymes, deep persuasion to bring knowledge into practicality, and creating a spiritual lifestyle with peace. In contrast, some teachers received their own pedagogy rather than a fixed curriculum to convey the messages perfectly from their own perspectives. In Malabar, the lifestyles and routines of teachers played a significant role in leading students on the straight path of spirituality and influenced the abundant students undoubtedly.

***Tasawwuf* texts in Foundation Level**

Malabar is a place where many Sufi saints have arrived since the emergence of Sufism. Therefore, they have given more importance to the expansion of Sufism to preach Islam and convey the real ideology of Islam to future generations. Hence, *Tasawwuf* texts

¹⁶ PA Sadiq Faizy Tanoor, *Dars Kitabukal Charithram Swadeenam*, 18.

¹⁷ Al-Hudawi, Shafeeq., “A Proposed Framework for the Curriculum of Islamic Education: Implication on the Curricula of Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions in Kerala, India.” (PhD, IIUM, Malaysia, 2011), 59, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2424334.

¹⁸ William Logan, *Malabar*. 2, 2. AES repr (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995), 108.

¹⁹ PA Sadiq Faizy Tanoor, *Dars Kitabukal Charithram Swadeenam*, 19.

²⁰ PA Sadiq Faizy Tanoor, *Dars Kitabukal Charithram Swadeenam*, 28.

were prioritized in the traditional curriculum of *Pallidars*. At a basic level, '*Mira 'tul Qulub*' in *Asharat Kutub*, '*Ta 'lim al Muta 'llim*,' '*Hidayat al Azkiya*,' '*Riyal al Swalihin*,' '*Al minhaj Al Sageer*,' '*Salahuddin*,' '*Minhaj Al Abidin*' '*Bidayt al Hidayat*' are considered foundational texts that provide a summary of *Tasawwuf*. The *Asharat Kutub* is a very popular and well-known collection of ten works in Malabar. This is considered one of the early collections of religious treatises for beginners of the *Pallidars* system in the Malabar region. *Muriqa 'tul Qulub* is one work in it that discusses Sufism.

'*Ta 'lim al Muta 'llim Tariq al Ta 'llum*' ('Instruction of the Student: The Method of Learning') is a spiritual and psychological work in *Tasawwuf* for knowledge seekers authored by Burhan al-din al-Zarnuji (d 610H)²¹, an eminent scholar of the Hanafi school of thought who authored multiple works in Islamic jurisprudence as well. Focusing on the purpose of studying is an indispensable factor in being an educationalist²². Meanwhile, as the finest and ultimate goal of this work, he has classified it into multiple parts encompassing the good manners of knowledge and its importance, the intention of seeking knowledge (*niyyah*), the selection of types of knowledge, how a religious knowledge seeker should approach it, and what the times should prefer for knowledge acquiring using simple and easy language that is accessible even for the beginners²³. This book came to reality as the Imam realized that abundant students are pursuing religious knowledge; however, they don't approach it with full benefits, putting the knowledge into practice. Hence, it provides spiritual relief and a goal of knowledge seeking and utilizing it in life²⁴. Moreover, commentaries on this work have been written accordingly, inferring into the acceptance and significance gained worldwide. At the time of Sultan Murad III, Shaykh Ibrahim ibn Ismail had written an explanation for this work, namely '*Sharh Ta 'lim al-Muta 'llim ala Tariqi Ta 'llum*'. The work '*lu 'lu ' al Maknoon*' is another commentary on this work authored by Ibrahim bin Ali al Qarisi. By the completion of this work by students from the foundation level of *Pallidars* curriculum, a student makes his intention of seeking knowledge better, implanting the goal and aim of that knowledge from the initial stage. Although this work is considered knowledge-guiding work, it has a great role for purifying the hearts of beginners from distraction to a disciplined venture. Due to this work being taught in *Pallidars* compulsorily, spiritual legacies were kept in Malabar²⁵.

