

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT SOCIOLOGY & HUMANITIES



ISSN 2277 – 9809 (online)

ISSN 2348 - 9359 (Print)

An Internationally Indexed Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal

www.IRJMSH.com
www.isarasolutions.com

Published by iSaRa Solutions

History of Migration of P.B. Umbichi Hajee to Ceylon

Dr.Maimoonath.A.P

Head& Associate Professor

Islamic History

Farook College (Autonomous)

maimoona00asif@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The life and migration of P.B. Umbichi Hajee (1854–1936) is an inspiring story of resilience, ambition, and generosity. Born into poverty in Chaliyam, Kerala, India, he migrated to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) at 16 with little more than determination. Starting as a laborer in Colombo’s fish market, he built a successful business empire, founding P.B. Umbichi, Ahammed Umbichi & Company and becoming a pioneer in dry fish exports and real estate. Beyond business, Umbichi dedicated himself to philanthropy, establishing schools like Zahira College in Colombo and Umbichi Haji Higher Secondary School in Chaliyam, supporting healthcare through hospitals like Ashoka Hospital in Calicut, and aiding social welfare projects such as famine relief and low-cost housing. Recognized as a Justice of the Peace by the British government, he also mediated communal conflicts and even donated generously to Saudi Arabia during a financial crisis. Sir P.B. Umbichi Hajee’s life demonstrates how one person’s determination and selflessness can transform communities, leaving a lasting legacy of progress and hope.

INTRODUCTION

The 18th and 19th centuries marked a significant phase of migration from Kerala, driven by socio-economic, political, and colonial factors. During this period, Kerala was under the influence of various colonial powers, including the British, Dutch, and Portuguese, which reshaped its economy and society. The decline of traditional industries like handloom and coir, coupled with population growth and land scarcity, pushed many Keralites to seek opportunities elsewhere. The British colonial administration facilitated the migration of laborers to plantations in other parts of India, such as Assam and Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka), as well as to British colonies like Malaya (present-day Malaysia) and Burma (Myanmar)¹. These migrations not only alleviated economic pressures but also established Kerala's diaspora as a significant cultural and economic force globally, laying the groundwork for future. P.B Umbichi Hajee was one of the best examples of such migration.

¹ Ahmed Moulavi,C.N et.al, “Kerala Muslim Charithram”, Kerala,(1951),P.14

The life and legacy of Sir P.B. Umbichi Hajee is a remarkable tale of resilience, ambition, and generosity that transcends borders and generations. Born in 1854 in the coastal village of Chaliyam in Kerala², India, Umbichi emerged from humble beginnings to become one of the most influential figures in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka)³. His journey from poverty to prosperity, and his unwavering commitment to improving the lives of others, left an indelible mark on the economic, social, and cultural fabric of both Ceylon and Malabar⁴. His story is not just one of personal success but also of profound contributions to education, healthcare, and social welfare, making him a symbol of hope and progress for countless individuals.

Early Life and Migration

Umbichi's early life was marked by hardship. Born into a poor family in Chaliyam⁵, he had limited access to formal education. However, his innate curiosity and determination led him to attend an Othupalli, a traditional school where he learned basic reading and writing skills and imbibed the cultural values of his community. Despite the challenges of poverty, Umbichi harbored a deep desire to improve his family's circumstances. Inspired by stories of people venturing to distant lands in search of better opportunities, he began to dream of a life beyond the confines of his village⁶.

In 1870, at the age of 16, Umbichi made the bold decision to leave his home and family behind and embark on a journey to Ceylon. The journey was arduous, taking him through ports like Bepore and Kochi before he finally arrived in Colombo with just two rupees and six paise to his name. His initial days in Ceylon were fraught with challenges. He struggled to locate his cousin, who was supposed to help him settle in, and for a time, his future seemed uncertain. However, fate intervened when he encountered Arunachalam Shetty, a kind-hearted man who offered him work in the fish market⁷. This opportunity marked the beginning of Umbichi's extraordinary rise in the world of business.

