CHAPTER-V

CONFIGURING IDENTITIES AND REFLECTING SELVES:
SITUATING CATHOLIC- NAZRANI WOMEN IN KERALA

Configuring women that suits the needs of the community and society was part of shaping the women according to patriarchal needs and desires. Patriarchy set the agenda for the institutionalisation of gender roles and gender relations of power. In the period of nation making and modernity, making of an ideal nun and the making of Nazrani women went in tandem. The latter was the extension of the former. The spirited self that constituted the Nazrani nun, disciplined in Christian virtues and morality and conceived what is ‘true womanhood’, was the best possible means to educate the lay women, in a world of new ideas and institutions. Nun, a small group within a large Nazrani canvass, became the new force, to shape women and ‘Catholic culture’ per se, without delineating the role of church and other agencies. Their identity being a religious could exert tremendous influence over the lay public. To understand the making of modern Nazrani womanhood it is imperative to study the role of women religious.

5.1 Patriarchal Anxieties on Women, Body and Sexuality

Amidst the modernisation of Kerala, like other communities, the Nazranies were anxious about women, body and sexuality. When modern ideas and institutions brought about new opportunities for men and women, to cope with these changes, Nazranies began to engage with modern institutions, which necessitated, reforming, refining and
moulding of women. Within the community the initiative to refine and mould women as per the aspirations of a modern society, without losing traditional values were taken up by the ecclesiastical authorities, having the support of the lay people. With the ‘pastoral power’, they controlled the desires and aspirations of the community, by imposing certain prohibitions and obligations. Women were the target of power. To shape and train women, who obey, respond and are skilful in womanly activities and who could be subjected, used, transformed and improved, according to the needs of the society, were envisioned by them. By exercising subtle coercion,¹ their movements, gestures and attitudes were constructed orienting a moral space, which has already been set in convents.

The patriarchal institutional anxiety on women found its clear expression, when schools were started along with religious congregations for women. Their efforts to introduce the medieval monastic disciplining in Kerala through the religious congregations, extended beyond the monasteries and convents, to make the lay people morally good and chaste in life. The Catholic principles of monogamy, sexuality and reproduction were insisted so that patriarchal hierarchical structure of the church could be established in Kerala, which in turn was helpful to maintain the patriarchal power of the Christian families in the wake of modernity. In this effort the sexuality of women had to be controlled as it was crucial in the construction of a subject, and point of connection between the individual and social body, whereby the individual is integrated into the

social order through the regulation and control of sexuality,\(^2\) which had its own needs and requirements of reproduction.\(^3\) To control the body and sexuality of women, new moral values and practices were introduced. Morality was linked with the education of women\(^4\) and the means of disciplining was mainly through the women education, which in turn was linked to the Christian family. The promotion of ideal Christian patriarchal family was seen as the vehicle of moral upliftment.

The notion that, ‘real Christian families will create a true Christian population’ forms the basis of the Catholic families. It is from family, good habits should be trained. Every deed of a family should be in accordance with the will of God. Then it will be a model family. The main purpose of family life is to procure children for God and bring up them accordingly. Mother is the heart of a family. If man protects the family, the woman moulds it. Her care nourishes the family. The ideal growth of family depends on the mother. The physical, mental and spiritual development of children also depends on the mother. So women have to bring up the children carefully.\(^5\) Nuns and priests should come from true Christian families. The encouragement of this vocation should come from the mother. Though father is the head of the family the first and foremost teacher is the mother. To instil curiosity and the desire to acquire knowledge, the mother has an important role. Everything depends on the morality of the mother. It is her presence and

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5 K.E. Job, *Grhasthasramadharmam*, Part. I (Mal), Ernakulam,1950, pp. 22-23
model that has to create inspiration and enthusiasm. Those who have not started character formation in the house may not get it in school. From childhood onwards they should be taught hygiene, satisfaction, patience, admiration, self control, faithfulness, sacrificial mentality and hard work.\textsuperscript{6} It is with this ideology women are refined and moulded. First there were modifications in the appropriate activities for a female at different stages of her life; second, the appropriate area of female action was expanded and along with it defined the concept of ‘perfect wife.’\textsuperscript{7} The permitted area for women was thus linked with the household. Nun was the perceived agency to form Nazrani women and that too through Catholic schools.

The dissemination of the idea of religious congregation, school and boarding, for women and girls, in fact started with the activities of the Carmelite Third Order for men. As part of apostolic activities, the Carmelite fathers of Kerala who led a harmonious blend of contemplative and apostolic life engaged themselves in preaching retreats in the various parishes of the vicariate, working for of the good of the souls and hearing confessions in the monastery and nearby parishes.\textsuperscript{8} The confessions were in fact helpful to know the devotee and were easy to identify those who wish to lead a virtuous life and were directed to Religious life. It was this retreat in various parishes that made known to the people about the facilities in female education and the Religious life for women in

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.1-50.


Kerala. Moreover, it is particular to note that, women and children came to join the congregations from places having Carmelite monasteries in the neighbourhood\(^9\) and the list of members of the first convent shows, women from different parts of Kerala joined Koonammavu.\(^10\) The institutional efforts taken by the Carmelite monks and diocesan priests described in the third chapter is ample enough to show how much, the ecclesiastical authorities were interested in women education and other activities needed for the community. In their efforts to start convents and schools, they demanded the support of the lay people.\(^11\) Equally important was the role of Latin ecclesiastical authorities. Having wide net work and authority over the Nazrani church, they were determined to proclaim that women religious congregation had been founded in the Vicariate of Varapuzha\(^12\) and education facilities were available in Koonammavu.\(^13\)

With the emergence of native vicariates, the bishops and priests took the initiative to educate women through Catholic schools, which was a necessity to confine the folk within the institutional structure of the Catholic Church.

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\(^9\) Apart from the monastery at Mannanam (1831), monasteries were founded in Koonammavu (1857), Plassanal (1858-60), Vazhakulam (1859), Elthuruthu (1866), Pulincunnu (1866), Ambhazhakad (1868), and Mutholy (1885). Along with these monasteries were constructed, seminary and schools for boys., CMI Sabhaude Charitra Samkshepam, 1829-1969, Op. cit., 1970, p. 24 and for details see Valerian, Vazhthapetta Divyasree Chavara Kuriakose Eliasachan, Biography, (Mal), Mannanam, 1939.

\(^10\) See Appendix No.6

\(^11\) To solve the problem of money in order to construct the new convent in Koonammavu, a meeting of the important people of the vicariate of Varapuzha was convoked and in the meeting it was suggested that each family must contribute a handful of rice for this purpose each time when they prepared the meal. So a charitable association of Infant Jesus was also formed, CWC Vol. I, Op. cit., pp. 130-131.

\(^12\) As Varapuzha was under the jurisdiction of Latin bishop, everything should get the consent of the bishop. Without his permission nothing could have done in the vicariate. Reports of the St. Thomas church was send to Rome frequently. Recognition from Rome was necessary for the continuation of the congregation.

