The previous chapter illustrates that the position of the Syrian Christian community on the whole, in the social formation, was not very promising. The low level of economic and social capital was the major factor. It is by the acquisition of education that they were able to improve their position in the emerging social formation, for “the cultural capital of modernity is education, not caste or religion”\(^\text{318}\). These general conditions also affected the plight and status of women in Syrian Christian community.

**Religious space as social space**

The social space of Syrian Christian women continued to be the religious space. Gouvea (1606) and Vincent Maria (1728)\(^\text{319}\) report their presence in the church, especially during the visits of foreign prelates. Buchanan’s reports\(^\text{320}\) in the first decade of nineteenth century throw light about the disposition of Syrian Christian women. He was received as a fellow


\(^{319}\) Scaria Zachariah, the Acts..., Op. cit., p 56 “if the Bishop enters the church they all go one by one to kiss his hand with great propriety, first of all kneeling down and bowing the head to the ground, and then rising, they receive the blessing with much reverence, so that they all look like well behaved religious sisters. The same they do to children, even those that are carried in arms, whom they lay at the feet of the prelate”.

\(^{320}\) Cited by Augur, C. M. from Buchanan’s Journals, in *Church history of Travancore*, A.E. S., p 79-102.
Christian in these churches. Buchanan noticed that the women in general were affable and courteous in their manners, indicating a high disposition. Buchanan notes that during his visit people came out to meet him. Although he mentions women only in two instances, that of Chengannoor and Colancherry churches, he never pointed out the absence of women among ‘people’, “the priests and people came out. women and children in their holiday clothes. to meet us a little distance from the town”\textsuperscript{321}. So it can be assumed that they were not strictly confined to home but were allowed to participate in religious functions. He states about the reception in general that, in all the churches he visited, he found the same affection for the religion of their forefathers, “women … appeared to be as much interested in the object of my visit as men”. He also gives an account of a conversation with an old woman at Colancherry, “an old lady wished me to make a promise that I would come back again in a year or two, or at least that I would write to them. She would take care that the cassanars did their duty meanwhile”\textsuperscript{322}. This indicates an active interest of women in religious affairs though they had no role to play in the church assemblies. Further Buchanan’s reports reveal the patriarchal nature of the community, “in every church the elders stepped forth with patriarchal simplicity and zeal, as the natural guardians of the people”.

\textsuperscript{321} ibid.
\textsuperscript{322} ibid.
It appears that the Syrian Christian women enjoyed much freedom than that of Brahmins who were the other patriarchal community of the region, "as to Brahmins, their families live in entire seclusion, as in a Romish convent; unlike anything that is known in Hindustan". Travancore is known for its freedom of women and matrilineal inheritance in many communities, especially the Nairs. Syrian Christian women were compared to that of Nair women by Buchanan, "the manners of indeed of the Nairs of both sexes have much of the same independent frankness". Still they were within the control of the patriarchal norms of the community.

Christian children are reported to be less shy to strangers, may be due to the familiarity with the visit of the foreign prelates. "The children showed nothing of the Hindu shyness and alarm at a stranger. They used to mount my palanquin, and sometimes get into it". This indicates their involvement in church affairs from early childhood itself; most probably their mothers or grandmothers might have brought them to the church.

However, the history of Syrian Christians hitherto was the history of their religious struggle, and women were never mentioned in that. The stories about their religious struggle were passed orally to the next generation, mainly by the narrations of old people, and women also had

323 ibid. p 90.
324 ibid.
participated in this process, for they were in contact with the children most of the time. Women themselves had their knowledge about these affairs from the conversations of the men of the family hence their world-view was formed according to that of the men of the family.

**Educational practices before the arrival of Anglican missionaries**

There is no clear-cut evidence regarding the educational facilities for men as well as women before the arrival of Anglican missionaries. For common men (women also) a rudimentary knowledge in reading, writing and arithmetic was sufficient for the business of day to day life. Skill in 'kulathozhil, the traditional hereditary job, was imparted by elders of the respective caste group. Knowledge in the 'Vedas' and 'Sastras' were required by the priestly class only. In the caste system this was the exclusive right of the Brahmins. Among Syrian Christians who had a different ritual status, the priests were trained in Syriac and church practices by learned elderly priests, 'the malpans', akin to the 'Gurukula' type of education (residing with the teacher for prospecting studies). The Portuguese started seminaries to train priests. The first seminary they started was to replace Syriac with that of Latin, which was rejected by the community. Then they started seminary in which the study of Syriac also was included, but the community was reluctant to change the traditional religious practices, the Puthencure Syrians totally rejected it. Thus
education in the modern sense was confined to the priests in the past, so women were completely excluded.

