HIGHER EDUCATIONAL VISION OF THE MUSLIM FEMALE STUDENTS IN KERALA PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS

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Abstract

Education is the empowerment and freedom for excellence for the male society is obvious for the whole world. Notwithstanding, the role of education for the half of the population of the women folk is lagging behind. It is especially more concern when talks in the sense of women from marginalized sections of the society, their empowerment, status, position in the society and the role of education in the higher and other strata of the educational field. The present Scenario witnesses a decent number of women from marginalized sections are in the higher education. The scholarship or financial support of the family is like a catalyst in bringing the change in the status and position of women in society through the promotion of education. According to the 2011 census, Kerala holds first place in female literacy with 91.98%. The highest literacy rate of Kerala and the influence of gulf migrate, cover the reality regarding the higher educational status and the conditions of Muslim women in North Malabar.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, education has been playing a key role in making human beings and shaping civilizations. The importance of education has grown manifold in the contemporary world, characterized by rapidly growing competition systems of information and knowledge. Structured formal education has today become pivotal for human resource development and is a pre-requisite for economic growth. No society can afford to ignore education of its members if it desires to carve out a dignified place for itself in the globalizing world.

India, no doubt, has registered phenomenal growth in education since independence. Hundreds of Universities, institutions of research, science, and technology, thousands of degree colleges and lakhs of schools have been established in the country. Free and compulsory education for all children in the age group 6-14 years has now become a fundamental of right. In spite of many educational developments, India has not so far achieved educational goals such as Greater Access and Equal Access, delineated by National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986. The seventh plan emphasized on the enrolment and retention of girls at the primary level of education, especially in the rural areas. It includes education of weaker sections of the society. This plan also aims to increase the socio economic status of women and to bring them in to the main stream of national development. The
Tenth plan stressed the importance of minority education including that of girl’s education. The Eleventh plan aimed to increase the literacy rate of persons of age 7 or more and to reduce the gender gap and dropout rates in literacy. The plan laid thrust on Muslim girl’s education. The twelfth plan (2012-17) aimed to increase mean years of schooling to seven years, enhances access to higher education and to eliminate the gender and social gap in school enrollment including scheduled castes (SC), scheduled tribes (ST) and Muslims, those who are most educationally backward in the country.

It is a widely known fact that among all socio-religious communities or underserved groups of the country Muslims the largest minority, are the most deprived, discriminated and excluded. Discrimination against them exists both in fact and design. Findings of individual researchers, organizational surveys and government’s committees explicitly show that their marginalization and exclusion is rapidly growing day by day.

Women constitute almost half of the population of the world. Education for women is the best way to improve the healthy nutrition and economic status of a household that constitutes a micro unit of economy. Gender disparities in education and all other social and demographic indicators reflect the unequal position of girl and women in highly sexist gender discriminatory social order. While historically there has always been a gap between the boys and girls in India, the case of Muslim women has been yawning.

**Women and Education: Historical Perspective**

The history of education of the Muslim women in Kerala echoes their liberation from social tyranny. The Quran principles permit women to acquire knowledge for developing their mental powers to become useful to the community. The Quran (20:114) requires to the Muslim men as well as women, to pray, ‘Lord increase me in my knowledge’. Therefore denial of the right to education of women is un-Islamic. While Islam regards education as a necessary condition which helps women to develop their faculties, Muslim theologians who dominated the community considered the education of women Muslim girls as an unnecessary step. It was the continuation of the pre-Islamic position of women in Arabia.

The Arab came to Kerala in the pre-Islamic period with their social customs and manners, traditional behavior, and practices for trade and business. Malabar was the most important area of Indo-Arab trade in Kerala from very ancient times. Traditional education for the ordinary Mappila consisted in rote learning of the Quran in Madras as attached to the mosques. British made several efforts to education. But certain noble souls imbibed western culture and they started reforms in the Muslim society. Higher education, and particularly college education, was considered the special danger point by the conservative leadership. A Secular college education was thoroughly discouraged, and the education of girls of older age was forbidden. In the aristocratic Mappila center of Kuttichira, situated in the heart of Calicut with its many high schools and several colleges, the first girl graduated from an ordinary high school in 1964 and the first college graduate of either sex received a bachelor’s degree in 1939. Up to 1965, the Muslim allotment of seats in Kerala teacher colleges had to be turned over for general distribution because of the lack of eligible Mappila candidate. But the Mappilas, of necessity, shared in the education explosion of the state, and by 1972 almost all eligible Mappila children were enrolled in elementary schools.