An indigenous work, '*Hidayat al-Adhkiya ila Tariq al-Awliya*' ('Guidance for the Adepts to the Path of God's Friends') is another renowned *Tasawwuf* text in Malabar that has a great impact on Muslim community in Malabar to reach spirituality and devotional insights²⁶. As per the nature of this work, it is a poetry collection text that is very popular

²¹ PA Sadiq Faizy Tanoor, 126.

²² Miftachul Huda and Mulyadhi Kartanegara, "Aim Formulation of Education: An Analysis of the Book *Ta 'lim al Muta 'llim*," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* (USA) 5, no. 2 (2015): 143.

²³ Abdu Rahman Kari, "Flows and Counterflows of Knowledge Tradition and Resistance Mapping the Dars System in Malabar," *University*, 2024, 120, <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/628159>.

²⁴ Imam Burhan al-Din al-Zarnuji, *Ta 'lim al-muta 'llim*, Third (Beirut: IPEX Printing Press, 2014), 29, http://archive.org/details/talimalmutallim_202003.

²⁵ PA Sadiq Faizy Tanoor, *Dars Kitabukal Charithram Swadeenam*, 127.

²⁶ Abbas Panakkal, *Hindu Amir of Muslims: Indigenized Islam from the Indian Ocean Littoral of Malabar* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury India, 2025), 19.

and prominent in the Malabar area. In addition, it was memorized completely even by the ordinary people due to its effectiveness in individuals' lives. It aims to bring forth a believer into the presence of God by persistent self-control and waging a war with the bad temptations of the heart. Even though it is a work from Malabar, it is not only learned in India, but it's also explored in other countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia²⁷. After the analytical study about this work in depth, it is found that he has illustrated in it the step-by-step way to reach *Haqiqa*, resembling *Sharia* with Ship, *Twariqa* which represents a way to gain the presence of God with the sea, and *Haqiqa* which is the last step of the journey of spirituality with pearls²⁸. Besides that, he also articulated in it that the lifestyle should be followed for those who want the way of spirituality, and the manners must be kept in daily lives.²⁹ *Kifayat al-Atqiya wa Minhaj al-Asfiya* by Sayyid Abu Bakr Shatta al-Dimyati, *Irshad al-Alibba ila Hidayat al-Adhkiya* by Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Malibari, and *Maslakul Atqiya wa Manhajul Asfiya* by Abd al Aziz ibn Hafeed Zainuddin ibn Ali al Malibari are the well-known commentaries on this work. When it comes to its specificity in teaching, this is taught vastly with a method that used in Malabar. The students recite the lines from the class loudly to memorise them with ease. In brief, as a believer, this work is preparing to cross these barriers to achieve the proximity of God. It is written by Shaikh Zainuddin Makhdoom al Kabir, who has authored other works in *Tasawwuf* such as '*Murshid al Tullab*', '*Siraj al Qulub*', '*Shams al Huda*', '*Thuhfat al Ahibba*', '*Shu'b al Iman*', '*Kitab al Safa min al Shifa*' are among them³⁰.

'*Minhaj Al Abidin*' ('The Way of the Worshipers') of Imam al Ghazali has also been included in the foundation level of traditional *Pallidars* curriculum in Malabar. It's mainly focused on the practical steps to reach into the root of spirituality, crossing the barriers of knowledge, repentance, etc³¹. As the title of the work implies worshipping and being conscious about Allah is the only way to meet him and his heaven. He explains that a worshipper who seek knowledge with education will pass through seven stages³². *Siraj al Talib*, *Bagyat al Talibin fi Ikhtisari Minhaj al Abidin*, are the most eminent works related to '*Minhaj al Abidin*'. Through the content analysis of this work, Imam al Ghazali has prepared a systematic and structural journey to enter the straight path. For that, the first phase is knowing Allah and his path directly incorporating knowledge with worship, both knowledge and worship are the two pearls in life. Other things than these are worse which is no goodness in it. He exemplified knowledge with trees and worship with their fruits given by the tree explaining that tree is basic and it has its own priority, however the utilization from tree will be from its fruits. Hence, worship is an indispensable factor

²⁷ PA Sadiq Faizy Tanoor, *Dars Kitabukal Charithram Swadeenam*, 129.

