AGRARIAN AND VILLAGE SOCIAL RELATIONS IN NORTH MALABAR

Chapter IV

AGRARIAN AND VILLAGE SOCIAL RELATIONS IN NORTH MALABAR

In an agrarian social structure, the role of village social relations is crucial. The present chapter focuses on how the factors like caste, class, kinship determine women's labour in the janmi-kudiyam pattern of tenurial structure. This chapter also focuses on how the agrarian women labourers resisted, when the janmi-kudiyam relationships changed in the context of the colonial land revenue administration.

In the pre-capitalist society, the ownership of land enabled the landlord to exploit the surplus labour of the downtrodden classes like agricultural labourers, and tenants and other occupational or service classes. For the landlord, the ownership of land had enabled him at the same time to extract rent from his tenants and also enabled him to enjoy the free service of his labourers. In North Malabar, these special privileges decided by local customs were called maryada or nattunadappu, in which women labourers

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1 Utsa Patnaik in Agrarian Relations and Accumulation, The Mode of Production Debate in India has states that the ownership of land had made possible for the landlord some exploitative activities like cultivation with the help of hired labourers, leasing out of land to tenants, usury, trading ingrains and other commodities, investments in various kinds of productive as well as unproductive activities in industries and services related to agriculture and rural society.

played an important role. This peculiar type of bond of contract between the landlord and the labourers was possible only because of the particular categories of kinship system that existed in the village social relations in an agrarian economy.

Even though the categories of kinship prevalent among different castes varied, it was the kinship norms that determined their social relations. In the case of women also, this norm had played an important role in determining their status. It is used to describe women's social relations within the family, to invoke obligations, to determine rights of inheritance and in effect to legitimate the structure of the relations of production and distribution and power authority\(^3\).

In the case of North Malabar, special emphasis was placed on matrilineal kinship. Here, *taravad* was the main residential unit of land owning class. And references have shown that matriliney was mainly practised among Namboodiris and Nayar *janmis* in North Malabar. People belong to the same *taravad* are related to each other either through male links or through female links. Since, most of these *taravad* practised matrilineal system of inheritance, women are also entitled to a share in the ancestral property and besides this, they had decision making power\(^4\).

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\(^3\) Max Hedley, 'Relations of Production of the Family Farm: Canadian Prairies', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 9(1) October, 1981 p.76.

The major Brahmin taravads which followed marumakkathayam system of inheritance during that period was Thazhakatmana, Keekkamkottavazhunnor, Eravilvazhunnor, Aroth Vazhunnor, Kundilayar, etc. The major Nayar taravad's are Kodom, Echikkanam, Kozhummal, Konottu, Cherippadi, Naranthatta, Kottayil, Edappanichaveri, Bedakathu Kamalon, Panathadi Kattur, Kalingottu Kookkal, Chandera Madiyan, Alathadi Malor, Periya, Mavila, Palattu, Karicheri, Kanyal, Kuttamathu etc. The Muslim taravads includes Trikkaripur, Udumbanthala, Kaikkotkadavu, Padanna, Thuruthi, Echilamadam, Chemmanad, Kasargod Pazhaya Kottakkar, etc. Dr Gundert gives the list of the castes who follow this system of inheritance. Seventeen Brahmin Illams in Payannur, Chirakkal taluk, Kshatriya, Tirumulpad, Nayar, Urali, Andor, Pallichan, Kushavan, Vyabari, Kolayan, Chembotti, Pisharodi, Variyan, Nambi, Teyambadi, Maran, Poduval, Kuttunambi, Attikurichi, Unnitiri, Eradi, Vallodi, Nedungadi, Veluttedan, Chaliyan, Tiyan in North and in Travancore.

Besides these matrilineal taravads (households), these villages contain a cross section of other independent castes also. It was the Tiyyas, Muslims and some groups of Nayars who acted as cultivating tenants in this system.

5 Personal Interview with K. Madhavan, T. Devi, and P.C. Karthiyayanikuttyamma, etc had strengthened this statement; K. Madhavan, in his book Oru Gandhiyan Communistinte Ormakal, Creative Arts and Cultural Co-operative Society Ltd, Trivandrum, 2002 p. 28-29 also gives reference about taravad.

