Chapter 7

Social Space of Women, Second Half of Twentieth Century

Kerala state was formed as a state of Indian union (first Travancore-cochin and then the state of Kerala by the addition of Malabar in 1956). The identity of ‘the subject’ was shifted to ‘citizen’ of India, theoretically providing equal rights and opportunities to all persons irrespective of caste, creed, gender etc. Under the constitution of Indian union women were ensured equal rights in all fields, including the voting rights, without any struggle. The principle of gender equality is basic to and has been enshrined in the constitution in its preamble, fundamental rights and directive principles. With in the frame-work of democratic polity, laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women’s advancement in different spheres. Various amendments were incorporated in the constitution from time to time for the progress of women, for instance the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts to politically empower women at the grass root level. The horizon of Keralites widened with the increasing mobility and job opportunities in other states. In addition to the traditional jobs, new fields of employment were opened for the educated women of Kerala.

\[575\] National Policy on Women, revised preliminary draft presented in parliament, 19-12-1995 p 1
During the national movement the struggle in the social field by the reformers was against caste disabilities and at the political level by the freedom fighters against the colonial rulers for freedom, for which the participation of both men and women was necessary. The gender issue was submerged in these struggles. The formation of civil society enhanced the creation of a public and private sphere, religion and family being pushed back to the private sphere. Women have been relegated to the domestic space. During the national movement for freedom and early years of independence, there was substantial progress on women's issues, especially among those groups that took the initiative for social reform. Despite all these advancements, social division of labour, which undervalues the work of women, still exists.

Women's organisations were active in post independent period especially in 1970s and played an important role in bringing about structural changes, as mentioned in the draft of National Policy of Women. “the women’s movement representing a vibrant force and a well spread out network of non-governmental organisations, with their intellectual strength, grass root presence, and dedication to women’s issues have also been successfully inspiring many of these laws, plans and policies...” However the actual situation is not promising as admitted in the preamble. “Experience has however, highlighted the fact that there still exists a very
wide gap between the goals enunciated in the constitution, legal frame
work, policies, plans and programmes and the situational reality of women
in India. It is also noted that the balance of gender equality justice and
equity continues to be tilted away from women. Women in India continue
to bear among others, the burden of poverty, illiteracy, economic
marginalisation, exclusion from decision-making processes, lack of access
to resources, social stereotyping, discrimination and violence at household
and societal levels. More over there is a persistent and institutionalised
discrimination against girl children, adolescent girls and women.
Inadequacy of the laws and the failure to implement the existing laws to
provide equal opportunities for women was felt by the women's
commission, "Mechanisms set up to achieve gender equality, justice and
equity remain inadequate to meet the complexity and challenges inherent in
the situation. The gap between the right ensured in the constitution and
the existing realities in terms of gender equality and gender justice has not
been reduced even after above 50 years of independence.

Through education women can change their position and
dispositions to some extent, but it is not sufficient to bring about permanent
and long lasting changes in the social space of women. as evident from the
experience of women of Kerala. Madhu Kishwar observes that, the gains
obtained by women went only a limited way and opened up opportunities for only a small section of women in the 1970s. They did not bring security against violence and brutality and the right to equitable nondiscriminatory participation in family, the society, the economy and the polity for the vast majority of women\(^{579}\).

**Gender discrimination and women of Kerala**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the state of Travancore- Cochin, almost all communities had reformation movements and equal accessibility to education for men as well as women. The literacy rate for women was 87.6 in Kerala by the fag end of twentieth century\(^{580}\). By the spread of female education women especially those of middle class were able to seek social status through education. Kerala shows outstanding progress in the field of health and availability to health care facilities also. Life expectancy at birth in Kerala is 68.8 for men and 74.4 for women in 1990-92. Infant mortality rate in 1992 17/ 1000, 17/ 1000 in rural, 13/ 1000 in urban areas, the lowest birth and death rate in India. The rate of immunisation is amongst the highest in India, girls immunised at the same rate as boys. At 74 years, female life expectancy at birth is 15 years higher than the Indian average – almost 6 years above the corresponding figure for men in Kerala. The female/male ratio is 1040/ 1000 in 1991, against the all


\(^{580}\) Table 7, a
India average of 927\textsuperscript{581}. The social status of women in Kerala is considered to be high according U.N. D. P. norms.