²⁸ Sulaiman V, "Interpreting Sufism: A Study on Hidayathul Adhkiya of Zainuddin Mkhdm 1," *ISHAL PAITHRKAM*, no. 26 (2021): 90.

²⁹ Abdurahiman C. K. Mohamed, "Curriculum of palli dars and its role in the dissemination of arabic language and literature in Kerala an analytical study," *University*, 2022, 244, <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/475196>.

³⁰ زين الدين المليباري, *adhkiyaV2-azharionline* (n.d.), accessed June 19, 2026, <http://archive.org/details/adhkiyaV2-azharionline>.

³¹ Mohamed, "Curriculum of palli dars and its role in the dissemination of arabic language and literature in Kerala an analytical study," 245.

³² Mohd Afandi Mat Rani et al., "The Book of Minhaj Al- 'Abidin: The Contribution of Al-Ghazali's Thought in The Moral Education of Today's Society," *International Journal of Mechanical Engineering* 7, no. 4 (2022): 95.

with knowledge³³. In the second stage, he explains the importance of repentance towards Allah to cleanse oneself from the impurities and evil thoughts to serve Allah, apart from that, he further elucidates the introduction to repentance, conditions, and its limits, apparently giving guidelines of how someone can refrain from and give up the sins. The third stage covers through the valley of obstacles and barriers (*Awa'iq*) which mentions the worldly attractions and recreations in it that lead the individuals astray from the firm divine paths. He encompassed in this stage those to avoid from the attachments of a worshipper, including keeping distance from bad associations, whispers of Satan and the deviations of self. The matters that we should be concerned about in life to purify our hearts are controlling and appropriate usage of eyes, ears, hearts, and tongue in the proper way. Moreover, consult the internal sickness of the heart, such as the conduct of jealousy, arrogance, the disease of pride, and the adverse consequence of hurry and hastiness.

Tribulations or obstacles (*Awariz*), motives (*Bawa'ith*), impairments (*Qawadih*), praise and gratitude (*Hamd and Shukr*) are the remaining stages that went through this work. The meaning of *Zuhd*, *Taqwa*, and ultimate reliance on Allah are also discussed which elevate the personality of a believer and the sustenance of self. In short, this work portrays an almost complete replication of a virtuous life from birth to death. As a beginner, the student acquires the basic but advanced notions of life, its aim, and guidelines to lead it in a proper and straight way. In *Pallidars* systems, teachers take the classes 'word by word', explaining each word with the intention of learning the Arabic language too. Students write down each point that is contemplated by *Ustad* and meaning of the word in their mother tongue. The next day everyone enters the next *sabq* (portion) soon after studying the previous class. Through this, each student grasps the entire part of work theoretically, practically, and linguistically.

In addition to these, '*Bidayatul Hidayah*' ('The Beginning of Guidance') is one of the foundational *Tasawwuf* texts in the traditional *Pallidars* Curriculum of Malabar, which was authored by Hujjatul Islam Imam Ghazali. This work has been referred to as spiritual cultivation and a foundation to spiritual thoughts³⁴. This book is considered the preface of his masterpiece work '*Ihya Ulum al-Din*'. This is classified into two parts. The first part delves into the things that we should do from birth to death and the manners of our Islamic worship, such as prayers, fasting and alms giving. He included in it the ethical manners that should have followed in one's life, such as praiseworthy way of waking up from sleep, entering the lavatory, the rule of ablution, washing, rules of cleanliness with sand, and other actions of a believer that he follows in his life refraining from disobedience committed with the limbs, including eyes, ears, and tongue like lying, breaking a promise, backbiting, cursing, jesting, ridiculing, and making fun of people. The second part mainly focused on the habits that should be eliminated from our lives. The third part continues discussing the ethical and moral code of conduct that should be followed in a society.