Report of M. T. Thomas, (1913) the then headmaster of Baker school, throws light on the state of education in former times, "until very recent days the state did not interest itself in educating the masses and the people were left to make their own arrangement for education of the children and most of the well to do families had their own tutors and the children of the poorer families in the neighbourhood were sent to them. In the rural parts, every village had its 'pyal' schools where boys and girls were taught together the three 'R's by the 'ashan', where children of all standards was taught by a single teacher and consequently the progress was very slow". Further the education imparted in these schools was restricted to memorizing portions from Vedas and Puranas. The development of one's mental factors came with the individuation process of modernity.

There is no clear evidence regarding the education of females in Travancore before the arrival of Anglican missionaries. It is assumed that the upper caste girls were taught the rudiments of writing in their own homes. Nagam Aiya notes "the Nairs, especially very earnest in the education of their sisters and nieces. No girl is permitted to grow up to

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325 Diocesan Records, October 1913, p 105.
womanhood without a fair knowledge of reading and writing"\textsuperscript{326}. A child’s education began at 5 and ended at 10. He observed that on account of the early marriages and other causes very few girls remain in the school to the end.

Micahel Tharakan presumes that, “from the rather lower level of literacy that seemed to have existed in Kerala in early 18\textsuperscript{th} century there was not much progress during the century"\textsuperscript{327}. The census report of 1901 shows that, of the total population 87.6\% were illiterate, only 12\% were being able to read and write. Of this the literate female was only 3.1 \%\textsuperscript{328}.

\textbf{Education-a breakthrough in the traditional practices and the creation of a new habitus}

There is no indication of any interest shown in educating the girls of the Syrian Christian community. The Syrian metropolitan and the people during the early nineteenth century were interested in the education and training of the clergy as well as the laity\textsuperscript{329} but it seems that by ‘laity’ emphasis was given to men rather than women. Mr. Doran’s statement in 1827\textsuperscript{330} points to the condition of Syrian Christian women during the early nineteenth century, “Christianity (alas! falsely so called) has done but little, if anything for Syrian women and the marks of degradation are, equally apparent in Syrian and heathen women alike”. According to him, “I

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{326} Nagam Aiya: Travancore..., Op. cit., p 472.
\item \textsuperscript{328} Nagam Aiya, Travancore..., Op. cit., p 32.
\item \textsuperscript{329} Diocesan Records, October 1913.
\item \textsuperscript{330} The Proceedings of the C.M.S 1827-28, pp 98,99.
\end{itemize}
need not say that female improvement ought to go hand in hand with that of man, if not precede it". The desire of the Anglican missionaries was to promote the moral, intellectual and social welfare of the people of this country in addition to the spread of Christianity and they recognized from the very beginning that the best means to accomplish the object was education. They felt that no community could make any real progress unless the position of the women was raised. It was the wives of the protestant missionaries who introduced the English system of education among girls and they were the pioneers to establish girl's schools.

The process of schooling and the propagation of modern ideas through a proper curriculum, helped to form a dent in the customary practices. These customary practices in the eyes of the foreigners were superstitious practices that cannot be justified by reason. The practices of the traditional society perpetuated mainly through the mothers. The missionaries realised that these could be changed only through the education of women. In the South Indian Missionary conference held at Ootacamund on April nineteenth – May fifth 1958, the issue of native female education was given much importance. In a paper presented on the subject by E.P. Hastings, “no one who views the degradation of Indian females and understands their strength of their attachment to superstition and idolatry, or rightly estimates the power of maternal influence on the
rising generation, can doubt that it is of the highest importance”. R. B.
Blyth stated the aims of educating a Hindu and a Mohammedan girl, “she
must be taught to read and write her language with fluency, she shall have
these acquisitions as attachment to superstition and idolatry or rightly
estimates the power of maternal influence up on the rising generation, can
doubt that it is of highest importance”, again, “she shall have these
acquisitions as a kind of second nature, a portion of her educated self”. For
this he suggested “an acquaintance with history, geography, Arithmetic,
Grammar, Natural History, Music and Sewing”. Unknowingly the
missionaries were trying to create a new habitus in the social formation,
breaking away from the age-old customary practices. They felt that this
process have to be started in home and through women and hence they
gave much importance to women’s education.

It was not an easy task to do away the customary practices and
beliefs. In many places the missionaries had to overcome strong prejudices
and opposition against educating women. Anybody who held responsible
position took no initiative in this matter as observed by many historians
about the period. “An organized form of teaching for girls was initiated by

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331 Proceedings of the South Indian Missionary Conference on 1858, p 197.
332 Ibid p 196.
the efforts of the wives of protestant missionaries only, without any formal suggestion from anyone in authority.”

