

# **STUDY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MUSLIM COMMUNITY OF KUTTICHIRA AREA OF KOZHIKODE CITY**

## **Introduction**

In this study, we want to examine the extent – both breadth and depth of domestic, gender violence, within the households of muslims of Kuttichira area of Kozhikode city. This community which is traditionally engaged in trade, has been very little studied from sociological perspective before. This is a matrilineal community living in ‘Akams’ with sprawling verandas, courtyards, lot of bedrooms called ‘Ara’ and as many number of kitchens. No study has yet been made of the lives of women who live in these peculiar matrilineal households from a feminist perspective. Thus the study of the pattern of violence through which women of Kuttichira have to undergo, which becomes one of the main hindrances to their development becomes important.

## **Specific Objective:**

1. To find out the degree of gender violence – both physical and psychological – between spouses and other blood relatives in these families.
2. To find out the breadth and depth of the problem of child abuse and incest these families experience
3. To find out the extent to which the not so uncommon practices of homosexuality.
4. To find out the degree of dowry violence, due to the recent affluence and influence of the consumerist culture.
5. To find out the rate of divorce and speculation, and how the personal laws affect the lives of women and children.
6. To find out the role of religious fundamentalism coupled with very deep – rooted patriarchal ideology in intensifying and perpetrating all these forms of violence.
7. To find out whether the resulting total helplessness of the women leads her into the flesh trade

These objectives are elaborated in the next section.

### **Statement of the problem**

By violence is meant any action or structure that compels another person to act against one's own will. It encompasses all forms ranging from physical violence to verbal emotional and psychological abuse. Gender violence refers to those forms of violence experienced by women due to the unequal power relationships of domination and subjugation between men and women in the existing patriarchal structure of family and society. Violence experienced through the sexual division of labour in the family and society at large are also part of this gender violence. Gender – based violence was established internationally as a developmental issue at the U.N decade for Women's meeting in 1985.

Domestic violence is violence occurring among family members, usually in or near the residential setting, which is having a gender dimension. Violence of the husband on the wife is one of the main manifestations of this violence. There are other types of violence for example, violence perpetrated by the in-laws, by brothers on sisters and by sons on their mothers however, it should be recognised that violence within the domestic sphere is fundamentally linked to the gender violence in other domain i.e; street, work place, etc.. Gender violence in any one domain is linked to and enables violence in others . Therefore, violence within the so-called 'private' domain of the household should be recognised for its societal, political nature and not dismissed as private. It means this question of domestic or familial violence has to be dealt with as a political one, thus having a definite scope for analysis or reform .

In this context, it is very important to study the situation of muslim women in the Kuttichira area of Kozhikode city. Kuttichira muslims, Called the Koyas, live on the Arabian Sea coast. They are traditionally a trading community. Kuttichira and Idiyankara – known as the Bagdad of Malabar – muslims are having a very typical matrilineal households with a system of visiting husbands. Child marriage has been the norm. Girls used to be given in marriage at the age of 11 to 13 . Polygyny was respectable and accepted. Unscrupulous and irresponsible divorce. There has been a system of Arab sailors marrying teenage girls who go back to their native place after a period of honey-moon, which is very short - never to return. These girls then have to cope up with the problem of looking after children born out of the bond. Homosexual practices among the menfolk are common which may also effect the relationships between spouses. Until two to three decades before, girls, were not generally sent to schools, but were sent

strictly to religious classes (Oathu) in a very early age. The role of women were typically that of delivering machines whose only purpose in life is to satisfy men's lust and look after children. Almost every year a child is born. By the age of 30 to 35, women would have become grandmothers. Thus the socialization a girl undergoes make them willing to accept their totally subordinate, powerless and inhuman position through religious and patriarchal preachings. This is one of the main form of psychological violence. Women are conditioned to accept the stereo-typed gender roles prescribed by the religion and patriarchal community unquestioningly. This hinders their healthy development both psychologically and physically. The incidence of sexual violence such as child abuse and incest are rampant. Dowry violence and wife battering are in the increase.

Muslim personal law, just as any other religious personal laws in India is starkly discriminatory to the female sex. The position of Muslim women generally is total powerlessness with triple talak and polygyny. In this situation, compared to muslim women in other parts, women in Kuttichira are in somewhat better position, because they live in their own apartments called 'Ara'; and not in the husband's house as is the general practice. While women in the second category are kicked out of the house the moment their husbands divorce them. Kuttichira women have the protection in their 'Akams'. As a result, while the other women are easily trapped into the 'flesh' market. Kuttichira women by and large don't end up there.