It is to be noted that only after the resurgence of the Muslim community, due to the
influence of the secular, scientific and rational education of the west that they prepared their girls to send to schools of government and nongovernmental agencies. Thus, the efforts of social reformers of the Muslim community and the spread of secular education by the governmental and non-governmental agencies were three major factors which brought about the regeneration of Muslim women. The status of Muslim women rose in society and early marriage became unpopular. Inter-caste marriages are not rare. English education accelerated their intellectual growth and cultural development. It trained them for democracy and to think as human beings with a spirit of freedom and critical inquiry.

Report on the socio economic survey of Caste| Community in Kerala in 1968 shows the literacy rate of three communities, viz. Ezhavas, Syrian Catholics, and Muslims. While 44.68% of Muslims were found illiterate, only 31.03% were illiterate among Ezhavas and 21.73% among Syrian Catholic Christians. Similarly the date on enrollment at primary and middle school classes, and on the number of SSLC candidates showed that Muslims lagged behind the other Communities. Surprisingly, only 1.43% of total Muslims in Kerala attained SSLC education 28% Pre University, 0.17% graduate and 0.3% Postgraduate level education. The Survey also noted that the position of Muslim women at every stage of education was deplorably low. Illiteracy among them was as high as 54.87% and only 65% were SSLC HOLDERS. In respect of higher education, they almost drew a blank. In Contrast, the Christian community had gone far ahead in University education even among women. In fact, they overtook not only Muslims but every other community in the state at all stages of education.

Higher Educational vision of Muslim female students: Present Scenario

At b there is a competition among Muslims girls to study western science, technology, history, literature, Political Science, Philosophy, Economics, Statistics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Veterinary Science and many other branches of knowledge. This revolution in the history of education of Muslim women in Kerala and the benefits of reservation n job opportunities improved their status and made them self-reliant in society and played a major role in the growth of national consciousness. Still it is a widely admitted sociological fact that a large number of Muslim girls and women are even now struggling hard to receive basic human rights, respect, and education means of livelihood, vertical social mobility, u and happiness. Illiteracy and marginal education cause these women to suffer in looming darkness and contribute to severe handicaps in meeting the demands to cope with life situations. The community requires preparation to adequately absorb the benefits of available educational provisions. This preparation must come from within the communities own internal efforts and resources. Leadership and more initiative should come from the few fortunate women, who have pioneered the breaking of social barriers, with the support of the far-sighted, and the powerful, and by harnessing all available governmental and nongovernmental resources.

Statement of the problem

The Muslim community in Kerala constitutes 26.56% (2011 Census) of the total population of the state and the Muslim women account for the major minority female population. In the present scenario, Muslim women in Kerala have attained better economic and educational status when compared with the Muslim women of
other Indian states; particularly the northern states. But, with regard to their social status, not much difference is noticed and in fact, they remain almost in the same crust. Though, educational and economic upliftment are the positive signs of women progress, as far as Muslim women in Kerala are concerned, their status and role behavior have to conform to male role expectations with the result that even today they hide themselves behind the screen in terms of involvement in social and political life and the dropout rate in the higher education sector is very high.

II. OBJECTIVES

The main intention of the work is to study the following objectives in connection with higher education and Muslim women in Kerala.

1) To examine the recent trends in higher education enrolment of Muslim female students in Kerala.

2) To find out what factors have motivated children of these groups to go to colleges and what factors account for those who drop out?

Methodology of the study

The current study is based on secondary sources. The statistical data has been selected from various sources of earlier studies. The data has been explored to assess the actual condition of Muslim women presence in the higher education sector of Kerala, missing link and focus of participation of minority women candidates in the higher education.

Growth in Enrolment of Women in Higher Education

The rate of enrolment is described as the percentage of actual enrolments in higher education, regardless of age, in a given academic year, to the 18-to 23-year old population eligible for higher education in that year.