\(^13\) Hearing about the facilities, candidate from Kollam diocese came to Koonammavu to get religious formation. Likewise some European ladies from Cochin, who were the members of the Third Order of Carmel came to Koonammavu and stayed in the orphanage for few days; Koonammavu Nalagamam, Vol. II, pp.94, 119.
5.2 Configuring Identities: Ideal Nazrani Women in the Making

Patriarchy was mediated through Church. Catholic Church was always anxious about women, body and sexuality. The Catholic Church sought to shape sexual morality from the pulpit and through schooling. In the creation of a morally good, modest, pious and an educated subject that yield to authorities, elders and husband, church needed the support of a group that could convey the ideal and make sure that such an ideology works well within the community. The frequent instructions on women education and their stay in the convents or boarding attached to a convent is a clear symbol of the patriarchal anxiety about womanhood and the power with which they could implement their ideas and ideals. The principles of the Catholic Church were communicated through pastoral letters, diocese bulletins and through various diocesan and Christian publications. In one of the pastoral letters written by Mar Thomas Kurialacherry, the Catholic ideal of womanhood is made clear. He has written that,

“Education of girls has to be given more attention, because the upbringing of children, who are to become the promoters, of morality and development of, the future world, depends on women. Children used to imitate the character of mother. It is undisputed that mothers are the best character moulders of children. According to my opinion, girls should have a minimum education up to the fourth standard and those who are able and are interested should be sent for higher grade schools attached to convents. If they have no facilities for that, parents should give them good spiritual books and create interest in spiritual reading. They should train them
in household duties and bring them up in their care and protection and when time comes, the girl should be sent off in marriage.”\textsuperscript{14}

Mar Kurialacherry, in his presidential address in the first, “All Kerala Catholic Congress,” also expressed his opinion on women education:

“Women should be given an honourable position in the society. Whether she is to be submissive to man or not is not the problem. She ought to have sufficient education to bring up morally trained and virtuous children. Only then can we look forward to having God-fearing and law-abiding citizens.”\textsuperscript{15}

The Romo-Syrian Church before the erection of native vicariates and after was very much anxious about women. When the native bishops were appointed, women and women education got priority. Mar Mathew Makil instructed through his \textit{Decrethu} that,

“Since the fear of God and salvation and welfare of families are derived from the good upbringing and education of girls, we, also are especially interested in the education and spiritual growth of girls. Hence, we desire that parishes near the convents of sisters may send their girls to be instructed in the schools of sisters

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\textsuperscript{15} Thomas Kurialacherry, ‘All Kerala Catholic Congress Presidential Address’ reported in \textit{Nazrani Deepika}, April 30,1918, p.1, columns 1-4,12, 18, 28, 46, 51.
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and special arrangements for the education of girls should be made in other parishes.”

In the early phase of the native vicariates, construction of convents was given importance. In the words of Mar. Louis Pazheparambil, “...due to the construction of bishops’ house and the construction of convents for the increase of religious and women education, we could not start an English high school.” The Trichur Vicar Apostolic Msgr. Adolphus Medlycott, in a letter to Propaganda Fide wrote, “......such as the need of education, construction of middle and upper primary schools, building of a minor seminary, promotion of women education by conducting girls’ school under the direction of European women religious helped by the native women religious.....”

Mar Thomas Kurialacherry also instructed through his pastoral letters, that,

“Girls who happen to be away from home, must stay in convents or boarding attached to convents. They were not permitted to stay in the houses of the relatives. Malayalam high schools are attached to the convents in Mutholy, Pulincunnu, Champakulam and Changanacherry, besides the English medium schools for girls opened in Kottayam and Aleppy. An English high school for girls in Changanacherry and a temporary boarding house and a convent in Trivandrum are

16 Mathew Makil, *Decrethu Pusthakam* (Mal), Changanacherry, 1904, chapter 6:8, p. 50; For details see Chapter I, footnote.136
newly opened for the convenience of those who desire college education. Anybody who wishes to study in government schools could make use of this facility.”

The Church was very much conscious about the character formation of the children who got education. The ecclesiastical authorities thought that schools and text books were getting degenerated and students who had respect, love and gratitude to priests, parents and teachers were decreasing day by day. These they thought, were all due to education without spiritual knowledge. So it was considered necessary to appoint teachers having religious faith and morality. It is in this context, women who mould the future generation, were insisted to be educated in convent schools or to reside in the convent boarding.

“Education is needed more for girls. As they are the future mothers and wives, they should be educated and be good models for the children as no one can deny their role in the formation of children. If the mother is uneducated and immoral the children will also be like that.”

The Changanacherry vicariate was also concerned about the married or unmarried employed women. The married or unmarried women who are away from parents,

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21 Orothu Chakkappan, ‘Mathapithakalute Kadamakal’ (Parental Duties), Sathyadeepam, Vol.VII, No.14,October5,1934, p.4; Sathyadeepam is a religious weekly published by the Ernakulam Archdiocese from July 1927 onwards. One of the intentions to start the weekly was to give scientific religious education to Catholics. More than that, “the religious knowledge - be it true or false - of our neighbours has increased leaps and bounds and Catholics should be enabled to meet the everyday objections and show to their neighbours, the light of truth. One who constantly read this paper will, we are confident, possess a stock of religious knowledge, sufficient to meet all ordinary cases. Hence it will be a great religious educator for Catholics themselves,” explains the first issue of the Sathyadeepam, July 3, 1927.
brothers or husbands for learning or job were directed to stay only in convents. Women who went for job without the permission of their husbands were reminded about the same.\textsuperscript{22} It was directed that, ‘our women should not be separated from their husband, because the problems created out of the separation of women from their husband for employment is indescribable.’ \textsuperscript{23}

During this period clear cut gender roles were prescribed for men and women so as to produce manly and womanly qualities in them.\textsuperscript{24} Directing men into the public space and women to that of domestic space was intentional. But gradually the entry of women in the public space was accepted on condition that she should accomplish all her womanly duties. The stand taken in this regard that, it was not justifiable to abandon the children for a clerical job. As the physical and mental jobs are for men in the economics of nature, education, nursing and household works are the natural and important duties assigned to women. It is true that women should have freedom to receive the jobs of men. But for the existence of the society, men and women have to accept the natural duties assigned to them by nature. Women were reminded, “don’t consider the jobs done by men superior and that of women inferior. Society considers womanly duties fair and good .It is where the wise way lies.”\textsuperscript{25}

Co-education was an important concern of the ecclesiastical authorities. With modern education, mixed schools began to appear. The Church was against this and the

\textsuperscript{24} J. Devika, En-gendering Individuals:The Language of Re-forming in Early Twentieth Century Keralam, New Delhi, 2007, pp.9 -11.
community was frequently reminded of to refrain from sending their children to mixed school. Both the Changanacherry and Ernakulam Vicariate addressed the matter in many pastoral letters that, ‘girls and boys should not be taught together in higher grade schools or secondary or in English schools.’ It was a precaution to safeguard the morality and purity of the grown up boys and girls. So boys and girls above nine years of age are not permitted to be taught in the same school. In 1923, in a letter Kurialacherry announced that, ‘now we have enough boys’ schools and girls’ schools and they should be sent separately. Otherwise, if known they will be forbidden from receiving sacraments and performing religious ceremonies.’

Mixed schools and colleges were considered as sources of moral danger. GEM, a Catholic monthly from Bombay wrote that, Rome was insisting on having separate colleges for women in India. Sathyadeepam wrote about co-education in 1934, that dangers of mixed school are greater in India. The reason seems to be that, “in India, when compared to European schools, where boys are admitted with girls, who attains the age of maturity in this hot climate much earlier, and who, especially in Hindu surroundings, hears so much at home and in the street about marriage, is not quite like their European sister of the same age. To herd these precious Indian girls with all sorts of boys in crowded classrooms and that too under men teachers are a highly pernicious

The Catholics insist on separate education because, the Catholic school is ‘the third member of the trinity of which the others are the church and the home.’ The Catholics stand for the ideal even under the most discouraging and trying circumstances, and any number of arguments, however alluring they may be, are not going to convince us that co-education is an ideal that Catholics ought to aspire for in the realm of education.

Mixed schools and colleges have always been, and shall always be - as long as India is a kaleidoscope of caste, creed and communities - a set back to the development of the education of girls. Hundreds of thousands of Indian parents, who might have sent their daughters to schools and colleges refrain from doing so, as they wish it the least to throw them up in the company of grown up boys, more often with those who do not even belong to their own community, and that too under men teachers. It is but a legitimate parental fear out of regard for the moral welfare of their girls, an ideal Indian parent has from time immemorial been upholding as something sacrosanct, and which the so called ‘civilized’ world is steadily giving away, they, the Indian parents, rather prefer to sacrifice the education of their daughters than send them to mixed schools and colleges where there is a possibility of the girls not only losing what has been taught them at home in regard to faith and morals but also developing youthful inter communal romances which invariably give acute heart burning to parents.