Several social customs and practices, especially early marriage greatly interfered with the girl’s education. They also had to face and overcome the natural indifference and resistance in this regard. Girls were destined for family life and an identity of their own, other than related to family was never thought of. The missionaries distributed pamphlets printed at the press at Nagercoil, relating to the advantage of women education and to create a public opinion in its favour. This was aimed to make an awareness of the advantages in sending girls to schools instead of confining them to their homes. This is clear from the missionary report, Economic factors were also behind the negative attitude towards female education. Parents had to give considerable amount of money at the time of marriage as dowry and with large dowries to provide at daughter’s marriage, parents were so unwilling to pay a ‘chakram’ for school fees. Missionary ladies overcame these problems by giving free education. The offers of free board and education and an outfit of clothes tempted the parents. In 1829, there were 42 girls in Mrs. Baker’s school, each cost

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Rs. 16 per Annum, which was found by Mr. Baker\textsuperscript{338}. In the first issue of Church Missionary record of Madras dated 1834, there is the acknowledgement of contributions to the native female education fund amounting to Rs. 665, indicating a rapid spread of female education during this period\textsuperscript{339}. Female education was free for a long time and missionaries generated funds for the expenditure from time to time, as evident from the report. “after the first seven years, several officers then at Quilon, kindly gave their subscription to support a few boarders under my care. Assistance was also given from a fund raised in aid of the Syrian college and other departments of the Mission and on application from the corresponding committee a fixed allowance was granted on September fourteenth 1829. From that time until Dec. 1842, a fixed amount, Rs. 60 per month were allowed for the entire expense of food, clothing, medicine, and teaching for 40 girls\textsuperscript{340}. (Some elderly women (born around 1905) in Kottayam town told that they were offered outfit of clothes by ‘Baker madamma’ to attend school).

**Initial stages of female education - early decades of nineteenth century**

Lady missionaries started an organized form of teaching for girls in 1820. For them, the diffusion of the knowledge of Christianity was of prime importance and education of women was a means to attain this goal. From the beginning they realized that the overall development of the girls was an

\textsuperscript{338} Proceedings of the C.M.S., 1827-28, p 98.


\textsuperscript{340} C.M.S. Record 1843, p 99.
important aspect in this matter. As mentioned earlier the social space and the religious space of the Syrian Christian women were one and the same. Since lady missionaries had undertaken the task of educating the females more importance was given to religious studies, especially Bible. The highly traditional Syrian Christian parents, at least a few in the beginning, were willing to entrust their girls to the lady missionaries. This in turn became the first step in creating a new social space for women. Moreover the British missionaries started schools attached to churches (since the first organized schools in the modern sense was attached to churches it may have got the name ‘Pallikudams’), and with the cooperation of the Syrian Christians, to start with a few parents started sending their girls to these institutions.

Mrs. Bailey\textsuperscript{341} gets the credit of initiating women’s education, in connection with the Kottayam Mission. It began with a few girls given instruction in her own house under her direction\textsuperscript{342}. The first girl’s school in the state was started by Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Fenn, both lady missionaries, at Kottayam most probably in 1820\textsuperscript{343}. It must be born in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{342} Proceedings of the C.M.S. 1827-28, p 99, Report of Henry Baker, Missionary Register 1852, p 603, Hough G.P., History of..., Op. cit., p 391-92The school continued to function for several years and then it was incorporated with the girls school of Mrs. Johnson.
\item \textsuperscript{343} C.M.S. Record for 1843, p99. G.P. Hunt, \textit{History of...}, Op. cit., p. 83. Mrs. Baker, in a letter to Rev. J. Tucker reported, “shortly after the establishment of the mission, female education began to be attended to and though there was no school on a large scale, in each mission family a few children were under instruction and a small number of days scholars were also allowed to attend”.
\end{itemize}
mind that the ‘girl’s school, in the beginning, unlike that of boys, was not in an organized form, with regular building, or syllabi and regular attendance. This school began as a day school, the girls were taught needle-work, English and catechism. Since it was hard to secure regular attendance Mrs. Baker decided to have the girls with her in the house, to sleep and to board as well as to learn and sew. She began with 6 girls, all below the age of 12, and others were added year by year\textsuperscript{344}. The school gradually developed. Mrs. Baker received 18 girls into her house wishing to increase the number to 25, and undertaking to board and lodge them under her own eyes, on a fee not exceeding 20 rupees a month for the whole\textsuperscript{345}. Mr. Baker reported the progress of female education commenced by Mrs. Fenn and Mrs. Baker, “all these children except two are under 12 years of age and had scarcely learned anything before they came”\textsuperscript{346}.

Their educational efforts were not restricted to Travancore or among the Syrian Christians alone. Mrs. Mead another missionary wife started a boarding school at Nagercoil in 1819, for the children of Christian converts, with free board along with clothing.\textsuperscript{347} Mrs. Ridsdale started a girl’s school at Cochin around 1828. A little later Mrs. Bailey wrote to Mr. Tucker about building a school for girls opposite to the printing

\textsuperscript{346} Proceedings of the C.M.S. 1827-28, p 98.
office. From the beginning Mrs. Norton in Alappuzha had 8 native women and 3 young women from Dutch community of Cochin and two or three days scholars under instruction, by 1828, there were 35 students.