Mridul Eapen and Praveena Kodoth observe that in Kerala context girls are overeducated, being encouraged to study further, while waiting to get a suitable job\textsuperscript{582}, or get married. Their studies revealed that gender disparity exists in the field of higher education. Certain professions are considered ‘suitable’ for girls from the point of view of their familial roles / responsibilities (such as teaching, stenography, dress making, cutting and tailoring, secretarial practices etc.) the family structures channeling women’s education to specific areas, facilitating occupational segregation. This in turn reasserts the inferior position of women in the social formation. In many cases employed women willingly forgo their career development and opportunities of promotion for the sake of the family. Despite all these advancements, there are some contradictions in the situation of women here. Women were not able to escape the clutches of gender discrimination and oppression with all these progress. The reports of sexual harassment of women in public space, working place and even in family regularly appear in the newspapers even in the beginning of twentyfirst century. Sexual harassment in the form of eke teasing, gossips.

\textsuperscript{581} Census Report of India 2001, Series 33, Kerala
\textsuperscript{582} Mridul Eapen and Praveena Kodoth: C D S Working paper Series, 341, p 26
dowry, physical violence against women still continues. All these factors restrict the mobility of women.

**Disposition of Syrian Christian women**

It was generally assumed that the status of women in Syrian Christian community does not show any significant difference from that of man, in spite of the community's adherence to traditional practices, social as well as religious, especially with respect to women's roles. The presence of few towering female personalities such as Mary Punnen Lukose (1886-1976), Head of the Thiruvithamcore Medical Department from 1938-1942, Accamma Cherian Varkey (1909-1982), Headmistress of St. Mary's School Kanjirappally and later 12th State Congress president who led the movement for 'responsible government' against the then Diwan Sir. C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, helped to endorse this assumption.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the entry of women in public space had begun in early twentieth century itself, in salaried jobs especially in the teaching profession in considerable numbers and medical profession - a distinguishing feature of Kerala. A number of women from the depressed classes also got opportunity in teaching profession by that time. The churches and charitable institutions, with an intention of service in the beginning rather than profit started hospitals and dispensaries. Hence the pioneers in this field were persons of religious dedication.
The Christian community had the highest rate of sterilisation both in 1980 and 1991. The proportion of Christian couples who had undergone sterilisation in 1981 and 1991 was nearly 50%, it was 34% for Muslims and Nair couples\textsuperscript{583}. This fact indicates that Christian women most probably had a say in the decision making process of the number of children. By the end of the twentieth century, Christian women had the highest age of marriage.

The Syrian Christian community is widely dispersed all over the world. Robin Jeffrey notes, "the readiness of Keralans to go anywhere" since the time of the first world war\textsuperscript{584}. In the first half of twentieth century a small number of Malayalees went to South East Asian countries such as Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Singapore etc. After independence migration of educated unemployed to the other states became a common feature. Among the Malayalees the Syrian Christians were the major migrating community.

K.C. Zachariah’s demographic observations reveal that nearly a quarter of the members of Mar Thoma Syrian church now live outside Kerala and this may be true of other denominations also\textsuperscript{585}. They availed the vast demand

\textsuperscript{584} Robin Jeffrey, Politics Op cit., p 12
for labour in 1970s in the oil rich countries of west Asia. The major place of origin of out migrants is central Travancore.

The educated youth were forced to seek employment outside Kerala due to the limited opportunities within the state. After independence, the Travancore-Cochin as part of Indian union, the Malyalees in general and Syrian Christians in particular migrated to other states in large numbers. The migrating men preferred to marry educated girls, so that they also get employment, which was necessary to support the family. Many families depended on these people for their subsistence and the education of the younger children. There was a large demand for trained doctors, nurses, and technicians in developing hospitals and Kerala provided these personnels. Generally these people followed the endogamous practices, and took the family with them, not severing the family connections, returning to the native place for festivals and family functions. Thus all India models and ideals were introduced to Kerala, influencing the lives, attitudes and even the dress code of the people, especially women here. The most visible change in the appearance of women was their shift to the sari. However all these changes were only superficial, due to the hold of traditional practices and lack of proper legislation. Because of the dwindling chances of getting jobs as teachers, women of this community turned to the medical

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586 Kerala's Gulf Connection: C D S. p 15, 16
profession. C.A. Hate reported in 1969 the presence of large number of Christian nurses from Kerala in Maharashtra. Mainly girls from lower middle class families chose the nursing profession because of the poor economic condition of the families and higher rate of dowry. The nurses got an outlet through opportunities in U.S.A and in European countries and in the Middle East. A large number of nurses, mainly Syrian Christian nurses migrated to United States of America within a short time in the late 1960s and 1970s. The knowledge of English, occupational skills and a high level of education helped them to lead a successful life there. It was the ladies who migrated first and later brought their families, a rare phenomenon elsewhere. Most of these ladies were particular to marry from their own community, and wished the same for their children. Job opportunities in this field in the Middle East during the 1970s attracted many to this profession, even though a stigma was attached to it. These women helped in education and occupation of their siblings and relatives. This resulted in the upward socio-economic mobility of the middle class. Even then the hold of tradition was very strong.