Castes like Parayas, Pulayas etc were the main agricultural classes. Most of the agricultural landless labourers were belonging to the low caste and were attached labourers to the \textit{janmis} and were occupying small plots of \textit{janmis} land with a hut\textsuperscript{7}. Besides these, other service castes like washermen, carpenters, blacksmiths etc were also engaged as seasonal agricultural labourers. Every agrarian village had within it all the essential artisan and servicing caste. In these villages, the institution of \textit{tara} right guaranteed the availability of the services of the occupational groups within the specified area. These servile class or the occupational class formed the basic and permanent group in these villages\textsuperscript{8}. Experiences from North Malabar show that, among these servile classes it was the women who often had to take on the responsibility of continuing caste based occupation. These classes rendered their service according to \textit{jajmani} system i.e., the craftsman was not paid in exchange for each item he produced, but was considered as a village servant on a hereditary basis\textsuperscript{9}.

In this network, the local members of each castes were united by kinship bonds and the categories of kinship bonds also changed according to different castes. That is why a separation between the land owners and labourers was possible in this society. On the basis of kinship, this society


\textsuperscript{8} M.R. Raghava Varier, \textit{Village Communities in Pre-Colonial Kerala}, Place Names Society India, Mysore, 1994, p.13.

\textsuperscript{9} Personal Interview with Kannan Puthanpurayil, Onchiyam, on 3.8.02.
provided more detailed criteria of a ritual and occupational nature which clarified the rank of each caste in relation to all others of the locality.

In this kin based society, there existed a particular type of tenurial system called *janmi-kudiyen* pattern. In this pattern there existed a three tier division of land rights known as *janmam*, *kanam* and *verumpattam*. *Janmam* is a word of Sanskrit origin and is usually interpreted as birth or birthright and therefore the hereditary rights in the soil conferring absolute rights of ownership. In these relations, when the *janmis* found themselves in need of money they leased out their lands for enjoyment as compensation for the money received by them. This is the origin of the *kanam*, *kuzhikanam*, and *verumpattam*. The word *kanam* has been explained in many ways. Dr. Gundert derived it from *kanuka* to see, and explained it as meaning that which was seen, or the visible right of the *kanamdar* by virtue of his being in possession as opposed to the invisible right of *janmi*.\(^\text{10}\) Usually the *kanam* tenure was granted for a period of 12 years. There was much difference between a *kanam* in South Malabar and North Malabar. The former was a tenure under which nominal amounts are received by the *janmis* mostly as security for rent. But in the latter case, it was really a mortgage with possession. *Kuzhikanam* was a tenure under which the tenant was allowed to make improvements. *Verumpattam* was name given to simple leases of wet

lands for cultivation in South Malabar\textsuperscript{11}.

In North Malabar, the corresponding name was \textit{verumkozhu}. \textit{verumkozhu} in North Malabar, on the other hand, means lease of trees alone which was otherwise known as \textit{melpattam}\textsuperscript{12}. The Origin of this tenure was the same as \textit{kuzhikanam}. \textit{Verumpattam} was a simple lease usually for one year duration on \textit{pattam} or \textit{varam}. \textit{melayma}, \textit{karayma}, \textit{otti}, \textit{kozhukanam}, \textit{kattakanam} etc was also prevalent there. Among these \textit{kozhukanam} and \textit{katta-kanam} are the amounts given as security for the \textit{varam} by the tenant. Beside these, the \textit{janmis} are making several other service tenures. The rights of the \textit{janmis} over the land were expressed by \textit{kiliyakam} and the obligations of the tenants were determined by custom \textit{maryadai}\textsuperscript{13}. The actual form of the privileges and rights exercised by the \textit{janmi} and the obligations of the tenants were also becoming localized.

The above tenurial patterns based on rules and obligations were possible because of the village social relations existed there. In North Malabar, there existed a typical village system that is entirely different from other parts of India. Here, settlement is usually haphazard, with no special


tendency for houses of a particular caste to cluster together. Besides these, in the Kerala villages, the four varna concept is not suitable\(^\text{14}\).