The attempts to educate girls were not restricted to these girl’s schools only but were extended to other schools started by the missionaries. Col. Digby Mackworth, in 1821, was surprised at the presence of ‘two little girls among them (boys)- quite a novelty in India’ in one of Mr. Baker’s school (probably at Kottayam). Hunt also stated that some girls were learning in parish schools as early as 1821. Missionary records from 1828 onwards showed that there were one or two day-schools maintained for the benefit of girls outside the missionary stations. In the compound school in Alleppezha there were forty boys and 13 girls in 1820. In 26th report it is given, “in the Sunday school under Mrs. Norton’s care there are forty scholars, and about a dozen young persons of both sexes attend daily for instruction. Besides this she has 9 or 10 native girls whom she teaches. Thus female education was gradually spreading. Mrs. Peet appears to have opened a school at Mavelikkara. By 1834, there were 25 schools with 27 teachers including 2 Hindu teachers.

352 Proceedings Of The C.M.S., 1821-22, p 156.
353 Proceedings Of The C.M.S., 1825-26, p 101.
780 children of whom 100 were Syrian girls. 45 girls were attending the female boarding schools\textsuperscript{354}.

**Advancement of female education in the second half of nineteenth century**

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the prejudice of female education was overcome and more and more girls attended the missionary schools. Various reports of that period show that the prejudices were soon overcame by the parents and more and more parents were willing to send their girls to the schools. They find it useful and for sacred employments, as evident from the report, "Parents are now satisfied that the female children are deriving benefit from being under Mrs. Baker's kind care that many of them are coming forward to solicit for an entrance for more"\textsuperscript{355}. There were girl's schools attached to every mission. These schools became very popular that these were unaffected by the ecclesiastical struggles and the conflict between the Syrian religious authorities and the missionaries\textsuperscript{356}. Mrs. Baker's school was prominent among them. After Mrs. Fenn's departure it was carried on by Mrs. Baker alone, and then in association with a daughter for 60 years, and her daughter-in-law and descendants continued for a long time. (Even after independence this school continued to be the best in providing education for girls).


\textsuperscript{355} Proceedings of the C.M.S 1827-28, p 98.

\textsuperscript{356} P. Cherian, The Malabar ..., Op. cit., p 191 "even the unrest following the arrival of Mar Athanasius nor even what ruptured the relation between the then metran and the missionaries seem to have in any way affected these schools".
In 1849 Henry Baker commenced a Girl’s boarding school at Pallom. Mrs. Caley started girl’s boarding school at Thiruvalla, Mrs. Bishop at Trichur, and Mrs. Bower at Kunnamkulam. All these schools continued in 20th century also, some without adequate support and crippled for want of funds357. By this time Mrs. Peet had opened a Girls school at Mavelikkara consisting 35 girls358. The Christian girl’s boarding school with its strength of 48 girls is carried on as it has been for 60 years by Mrs. Baker Sr.; in addition to which Miss. Baker had 100 boarders and over 130 scholars under her charge359. Other sections of the Christian community also entered the field of education in second half of 19th century. With the split of the non-catholic Syrian Christians with the Anglican missionaries during 1935-40, a number of schools associated with the church and the Seminary came under the control of Orthodox Church. Some of these schools continued and some ceased its function due lack of funds. The Mar Thoma church (the reformed Syrians Church) started schools of their-own. The rivalry between the two groups was reflected in starting more and more schools. Girls were also admitted in these schools. The Orthodox Church registered a society under the Companies act to manage and co-ordinate their educational activities by the end of nineteenth century.

357 Diocesan Records 1905, p 5.
358 Proceedings Of The CMS 1846-47, p 88.
359 Proceedings Of The C.M.S 1882-83, p 139.
The Roman Catholic church was not interested in education of the women in early decades of nineteenth century as evident from the report, "The Roman Catholic clergy have endeavoured to prevent the children from coming to Mrs. Norton and some few have in consequence left; but the number has been made up by others". However following the examples of the non-catholic Christians they also took the matter in right earnest later on. From 1880s the catholic Christians started schools of their own. By 1887 the number increased from 10 to 1000.

**Advancement of female education in the state and of other communities in the second half of nineteenth century**

By the end of nineteenth century, girls from Hindu community also were sent in large numbers to schools conducted by missionaries. Mrs. Neve was in charge of Hindu girl’s schools with 160 pupils. It is mentioned in the same report about a big Zenana Mission school in Trichur and the missionary ladies dispensing medicines to the needy. In 1883 it is reported that there were four Hindu girls schools in Kottayam, founded by Mrs. J.H. Bishop 10 years ago (1873) and were superintended by Mrs. Neve with an average attendance of 130.

