

**BA FAQIH SAYYIDS OF KERALA**  
**SAYYID ABDURAHMAN BAFaqI THANGAL**

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SAYYID ABdu RAHMAN BAFaqI THANGAL

The Bafaqih family of Hadhramaut played an important role in the political and commercial life of Malabar. The family originated from Muhammad Shahir Ba Faqih who was known as Ba faqih(the jurist) among his contemporaries for his piety and knowledge. His offspring also came to be called as Ba Faqihs. His son Muhammad Moula Idid had a son with considerable scholarship and his descendants migrated to different parts of Asia and Africa in around sixteenth century. Among them Muhammad bin Umar bin Muhammad settled at Hyderabad, Muhammad bin Ahmad settled in Northern Malabar, Abubakkar bn Ahmad in the Deccan, Ali in Muhammad bin Ahamad and Sayyid Ahmad bn Hashim in Koilandy and Abubakkar bn Muhammad bin Ahmad in Nasik . It was in eighteenth century (c.1770) Sayyid Ahmad bn Hashim Bafaqi migrated to Malabar from Hadramaut as a commercial entrepreneur and landed at Paropalli in Pantalayani, now known as Koyilandy. At Malabar Bafai spent most of his time in the propagation of Islam and at his behest mosques were constructed at different parts of Malabar. sayyid Ahmad married the daughter of Ahmad Munffar and a son named Sayyid Abdulla Bafaqi was born to this couple. Abdulla Bafaqi married from the *wahat* clan of Sayyids and bore seven sons. They are:

Hashim Bafaqi,

Abdu Rahman Bafaqi,  
Muhammad Bafaqi,  
Ali Bafaqi,  
Umar Bafaqi,  
Shaikh Bafaqi and  
Zain Bafaqi.

Sayyid Muhammad Bafaqi had six sons .They are:

Abdul Qadir Bafaqi,  
Hydaruz Bafaqi,  
Abdulla Bafaqi,  
Abdul Hamid Bafaqi,  
Ali Bafaqi, and  
Hashim Bafaqi

The offspring of Abdul Qadir Bafaqi:

Sayyid Abdulla Bafaqi  
Abdu Rahman Bafaqi (Bafaqi Thangal)  
Hashim  
Ahmad  
Muhammad  
Alawi  
Sharifa Rowla (Muthu Beevi)  
Mulla Beevi  
Maryam Beevi

### **Sayyid Abdul Rahman Bafaqi Thangal**

Sayyid Abdul Rahman Bafaqi Thangal, who played a major role in religio- political life of Malabar Muslim community, was born as the son of Abdul Qadir Bafaqi and Fathima Mulla Beevi on 19th February 1906 (1323 Dil Hajj 25) at Koyilandy Puthiya Maliyakkal house. Sayyid Abdul Qadir had six sons and three daughters including Sayyid Abdu Rahman. They are: Abdullah, Hshim, Ahmad, Muhammad, Abdu Rahman, Shareefa Rouza Muthu Beevi, Shareefa Mulla Beevi and Shareefa Maryam Beevi. Abdul Qadir Bafaqi was a prolific trader that he exchanged goods between different countries. He also established trade relations with Mali, Burma and other places.

Bafaqi Thangal had his education in the house of Thattangara Kuttyammu Musliyar at Veliyancode near Ponnani. After the death of the Musliyar in 1923 Tangal continued his studies

under his son Muhammad Musliyar. After the studies, following the footsteps of his father, he turned to business making Calicut as the centre. In 1924 he started copra (dried coconut) business at Calicut copra bazaar. This was followed business in rice and started a branch at Vadagara, forty Kilometres north of Calicut. In 1949 he started the Bafaqi and Company at Mughul street in Rangoon, Burma. The company rose into eminence that it became a major exporting Company in South Asia.

Bafaqi Thangal entered politics in 1936 to campaign for his relative Khan Bahadur Attakkoya Thangal in the election at Kurumbranad Muslim constituency. Attakkoya was an independent candidate while his opponent was the Muslim League leader B. Pocker Sahib. In the election Attakkoya was victorious and his victory was chiefly due to the influence of Bafaqi Thangal. He later realized that Muslims should have a common platform and this led him to join Muslim League politics in 1938. In 1943 he became the President of the Town Muslim League and in 1947 when Malabar Muslim League President Abdul Sathar Sait left for Pakistan Bafaqi Thangal became the President of Malabar District Muslim League. When Kerala State was formed Thangal became the President of the State Muslim League. He came to be known as Qaid al Qawm (The leader of the Muslim Nation). In 1952 he was elected as the president of Malabar Produce Merchants Association. He was nominated as the member of Kozhikode Municipal Council in the same year. In 1972 after the death of Qaide Millat Ismail Sahib he was unanimously elected as the President of Indian Union Muslim League.