There has been a phenomenal growth in the number of women students enrolled in higher education, since independence. Women enrolment was less than 10% of the total enrolment on the eve of independence and it rose to 49.01 % in 2011. The pace of growth has been particularly faster in the last two decades.

Table: 1 Percentage of girl’s enrolment to total enrolment in India by stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary Education</th>
<th>Secondary Education</th>
<th>Higher Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As the data in table 1 shows that the number of women enrolled increase 10% (50-51) to 46.2 % in 2010-11. Distribution of women enrolment by state shows that the percentage of increase has been almost static in the enrollment of women as compared to the total enrollment in all the states during 2016-17 over the preceding year. Among the states, Kerala with 61, 00 % topped in terms of women enrolment as a percentage of total enrolment of the state.

Key Results of the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2015-16.

- There are 799 Universities, 39071 Colleges and 11923 Stand Alone Institutions listed in AISHE, out of which 14 Universities are exclusively for Women, 4 in Rajasthan, 2 in Tamil Nadu and one each in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttarkhand and West Bengal.
Total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 34.6 million with 18.6 million boys and 16 million girls. Girls constitute 46.2% of the total enrolment.

Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India is 24.5% which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. GER for male population is 25.4% for females, it is 23.5%.

Distance enrolment constitutes about 11.05% of the total enrolment in higher education, of which 46.3% are female students.

Uttar Pradesh comes at number one with the highest student enrolment followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

SC Students constitutes 13.9% and ST Students 4.9% of the total enrolment. 33.75% students belong to OBC. 4.7% students belong to Muslim minority and 1.97% from other minor community.

Taking a look at the male-female ratio at each level, the trend is of higher male than females in almost every level, except M Phil, Post Graduate Certificate, wherein, the female enrolment is slightly higher than male enrolment. Student enrolment at undergraduate level has 53.3% male and 46.7% female. The Diploma has a skewed distribution of 70.4% males and 29.6% females. Ph. D levels have 59% male and 41% females.

Higher Educational enrolment and Muslims- Recent Trends

According to All India Survey on Higher Education 2014-15, in proportion to their population, Muslims were worse off than scheduled cast (SC) and scheduled tribes (ST). Muslims comprise 14% of India’s population but account for 4.4% of students enrolled in higher education. The situation has worsened over the last half century. According to the 2006 Sachar Committee, appointed to examine the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community.” In younger SC|STs (aged 20 to 30), the committee reported 3 times the proportion of graduates as in older SC|STs (aged 51 years and above). Among Muslims, the committee found double the proportion of graduates among younger Muslims compared to older Muslims, a widening gap between Muslim men and women compared with ‘All others’, and an almost certain possibility that Muslims will fall far behind even the SCs | STs, if the trend is not reversed.” Since Rajindar Sachar completed his report a decade ago, the gross enrollment rate of Muslims doubled from 6.84% to 13.8%.

According to Indian Muslims and higher education; a study of select Universities in North and South India, a 2013 comparative analysis in Kerala, Karnataka and Andre Pradesh, the representation of Muslims in higher education is three times the rate in non-minority institutions up worth. Indeed, the other comparative study of select Universities in North and South India, by Syma Iqbal, assistant Professor at Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi, found that Universities in Karnataka, Andre Pradesh, and Kerala were enhancing access to higher education through reservation and by offering financial assistant seven times the proportion of Muslim students were using scholarships in Southern Universities than in the North.

Problems of Muslims education in India

Indian culture is distinct in nature where each ethnic group has the liberty to maintain their regulations identity. Muslim society of India is very heterogeneous in nature mainly because of the influence of caste system; Muslims are among most backwardness in India. They are not taking care of their educational advancement by the advantage of constitutional provisions. The problem of backwardness is a long-term process. There are various reasons for Muslim backwardness like anti-
Muslim attitude taken by British before independence, Riots, communal violence and insecurity, poverty, negative attitude towards girls education, traditional Madrasa system etc.