The government efforts in the field of female education was practically nil during the first half of nineteenth century. Till 1864, the

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361 Proceedings Of The C.M.S 1881-82, p 137.
362 ibid. p 141.
363 Proceedings Of The C.M.S. 1882-83, p 139.
government had been indifferent in the matter of female education. In his administrative report of 1862-63 Sir Madhava Rao states, "very little, if anything has been done for female education. This subject calls for prompt attention, such as education must be among other advantages, the foundation of important social reforms." The school at Cantonment in Trivandrum, known as the Fort school, originally intended for the Christian girls was taken over by the government, recognized and opened for girls of all castes in 1867, under the charge of Miss Abel and a number of European ladies served the school as headmistresses. The course of study included a sound instruction of English, French, Music, needlework and Drawing. Miss Blandford of C.E.Z. Mission opened a school for high caste Hindu girls with government assistance and grant. "Miss Blandford has been instrumental in diffusing English education among high caste women and her influence has extended even to the ladies of the royal house." The school was started in 1864 with the support of H.H. Maharaja and the Diwan Madhava Rao, for high caste girls, in a large old palace, which was said to be haunted, within the fort. Miss Blandford's first pupils were the daughter and niece of the diwan and two more girls were admitted soon. A statement, 'at that time female education was not much valued', is given in the report, showing the general attitude towards

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366 ibid
367 ibid
educating women. In addition to this there was a government vernacular high school for girls at Trivandrum. But other than the above schools, the educational facilities for women were meager, even though all fees for girls were abolished in 1896. There were small village day schools for girls in different part of the district, but these were often difficult to continue for want of funds and teachers. The government’s Policy was to encourage more private schools giving financial support in the form of grant-in-aid, instead of starting schools of their own.

**Progress of female education in the state**

The progress of female education was very slow in the state. The main reason was the less number of girls schools and people’s prejudice to send girls to co-education schools. More over, even up to the fag end of nineteenth century the girl’s schools confined to lower primary classes. Baker school, one of the first girl’s schools, was recognized as lower secondary school by the Madras University only in 1892. It is reported in 1905, “the difficulties and slow progress of female education may be in a measure realized when it is stated that as recently as 1890, no schools in Trivandrum are taught higher than the upper primary standard while the youth had for a number of years been taught up to Matriculation examination whether they afterwards proceeded for their F.A. or B. A.

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368 Ibid
Degrees”. Fort school was raised to high school in 1888 and raised to a second grade college in 1897, affiliated to Madras University. This is the first and only second grade college for girls in the state. Only a very few could avail these facilities. Only girls of affluent families got the chances for higher studies outside the state.

The ratio of boys and girls under instruction in church Missionary schools of Travancore and Cochin was 4:1 in 1881, the boys 3463 and girls 850. The number of native agents (including pastors and teachers, probably male for females were not mentioned) was 199. The number of students and agents in 1890 were - boys 4510, girls 1341, and agents 264.

Another impediment in the progress of female education was caste prejudices. By the end of nineteenth century (1895-96), separate schools were established for ‘backward classes’ and most of other schools admitted lower caste students, especially ezhavas. But the government was not prepared to admit girls of these communities. Caste prejudice was more apparent in the education for girls than for boys.

Training of teachers

A Normal girls’ school was started at Kottayam in 1849 by Mrs. Johnson. This was carried on with great success, even after the death of her husband.

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371 Proceedings Of The CMS for 1881-82, Summary of the returns from the Travancore Cochin Mission for 1881, p 137.
372 Travancore Diocesan Record, March 1905, p 36.
It is not very clear whether the school was meant for the training of teachers only. Mrs. Johnson reported in 1854 that three of her students have been employed as schoolmistresses\textsuperscript{374}. Lady teacher’s training in the state is closely associated with that of Buchanan’s Institution at Pallom, near Kottayam, established by Rev. A.H. Lash and was inaugurated in 1891\textsuperscript{375}. This was quite a new idea in Travancore and this was the first training school for girls in the state\textsuperscript{376}. After some time the standard of the school was raised to Form 3. A middle school standard and a training department was formed for training those who had passed the Madras Presidency and Lower Secondary Examinations\textsuperscript{377}.

**Curriculum**

In the beginning the object of these schools was to give Christian girls moral education and to impart domestic training and needle work - embroidery, knitting, spinning, crochet, lace work, and sewing, along with plain instruction in reading and writing, and for the more talented English. Gradually few more subjects were added. The curriculum of the schools conducted by the lady missionaries, mainly intended to develop the overall qualities of the girls based on Christian principles comprised of reading and writing, the portions of the Bible, liturgy, needle work and knitting.

\textsuperscript{374} Proceedings Of The C.M.S. 1854-55, p 127.
\textsuperscript{375} Diocesan Records January, 1905, p 4 “One miss Usborne gave a large sum of money for establishing a training institution for girls on the same line as that already opened at Tinnevelly Mission”.
\textsuperscript{376} W.S. Hunt, the Anglican ..., Op. cit., p 254.
\textsuperscript{377} Diocesan Records. January 1905, p 5.
Archdeacon Robinson, in 1830, also commented about the flourishing condition of this school, stated that the little girls were taught knitting and spinning. In the 35th report of the CMS also it is given that in the boarding schools for girls there were 45 girls learning to sew and read. A report about Mrs. Baker’s school described the activities of the girls, “they are now employed from morning till noon at their needles and in the after part of the day at the books. The first class read the responses of the liturgy, which we use at the morning prayer. The students received a simple but thorough education as far as possible in those early days. Since it was intended mainly for the Christian girls, prime importance was given to moral education. Portions from the Bible, and catechism were included in the curriculum.