In the typical villages in North Malabar, caste rank was closely correlated with relationship to the land, especially paddy field. Here the head of the family of the village usually a male member, sometimes still remained the chief land owner. Although the head of family may till more than enough land for its own needs, the bulk of it is parcelled out among tenants, who may cultivate it themselves or sub-lease it yet again. Nambudiris and chieftain castes tend to be land owners, the higher Nayar sub-castes are either land owners or non-cultivating tenants (customary *kanamdars*), the inferior Nayar's and some Thiyyas are cultivating sub-tenants, either on permanent leases (cultivating *kanamdars*) or on annual leases (*verumpattamtdars*). But the concept of head man as defined by Eric Miller is not applicable in the case of North Malabar. Most of the settlement patterns in North Malabar are in the form of *kudis* in which direct relationship between *janmis* and labourers existed.

Experiences from North Malabar show that *avakasam*, *maryadai* and the existence of *kootam* appear to have decided the structure of power relations. In the *janmi kudiyam* tenurial pattern, both the men and women had to render their service. In the case of women, they had to provide social and reproductive labour. For men, they had to provide rent and labour. Besides

these, both of them had to perform certain caste obligations. Evidence from North Malabar shows that the burden of caste obligations are more on women. In this social system, women along with men also share the essential task of removing pollution of upper caste. It may be noticed that the Malayalis distinguished two kinds of pollutions, viz, by people whose very approach within certain defined distances causes atmospheric pollution to those of the upper section, and by people who only pollute by actual contact. So in this society the service of removing pollution was essential. So washer classes are distributed in all the desam and there are two types of them. One is performing for the upper section alone and another for the entire village community including all jati groups probably excepting the lowest agricultural workers. Those who claimed a higher social status are called veluthedan where as the other group is called vannan. The service of both these functionaries has religious as well as secular aspects. Clothes washed and supplied by both the groups are required by brahmanical and non-brahmanical temples, thereby linking them closely with the sphere of religious practices.

In Malabar, washer women's ritual functions are indispensable for the washing of soiled clothes during the ceremony that goes with the first menstruation called vannathimattu. According to this custom, a few days after the first menstruation of girl, the washer woman must supply purified

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cloth to the girl. The same is done in the case of pregnant women after child birth\textsuperscript{17}. During the period of peasant struggles, there are lot of instances in which the \textit{janmis} ostracized the tenant by preventing washer women from taking \textit{mattu}. \textit{vannan}, the lower category of village washerman has another duty of performing ritual dance during the festival and special occasions in the non-brahmanical \textit{kavu} temples. They are traditional physicians and their women functioned as midwives in the rural settlements until the proliferation of modern medicine and hospital facilities\textsuperscript{18}. Thus it shows that, in the village social relations, women were asked to perform household labour and community's demand of labour.

In this system it was their class that determines the severity of women labour. Through the experiences of Pallar women in Tamil Nadu, Karin Kapadia, brings out clear and useful connections between, gender, caste and class\textsuperscript{19}. She points out that it is impossible to deal with class and caste as categories without incorporating the dynamics of gender. Her book also points out the categories of kinship prevalent amongst different castes, in that region, with a special emphasis on matrilineal kin and the unique functions of the mothers brothers\textsuperscript{20}. In North Malabar, the severity of labour

\textsuperscript{17} Personal Interview with R.K. Janaki, Pazhassi, on 24. 4.03.


\textsuperscript{19} Karin Kapadia, \textit{Sita and her Sisters: Gender, Caste and Class in Rural South India}, Delhi, OUP, 1996.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid}, p.19.
can be seen in the case of agricultural labourer women. They were mostly low caste and landless and were largely attached to the *janmis* land with a hut. While the men belong to this class acted as general plough servants, the women belong to this class performed all the hard works like transplantation, weeding, threshing, sowing and so on and along with this they also performed menial labour in *janmis* household. Their landless condition faced them to work at the same time as *janmis* menial labourers and also to work at *janmis* farm. Thus they had to perform triple burden of labour. Here the variable of caste helps to shape ideas about the household composition of women's labour.