³³ Imam al-Ghazali, *Minhaj al-Abidin ila Jannati Rabbi 'l-Alamin* (2020), 45, http://archive.org/details/20200825_20200825_2336.

³⁴ Ahmad Lutfi, Jaenullah Jaenullah, and Muhammad Syaifullah, "Classical Ethical Values for Modern Challenges: Al-Ghazali's *Bidayatul Hidayah* and Its Relevance to National Character Education," *Assyfa Journal of Islamic Studies* 4, no. 1 (April 2026): 47, <https://doi.org/10.61650/ajis.v4i1.973>.

Texts for Intermediate Level

Consequently, intermediate students learn ‘*Irshadul Ibad*’, ‘*Murshid al Tullab*’, ‘*Irshadul Yafi*’ as major texts of *Tasawwuf*. ‘*Irshadul Ibad Ila Sabeeli al Rashad*’ is the most famous kitab which has been learned by Major scholars today in Kerala. This work became a central point that most people in Malabar became morally better. This made a good transformation among the Muslim community in Malabar. This work is written by Zainuddin Makhdoom II. He completed this based on the two prominent works. One is from; *Al-Zawajir ‘an Iqtirafi Al-Kabair*’ by his teacher Shaikh ibn Hajar Al-Hytami. Another one is from ‘*Murshid Al-Tullab*’ by his grandfather Imam Zaonudheem Makhdoom I. The work encompassed the Manners of Sharia, rearing of children and moral advice for community.³⁵ This book leads students to the way of virtues practically and theologically. He accumulates the importance of the education through an ethical and faith cantered acquisition of information.³⁶

Similarly, ‘*Irshadul Yafi*’ is another book handled in the intermediate level of *Pallidars* curriculum. In this work its author Abdullah ibn As’ad ibn Ali al Yafi describes the importance of *Tasawwuf* and how it moulds a personality into divinity. This work stood on narrations of remembrance of God, worship, advice, reports about virtuous personalities, the explanations of excellence of the spiritually elite personalities. Yafi’ is referred to a place where his tribe Himyar were situated. His nickname was Afeef al Din. He was born in Aden in Yemen in 695 AD. He died in Mecca in 768AD. He has other works in different disciplines of Islamic studies. *Mir’at al-Janan wa-Ibrat al-Yaqzan*, *Al Tar’eeb wa Tarheeb* are his notable works. By the end of this level, a student can acquire a holistic approach to the *Tasawwuf* and applicable divine thoughts in his Mind.

Features of Advanced Level Texts

To enhance the scholarly understanding of *Tasawwuf* and become more practiced scholar, most celebrated works such as ‘*Ihya Ulum al-Din*’, ‘*Hikam al- Ata’iyya*’ have been included in the advanced level of *Pallidars* curriculum. ‘*Ihya Ulum al-Din*’ is the masterpiece *Tasawwuf* text which is taught all over the world. One of its specifications is that it has been classified into four volumes including acts of worship (*rub’a al ibadat*), norms of daily life (*rub’a al adat*), the ways of prediction (*rub’a al mubiqat*), and means of salvation (*rub’a al munjiyat*).³⁷ This work has been read for centuries in all spiritual congregations among the continents. *Ihya* has influenced all eminent scholars and changed their life into a spiritual relief. In Malabar also, ‘*Ihya Ulum al-Din*’ is an indispensable *Tasawwuf* text and it is taught in every religious institution. Abu Hamid Muhammed bin Muhammed bin Muhammed bin Ahmed Al Gazzali is the author of this work. He is an eminent and renowned Islamic scholar who lived in the 11th century. Imam al Haramaini was one of his teachers.³⁸ He is not only specialised in *Tasawwuf*,

³⁵ Shaikh Zainudheen Makhdoom, *Al Irshad Ila Sabeel Rishad* (2020), 21, http://archive.org/details/20200825_20200825_0842.

³⁶ Isnaini Prasetyaningtias, “An Actualizing the Virtue of Knowledge in Strengthening Islamic Educational Awareness: A Perspective from the Book Irsyadul ‘Ibad,” *Proceeding International Conference on Islam, Law, and Society (INCOILS)* 5, no. 1 (2026): 11, <https://doi.org/10.70062/incoils.v5i1.465>.

