

**MUSLIM WOMEN IN MALABAR -TRANSITION IN EDUCATION (1990-2017)****Jibin. V K, Ph. D. & C. Naseema, Ph. D.***Post Doctoral Fellow of UGC, Dept. of Education, University of Calicut, Kerala.**Prof. Director, School of Education, University of Calicut, Kerala.**Scholarly Research Journal's is licensed Based on a work at [www.srjis.com](http://www.srjis.com)*

Religions in India are characterized by a diversity of beliefs and practices. India being a welfare state and every citizen of its natives appreciate square with economic, social and educational chances to develop and advance. Yet, different religious groups demonstrate imbalance in the level of education resulting upon assorted socio-social and financial status, which causes human gathering incongruities.

The religion of Islam is the second largest religion in India, with 14.2% of the country's population. Muslims in India are socially, economically and politically backward. This backwardness is manifested in various forms - widespread illiteracy, low income, irregular employment and under representation in higher employment categories, high incidence of poverty and so on; showing a low level of human development. Muslims were late to enter social transition, especially in the attainment of education. This backwardness in education has a negative reflection on their social and economic standards of life, defined in terms of asset ownership, employment structure, marital status, assistance received from financial agencies etc. (Kareem, 1989)

Thus, Muslims are often caught in a vicious circle of low economic status that leads to educational backwardness, which in turn prevents Muslims from reaching higher employment categories. Literacy rate among Muslims in 2011 is far below the national average. Thus, provision of education is the only way to help Muslims, to empower them.

The distinct pattern of Muslim women's employment in home-based work is in part due to discrimination in formal employment. In part, it is due to the vicious cycle of poverty, lack of education and technical skills, leading to low-skilled, low-income work, and back again to poverty. Muslim women are unable to bargain for better work conditions because

much of the work they do is sub-contracted. This restriction of mobility (based on social and cultural factors) restricts their employment opportunities and wages. Muslim women have minimal participation in Government micro-finance programmes such as Self Help Groups (SHGs), Watershed Programmes and Panchayati Raj (Sachar, 2006).

Educationally, Muslims comprise one of the most backward communities in the country. Muslim girls and women lag behind their male counterparts and women of all other communities. According to Census 2011, the literacy rate among Muslims (59.1%) was far below the National average (65.1%) and other socio-religious-communities (70.8%). The Muslim female literacy rate was 50.1 per cent below the Muslim male literacy rate (Census, 2011).

### **Reasons for the Educational Backwardness of Muslim Women**

The more important causes of educational backwardness in Indian society, as summarised by the Backward Classes Commission, are as follows:

1. Traditional apathy for education on account of social environmental condition or occupational handicaps.
2. Poverty and lack of means among the communities to educate their children.
3. Lack of sufficient number of educational institutions in rural areas.
4. Living in inaccessible areas and lack of proper communications.
5. Lack of adequate educational aid, in the form of scholarship, monetary grant for the purpose of books, clothing and hostel facility (Ramkrishnaya, 1986).

Moreover, the traditional Islamic injunction restricting girls to go for education in public places or institutions-especially higher coeducational institutions-still seem to guide the minds of most of the Muslim parents (Ruhela, 1998). Lack of an adequate number of schools and infrastructural facilities in the Muslim dominated areas was a major cause of educational backwardness of this community (GOI, 2006).

### **Literacy rate of Muslim women in Malabar region of Kerala**

Literacy rate of Muslim women in Malabar region of Kerala as per India Census 2011 is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 Literacy Rate Of Muslim Women In Malabar Region Of Kerala**

Si.No.	Districts	Total Literacy Rate among Muslims (%)	Literacy among Muslim Men (%)	Literacy rate among Muslim Women (%)
1.	Kasaragod	76.26	48.32	51.67
2.	Kannur	79.68	45.42	54.57

3.	<b>Wayanad</b>	77.75	49.87	50.12
4.	<b>Kozhikode</b>	81.02	47.08	52.91
5.	<b>Malappuram</b>	79.27	47.51	52.48
6.	<b>Palakkad</b>	78.82	48.50	51.49
7.	<b>Thrissur</b>	80.81	45.51	54.48