Caste shapes the boundaries about individual member's rights to its resource base and about intra-household and inter household relationships. It also shows that caste, also results in one additional feature of the sex/gender system. That is the general sexual availability of the lower caste women to the upper caste men, particularly to the men of the landlord family. The more feudal the area, the more this system of sexual availability is enforced. For example, the agricultural women labourers were not allowed to cover the upper part of their body before the *janmi*. The sexual exploitation was of two kinds one was forcing a women who were pregnant and feeding the child to hard labour in fields and in *janmis* house. The second one was forcing the women labourers to satisfy the sexual desires of the landlord. There are a lot of instances in which pregnant and feeding women were forced to hard work. In the Eleri area, the tribal agricultural
women took no rest before and after pregnancy. After three or four days of pregnancy, these women tested the strength of her hand by plucking kurunthotty shrubs and starts work. They were forced to work at night, and at low wages and were severely beaten\textsuperscript{21}. Besides these, they also becomes the prey of landlords.

The subordination of the tenants to the \textit{janmis} results in the general sexual availability of the tenants women to the \textit{janmis} men. The condition of the lower caste women became more worse. There were lot of instances in which good looking women belonging to the tenant families were being molested by the landlords\textsuperscript{22}. \textit{Pazhassayikundam} was a deep pit in between the hills near Kalliat and it was here that the dead bodies of the punished persons were dumped by the Kalliat \textit{janmis}. And Odattupalam was another place near Srikandapuram where the Karakkatidam \textit{janmis} hanged their enemies\textsuperscript{23}. These two \textit{janmis} were notorious for their cruelties. In one instance, the Kuttoor \textit{janmi}, one of the members of the Kalliat family raped an agricultural labourer woman while she was suffering from severe eye disease\textsuperscript{24}. At a time when there were no peasant organizations, two peasants, Vannathan Raman and Kodilon Raman questioned the \textit{janmis} when the peasant women were being molested by the \textit{janmis}. The infuriated \textit{janmi} by

\textsuperscript{21} Personal Interview with Podora Kunjiraman, Eleri, on 4.4.03.


\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Kavumbayi Samara Smaranika}, 50th Anniversary, 1996, p.66.

way of treachery hospitalized Vannathan Raman and cut the veins of his legs and made him handicapped. And the latter one was killed by breaking his head\textsuperscript{25}.

The village social relations had enabled the \textit{janmis} some privileges. Likewise the dependent should obtain some privileges from the \textit{janmis}. The \textit{janmi} had enjoyed privileges to use good dress, good language, and to use bronze and copper vessels and to wear slippers and also had the privilege to construct houses made of bricks. Besides this he also enjoyed certain privileges on different occasions. For funeral ceremonies and \textit{kathakali}, fees was levied. And demanding plantains, banana and other vegetables for rice-giving ceremony. If the \textit{janmis} are Muslims, demanding fowl and ghee during Ramzan; they demanded this by letters and the tenants comply with their request. Muslim \textit{janmis} also set a part the yield from the parambas in the possession of tenants for mosque purposes\textsuperscript{26}. On the occasion of marriage also there existed different customs in different areas. For example, in certain parts of Kasargod, Certain customs like \textit{padikanikkal}, \textit{vettilavekkal} etc. had been existed. According to the custom of \textit{vettilavekkal}/\textit{chekkanchellal}, in order to fix the marriage of their daughters, the tenants, need to seek prior permission from the \textit{janmi} by putting a bundle of betel leaf in front of the \textit{janmi}\textsuperscript{27}. According to the custom of \textit{padikanikkal}, on the wedding day the girl

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 274.


\textsuperscript{27} Personal Interview with C. Chirutha, Thillenkeri, on 26.4.03.
along with her relatives, have to visit the *janmis* house and the girls were made to stay there for three months\(^{28}\). These customs vary regionally. In some areas of Kasargod, on the wedding day, the couples and the whole relatives including men, women and children have to visit *janmis* house by performing *bayipanipattu* and *kali* (certain song)\(^ {29}\).