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
To convince the ordinary mass, the monthly has reported the speech of Rao Bahadur A.T. Pannirselvam Bar-at-Law, M.L.C, in the Madras Legislative Council during the budget discussion, “in the case of older children, let us not for the heaven’s sake import all that you find in the west. These mixed schools I would rather not have and that for obvious reasons I would certainly desire to let my children beyond the age of say 9 or 10 be admitted into such mixed schools.\textsuperscript{34}

Along with the opposition to co-education, another proposal put forth was classification in education. “As the mentality and attitude of the men and women are different they have to give different type of education. So a separate programme of education is needed. So qualified women teachers may be entrusted to educate the girls.\textsuperscript{35}

Modesty of women and modesty in dress was a matter of concern for the church. Instructions of the Roman congregation of the council were published through the diocesan bulletins. Pope Pius XI repeatedly condemned the immodest manner of dress used by Catholic women and girls. Therefore in order to promote discipline of clergy and laity the following order is issued:

“1) Let parish priests especially and preachers, given the opportunity, be urgent, reprove, rebuke and exhort that women wear such dress as becomes modesty and is an ornament and safeguard of virtue, and let them admonish parents not to allow their daughters to wear indecorous dress.

2) It is the duty of parents to give moral education to girls.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid.}, p.11.

3) Let parents likewise withhold their daughters from taking part in public athletic exercises and gymnastic contests; and if their attendance is compulsory, let them see that they are dressed in such a way as fully accords with modesty, indecent dress however let them never allow their daughters to wear.

4) Lady Directors of colleges and school mistresses should so strive to instil in the minds of their girls a love of modesty that they are effectively induced to dress decently.

5) Let the lady directors and mistresses admit neither girls nor even their mothers, if they are not dressed decently, into their colleges and schools and let them dismiss any who may have been admitted, unless they mend their ways.

6) Let Religious, according to the instructions given by the Sacred Congregation of Religious, dated 23rd August 1928, not to admit in their colleges, schools and chapels and play grounds, girls who do not observe the Christian manner of dressing, and let them not tolerate any such who may have been admitted.

7) Those who dress immodestly are not to be admitted to pious associations of women, and if admitted must be expelled, if after due admonition they do not change their ways or afterwards offends in this matter.
8) Girls and women, who wear immodest dress, are to be refused Holy Communion, and are not allowed to stand as sponsors at Baptism and Confirmation, and if need be, are to be refused admission into the church.”

Discussion about the freedom of women and also divorce comes to limelight. Connected with it came the narration of a virtuous wife. An article in Sathyadeepam exhorted that, “when one marries, he should give more importance to the virtues than the external beauty. Women of good character, humility and are soft spoken, trained in household works should be received as wife. Only she could make your home peaceful and satisfactory. The same author in another issue exhorts women, ‘to be submissive to the husband, improve the house hold manners and make the home attractive and peaceful.’ In another article titled Streekale Kurich (About women) has written, “Among the non-Christians and lower caste people, women were considered as mere slave. Christianity enhanced them from such conditions and gave them dignified position as that of women in western civilization. The innate quality of modesty which women has to posses was absent among the profane people. Christian women are renowned in civilization as chaste since they have such innate qualities. The earnestness of the Christian women to follow these virtues made the Christians morally good. Lowliness and modesty could not be acquired by mere desire but only those who follow a faithful

Christian life could absorb these qualities. Piety, love of God, continuous prayer and self control will help the Christians to gain such qualities. Above all the fear of God and deeds according to His wish will make all the good qualities."40 The same article continued, “A woman loses her shyness and modesty, when she is lost in Christian qualities. Her desire to expose the body to others could be controlled and to dress decently could be possible only if she is a God fearing person. Genuine Christian women will never expose her body to others for their entertainment. She will be a good daughter, good wife and a good mother.”41

An ideal Christian woman is presented through the article or the perception of the community to build up a good womanhood is evident in the article. That is why it is exhorted, “such woman is a precious asset. She is a valuable adornment of the society. It is she who makes community and caste glorious and powerful. If she is good, there will not be any atheists or traitors. In all Catholic institutions for women, including schools, the subjects that develop these qualities were insisted on. Many civilizing systems, immoral texts and romantic novels that reduce the shyness and humility of the women are spread among us. All this should be rejected and care should be taken not to deviate from morality. Or else the effort taken by the church will not be fruitful. Such women will be respected by everyone. If the modesty and politeness of women is lost, she is opening the door of the entire problem. Modesty and politeness increases the beauty of

41 Ibid.
women. This will enhance the position of women above men. So they are respected by men. Modesty and politeness is an outer cover of chastity.\textsuperscript{42}

Monogamous marriage was insisted on. As marriage is a life time contract, it cannot be violated.\textsuperscript{43} What makes the position of women significant is marriage. The unique and dignified position of women as wives and mothers are due to the unbreakable law of the church.\textsuperscript{44} Though a traditional Catholic norm, it began to be challenged with the western trends. “Many of the problems in the society are due to the modern western practices, but not many Catholics are affected by it, wrote Mar Kurialacherry.”\textsuperscript{45} Everything is learned from home and the model is mother. As family is the base, everything comes from women. ‘Birth control, independent marriage and divorce are not acceptable to the church. Marriage is a lifelong process.’\textsuperscript{46}

The entire responsibility of upbringing the family is put on women. She was instructed and always made conscious of her duties to her family. Character formation of children is left to her. “There is a saying that, ‘good Christians are decreasing because holy mothers are less’. The role of mother in the character formation, education and spiritual life of children is irrevocable. She should renew the Christian spirit in the family. The progress of a Christian family towards goodness and sin depends on a Catholic mother. That which is not in the family need not be looked for in altar, convents

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
and in the community. The qualities like patience, humility, sacrifice, obedience, fraternal love and purity are needed for a woman not only for character formation of the children and care for the husband but for the peaceful atmosphere of the family.\textsuperscript{47}

The articles published in Christian magazines and journals frequently compared the issues they discussed, with the West as well as rest of India. Even though Christian West was considered as the standard, many things were not acceptable to the traditional Nazranies. A local version of what is seen good in the West is applied here and others are out rightly rejected. A blend of traditional norms and ideals of the West was perceived good to make an ideal woman. This was similar to the social scenario of Kerala, where, in the question of liberating /making the modern woman, they were asked not to blindly follow western women but to undertake the more difficult task of re-examining local values, norms and practices in the light of bourgeois domesticity, so as to form a new arrangement to suit local requirements best.\textsuperscript{48}

The discussion on the freedom of women is strong. The debate is whether the freedom given to women will be helpful for the welfare of the society. For this a comparison is made with European countries, in order to draw certain general laws and to convince the community about the dangers inherent in the women employment and women’s freedom. K. M. Seethi wrote that, “In western countries freedom given to them has created problems in the family especially, conflict between husband and wife. There men and women are considered as equals, especially in the case of employment. But this


is not an honourable idea. They are not physically and mentally equal. Men could do physical jobs easily. But women could do calm jobs that needed support. If man is an expert in warfare, women are experts in childcare. Western experts opine that women doing all jobs irrespective of sex, avoiding these principles is not good and it has created problems in the society.\(^{49}\) The discussion of freedom of Nazrani women are to be linked with the Nazrani attitude towards the employment of women. The educated were not encouraged to seek employment but insisted on being a ‘good house wife’. They were not encouraged to be employed, saying, *penninte sambadhyam kondu geevikkenda gathiketilla*\(^{50}\) (There is no penury to live on the income of women). The denial of freedom of employment\(^{51}\) naturally denied economic independence, and women were automatically held up within the circuits of a family.