Gradually more and more subjects were introduced in addition to the basic Christian instruction and needlework. The general subjects taught comprised of vernacular languages, English in higher classes, history, Geography, Arithmetic, and elements of natural philosophy. We get a clear picture of the method of instruction from the report of Rev. Henry Baker Sr. about Mrs. Johnson’s school at Kottayam, “the school consists of

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379 CMS Record for 1843, p 99.
380 Proceedings Of The C.M.S. 1827-28, p 98.
43 girls. In the first class there are 8, of from 9-14 years of age. These I examined in their reading of Holy Scriptures and in Watt’s scripture history, geography and smaller Catechisms. They read fluently and without omission or mistake in the several different books of the Old Testament to which I directed them and with an emphasis and tone that shown at once they were familiar with them all. They answered questions readily on the part of the history of Israelites and related in their language in a manner that greatly interested me portions of history of Patriarchs; ... they had committed to memory 46 pages of Watt’s scripture history. They had learned Asia and Europe from Malayalam Translation of Clift’s book. They answered readily any question put to them on portions they have learned, and pointed out up on the maps of different countries and chief cities named to them, together orthography a little defective. This I hope will be remedied before another examination. Specimens of knitting, needlework etc were exhibited which did the girls much credit. It is pleasing to find that both here and in other schools in Travancore the girls became so fond of this work that both play hours and school hours alike find them engaged in it. These children all appeared healthy and happy and seemed to look up on Mrs. Johnson as their best earthly friend. She spoke of their general conduct as being good and several in particular, she
said she hoped their mind under the influence of the saving grace of the
gospel"383.

Effect of modern Education on the overall position of Syrian Christian
women
As mentioned in the previous chapter, individuation process started with
education. As a result the attitude of the women and towards women
changed considerably bringing about change in the position of women in
the social formation. The census report of 1891 records, "the social
position of the women among the Syrians is not bad. They are treated more
as helpmates and companion than as menials". In the initial stages the
missionary ladies gave much importance to impart good domestic training
to the girls, to make them better house wives with an idea of spreading
these qualities among the Syrian Christian families. Hunt also subscribed
to the same view, "the teaching in Baker as well as the similar boarding
schools managed by wives of missionaries, in Tiruvalla, Alleppey, Trichur
and other Mission stations was first planned chiefly to give the pupils
necessary domestic training"384.

The training in needle work, stitching etc may have changed their
attitude to work, since they were born and brought up in a social formation
where the menial work was looked down. This might have helped the first
group of students and the following generations to acquire the industrious

383 Missionary Register 1850, pp 54-55.
nature. In the course of time, this training facilitated the less privileged girls to earn some income in support of their families. Mrs. Baker statement also supports this view, "besides book learning, they have acquired such a knowledge of sewing, knitting and spinning as to enable some of them to do something towards their living after they leave the school." (I have first hand information on above. My grandmother as well as great grandmother was students of Baker school. They used to stitch clothes for the entire family). In 1921 the L.M.S. at Nagercoil alone employed about 2000 women for its lace industry. These women made lace in their home and brought once a week to the lace office. All the women were Christians connected with L.M.S.

Another goal in educating girls was to inculcate a reading habit in them. By encouraging the reading habits the development of mental faculties were taken care of. Hunt stated that, "if we can sent forth, to native society girls who take pleasure in reading for its own sake, who feel dissatisfied, if they spent a day without using some books, and who are to give expression to their thoughts in writing, while at the same time we furnish them with useful and elevating literature, surely we are doing not a little to promote the important work." By this the missionaries opened an avenue for these girls, for the development of mental horizon and to

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385 Proceedings Of The C.M.S. 1846-47. p 88.
387 Proceedings of the South India Missionary Conference, April 19th – May 5th 1858. p 196.
develop an individuality of their own which was inevitable to participate in
differentiated modern institutions.

*European teachers introduced a new role model as teachers and leaders, persons having some interest other than her family and working for the welfare of the society, which was hitherto unknown to them. For their mothers and grandmothers have no identity apart from the family as evident from Robert Bren’s statement, “the characters of the pupil will, to a great extent, be formed after the model of those under whose immediate influence they are placed”* 388.