Likewise, according to the customs, the dependents should obtain manure and fuels from the forests maintained by the *janmis*. But if the relation between the land owners and the dependents become strained, women became the worse sufferers. They were no longer allowed any such privileges. One of the informants told us that in one instance, when she went for another landlord’s labour, the *janmi* tried to prevent her from taking fuels from the forest\(^ {30}\). The cattle were allowed to graze only in waste lands. Besides these, during the festivals of *Vishu*, *Onam* etc labourers were expected to present gifts in the form of farm produces as an expression of allegiance. The agricultural labourers had to provide vegetables like cucumber, yarm etc. Weaver had to provide cloth, vaniyan presented oil, carpenter presented wooden articles\(^ {31}\) etc. On the occasion of marriage in *janmis* house the tenants had to provide most of the ingredients required for

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\(^{29}\) Personal Interview with Undacchi Padinjara Thodiyil, Noonji, on 4. 4.04.

\(^{30}\) Personal Interview with Kaarichi, Aallai, on 6.4.04.

\(^{31}\) Personal Interview with T. Raghavan and K.K. Raghavan, Pazhassi, on 24.4.03.
feasts. They had to provide milk, butter, curd, plantation leaves, banana and coconut. It was mainly the women’s work to supply plantain leaves for feast and to escort the landlords women during ceremony and other occasions, bringing water, washing utensil etc. But in the case of liberal janmis, they made a show of generosity on dependents by giving presents like grain, cloth and money to the dependents during festivals. The above references shows how the appropriation of women labour was decided by nattunadappu and maryadai.

It shows that regarding their land holding status, there existed some commonality between the janmi women and agricultural labour women. Besides this we had already discussed that there existed good co-operation between these women. It was on the basis of this, that the agricultural labour women had to take manure from the forest, and also take some other goods from janmis land. Here, most of the janmi women were engaged in field labour in her own field with the agricultural labourers. For the janmi women perhaps it was her matrilineal background which provided her this freedom. This labour freedom was one of the peculiarities of North Malabar. There existed a good labour relation between all women regardless of their land holding status. Facts show that women belonging to the occupational group simultaneously acted as helpers in their own family and acted as agricultural labourers especially during harvesting season. It was agreed that this society would have a continuing need for the services of the carpenters, blacksmith,

leather worker, potter, barber and washer man. In these villages, there were scarcely any families which did not have a connection with the land throughout the year even if only to supply supplementary labour for the harvest. In North Malabar, evidences show that it was the women labourers who acted as the main agent who provided this supplementary labour in the occupational class.

Studies from different parts of the country also show that land being the most important source of agriculture, its availability and distribution determine the agricultural development and overall labour use in a region. The land settlement records and experiences from North Malabar also emphasize this statement. The land settlement records in North Malabar confirm that the number of women property holders in North Malabar were comparatively high. Their experiences testify that in North Malabar, women belong to the janmi family were also involved in field labour this was due to their decision making power. So in order to analyse women property holders in North Malabar, we may compare the settlement and re settlement registers of certain taluks in North Malabar. The land survey and settlement register of North Malabar prove that the number of women property holders in this area are comparatively high. Even though the settlement registers do

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not present a clear picture of the extent of concentration of land, a rough calculation can be made from the following Tables.

**TABLE 4.1**

**Chirakkal Taluk,**

**Karivelloor Desam, Settlement and Resettlement Register**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acres of Land Holdings in Karivelloor Desam</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Resettlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>2494.5</td>
<td>2494.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>677.1</td>
<td>853.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>915.74</td>
<td>920.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Women Land Holders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Resettlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>77.23</td>
<td>237.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>40.23</td>
<td>102.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>29.99</td>
<td>70.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**TABLE 4.2**

**Chirakkal Taluk, Mayyil Desam,**

**Settlement and Resettlement Register**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acres of Land Holdings in Mayyil Desam</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Resettlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>741.62</td>
<td>752.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>173.62</td>
<td>180.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>86.21</td>
<td>88.50</td>
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</table>