“She should remain as the queen and heroine of the house. She should be a scholar, civilized and capable to carry on the house hold affairs and child care. She should be given education on those aspects. Men and women should not be given the same type of education and degree. There should be separate schools and syllabus for women. The education should be imparted on the basis of the duty she


\(^{50}\) Interview with many aged Nazrani women, reflected on this aspect and made this statement; Personal interview with, Thresiamma Ephrem (aged 68.), Mukala, Pala; Rosamma James (aged 75.), Keerikattu, Chalakudy; Daisamma Thomas (aged 68.), Valiaveettil, Mala, Trichur.

\(^{51}\) The rate of gainful employment rate among women in the Syrian community was lower than the Latins, Ezhavas and Nairs but higher than Muslims; K.C. Zachariah, *The Syrian Christians of Kerala: Demographic and Socio-Economic Transition in the Twentieth Century*, Thiruvananthapuram, 2001, p. 37.
has to fulfil. Without disrupting the household work, they could attend the women associations. But I pray women should not be made a masculine character.\textsuperscript{52}

The patriarchal objectives of the community to make an ideal Nazrani woman, having ‘womanly’ characteristics are evidently clear in the above deliberations.

5.3 Nun in the Shaping of Nazrani Women

The patriarchal anxiety on women and Christian morality necessitated the church to initiate the formation of Christian women. Amidst these efforts to configure the Nazrani women, the nun was entrusted with the duty of moulding women according to the needs of the Nazrani community. Both temporal and spiritual formation was intended through religious congregations. One of the most important places of formation of Nazrani women other than home was the convent school, where they were given secular education along with moral education. She being a Catholic-Nazrani, was oriented to a moral space where the question arise what is good or bad ,what is worth doing and what is not ,what has value and meaning and what is important for her and what is trivial or secondary. It is the frame within which one stands, determines the value of everything one defines, what is important and what is not.\textsuperscript{53}  Religious communities historically have met the needs of the surrounding society, in education, in arts, in medical care and

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\textsuperscript{52} K.M. Seethi, ‘Stree Swathantryam’ (Women’s Freedom), in Sathyadeepam, Vol. 21, No. 4, September 5, 1947, p. 11.  \\
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social work. To orient the Nazrani women towards self understanding, the religious congregations of Kerala have played a significant role.

Amidst the 19th century changes in Kerala, the Nazrani anxiety about women was clear. If Protestant missionary activities to educate girls were part of proselytization, the Catholic move was rather an organised attempt by the emerging native vicariates, having the support of Carmelite missionaries, to build a community conscious, morally good Christian women. The religious through their assigned task of educating the girl children and giving them Christian formation, was actually transferring the qualities that made the nun. The patriarchal anxiety to give their daughters Christian formation and secular education by women, through Catholic institutions inscribes the beginning of women education among the Nazrani Christians of Kerala.

Through education one was supposed to undergo a long process of training through which capacities, taken to be inherent to human beings, and highly determined by sexual endowment of the body, as well as to regulate oneself, were to be developed. The entire purpose of modern education, it was repeatedly assured, was the development of a self with a focus on *interiority* - both in the sense of a supposed inner space that pre-exists in education and in the sense of the act of looking inwards. The question of enlightening women was linked to the question of fashioning womanly space of the domestic and men were positioned comfortably in the public space. Female education was to be such that women were trained to become overseers of modern home, regulators

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of altruistic exchange between family members and agents of civilising their desire. In this way the complimentarity of the relation between both men and women was both illustrated and justified.\textsuperscript{56}

Catholic education through the nun was the innate idea behind the formation of the first congregation. The new native vicariates were particular in giving Catholic education to children of all the three vicariates. The ecclesiastical authorities knew that the most effective means to mould the community was to capture their minds through education. For them school was a cultural instrument to hold firm their community and religion.\textsuperscript{57} It is pronounced that, Catholics started Catholic schools in order to impart Catholic education. Catholic education does not mean training in Catholic principles alone, but it also means all the worldly affairs should also be in accordance with the Catholic principles. This type of education could not be attained in any other institutions. Secular subjects are taught in government schools. But it is not sure whether these subjects contain anything against Catholicism. That is why Catholics are insisting on Catholic education\textsuperscript{58}. Mar Louis Pazheparambil exhorted that, “it is the duty of the parish priests to take interest to teach children catechism and other moral lessons

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 7.
\textsuperscript{57} K.N. Ganesh discusses how education is used as cultural tool. Education becomes a means for subjugation and every colonialist has taken care to educate the colonised, in the image of the colonists themselves. Education is a cultural process, which reproduces and disseminates the lived experiences and representations of the people through which dynamic synthesis of the historical reality is constructed; K. N. Ganesh, ‘Cultural encounters under Colonialism: The case of education in Keralam’, in K.N.Ganesh (ed.), \textit{Culture and Modernity: Historical Explorations}, Calicut, 2004, p. 152.
necessary for their life. In order to keep up the good effects of learning, Catholic schools are necessary.”

The first congregation of Kerala was started with twin objectives, self-sanctification and education of girls. In the initial years, the education of the girls meant, ‘to teach them prayer and other virtues and engage them to train girls in needle works and handicrafts’ and this type of education was given through *edukumthath*. According to the constitution of the *edukumthath*, “this is nothing but a system to make good Christians through a faithful and a responsible Christian life. This also teaches girls holy life and also handicrafts and necessities needed for family life.” The subjects taught in the *edukumthath* were catechism, meditation, handicrafts, language, mathematics, music and cooking, which were to make them a good Christian wife and mother. The educational activity that has started in the *edukumthath* was made permanent with the establishment of a convent school. The rules for girls attending the day school are:

“In this school, girls of 10-16 years of age, who have learnt main Christian principles and passed the test are admitted. The rest of the Christian doctrines as well as reading and writing are taught in the school. Those who wish to learn sewing and handicrafts and Christian way of life is taught. The school is free but

62 The details of the constitution of the *edukumthath* is given in *Varappuzha Madathinte Jubilee Smarakam* (Mal), published by CTC sisters at time of their Golden Jubilee, 1940, pp. 26-27.
items necessary for learning must be paid for. The girls attending the school must always be clean and wear clean clothes; otherwise they cannot enter the school. They must confess once in a month and those who have not received the first commune had to prepare for it with the help of the teacher. During festive days girls must come to school, to be taught how to lead a Christian life far away from sin. Every day the teacher will have to read a spiritual book for half an hour. The girls are absolutely forbidden to talk during school hours of subject outside school curriculum or of worldly matters and to (give) message, notes, or any other objects. Each girl, as soon as she arrives at school, should recite kneeling before the image of the Blessed Mary, a Hail Mary and at the end of the daily lessons, three Hail Mary and ‘memorare’. The teacher should behave towards the girls as a loving mother and she should endeavour with her good manners, to acquire their affection. She should behave in such a way that they will show her great respect. She should instil in them the love of modesty, obedience towards the elders and of devotion for Madonna. She should talk to them about the dangers of being indiscrete and about the beauty of innocence. She should teach them to be clean and tidy and never be idle at home. She should often ask if they recite the rosary properly etc. Girls are not allowed to talk to boarders, and when they want to attend the mass, receive communion in the chapel, they may do so without coming inside except for confession. Girls with scarce modesty and bad behaviour, who are a nuisance to the school and a bad example to others, will be expelled. Girls should behave towards the teacher as loving daughters towards
their mother and should love her, confide in her, give her all respect and obey her
in everything promptly and cheerfully as if she was their true mother.”