Higher Educational Problems of Muslim Female Students in Kerala

In Kerala considered a role model for other parts of the country, almost all Muslim children up to the tenth slandered are in school, numbers that compare well to that of other communities. Yet the story is very different when one looks at higher education. Kerala has for long had a progressive Muslim movement that has encouraged the community to take up education. While there was some opposition to girls joining educational institutions after India’s independence, the Kerala Muslim Aikya Sabha (a constitution of various Muslim Organizations) kicked off a renaissance movement that helped in changing many of those initial perceptions. 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. According to Indian Muslims and Higher Education: A study of select Universities in North and South India, a 2013 comparative analysis in Kerala, Karnataka and Andre Pradesh, the representation of Muslims in Higher Education is three times the rate in nonminority institutions up North. Though the Muslim community has seen several positive changes over the past decades, the dropout rate among Muslim female students is very high. The study was done by Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU) from 2009 to 2011, 3% of the 1.6 lakh students who took admission in Engineering Colleges have dropped out the course midway. In 2011, about 4% of the 1.3 lakh students had chosen to leave the course. And the number is increasing steadily. The dropout rate among Muslims is higher than the general population (17.6%), compared to the all India average of 13.2% (NFHS-2013-14).Rakesh Basant, Professor of economics at Indian Institute of Management, Ahmadabad, and a member of the Sachar Committee said: “High dropout rates among Muslims, especially after middle school are to blame for the communities small pool of youth eligible for higher education and therefore, low share of higher education enrolment.”

Higher educational dropout among Muslims: As a policy issue.

A dropout is defined as “any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a programme of studies without transferring to another elementary or secondary school.” Although school and college enrolment rates have steadily been increasing for the last hundred years or so, thousands of undergraduate’s dropout of college every year. This causes financial losses to the college in question, let alone students themselves, who lose not just for money, but time and self-assurance as well.

There are many reasons why a student especially the women dropout from college or not able to complete higher education. Migration of families, marriage, lack of colleges, lack of infrastructures such as drinking water and toilets, poverty, availability and accessibility are the big reasons why students dropout from colleges. The variations are sharper if the data is disaggregated to District level.

Kerala, which stands out from the rest of India with 94% literacy rate, has achieved another distinction of having the lowest dropout rate of students in the country.(The Hindu-18th March 2013.) wayanad district had the highest overall dropout rate of more than 1%.However, the rest of the 13 districts the state has less than 0.5% dropout rate. While more young women are enrolled in
higher education than ever before, they are either marrying early or not finding or not looking for jobs, according to an Indian Spend analysis of various data. The enrolment of girls in higher education increased from 39% to 46% from 2007 to 2014, but female participation in India’s labour force declined to a low of 27% in 2014 from 34% in 1999. According to a 2005 study by the IMF, almost 12 million women are enrolled in undergraduate courses, but few continue to professional courses: 600000 women were enrolled for Diploma courses in 2013, the latest year for which data are available. Even fewer women sign on for Ph. Ds; only 40% of PhD candidates are females.

In 2016, girls were more successful than boys in clearing 10th standard exam of a National Education Board, a trend that has held over 7 years. So what happens to these girls after the Board exams? Although the median age of marriage has increased, it continues to be low: 19.2 for women in 2011, up from 18.2 in 2001. After graduation, numbers of Men increase, women decrease. As Basant (member-Sachar Committee) says, “supply side interventions”, such as scholarships for students and good neighborhood schools, to ensure more Muslim children pursue higher education must be needed.

III. CONCLUSION

Women constitute almost half of the population of the world. Education for women is the best way to improve the health nutrition and economic status of a household that constitutes a micro unit of nation economy. While more young women in India are enrolled in higher education than before and apparently more successful in clearing 10th standard board exam than young man, they are either marrying or not looking for jobs or higher education by several reasons. The enrolment of girls in higher education increased from 39% to 46% from 2007 to 2014, but female participation in India’s labour force declined to a low of 27% in 2014 from 34% in 1999. Theoretically, it is necessary to stress that the dominated explanations for the failure and dropout of the University students are marriage, resource scarcity, inappropriate vocation choice etc. There could be some underlying reasons related to dropout. It may cause structures or academic disabilities. Girls are expected to contribute to the household at a younger age than boys. She is being trained for the role of a wife, mother etc., whereas boys are trained for a job. We also see a fear that educating girls causes excessive independence and this is seemingly manifested in the attitude that parents take to a girl’s education. Another is infrastructure barriers. There are multiple factors that contribute to college dropout rates and not all solutions are available to every student. But a combination of support possible coupled with flexible academic schedules could reduce this dropout rate.

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