**Women Land Holders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Resettlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>67.69</td>
<td>74.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>26.42</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>6.37</td>
<td>13.76</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### TABLE 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acres of Land Holdings in Kandakkai Desam</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Resettlement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>699.4</td>
<td>527.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>187.24</td>
<td>196.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>131.10</td>
<td>129.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Women Land Holders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Resettlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>40.09</td>
<td>95.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>20.02</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>8.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### TABLE 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acres of Land Holdings in Timiri Desam</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Resettlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>5737.44</td>
<td>6180.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>26.23</td>
<td>28.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>11.46</td>
<td>12.24</td>
</tr>
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**Women Land Holders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Resettlement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>7.82</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wet</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table confirm that except in the case of Timiri, the total number of women landholders increased during the period of re-settlement as compared to the settlement. The wet land indicates the cultivating land. The tables show that in all villages there existed a small percentage, that is above one fourth, of total land was under women land holders. Thus it confirms that this small percentage of women had their own decision making power over land. In the case of Karivelloor Village, they had the highest number of women land holders. Experiences show that this was one of the areas of active peasant struggles in which zealous participation of women can be seen. Even today, this active participation of women in public activities can be seen in Karivelloor. Likewise, Kandakkai-Mayyil and Timiri are areas of active peasant struggle. In Timiri paddy harvesting struggle, Kandakkai grass cutting and *kalamkettu* struggle, active women participation can be seen. Here, it shows that women's property right (it leads to decision power) and their direct participation in the struggle had some linkages. For example, in the Timiri paddy harvesting struggles it was the women who took initiative. These linkages are discussed in another section.

Thus it shows that in this social set up women have acted as the main link which preserves and plans the continuation of this kinship and caste structure. It shows that women were asked to perform social, economic and customary rules and obligations. But these rules and obligations changes according to their land holding capacity. The landholding provides them
more decision power. That decision power helps them to involve more in private and public activities. The community also demanded labour of women especially in the occupational and agricultural labourers. Thus references have shown that the community's demand on labour in this economy was mainly based on women's labour. Besides these, the bond of contract which ties labourers to their masters is understood to include the services of both the husband and wife. Caste works differently among men and women. i.e., men and women in the same class often have a differential access to forms of social privilege, to wages and to the means of production.

Both the primary sources and secondary sources regarding North Malabar have shown that women in North Malabar worked continuously for hours and their labour formed the backbone of this society. It also shows that certain determinants like caste, class kinship had an important role in determining their labour status. Besides, these determinants places certain rules and obligations on their labour. Thus the centrality of women's labour in North Malabar questions the existing notions about women's labour. Here, both the landless and landowning women had equal participation in the household labour and field labour. This equal participation of women labourers was not same everywhere. Thus the women labourers in North Malabar remained as a different category. This was due to the peculiar kinship system existed in that area which we already discussed.

But the centrality of women's labour gradually began to change with
the emergence of colonial rule. The colonial rule affected the whole village social structure. In the place of old village assemblies, new administrative systems emerged. The work of local administration was performed in urban areas by district municipalities or the corporations. In rural areas, it was performed by district boards and Panchayats. Besides these the property rights over the lands which were earlier vested with the hands of janmi's were replaced by the rights decided by the British legal code.

The settlement register was the foundation on which the whole revenue administration rested. It formed a complete domesday book regarding accurate information regarding every separate holding, large or small. From the register a ledger known as the chitta is prepared which gives each ryot's personal account within the government. Every field or fraction of a field held by the same ryot is picked out from the settlement register, and entered in this ledger under his name with particulars of the area, assessment and other details. Besides these every thirty years, the valuation of the states share of the produce of the land is re-examined. This process was known as resettlement.

Due to the above conditions, certain new developments had been created. i.e., a) The direct producers were increasingly deprived of their

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37 Ibid, p. 244.
share of the total yield and in many cases the rent ate into their subsistence. This set in process the deterioration of the conditions of the peasantry. b) The surplus thus appropriated forms the basis of a struggle for rent between two sections of the rent-receivers in a situation where new capitalist relations were penetrating the economy. This contradiction resulted in the janmi using his legal powers to extract as much renewal fees from the kanakkaran as possible and resorting to precapitalist oppression along with the new-fangled legal process. c) The vast masses of the peasantry were increasingly impoverished and kanakkarans gained at the expense of the old debilitated landlordism. There emerged a new type of landlord who can be described as 'semi-feudal' from the ranks of janmis and big non-cultivating kanakkars who combined inadequately developed capitalist features with pre-dominant pre capitalist relations of production. But North Malabar experiences show that there existed no kanakkaran in this society instead their existed direct relation between the landlord and the labourers.