SABS also started their congregation,

“to work for the salvation of others and have to engage themselves in certain
works that will bring about good to the world. This has to be achieved
specially through schools for girls. Hence through these girls’ schools teaching
them the three R’s, cooking, stitching and so on useful to their worldly life,
and those virtues that are essential for the moral life like humility, meekness,
gentleness, mortification, fear of god and cultural accomplishments like
cleanliness, punctuality and good manners, is quite keeping with your call. To
teach the above and do good to the world, there is nothing better than the
establishment of schools, you can renew and sanctify families, places and
countries and bring closer to God most fruitfully.”

The boarding attached to the convents were to give education, train them
handiwork and bring them up morally. The boarding mistress had to take care of the
physical and spiritual growth of the children. The students were not permitted to speak
to outsiders or talk unnecessarily to male teachers, if any. They were not permitted to

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64 Fr. Leopold’s Diary Vol.III, (English trans.), Aluva, p. 8-10; the original manuscript is in Italian and the
English translation is kept in Archives, CMC Generalate, Aluva.
65 Visudhakurbanayude Aradhana Sabhakaryayude Kanyastrikulute Niyamangal (Rules of the Sisters of the
Adoration Congregation of Holy Eucharist ), Changanacherry, 1917, Part III, chapter 10: 1, 2; in
66 Ibid., Chapter 10:2:1,2.
write or receive letters without the permission of the mistress.\textsuperscript{67} A holy and an educated sister should be appointed in order to teach morality in the school.\textsuperscript{68} The teachers of the school should be qualified teachers and if they are not available, modest and qualified women can be appointed as teachers. If it is necessary to appoint a male teacher, his character and conduct should be good and the headmistress should be vigilant about his whereabouts.\textsuperscript{69}

The rules for the girl’s school at Koonammavu, started in 1872 and guidelines to schools and boarding of the SABS sisters, makes clear the type of education imparted to the girls and the regulatory measures taken up by the monastery to discipline and form the girls as per Christian vision. Both congregations gave emphasis to Christian education. The qualities like modesty, obedience and silence were insisted on. They were warned against the danger of indiscreetness and awareness was given to live away from sin. They were also exhorted of the beauty of innocence. It is clear that both the congregations were alert about the morality of girls. The teacher student relation was deemed to be that of a mother and a daughter. This clearly indicates how ideals of the convent were transmitted outside the convent. The boarding and school attached to the convent thus became the centres of learning for girls.

Apart from teaching girls in the school, another medium through which the nun could influence women and girls were, at times of handicrafts training. The handicrafts mainly meant to those who are uneducated and unemployed and could not afford to

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., chapter,10:2:3.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., Chapter,10:3:1.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., Chapter,10:3:3.
education and it was done free of cost. Instruction was given to those who stayed in the 
edukumthath as well as lay women. In a letter written in April 1882, to a rich Italian lady
they wrote, “to women of Kerala who have no training or employment other than
household services, you enabled us to get rare beads and materials to teach them
handiwork in order to meet their livelihood.” The religious taught them handicrafts like
rosary making, stitching and lace making. In an agricultural tract like Koonammavu,
women were free except during sowing and harvest season. The free time of the
uneducated and unemployed was engaged with these handiworks and it was a source of
income for them even though meagre. The time of instruction was actually time for
transmitting moral values. While making rosary they were asked to recite ejaculatory
prayers.

Orphanages, rescue homes, children’s home, dispensaries, weaving centres and
Sanketham were other means of Christian formation. In all these places the sisters took
care of women. The members from all communities were received in these institutions.
The charism of FCC and SHC itself was to look after the poor and the destitute. The
destitute that are admitted in these institutions and who have the capacity to do work,

72 The materials for hand works especially rosary was supplied from the convent. The finished articles
were returned to the convent and received the remuneration for the same. The sisters in turn gave them
to the needy. Now Koonammavu is known as Kondha gramam; Interview with Sr. Henreena
(aged.78.), St. Teresa’s Convent, Koonammavu, dated. 5. 04. 2010
73 Ibid.
either young or aged, were trained in mat making, basket making\textsuperscript{74} and weaving, in centres having weaving centres attached to the convent.

The convents were also centres of proselytism. Attached to St. Germaines’ convent Chengal and St. Anns’ Convent, Muttom, Cherthala; \textit{manasandharapura}\textsuperscript{75} were started on December 10, 1921 and January 3, 1928 respectively. Though at the initiative of and at the guidance of the bishop and concerned priests, the converts were received and facilities of stay were given.\textsuperscript{76} All the expenses of the converts were met with in the parish church. Men, women and children were converted to Christianity. \textit{Paraya, Pulaya} and \textit{Chovon} were the major converts. Some of them returned to the native place while others stayed in the \textit{Sanketham}.\textsuperscript{77} In Chengal in between 1921-1965, 3504 persons were converted\textsuperscript{78} and in Muttom the number was comparatively low.\textsuperscript{79} Because of the absence of a church in Chengal, all the converts were baptised in the convent chapel and record has been kept there. The role of the sisters was to teach them catechism and prepare them to receive sacraments.\textsuperscript{80} In Muttom a sister was assigned to teach them catechism\textsuperscript{81} and when a dispensary was started for the treatment of the poor converts that duty was also

\textsuperscript{75} Chengal Madam Nalagamam, Vol. II, 1909-1926, p. 31, see also Chengal Madathinte Charitram (History of Chengal Convent. An unpublished manuscript kept in the Chengal convent. Usually Convent documents are written by the sisters who are in charge of a particular office. So the author is not mentioned in any of the documents.), p.74; Muttathu Madathinte Nalagamam, Vol.1, 1910-1932, p. 105.
\textsuperscript{76} Muttathu Madathinte Nalagamam, Vol. II, 1933-1948, p.9; Chengal Madam Nalagamam, Vol.11, 1909-1926, p. 31, see also Chengal Madathinte Charitram , p. 74.
\textsuperscript{77} Baptism Register of Converts, St. Germaine’s Convent, Chengal., Vol.1-1V, 1921-1965
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{79} Exact number is not available.
\textsuperscript{80} Interview with Sr. Mary Davis (aged.65.), St. Germaine’s Convent, Chengal, 35. 2010.
assigned to two sisters.\(^{82}\) Though in other congregations direct conversion has not occurred under their initiative, they were asked to teach catechism to the newly converted and also to prepare them to receive holy sacraments.\(^{83}\)

As a follow up to *manasandharpura, Sanketham* for women was started in Chengal on September 24, 1925.\(^ {84}\) The *Sanketham* was meant to accommodate ladies of other communities, who wish to join or have already been converted to Christianity, but have no means of livelihood or place to reside. It also admitted Christian women who are of good character, but poor and have no means of livelihood. The admission of the married or unmarried poor women in the *Sanketham* signals the anxiety of the community over such issues. They met their livelihood by making handicrafts and helping sisters in the convent. From 1925-1960, the *Sanketham* accommodated 350 ladies.\(^ {85}\) Later in 1962 it was converted to *Balasanketham*. The orphanage for girls started at Karukutty in 1922, intended mainly to admit converted orphans who have nobody to take care of.\(^ {86}\)

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\(^{83}\) Changanachery FCC Nalagamam, Vol., 1, p.5. Also described in the *Claramadathinte Arambha Charitram*, (History of the Beginning of Clarist Convent; an unpaged manuscript kept in the Kannadiurumpu convent; it is important to note that, conversion to Catholic church was frequent in Kerala during the period and many Catholic priests and lay people were working for the newly converted, eg., Thommachen Puthenparambil, the lay leader, Fr. Mathew Kadalikattil, the founder of SHC and Ramapurathu Kunjachan, a priest who belonged to the Ramapuram parish, Chanaganacherry diocese).