Umbichi's work in the fish market was the foundation upon which he built his business empire. Starting with the sale of dry fish, he quickly expanded his operations to include other commodities such as coir, fertilizers, and textiles. His keen business acumen and strategic vision allowed him to capitalize on the growing export market in Ceylon, particularly with Europe. In the early 1880s, he founded his own company, Ahammed Umbichi & Company, which became a major player in the export industry. One of his most notable achievements was the introduction of "Kumbalamass," a boiled dry fish product that became a staple in Ceylon's culinary tradition⁸. His ability to navigate complex trade routes and supply dry fish to international markets, including the Middle East and Europe, further solidified his reputation as a pioneering businessman. It is fascinating to learn that a place in Colombo, Sri Lanka, is named after Chaliyam Umbichi Hajee,

² Ashraf.K.P,"P.B.Umbichi Hajee(J.P)",Chaliyam,(2015),P.15

³ Veera Keralam,Newspaper ,Ceylon,13 November 1936,P.1

⁴ William Logan, "Malabar Manual",P.14

⁵ Encyclopedia of Islam,Vol:11,P.66

⁶ Narayanan,M.G.S, " Calicut: The City of Truth", Calicut (2006),P.18

⁷ Malayalam News,Sunday Plus Seven,2013 March 10

⁸ Ramnath, Kalyani. *Boats in a storm: Law, migration, and decolonization in South and Southeast Asia, 1942–1962*. Stanford University Press, 2023,P.7

known as "Imbichi Place"⁹. This area is historically significant as it houses a mosque and a residence constructed by him during his time in Colombo. The naming of the place after him reflects his influence and contributions to the local Muslim community in Sri Lanka. This connection highlights the far-reaching impact of Kerala's merchants and philanthropists in the 19th century, particularly in regions like Sri Lanka, where they established trade networks and community institutions. The presence of "Imbichi Place" in Colombo serves as a testament to Umbichi Hajee's legacy and his role in fostering cultural and religious ties between Kerala and Sri Lanka.

As his wealth grew, Umbichi diversified his investments, venturing into real estate. He purchased numerous properties in Colombo and other major towns, establishing a significant presence in the urban economy. His investments were not limited to residential properties but also included commercial and industrial ventures, further cementing his status as a leading figure in Ceylon's economic landscape.

Contributions

While Umbichi's business success was extraordinary, it was his commitment to philanthropy and social reform that truly set him apart. He believed deeply in the transformative power of education and worked tirelessly to make it accessible to people in both Ceylon and Malabar. In his hometown of Chaliyam, he played a pivotal role in the founding of the Umbichi Haji Higher Secondary School, an institution that became a beacon of learning for future generations¹⁰. In Ceylon, he supported the establishment of Zahira College in Colombo, a school that provided quality education to the Muslim community, which had been underserved by formal institutions at the time.

Umbichi's philanthropic efforts extended beyond education to healthcare. Recognizing the need for better medical services, he contributed significantly to the establishment of hospitals and healthcare facilities. One of his most notable projects was his involvement in the creation of Ashoka Hospital in Calicut, one of the first private hospitals in Malabar. His generosity in funding these institutions ensured that thousands of people had access to life-saving treatments, many for the first time. Additionally, he supported the construction of mosques and religious institutions, reflecting his commitment to the spiritual well-being of his community¹¹.

Umbichi's dedication to social welfare was equally profound. He made significant contributions to famine relief efforts, ensuring that food, shelter, and medical supplies reached those most affected by hardship. He also provided low-cost housing for impoverished families, helping them break the cycle of poverty and build a better future. These initiatives addressed some of the most pressing issues facing the communities of Ceylon and Malabar, leaving a lasting impact on countless lives.

As his influence grew, Umbichi became a prominent figure in both business and politics. His success earned him recognition from the British government, which bestowed upon

⁹ Ashraf.K.P,"P.B.Umbichi Hajee(J.P)",Chaliyam,(2015),P.39

¹⁰ Silver Jubilee Souvenir, Umbichi Hajee High School,1973

¹¹ Ashraf.K.P,"Chaliyam Oru Pauranika Nagaram",P.10

him the title of Justice of the Peace (J.P.), a prestigious honor that underscored his contributions to the economic and social development of Ceylon¹². He also played a key role as a mediator during times of political and communal tension, using his diplomatic skills to promote stability and unity.