*Source: India Census 2011*

According to Census 2011, the literacy rate among Muslims in Kerala is 66.27 per cent .The Muslim female literacy rate was 78.9 per cent which is above the Muslim male literacy rate (71.9 %). In Malabar region, Kozhikode has highest literacy rate among total Muslim population (81.02). When we focus on Literacy rate among Muslim women, Kannur district in Malabar region is in the apex level (54.57 %) than the Thrissur district (54.48). Wayanad district secured the highest position in the male literacy rate among Muslims (49.87). Another important point is that Muslim women literacy rate is higher than the Muslim male literacy rate in all districts of Malabar region of Kerala.

Education is one of the significant social indicators having bearing on the achievement and the growth of an individual as well as community. This is perceived to be highly suitable for providing employment and, thereby, improving the quality of life, the level of human well-being and access to basic social services. The progress and all-round development of a country depends upon harnessing the skills and abilities of all sections of society, regardless of caste, creed, religion and sex.

Women have been discriminated against for ages and they have not been given equal opportunities in many social, economic and cultural spheres. If we do not involve women in development activities, it not merely obstructs their own development, but also affects the progress of the entire nation. The status of women could be the best indicator of a nation's progress. Women's active role is regarded as an integral part of a progressive social system.

Education is a key indicator of human development and is included in the commonly used Human Development Indices. These indices focus on enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. So far as the minorities in India are concerned, Muslims are the largest minority in the country. Majority of this community is educationally and economically extremely backward. Almost all other minorities are educationally and economically better off. Unfortunately, Muslims have not been able to get their due share in total welfare work done by the government, for economically weaker sections of the society in the country since Independence.

Muslim women have the lowest Work Participation Rate (WPR) among all the three religious categories (Hindus, Muslims and Christians). Sixty per cent of Muslim women are self-employed--the highest percentage among all three categories. Muslim women employment as regular workers in urban areas is 15.7 per cent as compared to 27.7 per cent for Hindu women and 51.5 per cent for Christian women highlight their marginal presence in salaried jobs. As per the Census 2001, the gender gap in literacy in India was 21.6. In all the religious groups, female literacy rate was lower than male literacy rate.

In the twentieth century, the history of Muslim educational institutions in the State begins from the 15 annual meeting of the All India Muslim Educational Conference held in Madras 1901, presided over by Justice Badun. Even the emergence of Aligarh Muslim University was the culmination of many Educational Conferences, which were held in various parts of northern India. In the Madras Conference, a large number of socio-religious and educational activists actively participated in the meetings and imbibed the embodiment of its visions. As a result of this, Muslim leaders of the South took the initiative to form an organization viz. South Indian Muhammadan Association for the promotion of general education among the Muslims in Kerala. Likewise, many scholars in different parts of the State took various steps. It led to the generation of a series of community organizations in the respective regions with the object of establishing educational institutions.

### **History of Muslims in Malabar**

Modernity has not brought a great change in the Muslim women. They are; by and large tradition bound and adhere to the Quranic instruction and the age old customs and practices like the practice of early marriage prevented Muslim women from continuing their education after marriage. The traditional value system of subordination of women is still enforced by men. They do not participate in decision-making process with regards to family budget acquisition and disposal of property.

The story of Muslims in Malabar is truly unique. Muslims here lived harmoniously under non-Muslim rulers for thousand years. This harmony is reflected in the old historical mosques that litter this region- a few of them almost a thousand years old. As William Logan suggests in Malabar Manual, by the ninth century, Muslims had become a distinct community. Arabs who came and settled here married with the local population and a distinct group called Mappilas was born.

The Muslim people living in Malabar region of Kerala are called Mappilas and Malabar enjoyed a peaceful and prosperous lifestyle until the sixteenth century. At this time the Portuguese arrived in India and their piracy on the Indian Ocean disrupted the long

established trade routes on the water. This, and the brief rule of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan created the environment of distrust between the communities, which further escalated under the British.