The growing commercialization of agriculture and the industrialisation process also led to the destruction of the traditional agrarian economy. In those days exchange of the major cash crops like pepper, ginger, coconut, cashewnuts, cardamon, arecanuts etc had existed. The economic depression which appear in 1929 and reached its climax in the

38 Prakash Karat, 'Agrarian Relations in Malabar-1925 to 1948', Part I, Social Scientist, P. 34.
year 1932, according to many economists made agriculture a less paying occupation than it was before. It was at this period, the industrialists utilized the opportunity to the fullest and was able to get an unlimited supply of labour by offering rates which were slightly higher than the very low rates that they were getting in agriculture\textsuperscript{39}.

Regarding the industrialization process in Malabar, Prakash Karat came into two conclusions i.e., (1) The industries which developed in Malabar, were predominantly extractive, the majority being based on small-scale commodity production. There were no capital good industries (2) There was an extensive spread of cottage industries producing commodities for market, but these did not develop to the higher stage of factory industry\textsuperscript{40}.

It was the Basel Evangelical Mission who took initiative to establish industries in North Malabar. From 1837 onwards they had set up textiles industries in Malabar and their textiles industry at Cannanore was the important one\textsuperscript{41}. The peculiar feature of industry in Malabar is that there existed all stages of industry side by side. The ordinary weaver with his handloom, a little advanced weaver with his loom fitted with flying shuttle, the well organized handloom factories and the power loom factories\textsuperscript{42}.

\textsuperscript{39} Madras Labour, July 1937-October 1938, Government of Madras, 1938, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{40} Prakash Karat, Agrarian Relation...Part II, Op. Cit., p.40
with textiles, the mission had also set up tiles industry. The first tiles company was started in 1874 at Puthiyara near Kozhikode\textsuperscript{43}.

Cashew was another industry that developed during this period, and the working conditions of Cashew labourers were deplorable. In this industry women had been working without necessary facilities and cleaning was done by low caste women\textsuperscript{44}. By 1920's the adjacent coastal towns of Cannanore and Tellichery in Malabar had developed into important beedi manufacturing centers. It became firmly established in North Malabar after the first world war when Muslim merchants utilized their trade connections to start exporting beedis to Ceylon and later to Burma. The reports show that the wage of women beedi labourers in Kerala was comparatively high, which might be due to influence the strong trade unions.

The All India Agro-Industrial Exhibition, that was held at Cannanore in 1907 was enough proof of the Industrial mobilization in Malabar\textsuperscript{45}. The commercialization of agriculture led to the development of agro-processing industries, the most important being the coconut industries. These included toddy tapping, copra making, oil pressing and coir processing. The coir industry rapidly became a major non-agricultural occupation became a major non-agricultural occupation along the coast. With the emergence of

\textsuperscript{43} R. Prakasam, \textit{Keralathile... Op. Cit.}, p.9.
\textsuperscript{44} K.P. Kannan, \textit{Of Rural Proletarian Struggles}, OUP, Madras, 1988, p.88.
coir weaving factories, household based workers in coir processing who were engaged in the retting de-fibring and spinning coir yarn shift to factor based weaving which produces coir mats and mattings. A major chunk of those working in this sector were women and children. The major coir industries in North Malabar are concentrated on Badagara, Quilandy, etc.

Until the process of industrialization, most of the labour processes were used to be done by the women labourers in conjunction with household task and agricultural tasks. In those days most of the agricultural activities like harvesting, carrying harvesting paddy, threshing, winnowing, parboiling paddy, drying paddy, hand pounding of rice etc were used to be the exclusive, preserve of female labour. But now that complementary task was completely wiped out. That type of labour was clearly undergoing transformation.