Umbichi's generosity extended beyond the shores of Ceylon. During a period of financial difficulty in Saudi Arabia, he made a significant donation of 10,000 British pounds to the Saudi King, a gesture that highlighted his commitment to international solidarity and his recognition of the interconnectedness of global communities.

Sir P.B. Umbichi Hajee passed away on November 10, 1936, at the age of 82. His death marked the end of an era, but his legacy endured. Newspapers in Ceylon and Malabar hailed him as the "Indian Financial Emperor," a fitting tribute to a man who had transformed the business landscape of the region. His funeral was attended by individuals from all walks of life, including prominent politicians, business leaders, and everyday citizens. Even the British government observed a period of silence in Parliament in recognition of his contributions to the empire.

Conclusion

The life of Sir P.B. Umbichi Hajee is a testament to the power of determination, vision, and selflessness. From his humble beginnings in Chaliyam to his rise as a successful businessman, philanthropist, and political figure, his story is one of resilience and unwavering commitment to the service of others. His business ventures laid the foundation for much of Ceylon's modern economy, while his philanthropic endeavors continue to impact the region. The institutions he helped establish, the communities he supported, and the people he inspired ensure that his legacy will live on for generations to come. Sir P.B. Umbichi Hajee's name remains synonymous with growth, prosperity, and the enduring belief that one individual can make a profound difference in the world.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed Moulavi, C. N. et al. (1951). *Kerala Muslim Charithram*. Kerala, p.14.
- Ashraf, K. P. (2015). *P. B. Umbichi Hajee (J.P)*. Chaliyam, p.15.
- *Veera Keralam*. (1936, November 13). Newspaper, Ceylon, p.1.
- Logan, William. *Malabar Manual*. p.14.
- *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Vol. 11, p.66.
- Narayanan, M. G. S. (2006). *Calicut: The City of Truth*. Calicut, p.18.
- *Malayalam News, Sunday Plus Seven*. (2013, March 10).
- Ramnath, Kalyani. (2023). *Boats in a Storm: Law, Migration, and Decolonization in South and Southeast Asia, 1942–1962*. Stanford University Press, p.7.
- *Silver Jubilee Souvenir, Umbichi Hajee High School*. (1973).
- Ashraf, K. P. *Chaliyam Oru Pauranika Nagaram*. p.10.

¹² Ashraf.K.P,"P.B.Umbichi Hajee(J.P)",Chaliyam,(2015),P.78



EARN YOUR MBA

WWW.IIMPS.IN



Accreditation & Ranking



UGC / NCTE Approved.

INFO@IIMPS.IN

☎ 011-41005174

R
S
E
A
R
C
H
G
A
T
E
W
A
Y

STOP PLAGIARISM



Arogyam Ayurveda
Holistic Healing through herbs



A
R
O
G
Y
A
M
O
N
L
I
N
E

PARIVARTAN PSYCHOLOGY CENTER



COLOR PSYCHOLOGY : HOW COLOR AFFECT YOUR CHILD



- BLUE** Calms your Child's Mind & Body
- YELLOW** Promotes Concentration, Stimulates the Memory
- PINK** Evokes Empathy, makes your Child Calm
- RED** Excites and energizes your Child's body
- GREEN** Improves Reading speed and Comprehension

www.parivartan4u.com



Confuse about your children's future?

भारतीय भाषा, शिक्षा, साहित्य एवं शोध

ISSN 2321 – 9726

WWW.BHARTIYASHODH.COM



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF
MANAGEMENT SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

ISSN – 2250 – 1959 (O) 2348 – 9367 (P)

WWW.IRJMST.COM



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF
COMMERCE, ARTS AND SCIENCE**

ISSN 2319 – 9202

WWW.CASIRJ.COM



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF
MANAGEMENT SOCIOLOGY & HUMANITIES**

ISSN 2277 – 9809 (O) 2348 - 9359 (P)

WWW.IRJMSSH.COM



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF SCIENCE
ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY**

ISSN 2454-3195 (online)

WWW.RJSET.COM



**INTEGRATED RESEARCH JOURNAL OF
MANAGEMENT, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION**

ISSN 2582-5445

WWW.IRJMSI.COM



**JOURNAL OF LEGAL STUDIES, POLITICS
AND ECONOMICS RESEARCH**

WWW.JLPER.COM

JLPE