

# Appearance of Education As implement for Empowerment and Liberation of Muslim Women

Dr.Vigimole P S

---

**Abstract:** Educational progress has catalyzed profound socio-economic shifts within the Muslim community, sparking a noticeable transformation in the perspectives of Muslim women across various regions. Many superstitious beliefs have been relinquished, leading to a more subdued and meaningful celebration of social events like marriages. Muslim women are no longer confined to their homes; rather, they are actively participating in learned professions and engaging in various social activities. Education has played a pivotal role in the emancipation of Muslim women, empowering them to break free from traditional constraints. Additionally, the infusion of funds from the Arabian Peninsula has further accelerated the transformation of the lifestyle of Muslim women.

**KEYWORDS:** Education, Women, Muslim, Gulf, Hijab, Niqab, Burqa, Abaya, Pardha, Malabar, British, Social, Arabian Peninsula.

---

Date of Submission: 14-10-2023

Date of Acceptance: 30-10-2023

---

## I. INTRODUCTION

Muslim women have not achieved marked progress in the field of education despite financial stability and encouragement from the government. So more and more endeavors should come from their parents and women's organization has to raise the educational standard of Muslim women. Educational and intellectual pursuits would emancipate them from many miseries of life. Muslim women should come out of their self-made prison. They should not miss any opportunity to be educated. Education is the remedy for most of the ills of Muslim society.

## II. THE DYNAMIC JOURNEY

Over the last few decades, Muslim women have undergone innumerable changes at different levels of their activities, despite various obstacles and obstructions emerging from the conflicts between traditionalism and modernity. The Quran has certainly upheld the doctrine of gender equality. Before the 20th century Muslim women in Malabar lagged behind the Hindu women at all levels of their activities. They were under segregation and were controlled by the orthodox segments of society. Now they have emerged successfully from the conflicts between the forces of tradition and modernity. This paper presents an insight into the changing scenario of Muslim women of Kerala in general with special reference to the changing position of Muslim women of Malabar.

The position of women under Islam has been a subject of controversy between the educated and progressive sections and conservative sections of society. When the Holy Scriptures and nature provide much importance to women, she has been treated as an inferior being compared to men. Gender equality is accorded by the prophet and the rights and duties are performed by both parties equally. The Quran has greatly improved the social status of women and laid down definite norms against mere customs and usages. But in Malabar, it is a reality that she has been marginalized under male domination.

The Abaya or Burqa system among Muslims has been a subject of controversy between the old conservative school of thought and the new enlightened section of Muslims brought under the influence of Western education and culture. There is no doubt that the Burqa system, as it exists among middle-class Muslims, is unquestionably present. It is purely a religious custom. Women in early Islam were not confined to their homes, they came out on occasions under the stress of economic, social, and religious necessity. The Unnecessary intermixture of the genders was never approved of by Islam and runs counter to the whole spirit of its teaching.

The advocates of the Burqa or Pardha system contend that Islam promotes the idea of safeguarding women by encouraging modesty and preventing the display of charms. This interpretation challenges the notion that Islam aims to confine women within their homes. The Quranic directive for women to stay in their homes and avoid displaying their charms is seen as a response to the societal norms of pre-Islamic Arabia, where women faced social and legal challenges yet freely moved about and engaged in extensive interactions with

strangers. Islam sought to replace this lifestyle with one centered on decency and responsibility. Contrary to the belief that Islam prohibits women's movement outside their homes, the emphasis on modest dress and behavior is viewed as a means to protect women's honor and dignity from potential harm. The use of the Burqa or Pardha is not perceived as an obstacle to social change among Muslim women. Instead, they embrace both traditional and modern dresses, and attending mosques is no longer a restricted practice for them, signaling a shift in societal norms.

However, the question remains unresolved regarding whether women who venture outside their homes are allowed to uncover their hands, feet, and faces, and whether wearing a veil is obligatory. A significant consensus exists among Muslim scholars, jurists, and religious authorities who argue that veiling the face of women is not a mandatory practice. Historical evidence, drawn from the traditions of the Prophet, supports this perspective. In the days of the Prophet, Muslim women frequently left their homes to fulfill economic, intellectual, and religious needs without necessarily donning a veil but adhering to the practice of wearing loose garments.

There has been criticism of Islam, particularly in the context of polygamy. Some critics argue that while polygamy is allowed under specific conditions, it has been a source of controversy and criticism. Islamic teachings do present polygamy as a provision under specific conditions but not as a compulsory practice. It is considered optional, and the emphasis is on justice and equality among wives. The mention of polygamy being permitted in the sociological context, especially for the well-being of the weak and orphans, is in line with the understanding that polygamy may be allowed to address specific social needs. During the time of the Prophet, there was a lack of formal matrimonial laws as detailed in later Islamic jurisprudence. The practice of polygamy was regulated with certain conditions introduced by Islam. Islamic law limits a man to a maximum of four wives, acting as a form of restraining legislation. This is specified in the Quran (Surah An-Nisa 4:3). The mention that polygamy was introduced to help helpless women and prevent them from falling into destitution aligns with the idea that polygamy could be a social response to certain circumstances.