The Mappilas of Malabar have attracted the attention of historians, ethnographers, sociologists and political scientists ever since the gaze of these disciplines was cast on the southwestern part of the Indian peninsula in recent times. Questions were raised such as education and social mobility as well as leadership and political mobilization among the Mappilas. Kerala, since long has had a sizeable Muslim population concentrated mainly in the Malabar region. It is believed that Islam came to Kerala during or immediately after the life of the Prophet Muhammed. Although Islam attaches great importance to education, Muslims have not shown much interest in education. Earlier, Muslims concentrated mainly on the in-depth study of Qur'an and Hadith and this was carried on through the Madrasahs.

### **Distorted picture**

What was formerly British Malabar, the bulk of the evidence comes from the northern parts, and that too the towns of Kozhikode, Thalasseri and Kannur. Malabar was through the Arabs who came to the Malabar Coast as seamen, etc. who got into marital relations with the local women may be defended for the coastal region, it does not explain the bulk of the Muslim population in the interior. So, the life-world and even social structure of the Mappila peasant of Eranad and Valluvanad differed considerably from those of the Mappilas of Kozhikode or Thalasseri or Kannur.

Kerala Shashtra Sahitya Parishat (KSSP) found 57.2 percent of homemakers among Muslims in Kerala, which is higher in comparison with women in other religious backgrounds and districts. The finding indicates the nature of work participation of women in the 'Developed State Kerala'. Previously, it can be noted from the study that Muslim women were limited to domestic and community spaces, in comparison with the women from other religious backgrounds.

Kerala is a socially progressive state ranked highest on Human Development Index (HDI) among all. The Muslims in Kerala are estimated at around a fourth of the state's population, who are the well-educated Muslims in the country (Census, 2011). Nevertheless, Muslim women have been largely silenced and sidelined from the national mainstream (Sachar, 2006). Social institutions viz., religious and cultural factors, patriarchal nature of family maintains and reinforces social exclusion of women especially among minorities such as Muslims, dalits and tribes (Udin, 2012). The structural disabilities on Muslim women are evident in the spheres of education, economic, social and political life, which results in their

social exclusion (Brenner, 1996). However, the national and state development efforts through empowerment actions, including educational, legal and socio-cultural have significantly contributed to empowerment of women. Evidence suggests that the empowerment needs and the levels of empowerment enjoyed by Muslim women are different in diverse socio-cultural contexts across the states in India (Ahmed, 1986; Anwar et al., 2013; Haron, 2008).

### **Muslim Women Education-Present scenario**

Lack of education is a stumbling block for status mobility. Better education and economic conditions have indeed raised the status of Muslim women. More vigorous efforts have to be put in if Muslim women are to be transformed from their traditional conservative and backward state of affairs to a modern, progressive and forward position.

The group of Muslim women are the illustrative of an emerging scenario, which they perceive as the milestone in Muslim women empowerment and in to some extent, the social empowerment of Muslim community. There are several problems, being faced by the women in her familial and social life that couldn't be smoothly accessed by the men. As a woman, I have easy access to their problems and can take up easy redressing measures "If you need a transformation in the community, make women empowerment and representation possible, you have to raise questions towards the patriarchal underpinnings of the society, and irrational distinctions," says M K Mohammed of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind.

Earlier, a state conference, organised by the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind in Malappuram district, had passed a resolution seeking representation and reservation for women in Mahallu committees. They are attempting to fashion women empowerment in their own way. The political awareness and involvement of women can be considered as a yardstick of their empowerment. Empowerment of women could address the issue and the process of empowerment moves through several stages, first participation then decision-making, third action and the fourth the capability to take responsibility for those actions (Ranadive 2005).

Presently, one of the newspapers reported from Malappuram district that a Muslim women Panchayat leader (Vice president of Pookotoor Panchayat) quit alleging male supremacy. Quoted her word "fed up with the male supremacy and unpleasant behaviour of male colleagues in the governing body". She says that the party leaders had asked her to take part only in those board meetings of the governing body and nothing else. This attitude has forced her to make an urgent decision regarding the resignation and also she said "holding the post of Vice President, it is meaningless to be there in the panchayat only for the board meetings without even being part of any other programmes". Malappuram is a Muslim

majority district in Kerala state. According to Census 2011, Muslims constitute 70.24 percentage of the total district population. The percentage followed by Hindus (27.60 percentage) and Christians (2.01 percentage) in the total.