The industrial process seems to have adversely affected the position of women in different ways. In North Malabar, with the growth of industrialization, the domestic mode of production based on Kudi was transformed into nuclear families in which household units are separated from labour place. Thus the pre-capitalist family is to be replaced by nuclear family in which women had to shoulder the responsibility of children. In the pre-capitalist society, child rearing was a collective task performed by all the members of the society, especially old people and the siblings looked after them. As a result of nuclear family now the children were in school and
women were responsible for educating the children and providing them other facilities. Nuclearisation confined women to the domestic domain. They were knocked out of the labour market and lost their economic independence. Studies prove that capitalist production and exchange have caused a decrease in women's labour. With the emergence of modern technologies, many manual operations were taken by the machines. Previously women had combined weaving, beedi making, coir making etc with other agricultural labour. But now they were brought under factory in which they became wage labourers. Like wise, rice husking was one of the important labour of women which require heavy labour and provided labour to so many women. But the introduction of ricemill posed a severe blow to them. There were only two choices before them, either to remain agricultural labourers or as industrial labourers.

Slowly capitalism also limited women's mobility. Earlier they were actively involved in market transactions. It was they who acted as the main transactors who sold goods like jaggery, pottery, mat, fish, oil, etc. In the neighbouring villages and also in daily/weekly markets. Some evidences regarding market systems are available in the form of letters in the archival records. The extracts from some letters are given below;

In a letter, a merchant from Mukkalibazar requested to the Malabar district board president to extent the area of Mukkali fish market and also about the necessity to open one vegetable market in Mukkali because of over
crowding in the existing market... This letter further states that in between 3 pm to 7pm, about 500 persons including men and women were gathering in that small area... In this market, articles like coconut, arecanut, tapioca, jaggery, muram, pottery, coir, basket etc were transacted.46

Another letter states about the opening of a regulated market at Perambra market for coconut and arecanuts... In this letter there is also reference about Uralungal market at Kunnummakara Panchayat.47

Likewise, a letter states that, weekly markets has inter village and even inter taluk importance and agricultural products are brought to the market from far away place...48

The above letters sites that both men and women were active in market transactions. Besides that, inter village and inter taluk markets existed in which produce from far away places were transacted. During that period, these market places also fulfilled a variety of non-economic functions, as centres of inter village contact, information, gossip, sociability etc. Slowly women were excluded from this type of meeting and exchange


47 Perambra Market, Opening of a regulated market by the market committee regarding letter No. 74169/55 dated 27.11.1955, Calicut Regional Archives, bundle No. 21060/56, 4.5.56.

centers. In *Capital*, Marx had described the market system in which all modes of production re intervene in the circulation network. For example, both the mill made clothes and hand made clothes circulated in the market.

In the capitalist society, because of their double burden of domestic activities and bread winning women became backward in their skills and men were given more labour opportunities like the operation of machineries. They entered the labour force as a result of poverty and the consequent struggle for survival. And most of the capitalist industries were utilizing women's cheap labour. Thus when the character of women's labour was changed, they were standing in a vulnerable position. The nature of the exploitation itself changed and the exploitation against them varied according to the hours of labour, condition of labour and wages and even in the form of sexual exploitation by the factory holders.

Besides this, certain patriarchal norms such as physical weakness of women for manual labour got reinforced during this period. But we can see that most of the labour that they were performed hard and tedious. The division of labour and wage had been strengthened because of the reason that the power was vested in the hands of men. Thus the existence of women labourers became crippled and as a result they were marginalized and they did not attain leadership.

The degradation of women's labour can be seen in this transition period. It further led to intense feelings of opposition between one's private
life and public life. And this forms the basis for a series of powerful ideological structures. Later, this isolation of the units of domestic labour appears to be a natural separation of women from men as well and resulted in conflicts between men and women in private life. The newly emerging industrial classes and the stages had affected the society. Because of this, the period witnessed the emergence of various movements. When the exploitation increased, the agricultural labourers and industrial labourers became organized. Unions were developed among the industrial labourers during 1930's. This period also witnessed many general strikes. Since most of the industrial labourers belong to agricultural family, there existed deep cooperation between agricultural labourers and industrial labourers. This can be seen in the December 6, 1937 Beedi Unions Strike49. In this general strike, peasants from villages carried bananas, jack fruits, mangoes and so on for the striking workers. Like wise strong movements was developed among agricultural labourers under Karshaka Sanghams.

When the emerging situation had questioned their earlier labour privileges, women labourers also participated in all this struggles. Their participation in this agitation showed that they formed an important part of the social labour process. Under this situation, the participation of women labourers in agrarian struggles is an important aspect.