Girls residing away from their parental homes in the boarding school for the first time in the history had helped to break some traditional customs and superstitious practices. They introduced a type of community living through these boarding schools, where the senior girls were the group leaders, responsible for the good behaviour of the younger ones. Thus leadership qualities and organizing capacity of these girls were developed, which in turn may have helped others whom these girls were coming in contact with. The students were told to keep their surroundings clean. Personal hygiene was a matter of great importance to the lady missionaries. They took much effort to inculcate such habits among the students. The girls were taught to stitch their own clothes and that of their family. Robert Bren pointed out “in a boarding school customs are broken

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through, heathenish observances set aside and regular opportunities obtained for the understanding of the truth”, “at the same time the course of instruction being limited, and the pupils returning to their friends for shorter periods at vacations the natural ties are kept up”. He further added that the instruction of the boarding schools is not only higher, but the pupils learn much better than in day schools; they are not only more thoroughly instructed, but habits of order, cleanliness, industry etc are formed. The educated girls have set a higher standard in character, conduct and knowledge, which insensibly lead other women to imitate and follow.

The prime aim of these missionaries was to inculcate Christian principles, among women, so much importance was given for bible study. M.M. Thomas and C.P. Mathew were of opinion that, “but the more important service they did was to place emphasis on the centrality of the scriptures in the life of the Christian and the church”. They further added that, “but the idea that the church must preach the word, and that the scriptures should be the authoritative criterion for testing the tradition of faith and order, have gained wide spread acceptance in the Syrian...

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389 Ibid.
390 Ibid p 208.
community, largely as a result of the currents of thought initiated by the mission. 391

This change in the concept had wider implications in the life of the Syrian women also. In the traditional church the place of women was behind that of men and they were not allowed to participate in the church affairs. Education changed the outlook of women and they became aware of a personal religion. Accounts of revival in girls boarding school was reported in the latter part of 19th century. 392 It is remarkable fact in a land where women are commonly despised, the blessing of revival has in many instance came first the girls boarding schools through the ministry of girls and women, it has passed on to the church. In the latter part of the 19th century, a gospel team of women from Tamil nadu, under the leadership of Ammal, daughter of Vedanayakam Sastri conducted revival meetings here. This may have been the first instance of public religious activity of native women, breaking the traditional thinking of confining the women to the private space, denying their activities in the religious and public space.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, separation of the reformed party was incomplete, as Mar Thoma church. Revival meetings became the strength of the church. Family prayer with bible reading with songs and in morning and evening became a common practice, it was women who took

392 Diocesan Record July 1906, p 56.
initiative for the family prayer. Women formed small prayer groups here and there and they met at regular intervals. The revival of women may have been an outward expression of newly acquired freedom through education.

The missionary ladies gave attention to provide proper Christian leadership for women, for one of the aims in educating the girls was to provide suitable wives for educated Christian men especially priests. Always the wives of the priests had an exalted position in the community and they thought that educated women should provide leadership for other women of the community. In 1845 Mr. Baker pointed out the necessity of sanctioning funds for Mrs. Baker’s school for the school is providing suitable wives for native Priests, Catechists, and schoolmasters. The missionaries were careful to give a good instruction in the religious matters, for portions from the Bible and liturgy was included in the curriculum from the beginning itself, their main aim being evangelization. This is evident from the resolutions on native female education at the south Indian Missionary Conference in 1958, ‘the paramount importance of educating the females of the land on sound Christian principles, the boarding institutions for the female have served and do still serve a most valuable purpose in saving souls. training agents for mission work, and

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393 Mar Thoma Stree jana Suvishesha sevika sakham Charitra samshepam, 1915-1995, compiled by Dr. Mrs., K. K George, Miss Susy David and Kusum Thomas, p 12.
394 CMS Record for 1845, p 100.
furnishing suitable wives for educated Christian men. The Christian day schools for females are a most important method for reaching the masses of the people%^395.

Girls, educated from these schools began to teach in girl’s schools, by the middle of nineteenth century, there by initiating their entry into the field of teaching profession. This event was a major break through for women. Mrs. Johnson accounted in 1854, out of 35 girls, (all of them got married with one or two children) 3 have been employed as school- mistresses%^396. The number of women employed as schoolteachers increased thereon. It was reported that, “a number of students trained here are now doing good work in all parts of the mission, including the village schools connected with the Buchanan Institution” and in 1898. the girl’s day school at Aleppo was staffed entirely by women%^397. By the middle of nineteenth century, substantial improvement in the quality of the second generation of educated girls was observed. Archdeacon Pratt reports about these girls (Mrs. Johnson’s school), “I think the intelligence of these children was quite great as any – in fact, I thought it superior to that of any – I had ever seen in India. I have examined them for an hour and asked them many questions: and I do not scruple to say that I was quite astonished at the full

395 Ibid. p 209.
and accurate answers they gave". These girls were competent enough to take up teaching profession. Mr. Lash reported about the teaching demonstration by the students at the occasion of the opening of the new building of the school on 1892, "this exhibition excited the great interest and everyone was struck by the concentration each young women showed in the work, she had in hand and the control she exercised over the class".