\(^{84}\) Chengal Madam Nalagamam, Vol. 11, 1909-1926, p. 41, see also Chengal Madathinte Charitram, p.74-75.

\(^{85}\) Admission Register 1925-1986, St. Marys’ Refuge Home, Chengal

The leadership roles in parishes like leading prayer and choir service, decorating the altar, organising various pious organizations like Sodality,87 Legion of Mary and Mission League were carried out by the sisters. Teaching Sunday catechism to girls was assigned to sisters. Mar Augustine Kandathil instructed that, “in places having convents, the religious had to teach the girls catechism.”88 Preparing the children for first communion and confession was also done by them. In order to bring up the children in a holy manner, what the sisters did was, they were asked to do sacrifices and recite ejaculatory prayers. They had boxes called thyagapetty and sukrutha cheppu in order to write down the number of sacrifices and good deeds done by the children every day.89 The sisters also inspired them to collect money for mission centres especially by collecting handful of rice and old clothes. The exhibition conducted in mission Sundays, especially of handicrafts made by children created great enthusiasm among children.90

The house visits of the sisters also were helpful to have contact with the society.91 In many of the parishes, the sisters prepared ladies for married life.92 In order to illustrate the type of instruction given to ladies, a letter written by Sr. Evuprasia on November 6, 1945 will be of tremendous help. This letter is written to her niece on the occasion of marriage. “...You should observe humility, patience, obedience, justice, truthfulness, faith fullness, love and promptness to follow holy script......Should not do anything

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87 In Chengal, Sodality was started in 1920, Chengal Madathinte Charitram, p. 42.
90 Interview with Sr. Mary Davis, St. Germaine’s Convent, Chengal, on 3.5.2010.
92 Interview with Sr. Linnet (aged 70.), CMC Convent, Kanjoor. Even today in Trichur and Angamaly diocese the system is in existence, though not compulsory.
without the permission of your husband. Consider each one of his family as your own. You should be sweet in your words, deeds and look towards your husband. Until death live according to the dignity of the vocation so as to attain salvation...”

The convent was also a venue for the annual retreats for women. Usually a three day or five day residential programme was arranged for married women. In 1938, the first *Mathrusangham* was established in St. Mary’s convent School Ernakulam, at the initiative of Fr. Joseph Mavunkal, as requested by bishop Mar Augustine Kandathil. It was a union of Catholic mothers, a union to keep married women conscious of the ideals of Christian womanhood, wifehood and motherhood. This union was intended to guide Catholic mothers to be a model for children. They were made alert about the separated life of husband and wife, about the morality of women, modesty in dress and the good upbringing of children. Later in 1950 a trimonthly named *Amma* (Mother) was started to spread and guide the works of the *Sangham*. The sisters were given the charge of co-ordinating the work of both the union and the monthly.

It is important to note that the convents were started in the traditional Christian belt and intended to impart Catholic education. In a period of lack of sufficient number of schools, the Catholic schools run by the sisters or the church admitted students...
irrespective of caste and creed. As the government schools of the period admitted all the categories, the upper caste was reluctant to go to school. In these circumstances Catholic schools were a boon to high caste Hindus also. These schools in the initial years had non-Catholic and non-Christian teachers. Latter their number decreased due to the increase in the qualified Catholic teachers. All the Catholic schools were attended by a large number of non-Christian students.

5.4 Self in Reflection: Perceptions of Nazrani Women

The whole effort of the church was to regulate and shape the women’s self according to the Catholic ideology. This was actually to maintain the patriarchal Nazrani family, where man is supreme and dominant. The upward mobility of women’s status in the society through education was curtailed with restrictions on seeking employment. The major thrust of women education was not to generate full capability in women but the character formation of the next generation. The new duty assigned to her was that of a capacitor, to the younger generation. For this duty she was trained in convent schools. The regulations inscribed on her particularly on women’s space in the society and family was a cross section of the emerging modernity in Kerala. The deliberations in the cultic space and public space internalised by women, began to reproduce the self images, increasingly in the 1940’s, through the journals and Christian publications, which in turn further influenced the ordinary women folk.

Details of the schools, students and teachers given in the Vaidikapanchankam : Calender for 1928, Changanacherry diocese, Ernakulam, 1928.

A comparative study of the details of the schools given in the Vaidikapanchankam for different years, of the three vicariates is helpful for the study. Vaidhika panchankam is a Calender for priests published from 1875 onwards. Now the manuscript is kept in the Archives, Archbishops’ House Ernakulam.
A Catholic woman association, started in England in 1913 was introduced to Nazrani women by Elizabeth Uthuppu. The chief objectives of the association were to preserve the inviolability of the marriage and its sacramental character, natural laws to be followed in married life, give Catholic education to children and they should be brought up as socially accepted ideal citizens, to avoid immoral contacts, entertainments and literature, administer the family in a practical way and participate in the good activities of the world. All this will be very helpful in developing deep rooted morality in mother and children.101

Articles of Achamma Joseph on *Stree Vidhyabhyasam* (Women Education) are significant from the agrarian background of the Nazrani Catholics. She laments on the type of education given to women because, type of education given, benefits only urban women. It is of no good to rural women, who have to go back to villages and the higher education given to them will not be of good to their family or themselves. In order to help in cultivation, to grow vegetables in their farm, to bring children up and even for routine house hold work the higher education is not helpful.102 Here she has fully encapsulated the Nazrani idea that primary education is enough for those who are to lead a married life. After primary education they were taught culinary works and were sent in

marriage. The Census Report of Travancore shows that child marriage was highest among the Syrian Christians.

Achamma Joseph again, has written about Cuebecile Streeevidhyalayangal (Girls’ Schools of Quebec). Importance is given to train the future agriculturists and women were trained to become the good wives of the cultivators. The girls’ schools in Quebec are run by the religious of the various congregations. The students are trained in real ‘women culture’ and coaching was given to girls for the natural roles of mother and wife. The intention of these schools is to train the girls in the artistic and scientific sides of rural life, and imparting that knowledge to practical purposes. In order to manage an agricultural family in a systematic and a profitable manner, an educated woman is a necessity. Apart from that they were taught cooking, tailoring and weaving. For Achamma the importance of this type of education was that, when she returned home, it will enable her to manage the household affairs of an agricultural family more efficiently and this will help her to carry out her role as a wife and a mother. After the household work at the husbands’ house she could engage in these kind of work and could earn an income from it. In short education given to them was to manage the household duties of an agricultural family in a more practical way. These ladies, when married could lead a very prosperous life. They don’t have time to waste. After the household work, women could support the husband in agricultural matters too. When their efforts become a

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103 See footnote No. 88.
104 Census of India, Travancore 1931, p. 183.
success, they could save a good amount annually. The story entitled, *Nagarika Vanithamaniyaya Ente Amma* (My Urban Mother), also reflects the merits of agrarian life. The story narrates how a woman lived in a town was displaced to a rural area and how much she was displeased by it. But her husband, who is narrated as wise and practical, dealt with the situation and at last she was accustomed to the village life and realised how good agricultural life and village people were rather than the town dwellers. She rejects the town life and sees many good aspects in village life. Underneath these writings could be seen, the Nazrani anxiety about modernisation and the challenges towards their traditional norms and practices. Giving higher education to the children was also impossible because large Nazrani families could not afford to the higher education charges and the support of women is a necessity in an agrarian family.