Thangal became the king maker of Kerala politics. He was there in the liberation struggle against the EMS ministry of Kerala in 1957. Following the dismissal of EMS ministry the Congress formed a new ministry in which Muslim League became the speaker of the Legislative Assembly, but due to differences with Congress the League left the ministry and joined with EMS Nambudirippad and in the newly formed cabinet by EMS in 1967 Muslim League leaders Mr. Muhammad Koya and Ahamad Kurikkal became the ministers for education and Local self government respectively. Later Thangal came out of CPM led coalition and joined hands with Sri C. Achuta Menon of right wing CPI. Thus League continuously enjoyed the rule and Thangal created a situation that no party can rule the state without Muslim League. Thangal's presence was crucial in the formation of all these ministries. As the leader of Muslim League and of the Muslim community he spent his whole time for strengthening the community in religious and political fields. He was there to revive the traditional Islam by assisting the creation of Samastha Kerala Jamiyyat al Ulama the body of traditionalist ulama and also serving its President ship. He chaired the Samastha Mushavara (executive) held at the Mudakkara mosque at Calicut in 1949 and it was in this meeting the body decided to start elementary Islamic Madrasas at different parts of Malabar. He presided over other Mushavara meetings also. Sometimes the meetings of both the Samastha and Muslim League were convened in the warehouse (Pandikasala) of Bafaqi Thangal. It was due to the pressure from the Samastha, Thangal decided

to keep away from the Muslim Educational Society for their “anti Islamic article” describing Prophet Muhammad as the founder of Islam instead of being its messenger. Muslim League leaders followed the way of Thangal resigning from MES. He actively participated in the formation of Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Vidyabyasa Board under Samastha Kerala Jamiyyatul Ulama and till his death he continued as the treasurer of the organization.

Bafaqi Thangal believed that Muslim revivalism can be achieved only through upholding the traditional beliefs propounded by the ulama and to keep the identity of the community, the Kerala Muslim cultural stream developed by the Sufis and Ulama should be continued. At the same time he insisted that freedom of opinion may be given to all the sects and groups within the community. He utilized the service of the modern educated class to spread the Muslim League movement to far and wide and Chandrika daily became the mouth piece, not only of Muslim League, but also of the whole community. Whenever there occurred any issues between the dissident Muslim groups, Thangal interfered and the issue was settled. His words were accepted by all sections without faltering. When northern Kerala was affected with communal riots between a section of Hindus and Muslims, Thangal reached the place to make the situation normal. During the Thalassery riots of 1960s Thangal lead peace marches and the leaders of both the communities accepted his words. His leadership heightened the prestige and morale of the community.

Thangal was there in the establishment of the different educational centres in various parts of Kerala. Farook College, Tirur Polytechnic College, P.S.M.O College, Sir Sayyid College and Jamia Nooriya Arabic college are the monuments of his educational accomplishments. He was the working force behind the Maunat al Islam Sabha of Ponnani, Tarbiyyat al Islam Sabha of Calicut, Talassery Darussalam Yatheem Khana etc. He renovated the Puzhvakkath Palli of Calicut and that of Elathur Valiya Masjid at his own expenses. Thangal visited Malaysia, Singapur, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), Indonesia and Arabia. He also established connections with the Bafaqi families in various parts of the world.

### **For Hindu Muslim Unity**

From early times, Kerala had been a place of religious toleration. The sufis, who preached here Islamic message always respected all the castes and communities. Besides, Zamorin who ruled over Kerala for centuries strictly maintained friendship among different religious people and this attitude fostered the development of his kingdom. Bafaqi Thangal, a devout Muslim in the line of Sufis, always stood for amity and toleration. His humble voice, attitude without slightest hatred towards others, his polite speech- all heightened his personal character that made him the respected leader of all. Despite the tolerable tradition in Kerala, rare incidents sometimes sparked communal fury and often Hindu or Muslim communalists created tensions in the society. When there occurred a communal clash following a meeting of the supporters Cow Protection at Payyoli, in Badagara, certain Muslim hooligans is said to have slaughtered an oxen near the