Girls had made remarkable advances in professional courses such as engineering, medicine, agriculture, veterinary science and almost all other areas as men, even though in small numbers compared to boys, by the end of twentieth century. The structural factors, including the unwritten

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traditional practices and norms continued to influence women and their place in the domestic as well as public space. Secularism was only on ideological plane. Inter caste marriages and even ‘love marriages’ in the same religious denomination were looked down. The general religious revivalism in the latter part of the twentieth century revitalised the qualities of chastity, honour, prudence etc essential for women’s respectability. Education and employment of women failed to curb this attitude.

It appears the limited freedom enjoyed by women during the middle of twentieth century, mainly due to the ‘nationalistic spirit’, was lost in the later decades. K. Saradamoni, observed about women belonging to the matrilineal communities of Kerala that, “women were losing their spirit of independence and becoming more and more subservient”\(^{580}\), which was true of women of other communities also. The educated employed women could exert their opinion in the decision making process of the family.

The hold of tradition, patriarchy as well as ecclesiastical dominance was very strong in the Syrian Christian community resisting major changes in the space of women even by the middle of twentieth century. (Mar Thoma church is an exception; where voting rights and membership in the decision making bodies of the church were available to women from 1933 onwards). Women’s space was restricted to the kitchen premises. They should not show their faces outside this. Loud talking and laughter was not

\(^{580}\) Saradamoni, Matriliney Transformed, P 24., Robin Jeffrey. 1992, p xxv
allowed. She gets fresh air only when she goes to the church. She further stated that giving equal status to woman was unthinkable even during the latter part of twentieth century and unquestioned submissiveness were expected of women. This was true of girls belonging to the orthodox churches and even of the traditional families who joined the Anglican church and Marthoma church, especially from agricultural background. Accamma’s own observation was that the boys, especially catholic boys were reluctant to marry highly educated women, for they were afraid of the dilution of patriarchy. Even now, in most of the affluent Syrian Christian families, the girl’s education is meant for the family status and to get proper alliance, rather than for her career development. This trend was noticed by the C.M.S. missionaries in the early decades of twentieth century itself. The missionaries themselves gave more stress to domestic training based on religious principles, thereby indirectly assisted in the perpetuation of patriarchal norms. Even in the latter part of twentieth century, prejudice against co-education continued and the preference for ‘convent educated girls’ was a common feature in the matrimonial columns (the modern version of the arranged marriage) of the leading dailies during the latter part of twentieth century. Education plays a major role in perpetuating the cultural values of the society. Pedagogic action is responsible for the reproduction of culture in all its arbitrariness, reproduce the underlying

590 Accamma (Cherian) Varkey. 1977, p 14 and 15. 591 Ibid.
power relations also. In Bourdieu’s words, “the social reproduction function as cultural reproduction”.

**Practices that help to endorse Patriarchal structure (male domination)**

Social, religious and political practices are organized in such a way to control the position of women or to keep ‘the order of things’, the implication of the order of things being the masculine domination and female subordination. The media play an important role in perpetuating male domination. It quite often distorts women’s question, through advertisements, sensational news, by using patronising language, projecting stereotyped roles for women and so on. A lot of research work has been done on the role of media and it requires a detailed study, it does not come under the scope of this study.

**Social practices**

**Marriage practices**

In the institution of marriage, the order of the gender, the political orders and the religious practices are linked together, each mutually supporting the other. *Community and gender are constitutive of the personal and the social.* They make the historically mediated structural features of human life worlds and inform lived experience. They have both absolute (that is in themselves) and relative (in relation to other communities and gender groups) value in the constitution of persons. As mentioned earlier arranged marriage is one of the main cause of female subordination and masculine
domination. Arranged marriages and the lack of proper regulations for divorce restricted the freedom of Syrian Christian women. In most of the arranged marriages the dowry is a must. This indirectly devalues women for her educational qualifications, employment status or other qualities are underestimated without a dowry in the marriage market. Arranged marriages were considered superior even during this period and love marriages were looked down by the society. People were willing to give large amount of dowry (exorbitant and unjustifiable rate demand by the boys parents) to get a proper alliance, rather than allowing the girls (or boys) to choose their spouse or to give equal share of parental wealth thereby giving them economic freedom. How ever there was some change of attitude among those who reside in the urban areas and metropolitan cities, even though they were not completely free of the hold of tradition. The immediate beneficiaries of the changes were the urban upper middle class women.

