



Educational Status of Muslim Women in Matriarchal Families of Malabar

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Abstract:

This paper focuses on the educational attainment of Muslim women in North Malabar in general and those who are from Matriarchal families in particular. The objectives of the study were to find out the educational status of Muslim women in matriarchal families of North Malabar and to identify the causes of their educational backwardness. Survey method was used for the study. The sample comprises of 200 Muslim women belonging to the age group of 16 to 24 years. Self-administered questionnaire and interview schedule were the tools employed for the study. Percentage analysis was used to analyse and interpret data. The findings reveal that though there seem to be progress in the school education of Muslim girls belonging to Matriarchal families, their educational attainment in higher education is not satisfactory. There are various causes that hinder their education. They include early marriage, gender disparity, more emphasis for religious education, lack of higher educational and job opportunities, financial constraints, lack of educational awareness among parents, etc. Therefore, this study suggests that, different stake holders, especially policy makers and religious leaders, should take initiatives for upbringing the Muslim women from matriarchal families of North Malabar in to mainstream of education as they are still in a backward position compared to other sections of the same community.

Keywords: Muslim women, Matriarchal, North Malabar

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is an important indicator of human development. It is the powerful instrument in bringing changes in the society and nation. Women play a vital role in bringing changes in the society. Today, majority of the Indian women are seen as a downtrodden segment due to various factors. Muslims form one of the major

minority communities in India. Sachar committee (2006) reported that the educational conditions of Muslims in India are very poor when compared to other religious groups. According to Census 2011, the female literacy rate in Kerala was 92.98%. However, the educational condition of Muslim women especially in North Malabar seems to be poor.



The region of North Malabar includes Kozhikode, Kannur, Kasargod and Mananthavadytaluk of Wayanad districts. The region is mainly covered by coastal areas and a part of the foothills of Western Ghats. Muslims are commonly known as Mappilas' in this region. According to Miller (1976), the term Mappila originated from two Malayalam words. They are 'maha' which means 'Great' and 'pillai' means the 'Son'. Mappilas are considered to be as the descendents of Arab traders. Their chief occupation is fishing, self employment and many of them are working as labourers in the Gulf countries. North Malabar is the only region in Kerala where matriarchal system of residence is still widely practiced among different communities, especially Hindus and Muslims. Earlier it was known as 'Marumakkathayam' system. Here, the name of maternal family is given to offspring as surname. Both the male and female children take their identity from the mother permanently, i.e. the descent through the female member. This means after marriage, the groom will resides in wives' house either permanently or till he moves on his own. Instead of calling the name of groom, he was always considered as 'puthiyapala' by the wife's family members and relatives throughout his life. Here, women enjoy more freedom and power in decision making. Arakkal, was the only Muslim royal family in Kerala do practices Matriarchal system. Due to the increase in the number of Gulf migrants from this region, the

education of Muslim women in North Malabar has been masked. Hence, the study needs to be analyzed in depth. It is against this backdrop, the current study is initiated.

2 Review of Related Literature

Menon(1981) conducted a study on the 'Educational Status of Muslim Women in Kerala'. He concludes that early marriage, seclusion and lack of meaningful role of the educated women in the community were the main reasons for the low level of educational attainment among Muslim women in Kerala. Hasan and Menon (2005) conducted a study on Muslim women's education in five cities of India. One among them was Calicut district of Kerala. The study concluded that there is a special need for the State to take proactive role in this regard to promote social justice and empowerment of Muslim women. Sachar(2006) pointed out that Muslims are the most economically, educationally and socially backward sections of Indian society. The literacy rate of Muslims was 59.1% which was below the national average of 64.8%. Less than 4% of Muslims were graduates. The percentage of Muslim men enrolling for Degree courses is lower than that of women. All the above mentioned studies reveal that Muslim women are backward in all aspects of development. The studies related to Muslim women in Kerala are very scanty. This motivated the investigator to conduct the present study.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

□ To find out the educational status of Muslim



women in matriarchal families of North Malabar. □ To identify the causes that leads to the educational backwardness of Muslim women in North Malabar.

3 METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out through survey method. Purposive random sampling method was used. 2.1. Sample The sample for the present study comprises of 200 Muslim women belonging to Matriarchal families of North Malabar falling in the age group of 16 to 24 years. 2.2. Tools used Self-administered questionnaire containing 20 closed ended items was used to collect data. 2.3. Statistical Techniques Used Percentage analysis was done to analyze, tabulate and interpret data.

4. Results and Interpretations

The higher educational status reveals that the enrolment rate of Muslim girls in Post-Graduation and Professional courses is found to be very less when compared to that of graduation. As the data show, 40% of girls successfully completed their higher secondary level of education. The study highlights that though there is increase in the enrolment rate of girls for graduation courses, only few of them were able to complete it successfully.

5. Major findings of the study

- The study found that there were no dropouts among Muslim girls in schools up to matriculation. At the higher educational level, the enrolment

rate of Muslim girls found to be less and the dropout rate seem to be higher.

- Majority of the Muslim girls were successfully completed their higher secondary level of education.
- The main reason for the discontinuation of the higher education in Muslim girls is related to marriage. Marriage between 17 to 19 years is considered as a suitable age by the parents for getting their daughter(s) married. Only few of them were able to complete their courses even after marriage. This is mainly because majority of the boys in this region are migrating to Gulf countries after their higher secondary education. Instead of graduating, they undergo job oriented Diploma courses. Boys do get married earlier and they prefer least educated girls.
- More emphasis was given to religious education than modern education.
- There exists gender disparity, superstition and baseless custom with regard to Muslim women education.
- Due to unemployment of parents, Muslim girls face financial stringency in continuing their education.
- Parents are not willing to send their daughter(s) to far off places to pursue education. □ Lack of higher educational institutions and job opportunities prevents the education of Muslim girls.
- Family acceptance towards higher education is not much encouraged.



- Negative attitude of parents and elderly members in the family regarding women education.
- Though Matriarchal system is widely prevalent in this region, the higher educational attainment of Muslim girls is not much encouraging. They need awareness and motivation from the parents and teachers. Teachers are considered as the role models by the students. Most of the teachers have an assumption that Muslim women will not complete their educational courses successfully. This negative attitude and prejudice from the part of the teachers need to be changed.

6. Conclusion

It is evident from the study that the educational attainment of Muslim women in matriarchal families of North Malabar are far better in their school level of education and seem to be poor in their higher education including post-graduation and profession. Various causes were identified which stand as a stumbling block in the way of getting Muslim women highly educated. The study highlights that Muslim women need awareness, motivation and role models within the community. Religious leaders can play a vital role in the education of Muslim women through his thought provoking and insightful speech especially during Friday prayers where crowd gathers at the mosque. Authorities and policy makers should concentrate on this region by providing

various packages for enhancing Muslim girls in to the mainstream of education.

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