*Endhiningane Vesham Kettunnu* (Why to dress like this?) is an article that mocks on the modern dressing of women. Here the dress of man and women are taken into consideration. Wife is fully adorned and husband clad in white dress. Fully adorned women are held as devoid of intelligence. Husband and wife going outside the domestic space are counted as symbol of freedom. But they are mocked in the name of dress and ornaments. This article extends the idea that in order to become a good mother and a wife, costly *saree* and ornaments will not help. It exhorted to attain knowledge in order to become good wife and a good mother through good magazines and books instead of spending money for costly clothes. The article visualises, “a period in which Catholic

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106 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
women spend less amount on dress and giving the rest to the poor ladies in your surroundings, a period in which you give up your madness to enter politics but to join Catholic mothers union, Catholic women association or Legion of Mary to serve the community, the period you do service to the church.\textsuperscript{108} This article could be seen in the background of the decree of Pious XI in 1930 and Pious XII in 1940, that those women, who are dressed immodest, will not be permitted to enter the church, give sacraments or teach them in schools. Following this instruction, the Catholic Church in Kerala insisted on not permitting women, who used wider necked, halve sleeved \textit{chatta} without covering the elbow to confess. Though women were eager to wear modern dress they were not permitted by the church.\textsuperscript{109} It is obvious that unlike the traditional custom, people began to spend more money on dress, ornaments, food and entertainment,\textsuperscript{110} which is also a clear reflection of the economic prosperity of the community. The presidential address of the Thathampally women’s meeting, justified the Catholic stand by expressing that, “the dress worn by civilized women is shameful. The educated should be a model in dressing. What others expect from us are modesty and humility.”\textsuperscript{111}

Repeated articles of Achromma Joseph, about how to make man/woman relations strong and how to care the husband appeared in the columns of \textit{Sathayadeepam}. Instructions were given to newly wedded brides. It is as follows: “Don’t speak louder,
this is not only to make home calm but it includes a dignity in itself. Most of the men believe that, they are the kings. So, if spoken louder, he thinks that it is to show dominance over him. On the other hand they like moderation in speech. Not only you, but take care that children do not speak louder. The husband should not go elsewhere, because of the disturbance in the house. He should be given care, when he returns home after the tiresome jobs outside the house. The wife should take care of him, stopping whatever work you are doing. Receive him pleasantly. Only then, he will come to you, when he is tired. Receive the gift given by the husband happily, even if you don’t like that.”

After a pause, she resumed the column saying that, she did not get time to write the article due to household work. In an article titled, Sradhikenda Chila Pradhana Sanghathikal (Certain Important Things to be Taken Care of), she put it in numbers: a) Give tasty food in time, so that he will not go to hotels or other places. b) Help him in his jobs. It will be relief for him that somebody is there to sympathise with him. c) If sick, take care of him with utmost care, it will be a relief to his mind and body. d) Do everything after thorough thinking. e) Consider everything as ours.”

The article Vanitha Dharmam (Feminine Duty) emphasised the need for women education and the type of education needed for women. It observes that, what is followed is syllabus for men. “Those who have the capability could do that, but for others womanly training is needed. In the recent years Madras University has introduced special

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113 Achamma Joseph, ‘Sradhikenda Chila Pradhana Sanghathikal’(Certain Important Things to be Taken Care of), in Sathyadeepam, Vol.21, No.17, December 5, 1947, p.11.
courses for women like, psychology, first aid, nursing and household affairs. Similar changes were also made in Bombay and Delhi. Educated women usually take the jobs like teaching, nursing and medical profession.”\textsuperscript{114} In another issue, the English thinker Ruskin is quoted, to convince of the ‘division between manly duties and womanly duties. Protection and safety of the house is assigned as the duty of man and the organization, attraction and happiness of the house as the duty of women. Wealth incurred by man and the systematic use of what is acquired by man is the duty of women. Such a division existed from early periods onwards.’\textsuperscript{115}

One of the demerits of modern education is, it creates aversion for all types of jobs. In order to overcome such negligence on her part women should taught certain important matters. Women education should include: a) knowledge in cooking. b) expertise in decorating house c) lessons in music, as the dignity of women is quantified by music. d) woman as the heroine of the house, should be taught child care.\textsuperscript{116} Another discussion on, \textit{Bharya, Aval Enganeyullavalayirikanam} (How a wife should be?), reveals the opinion of American students in the column. They opine that, “those women who seek employment after marriage, lose interest in family and children. She should be devoted to God and husband.”\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{114} K.J. Syriac (Mrs.), ‘Vanitha Dharmam’ (Feminine Duty), in \textit{Sathyadeepam}, Vol. 21, No. 36, April 30, 1948, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. 21, No. 37, May 7, 1948, p.3.
\textsuperscript{117} Achamma Joseph, ‘Bharya, Aval Enganeyullavalayirikanam’ (How a wife should be?), in \textit{Sathyadeepam}, Vol. 21, No.41, June 4, 1948, p. 3.
In an article titled *Bharya* (Wife), Elikutty Mathew says, wife is the right hand of the husband. Unvanquished patience, meticulous service, intense love and obedience are the qualities essential for a wife. When husband returns home after the tiresome work, from the industries or agricultural fields, the wife should receive him pleasantly and take care of him whole heartedly. She should not receive him with disgraceful face. Wife is the ever burning lamp of the house. Joy of the married life is vested in wife. She should be a good adviser and a guide to the husband at times of need. She should also be a good student and a teacher. She should have both religious and political awareness. Mother is the first teacher of a child. As the church authorities exhort, I wish mothers to make a happy life that make the political, human and family life beautiful.¹¹⁸

‘For altar and hearth or for religion and family’ was the slogan of Catholic Mothers’ Union founded in 1938. Duties of the Union was to decorate the altar, clean the holy dress and holy dishes, make donations to poor churches, help the patients and women at the time of delivery, give food and water to the poor, organise retreats to women. If there are convents in the parish the sisters have to lead the Union. Everything should be done by the sisters. Those who are in the sodality should shift to the Union after marriage.¹¹⁹ *Sathyadeepam* reported that the women association meeting conducted along with the 18th All Kerala Catholic Congress meeting addressed the problems of birth control, importance of religious life and the duty of the mother.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ ‘Catholica Matrusangham’ (Catholic Mother’s Union), in *Amma* (Mal), Vol.3, No. 4, April 1952, pp. 9-11
¹²⁰ *Sathyadeepam*, Vol. XV, No. 41, April 24, 1942, p. 3.
The Nazrani women imbibed what all characteristics were attributed to them and they themselves became the propagators of the engendering. They felt that “Glory of women rests on motherhood. It is true that men and women are equal. But they are different in a special way. However efficient she may be to do the works done by men, if she does not fulfil the special duty assigned to her, one cannot say that her life is a success. A community that insists on a woman to do the work of a man is bad. In order to change this attitude everyone has to work hard.”\textsuperscript{121}

Moreover, motherhood is attributed to teachers, nurses and sisters. The one who imparts knowledge about truth and implants love in others’ children through good words and deeds is a mother. She is the mother of both manliness and womanhood in the children. The nurses who take care of the patients and aged people and give life to them are also mothers. They sustain life, which is the gift of god. The sisters who, through their pieces advice and prayers, instil love of God are also mothers. The attributes of motherhood will be great in those who instil this type of spirit with love. The idea is clear that, even if one is unmarried and living alone in this world, she who encourages and activates human life and spiritual life, by giving soul and heart, working hard along with God, is also a mother.\textsuperscript{122}

Having enforced the idea of a good mother, writings about bad or harmful mothers also began to appear. Those who neglect the importance of life and the real mothers who reject their role as a mother is harm to women’s glory and an enemy of

\textsuperscript{121} ‘Matruthwamathre Streeyude Mahathwam’ (Motherhood is Women’s Greatness), in \textit{Amma (Mal)}, Vol. 3, No. 5, May 1952, pp. 20-21.

\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Ibid.}
human beings. Any married woman who rejects her ability to give birth to young ones, a nurse who could have saved the life of a patient, a teacher who has not attempted to impart divine knowledge to souls, a religious who is lazy in the nourishment of her soul with divine life and any woman who is immersed in her own life and not concerned about others is sinned against the duty of motherhood.  