Another major change brought about by the progress of female education was the raise of the age of marriage among the Syrian Christians. Child marriage as mentioned earlier was one of the evils of this community. Girls were married even before the age of 10, during nineteenth century, resulting in the higher female mortality rate, most probably due to premature maternity, resulting in the lower sex ratio among the Syrian Christians. Child marriage was not common among other communities in Travancore, other than that of the Muslims. The female mortality rate of Syrian Christians was higher than that of the Muslims, even in the beginning of twentieth century. Hunt observed that from the beginning, these women pioneers in women's education, following Mrs. Baker sr. had worked through their schools to raise the marriage age...
amongst the Christians.\textsuperscript{400} But the process was very slow. The main reason for this was the occupation of most of the Syrian Christians was agriculture and most of them were residing in interior villages without much schooling facilities. More over through the limited boarding school facilities, only a small percentage of the population could be covered.

Changes due to education in social practices of women were visible by the middle of the nineteenth century. Educated women started to attend church services regularly. Prior to this the women were so engrossed in house work that they went to church occasionally or on special days only. It seems young girls may have regularly attended the church. Henry baker sr. reported in 1850, “a number of young women who are educated by Mrs. Bailey are married and settled at Kottayam and their steady conduct and regular attendance on religious instruction speak much for goodness inculcated up on them when at school”.\textsuperscript{401} Mr. Henry Baker, in his survey of the educational work conducted in 1870 stated that, “the two large boarding schools, one kept by my mother for 50 years and the last by my wife for 26 years have had no small effect on the mothers of our Christian families; and as from Sunday to Sunday I look from various pulpits I preach in round the congregations, it is easy to discover those who have

\textsuperscript{401} Missionary Register 1852: p 603.
been in these schools, so too in passing along the street. Mrs. Johnson
gave an account about her former students. "35 girls, many of them
mothers of one or two children which I have pleasure of seeing them bring
early to church, teaching them behave well. Mrs. Hawksworth reported
about Mrs. Peet’s school at Mavelikkara, “throughout this large mission
(Mavelikkara) I only know one female who can read with exception those
in Mrs. Peet’s school and are married”.

It seems that there was some distinction between the girls educated
in the boarding schools and the day schools. There was a marked difference
in the curriculum and way of teaching in the boarding schools conducted
by the missionaries and the day schools. The ‘boarding school effect’ may
have created a different class of women, trained to become better
housewives based on western standards. By early twentieth century, a fee
was charged for the students in these boarding schools, thereby, restricting
the admission to the affluent group of the society. Gradually the instruction
in these schools became a status symbol. Moreover the education for upper
class women also became status symbol, rather than for a career. The
Syrian Christian women were the pioneers in this field. By the
establishment of modern educational institutions the condition in Kerala
became suitable for the acquisition of educational capital irrespective of

p 193.
403 Proceedings Of The C.M.S 1854-55, p 127.
caste, religion and gender. By this process the people were able to come out of the traditional social space as individuals. The most important of which was the girl's entry into the public space through teaching profession. But this transition was slow especially for women, due to the hold of strong traditional practices.

Conclusion

All the above facts indicate the role of female education in bringing about a new habitus for women. Development of mental faculties inculcated through education facilitated the individuation process. European teachers introduced new role models as teachers and leaders. Girls residing away from homes, in boarding schools for the first time in history, helped to break traditional customs, thereby interrupting the traditional habitus. Domestic space underwent changes due to the emergence of nuclear families. Religious space also changed by the influence of reformation.

However the space evolved was a gendered one. Unknowingly, the education imparted by the missionaries was gender biased. Emphasis was given to the domestic training and the inculcation of religious principles, intended to make them better housewives. This helped to relegate women to traditionally feminine role and confine them to the domestic space, establishing the patriarchal order that had far-reaching consequences in the development of the social space of women in later periods. Many sociologists are of opinion that compulsiveness of modernity was from its first origins gender-divided. Weber
describes a male public domain in the Protestant Ethics. Religion and family were in private domain. Since women are intimately connected to family and domestic roles, they were in the private domain. Betty Freidan (1963) in The Feminine Mystique reveals the position of white heterosexual, middle-class American women who were careerless and trapped in domesticity. Five main foci are involved in most discussions of sexual difference: biology, experience, discourse, the unconscious and social and economic conditions. Certain themes such as the omnipresence of patriarchy, the inadequacy for women of existing political organizations and the celebration of women’s difference as central to the cultural politics of liberation dominated second wave feminism\textsuperscript{404}. Giddens points out that, traditional modes of gender difference, and gender domination, were actively reinforced by the development of newer traditions – including an ethos of the female domesticity\textsuperscript{405}. Bourdieu states that existing power relations are reproduced through education. Education of girls, especially in girl’s schools through out the nineteenth century gave importance to domestic training to make them better house wives. It is a well-accepted fact that female education contributed to the education of next generation, and thereby accelerating the changes in the social space. However the educational institutions and its practices perpetuated the division of gender and its discriminatory values. The religions also reinforced masculine domination through symbols and practices.

\textsuperscript{404} A Readers Guide to contemporary Literary Theory