Since more than 3 decades, there has been an exodus to the Gulf countries for employment-largely by menfolk. Pattern of life are changing. There is a growing awareness of the need for education. Lot of english medium schools have been functioning since 10 to 15 years, largely meant for children of gulf emigrants. Along with affluence has come the consumerist culture coupled with demands for dowry which was unheard of before. Among those emigrants who can afford a separate house, nuclear family is becoming the norm..Along with the acceptance of the need for women to get educated, there is a conscious attempt to bring women out of their domestic dwellings. The Mujahid movement which gives stress on the importance of education and also promotes women praying in mosques is gaining roots among Kuttichira muslims. There has been a very heated discussion on women's right to go to the mosque for prayer. Muslim women's organization like the Girls Islamic Organization actively participated in agitation against world beauty contest recently held in Bangalore which was organized by the co-ordinated body of various women's organizations called the Womens Action Forum. Religious Fundamentalism coupled with purda culture is being promoted aggressively by some political and religious organizations. Though this is a general case in the Malabar

area the process of change among Kuttichira women in particular seem to be very slow compared to the other parts of Malabar.

### **Main Research Hypothesis**

The purpose of my research is to find out whether these matri-local households has protected women(compare to patrilineal households) from domestic violence and whether the current changes are eroding the protection of the above mentioned system the growing influence of education which gives an opportunity to women to develop thir individual capacities has been counteracted by religious discourses in the mosques and social conditioning of women in the stereo-typed image of typical wife. The media-women's magazines like Vanitha, Grihalakshmi, Aramam, Mahila Chandrika etc.. as well as the visual media like the TV and Cinema play a vital role in the reinforcing the patriarchal ideology. Media is very influential in protecting the images of a typical wife-the mode woman-as well as the objectified commercialized women who are products of consumerism. All these images form invisible psychological bondage for women in their attempt to break out of patriarchal controls. Though women are coming out in large numbers to pray in the mosques, there are very small numbers in the public field. Political women are still invisible though some have become councillors, panchayat members and party workers through their capacity of wives of party leaders. Due to the influence of affluence through Gulf emigration which results in getting trapped in consumerism, dowry harassment and violence is increasing in households. Household patterns are changing. Nuclear family is becoming the norm. Child abuse, incest and other incidences of sexual violence is growing. Though divorce rate are increasing, resistance is also growing from among the women folk. Education coupled with programes to empower women socially, politically, culturally and economically will release the inherent strength of the women from the shackles of religious fundamentalism and patriarchal ideology.

### **Methodology**

The methodology used for the research will be multi-disciplinaru and complimentary.

1.Questionnaire method : we will select 10 to 20 'Akams'(each Akam may consist of 10 to15 nuclear family units) which are the traditional family households compared to 'Tharavads' of Nair community, where lives generation of female lineage – great grandmothers, grandmothers, mothers, sisters, daughters and their children. One repondent in each 'Akam' will be;

asked to answer a household survey, giving basic socio-economic and demographic details of all members of the family.

2. In dept. interviews with women from each 'Ara' representing all the different generations. This has to take the form of narratives for which a total co-operation of the respondent is called for. Life histories and experiences of the women will be used to highlight social change.

3. Interviews of at least one main male respondent of each 'Akam' will be made, to get a clear picture of how male power worked in these settings. Interview of a few of the religious heads also will be done.

4. Interviews of various leading muslim personalities figures in the cultural and social field will be done.

5. References to studies by historians, novelists and other prominent personalities and social scientists to conceptualize the study. Please refer to the list of reference material enclosed along with this proposal.

### **Plan of Action:**

To know a thing is to change it. Based on the research findings a strategic plan of action will be formulated. The ultimate aim of the action will be the empowerment of the women socially, politically and economically, i.e., the empowerment of women in an allround way.

### **Our goal is :**

1. To supplement the existing organizations working in the area a thorough study of the women's status.
2. To disseminate the findings of the study to other scholars and action groups to facilitate the process of change among the target group.
3. To disseminate the findings of the study back to the subjects to make them conscious of their status and thus enable them to bring about reform, change through a social process in which they are the active participants.

A concerted and co-ordinated work of various women's organizations and a spontaneous movement from among the subjects themselves are the need of the hour.

**List of the reference material to facilitate the study:-**

1. History of Kozhikode Muslims – by P.P. Mammed koya.
2. Sulthan Veedu – Novel  
Surumayitta kannukal- Short stories } By P.A.Mohammed Koya
3. Ennapadam – Novel  
Secular democracy & Indian Muslims – Article, Kala,  
Love, in Kungungal and other short stories. } N.P. Muhammed
4. Koyas of Calicut – Shialikoya, Prof. Guruvayoorappan College.
5. Social Life of Muslims in Calicut – by N.P. Hafiz Muhammed.
6. Matrilinear System of Malabar Muslims – S.M. Muhammed Koya,  
Reader, Calicut University.
7. History of Kerala Muslims P.A. Said Muhammed  
History Association,
8. Mappila Muslims of Kerala – Ibrahim Kunchu.
9. Mappila Muslims of Kerala – R.A. Miller
10. Muslims of Malabar – Prof. K.M. Wahabuddin

K AJITHA..