The prime duty of the parents is to sweep away selfishness and implant Christian ideals and this itself is a service of Catholic women to the community. The Catholic parents should grasp this ideal in the right way and train the children in these ideals. Only if a home is good, the country will improve. Many families join together to form a community and many communities together formed a country. The prosperity of a country depends upon the families. And the prosperity of a family depends on a woman who is a mother, teacher and mistress of the house. Many saints got their spiritual training in their childhood itself. Women should not be lazy and the leisure time should be utilised by them through handicrafts so as to acquire financial security. Mother should give Catholic education to children and they should be brought up accordingly.

To study in a Catholic school itself is a Catholic work. Even if schools of non-Christians or non-Catholics having more facilities is situated nearby, a Catholic who

123 Ibid.
124 Elia Uthuppu, ‘Kerala Catholica Vanithakalum Samudhaya Sevanavum’, in Prekshithan, (Kerala Catholic Women and Community service), Vol. 6, No. 9 &10, September-October 1932, pp.194-195; This was a Catholic monthly published from West Fort, Trichur.
125 Ibid.
goes to a Catholic school with less facilities, has done a Catholic work and shows an enhanced faith. He has to join the Catholic league for doing Catholic work. By attending the holy mass every day and prompting others to do the same is a means to live holy.¹²⁷

One important question put forward was, how women could participate in Catholic activities. An analysis shows that whatever one does in the name of God is a Catholic activity. The role of women is seen in a wider sense. As men and women are born with separate duties, community will not prosper without the active participation of both. The prosperity of the society depends on the family. The article by Mary Anthraper tries to convince others that both sexes had their own roles to perform. Women are not slaves, but have a participatory role. Thus she is convinces the entire society the ideologies of the Catholics.¹²⁸

At the turn of the twentieth century, when people began to give more importance to women education, Nazrani women realised that what empowers them is education. But they were under the misconception that, “we are leading the universe. Women, especially those who enter married life have to control the world. It is in her earnestness to bring up her children that the development of the world exists. A man who attains something in the war field could be done by a woman who looks after the child in the house. The most important service women could do is child care. For that she needs education. An illiterate woman could endanger world, likewise an educated women

¹²⁷ A.A. Abraham, ‘Vidyarthikalum Catholic Pravarthanavum’(Students and Catholic Activities), in Tiruhradayamasika (The Sacred Heart Monthly), Vol. 5, No.10, June 1941, pp. 389-391; This was a magazine issued by Sacred Heart Mount Kottayam, Kottayam Diocese.
¹²⁸ Mary Anthraper, ‘Catholica Pravarthanathil Streekalute Sthanam’ (Role of Women in Catholic Activities), in Vedaprachara Madhyasthan, Vol.10, No. 3, September 1937, pp. 81-86; this was a monthly diocesan bulletin of Changanacherry Diocese.
could safeguard the world also. She is upbringing soldiers, diplomats, poets, intellectuals and pious men. She is becoming wife and mother for the goodness of the world.”

While explaining the role of women in upbringing children, Mary Joseph reveals the prize, a woman has to give, as a mother, even though she does not find any fault with it. “From pregnancy onwards she is carrying a burden responsible to the world. From the conception of pregnancy, she has to live in utter care. She has to control her emotions and acquire good qualities. The first teacher of a child is its mother. She has to send an enthusiastic child to school. A child should not get the opportunity to imitate a hot tempered and quarrelsome mother. She should satisfy the curiosities of her child and should impart wisdom along with breast milk. So she needs education. It is she who uses education most effectively. Therefore she is the architect of world development.”

The above reflections are indicative of the emergence of the gendered identity of the Nazrani women. But this does not mean that the entire Nazrani women accepted these convictions without say. There were Nazrani women who stood against patriarchal norms of the society. The speech made by Mrs. I. C. Chacko, at the women’s meeting held as part of the All-Kerala Catholic Conference at Pala, explicitly reveals at least a few women were rowing against the existing norms. Mrs. Chacko’s attack on the dowry

131 Mrs. Chacko (1892-1966) was born, Niğheerikal Mariam in a distinguished Syrian Christian family in Alappuzha, as the daughter of a well-known lawyer, Niğheerikkal Cyriac. She passed her F.A. (Fine-Arts) examination from the Maharajas College for Women. At seventeen she was married off to I. C. Chacko, a brilliant scholar and intellectual in Travancore. The speech was published as ‘Nammude Strekaal’ in ‘Vanithakusumam’, 16 ME 1102 Karkatakam (July-August 1927), p. 193-99, in J. Devika, Her-Self : Early Writings of Malayalee Woman on Gender 1898-1938, Kolkata, 2005, pp. 96-104.
system of the Christians and the alienation of women from the landed property of the parents, was significant enough to attract the attention of many. To become independent and free from the tutelage of man, she makes three suggestions; first, like the women in England, she should demand a share of her husband’s earnings. Secondly, she should embark upon home based industries like spinning, weaving, making ornaments of gold and silver, painting and sewing so as to improve the financial condition though negligible. Thirdly, the ancestral wealth - streedhanam - must remain with women. Only then women will be respected. 132 While pointing to the problem of child marriage, she pointed out the contradiction that, “we, who value life as nun over matrimony, should display total negligence about marriage and related matters, and marry off girls aged twelve or fourteen.” 133 She reminded that this is against laws and denial of her right to study. A representative of upper class women, she was of opinion that higher education is inevitable for women to widen the intellect and character formation, against the view that education from schools and colleges are inappropriate for women and they need to be trained in sewing, cooking and so on. 134 At the same time she suggests that it is advantageous to give training to married women in child care, nursing, cooking and sewing after higher education, in the same way that men are trained in different professions. 135 She was specific about the gender disparities prevailing in the community and conscious about women’s rights, but at the same time not different from other women who identified their womanly space.

132 Ibid., pp.101-102.
133 Ibid., p. 99.
134 Ibid., p. 98.
135 Ibid.
In the construction of modern Nazrani women self, the nun had a specific role to play. They were involved in giving two types of training; one which turned towards other world and the other which was directed towards temporal world. The training oriented to the other world was given mainly through boarding, Sunday schools and other church organisations. The training for the temporal world was imparted through convent and parish schools. The training given in convent schools was intended to produce an ideal woman. Secondly, the agency that has been intrinsically involved in the construction of women identity was the Church authorities. Thirdly, the lay men through public deliberations, especially through Christian publications were earnest in instilling womanly qualities in women. The patriarchal anxiety of the church and the lay public was behind the desire to control women, body and sexuality. Fourthly, the educated women herself spread what were ‘ideal’ for women, through various Christian publications.

Majority of the Nazrani women were convent educated or those who studied in parish schools. Those who could not afford to modern education were given training in handicrafts. Schools, convents, boarding, Sunday schools and training centres - were all places of moral disciplining. Men were assigned the duty of protecting the family and physical and mental jobs, ‘natural’ in the economics of nature, while education, nursing, household work and bringing up children were taken ‘natural’ to women. Separation of manly and womanly space and separate curriculum for women to enrich their domestic capacities were all intended to locate women in the domestic space and men in the public place. They were taught what is womanly and the qualities needed for a Catholic woman. The attempt to bring up all the children in Catholic morality and ‘obedience’ to
authorities and elders were to hold them within the community. The married were not permitted to separate or permitted to seek job, only if they fulfilled their womanly duties. The monogamous marriage, restriction to divorce, restrictions in dress code and insistence on the morality of women were all intended to maintain a patriarchal community structure. Women internalised the ‘womanly’ attributes communicated through Church, school and family and thought natural and real. They wanted to become ‘good wives’ and ‘good mothers’ and the educated women exhorted these ideals through the columns of Christian publications. Thus the self conception of the Nazrani women was made adapted to the patriarchal norms and needs of the community.