meeting place and this led to the clash between two communities in 1952. Bafaqi Thangal rushed to the place boldly and standing on a jeep he asked the people to disperse and all accepted his advice. Within short time the Collector convened a peace meeting in which Bafaqi Thangal was the chief invitee along with others. When a similar incident took place at Naduvattam in Beypore, Thangal tried his best to bring a reconciliation between the two communities, though the incident ended in police firing, killing two belonging to Muslim community. The riot took place when the Hindus of a temple decided to lead their procession through the road in front of a mosque. When Thalassery riots of 1972, took place, Bafaqi Thangal was in Makkah. The reason was the RSS attacking a Muslim shop that sparked fire of riot burning about 350 shops, two hundred houses and about seventy two houses of worship. The absence of Thangal was conspicuous, that if he was there, the riot will not spread in this manner. No one was ready to visit the place and take necessary actions as Thangal done in the previous riots. However, when he came back from Makkah he rushed to the place and talked with both Hindu and Muslim leaders.

Bafaqi Thangal performed Hajj for twenty two times. There in Makka he arranged permanent facilities to the Kerala pilgrims and also tried to regain the Keyi Rubat, the resting place of Malayali Hajis from the Saudi government. He personally presented the case before His Highness Faizal, who was then the ruler of Saudi Arabia. His popularity in Makka and Madina was so great that the king himself used to invite him to the gatherings in the palace.

Bafaqi Thangal left the world on Friday 19th January 1973 after performing the Hajj and he was laid to rest at Jannat al Mahalla in Makkah. A large gathering assembled in the Harem Shareef of Makkah to mourn his demise. People from various sections and political parties lamented over the death of the great leader. Muslim community of Kerala lost a shepherd in their political and religious life. In religion, and politics and in all walks of life Bafaqi Thangal was a model for all. When Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister, visited Kerala she invited Bafaqi Thangal for a talk, and she was so impressed with his personality that she followed him to the car with respect. As recorded by K.K. Vishwanathan, the Governor of Kerala, after his death, that the absence of Bafaqi Thangal had created a vacuum in the public life of Kerala and this will remain visible for a long time.

### **Family**

Bafaqi Thangal had married five times. The first wife was Puthan Veetil Khadeeja Beevi of Tanur, (daughter of Ponnani Jarathingal Cheriya Koya Thangal), in which there were five sons and two daughters. Sharefa Mulla Beevi, the eldest daughter was married to his nephew Sayyid Umar Bafaqi Thangal, who also was also a leader of Muslim League party. His second wife was Shareefa Amina Beevi of Koilandy and third Muthu Beevi of Koilandy Puthiya Maliykkal, both of whom died shortly. The fourth wife Shareefa Khadeeja Beevi of Chaliyam gave birth to six sons and four daughters. After the death of his former wives he married a fifth wife in which three sons and one daughter were born. His children are Hamid, Abdul Qadir, Muhammad,

Husyn, Zainul Abideen, Abubakkar, Shareefa, Ummu Kulthu (from Khadeeja), Muhammad, Ruqiyya, Abdullah, Fathima, Ahmad, Ibrahim, Ali, Hamza, Abubakkar, Umar, Hasan, Mryam, Khadeeja ((from Kahdeeja Beevi of Chaliyam), Hamza, Umar and Nafeesa (from Shareefa Beevi, Puthiyangadi).

Genealogy of Bafaqi Thangal from Prophet Muhammad:

1. Prophet Muhammad
2. Fathima
3. Husayn
4. Zain al Abideen
5. Muhammad Baqir
6. Ja'far Sadiq
7. Ali al Uraizi
8. Muhammad
9. Isa al Naqib
10. Ahmad al Muhajir
11. Abdullah
12. Alawi Salih Sahal
13. Muhammad Sahib Bait Jabeer
14. Alawi
15. Ali
16. Sahib al Mirbat
17. Alawi
18. Abd al Rahman
19. Ahamad
20. Abdullah
21. Muhammad
22. Ali Sahib al hawth
23. Muhammad
24. Abdullah
25. Ahmad
26. Ali
27. Muhammad
28. Ali
29. Abdullah
30. Shaikh
31. Ahmad
32. Hashim
33. Ahmad Bafaqi
34. Abdullah Bafaqi
35. Muhammad Bafaqi
36. Abd al Qadir Bafaqi
37. Abdu Rahman Bafaqi

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