³⁷ Kari, “Flows and Counterflows of Knowledge Tradition and Resistance Mapping the Dars System in Malabar.”

³⁸ PA Sadiq Faizy Tanoor, *Dars Kitabukal Charithram Swadeenam*, 131.

rather he has written a plethora of works including Islamic jurisprudence, theology and astronomy. However, *Ihya* is counted as one of his masterpieces. It is a comprehensive of worldly and other worldly life and discusses the matters related to life and death. He includes many Qur'anic verses and prophetic narrations for each subject. The controversy among Islamic scholars around the world is that he added the non-authentic prophetic narrations for doing good deeds and not as proof.

Hikam al- Ata'iyya is another *Tasawwuf* text used in the advanced level curriculum of traditional *Pallidars*. This is a collection of spiritual wisdom that encourages believers to seek divinity, written by Abi al Fazl Ahmed ibn Muhammed ibn Abd al Kareem ibn Ata'llah al Sikandari who was born in Alexandria. He is a follower of the Maliki school of thought and the *Shadili* Sufi order. Scholars believe that *Hikam* is the heaven of wisdoms and has around 40 commentaries worldwide, such as '*Iqadh al-Himam fi Sharh Al-Hikam*' by Ahmed bin Muhammed bin Ajeebah Al-Hasani, '*Qurratul 'Ain fi Sharh Al-Hikam*' by Shaikh Ahmed Zaruq, '*Sharh Al-Hikam Al-Ath'ya*' by Shaikh Abdul Majid Al-Sharnubi.

CONCLUSION

The *Pallidars* system in Malabar has a historical trajectory from its early origin to the formation of a structured curriculum which systematically integrates *Tasawwuf* texts to provide comprehensive moral and ethical divine education. The curriculum's structured progression, from foundational to advanced levels, effectively imparts spiritual knowledge and Islamic ideological understanding, as exemplified by key texts. In the Foundational level, '*Muriqa'tul Qulub*' in *Asharat Kutub*, '*Ta'lim al Muta'llim*', '*Hidayat al Azkiya*', '*Riyal al Swalihin*', '*Al minhaj Al Sageer*', '*Salahuddin*', '*Minhaj Al Abidin*' '*Bidayt al Hidayat*' were included as a basic works for the beginners. Subsequently, '*Irshadul Ibad*', '*Murshid al Tullab*', '*Irshadul Yafi*' determined as the intermediate level texts which makes the students ready for advanced level learning of spirituality. In the advanced level, '*Ihya Ulum al-Din*' and *Hikam al- Ata'iyya* transform a believer into a completed spirituality and understandings about Islam and its ideologies. This integration fosters significant personal transformation among learners, enabling them to internalize *Tasawwuf* principles and apply them in daily life, thereby promoting an ethical lifestyle rooted in Islamic teachings.

Despite the enduring influence of traditional *Pallidars* education on earlier generations, the study acknowledges challenges posed by modern ideologies that have distanced from *Tasawwuf* texts in modernised institutions of Islamic Studies. Overall, this research contributes to *Tasawwuf* as a science by offering a nuanced understanding of how multiple *Tasawwuf* texts collectively shape moral and ethical education in Malabar, emphasizing the curriculum's role in sustaining spiritual and ethical values within the Muslim community. However, the study is limited by its focus of the major *Tasawwuf* texts included in the traditional *Pallidars* curriculum which may not capture the full diversity of curricula of Islamic higher education system of the region. Future researchers are encouraged to explore additional *Tasawwuf* texts both classical and modern, and incorporated empirical studies on the practical application of spiritual beliefs among students which is the core part of *Ihsan*. Additionally, the biographical insights

into the authors of these *Tasawwuf* works enrich the historical and cultural context of the curriculum, highlighting its deep intellectual heritage which opens new horizons of studies for preserving the rich heritage of Islamic education of the region.

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