Islamic teachings do consider marriage as a civil contract entered into by the mutual consent of the bride and groom. It is also viewed as a highly sacred bond with religious and social importance. Islam permits divorce under certain circumstances, and the Quran emphasizes efforts at reconciliation before resorting to divorce. Divorce is seen as a permissible but discouraged option, especially after all attempts at reconciliation have failed. The pronouncement of Triple Talaq cannot be made in a single utterance. But there should be an interval between the first, the second, and the third Talaq. This gap is given for reconciliation.

It's important to note that interpretations of Islamic teachings can vary, and different scholars may offer nuanced perspectives on these matters. The context of these teachings is significant, and understanding them often requires considering the historical and social contexts in which they were revealed.

The Muslims of Malabar followed the matrilineal system of inheritance which was against the Islamic law of inheritance. This was a distinctive feature of Muslim society. It is a clear fact that in many areas of social life, they have adopted the elements of Kerala culture ranging from dress habits to marriage practices. In the marriage ceremony, Nikah is a very important aspect of the marriage custom.

Numerous criticisms surround the issue of property rights in Islam. Concerning these rights, a son is entitled to a 2/3 share, while a daughter is allocated only a 1/3 share in the inheritance. The Quran asserts that a son is bestowed with the exclusive responsibility of caring for aging parents and providing sustenance for them. Additionally, the son is obligated to fulfill the Mahar, a bride gift, and forgo a sum of gold to the bride. These responsibilities contribute to his entitlement to a double share in the inheritance.

Prophet Muhammad unequivocally stressed the significance of education, declaring it a crucial responsibility of fathers towards both their sons and daughters. Despite being pioneers of learning in the Middle Ages, Muslims eventually faced a decline in vitality and progress due to the influence of orthodox Ulema, descending into obscurantism, ignorance, and superstition. The orthodox Ulema, resisting progress, placed numerous obstacles in the path of educating the Muslim masses. In particular, the education of Muslim girls was prohibited in Madrasas, limiting instruction to the rote memorization of the Quran and basic religious knowledge.

Indian Muslims, as a whole, lagged in English education due to neglect and indifference. There was a prevalent objection within the Muslim community against the study of English, rooted in the belief that learning the language would pose a threat to their religious identity. According to traditional Sunni interpretations, it was not mandated by Islamic law to learn English or any language of non-Muslim communities, except for practical necessities such as responding to letters or engaging in religious debates with people of other faiths. This attitude weakened the position of Muslims generally: they began to lose all over India and passed through such a different situation as a result of their refusal to accept education on English lines. It was a necessary passport to success. Muslims as a class were illiterate and Madrasa education was the system of education that was predominant in the Mappila community acquired a hundred years ago. The opposition to higher education had

blocked their progress and retarded the community economically and created a public image and private mentality of backwardness.

### **III. EMPOWERING CHANGE**

The social and religious reform movements inaugurated in the second half of the 19th century aimed at restoring the pristine parity of Islam to relinquish all superstitions, beliefs, and un-Islamic practices it also aimed and spreading modern education among the masses. The movement met with such resistance from the orthodox occasions the difference of opinion even led to conflict between the two factions.

Western education is recognized as a potent factor for their change. Like all other conservative societies, the Muslim society was not free from these concepts. It was based on superstitions and irrational beliefs which are purely against the principles of the Quran. This was the social condition that prevailed in Malabar till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Western education had spread in Malabar during the first half of the 19th century.

However the Muslims had opposed Western education from the beginning since it was introduced by the British, the opposition to British rule found expression in a series of violent outbreaks that roused Malabar intermittently in the 19th century. It was this hatred against the British that created in their minds an unyielding opposition to all things related to Western concepts. The community viewed the colonial language as the language of the devil and Malayalam as the language of the idolaters. This is due to the rigid type of training given in the Madrasas. As a result, the Muslim women could not achieve their own space in the society.

Consequently, the system of education introduced by the British was opposed to the belief that it threatened to subvert the very basis of the Islamic faith. As W.H. Hunter observed our system of public education has awakened the Hindus from the sleep of the centuries and quickened the inert masses with some tradition unsuited to the requirements and hateful to the religion of the Muslim people. Therefore they opposed secular education vehemently.