Present situation has changed tremendously; it is because of several factors. Women 'empowerment' in the terms of girl's education, 'autonomy' freedom of movement to purchase, to go to hospital needs, to visit bank for cash transaction noted achievement of Malappuram especially all over the parts of Malabar. All this happened in a short span of time because of gulf migration of their family members or husbands and the presence of Muslim reformist movements like Nadwatul Mujahideen and Jama'at-e-Islami which floated their own women's organizations that make a new awareness and awakening among Muslim women.

Major political party in Kerala, Indian Muslim League (IUML) launched its women's wing . The post-independence period has seen many positive steps to improve the socio-economic status of women. Women themselves have become keenly aware of their right and are spearheading movements across the country against social evils. This consciousness is largely due to an increase in women's literacy although there is still a long road to travel.

Women in Kerala enjoy a higher socio-economic status when compared with their counterparts living in the rest of the country. But it does not mean complete uniformity in socio-economic status of women among all religious groups. The socio-economic conditions of Muslim women in Kerala are generally improved when compared with women in other states.

Recently, there are notable changes in the educational aspirations and attainment in Malabar region especially in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts. The important reasons for this change are the impact of gulf migration and the increasing influence of religious movements like Jama-at-Islami, Mujahidheen etc. These religious movements are instrumental in changing the outlook of the Muslims towards education and employment. The establishment of a number of institutions for providing primary education to collegiate education both in public and private sectors also changed the attitude of Muslims towards education.

### **Female Literacy in Kerala Compared with Rest of India**

The following figure shows the status of female literacy compared with other parts of India.

**FIGURE 1**

*Status of Female Literacy Compared with Other parts of India.*

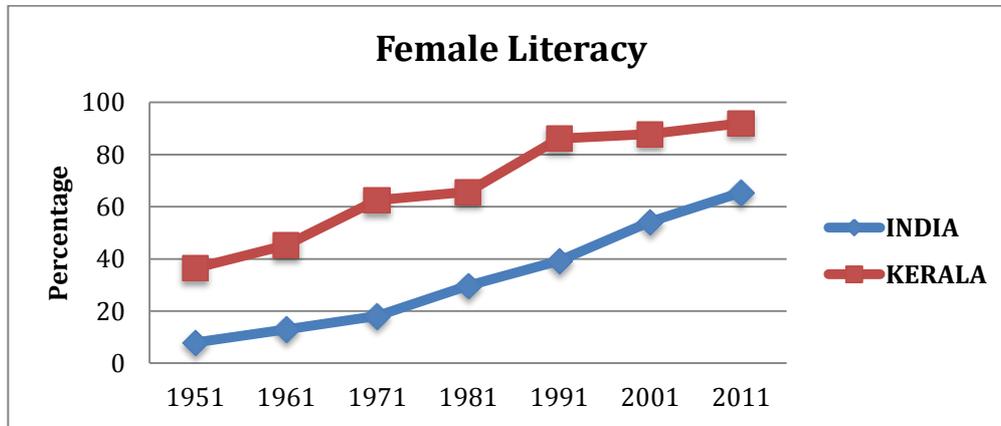


Figure shows that Kerala state having high literacy rate among Muslim women (1951-2011) when compared to total Muslim women literacy rate in India. In 2011 census, literacy rate among Muslim women is 92.2 percentage when compared to total Muslim Women literacy rate in India. (65.46 percent)

There is a silent demographic transition happening in the Muslim population in Kerala, and more significantly, among Muslim women, who are getting more and more empowered like women from other communities. (Thomas Isaac, 2013). There are two reasons for this emboldened attitude of Muslim women in tune with the mores of the 21st century: "The high literacy rate among Muslim women along with declining death rate in the community has triggered a social transition. Fifty years ago the community had low social and health indicators, especially in many districts of Malabar region. But today that is not the case. The community too wants to experience the kind of economic freedom and empowerment that comes along with financial security as enjoyed by other communities over the years,"