### **IV. TRANSFORMATIVE PATHS**

As early as 1871, responding to recommendations from a government-appointed committee on Mappila education, efforts were initiated to encourage the learning of Malayalam, encompassing reading, writing, and arithmetic, alongside religious education. This initiative was implemented through incentives offered at Othupalli or Maqtab, which were single-teacher schools situated in local mosques. The imam of the mosque, also serving as the Othupalli teacher, provided basic Islamic education to children in the area, albeit progress was slow. The Mappila community, accustomed to Arabic Malayalam, found the transition to the vernacular language not entirely welcome despite the competence of the Mullas in delivering instruction.

The education of girls received a great boost as encouragement was forthcoming on the part of the government in the form of various incentives. Another significant achievement in the educational sphere was the establishment of many schools for Muslim girls in different parts of Malabar to impart religious education as well as secular education.

After 1940, the steps already taken to foster education were only continued and no new measures were adopted. However, the impact of modern education began to be felt among the common folk more and more educated and philanthropic persons in the community began to take active steps in establishing schools and institutions for higher learning for the benefit of the students in the community. Thus gradually education became widespread among them in Malabar.

The advancement of Muslim women's education, social standing, and economic independence cannot be solely attributed to Western education; rather, several other factors have played pivotal roles. The migration from West Asia has notably contributed to the rise in literacy rates, especially among women in the Malappuram region. Undoubtedly, a significant social transformation has taken place in the traditional status of Muslim women in Malabar, where they have actively challenged conservative values and emerged from societal constraints. This newfound courage and confidence have propelled them towards empowerment. The multifaceted impact of modern education, economic independence, socio-religious reforms, expansion of trade, and the inflow of cash from the Arabian Peninsula has collectively led to a remarkable improvement in the lives of Muslim women. These factors have not only contributed to their educational and economic well-being but have also fostered positive social changes, enabling them to break free from traditional norms and actively participate in various aspects of life.

Muslim women in Malabar and other regions of Kerala were in the process of transitioning from orthodox and traditional norms to a considerable extent of modernization. They are breaking free from confinement and segregation. As widely acknowledged, education serves as a pivotal factor in the development of various aspects of our lives. The pursuit of education is essential to unlock the potentialities of human beings and broaden the mental horizons of individuals, a belief that Muslim women are increasingly embracing.

The credit certainly goes to socio-religious reformers and various organizations that have rendered meritorious services throughout Kerala, guiding both Muslim men and women towards the path of progress and shielding them from the pitfalls of social backwardness, ignorance, and superstitions. These reformers advocate change from social, cultural, and educational perspectives, and their efforts have undeniably yielded many positive results within Muslim society. Thanks to their pioneering work, a substantial number of women are now attending schools and colleges. Among them, we find teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, politicians, and social workers who actively participate in women's prayers held within the mosques.

## V. CONCLUSION

Education emerges as the catalyst for profound transformation within Muslim society, offering not just financial security but, more importantly, unlocking vast realms of knowledge for women. Through the empowering force of education, Muslim women stride confidently, architects of a brighter future not only for themselves but for the entire Muslim community. Let us acknowledge, with unwavering credit, the tireless efforts of socio-religious reformers and various organizations across Kerala. Their meritorious services have not only guided Muslim women onto the path of progress but have also shielded them from the clutches of superstitions and ignorance. Education, a potent agent of change, endows Muslim women with the ability to shape their destinies, undergo personal metamorphosis, and cultivate an unshakeable inner strength. This, in turn, gives rise to a profound sense of positive self-image and an enduring spirit of respect.

## REFERENCES

- [1]. Shariat Ali, *Muslim Women in the Eyes and Hearts of Prophet*, Trivandrum,1990
- [2]. Ara Ashraff, *Muslim Women in Changing Perspective*, Delhi,1992
- [3]. Asher Ali Engineer, *Status of Women in Islam*, Delhi,1987
- [4]. Safiya Iqbal, *Marriage Women and Islamic law*, Delhi,1991
- [5]. S.M.Muhammed Koya, *Mappilas of Malabar*, Calicut,1983
- [6]. Roland E Millar's *Mapilla Muslims of Kerala*, Madras,1976
- [7]. SyedMoinudeen Shaha Islam in Kerala, Trichur,1974
- [8]. Stephen Frederic Dales, *The Mapillas of Malabar*, Oxford,1980
- [9]. A.P.Ibrhium Kunju's *Mapilla Muslims of Kerala*, Trivandrum,1989.

Dr.Vigimole P S. "Appearance of Education As implement for Empowerment and Liberation of Muslim Women." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention (IJHSSI)*, vol. 12, no. 10, 2023, pp. 70-77. Journal DOI- 10.35629/7722