**Table 2 Literacy rate of Muslim Women in Kerala**

State	Religion	2001 %	2011 %
Kerala	Hindu	77.8	83.6
	Muslim	73.4	78.9
	Christian	83.4	87.5

*Source: India Census 2001 & 2011*

Previously Muslim children in the age group of 6-14 year have either never attended school or have dropped out. Muslims have the highest dropout rate in the state of Kerala. Only one out of the 25 undergraduate students and one out of the 50 post-graduate students is

a Muslim in premier colleges. But now drop out rate of Muslim students are lower than the students from Hindu religion. The Department of Education, University of Calicut hosting 10 or more Muslim female students who are pursuing Ph.D with UGC fellowship out of 25 research scholars.

## **CONCLUSION**

Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society of any country and it is considered as a potent instrument through which processes of modernization and social change come to existence. Hence, to think harmonious development of the country without educating women is impossible. Moreover, it has been rightly said that to educate a woman is to educate the whole family. Therefore, the emphasis with regard to women education should be to equip her multiple role as citizen, housewife, mother, and contributor to family income, builders of new society and builder of the nation.

Today Muslim women of Kerala are willing to express their problems without any hesitation in public and analyze social problem in their own outlook. The status of Muslim women is higher when we compare with other states of India. Education is the only factor that affects the life style, culture and status of Muslim women in Kerala. Important fact noted that Muslim women literacy rate is higher than the Muslim Male literacy rate in all districts of Malabar region of Kerala. Educated Muslim women are not ready to marry the groom whom they are financially sound. They need the educated male as counterparts. So uneducated Muslim male are confronting difficulties to getting a lady for the marriage.

Muslim girls' increasing passion for engineering and medical courses is a new trend in the educational empowerment of the Malabar region. The minority education institutions have played a crucial role in setting this trend, which can brought sweeping changes to the community. The investigator could not say it is all about full of transition but it is a fastest constructive progress from the part of Muslim women towards empowerment. There main reasons for the empowerment of Muslim women in Kerala is Economic forwardness, liberal education and socialization, non-promotion of early marriage, non-patriarchal superiority and literacy of parents.

## **REFERENCE**

- Begum, S.A & Beena M.N (2014). Empowerment of Muslim Women in Islam; Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 19, Issue 10*
- Cherayi, S & Jose,P.J (2016). Empowerment and social inclusion of Muslim women: Towards a new conceptual model; Journal of Rural Studies.*
- [http:// censusindia.gov.in/2011](http://censusindia.gov.in/2011)*

<http://indianmuslims.in/mappilas-the-first-muslims-of-india/>

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kozhikode/Silent-change-taking-place-among-Kerala-Muslims-Thomas-Isaac/articleshow/24353464.cms>

Kamat, A. R. (1981), "Literacy and Education of Muslims: A Note", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 16(23), p.1032.

King, E. M.; and Hill, M. A. (1993), *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits and Policies*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, pp. 1-10.

L. R. S. Lakshmi, (2011). *The Malabar Muslims ; A Different Perspective*, Foundation Books, 4381/4, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-

Logan, Malabar , V o l . Madras, 1951 (edn.) p. 191. *Malabarmuslims.in*

Masih, A. (2007), "Accessibility of Minorities to Elementary Education: A Case for Positive Discrimination in Favour of Muslims", in M. A. Jawaid, K. N. Jehangir and S. Bose (eds.), *Minorities of India: Problems and Prospects*, Manak Publications, New Delhi, p. 140.

Planning Commission (2008), *Kerala Development Report*, Academic Foundation, New Delhi, p. 271

Ruhela, S. P. (1998), "Religion, Social Class and Educational Opportunity: Case Studies of Eight Muslim Girls", in S. P. Ruhela (ed.), *Empowerment of the Indian Muslim Women*, MD Publications, New Delhi, p. 20.

Zabeena Hameed P. "Female education and demographic transition in Kerala with special reference to Malappuram district" Thesis. Department of Economics, Dr. John Matthai Centre, University of Calicut, 2007.