Religious practices

Religious practices of marriage supports endogamy. Almost all communities had their own religious practices for marriage and generally people of India prefer religious marriages rather than civil marriages. The Syrian Christian community showed a rather progressive attitude during the second half of twentieth century due to the provision of equal status in the Indian constitution, but still exerts the controlling power, through
patriarchal norms\textsuperscript{592}. It seems that migration and immigration had not much diluted the hold of patriarchy. Wherever they went, the Syrian Christians were particular to continue their religious practices, as small prayer groups in the initial stages, gradually developing to a church congregation, culminating in building separate churches for various denominations, thereby keeping their identity intact. This facilitated the perpetuation of patriarchal norms of the community, though influenced by the local culture to some extent. The insistence of parents for arranged marriages must have been an attempt to carry on the cultural tradition. However it seems that at least a small percentage of the younger generation escaped from the clutches of tradition.

**The practice of dowry and economic subordination of women**

Marriage is constantly projected as the ultimate goal of women’s life and dowry is accepted as a necessary evil. The practice of dowry is continued even in the twentyfirst century. The dowry system is the main cause of economic subordination of women. It is closely associated with the property rights of women. This fact is visible in the attempts to prevent the amendment of the Christian personal law for a long time. These economic functions of the family are closely related to the social space of women, for these factors may have played an important role in controlling the freedom of women, economic as well as social. One of the prime factors that

\textsuperscript{592} Accamma Varkey Op. cit., p 130
prompt parents to allow their daughters to seek employment wherever it may be found is the need to raise money for their dowries\textsuperscript{593}. The preference for nursing and paramedical courses by girls and their parents is due to the promising job prospectus in and outside Kerala. This in turn will help them to overcome the dowry problem as well.

All along, from earlier decades of twentieth century onwards The Mar Thoma Church supported equal share for girls. The Christian Succession Act of Travancore had fixed the amount of dowry as ‘one-third of the value of the son or Rs. 5000, whichever is less’. By granting the daughter only one-third value of the son, more than the economic value (for the highest dowry at that time was only about Rs. 2000), it was actually an insult to her, further decreasing her social position, as observed by Yuhanon Mar Thoma who advocated for equal share to daughters. He supported women’s organizations in 1975 in this respect as reasonable and just and urged the government to consider their representation.\textsuperscript{594} Many eminent social activists like M. M. Thomas were also of this view.

However the demand for the dowry showed an increasing trend after independence, and even with the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961. The increased influence of consumerism placed the dowry as an easy source of


\textsuperscript{594} M.M. Thomas, Abraham Op., Cit. 1978, p 53.54.
obtaining wealth for bridegroom’s parents and came to be regarded as ‘sale money’ for girls. This practice gradually spread to other communities also where the dowry system was absent in the past, curtailing the economic independence of women as a whole. It became one of the easiest ways of acquiring economic capital, in addition to the social and symbolic capital. The unhealthy bargaining at the time of marriage led the parents to consider the daughters as a burden, leading to the increased female foeticide. In late twentieth century, parents employed outside India were able to give large amount dowry to get ‘proper alliance’ for their daughters, which in turn will enhance their social position, accelerated the rate of dowry. In all India scenario the importance given to the issue of dowry reveals the spread of the practice. The number of reported dowry deaths and related violence is increasing. It is under consistent and vigorous attack by all women’s organizations for a number of decades. Anti dowry laws are made more stringent. The peculiarly extortionist versions of dowry have grown and thrived in India and brought many new regions and communities under its influence. Nowhere the practice of dowry been halted or contained\(^\text{595}\).

The main reason for the continuation of dowry is patriarchy in addition to the acquisition economic, social and symbolic capital. The educational qualification of the bridegroom and the bride became the main

criteria of a marriage alliance and many a 'boy' regarded the amount of dowry received as a symbol of his social status and eligibility rather than the share of parental property entitled to the girl. So the education, and even employment of girls, instead of removing the practice of dowry, reinstated it in the society. There are several cases of lower middle class families who manage to give a dowry even more than that of the girl's share in the parental property to provide a moderately good life for their daughter. The parents had to sacrifice a lot to do so\textsuperscript{596}. There are a number of instances in which girls had to remain single for want of dowry. As a matter of practice the dowry is given to the father-in-law in hard cash without any proper record, for the giving and taking dowry is illegal. This money is used, among others for the marriage expenses, refreshment expenses etc. In Kerala Luxurious weddings are a common feature now a days. Among the lower and middle-income groups, in almost all cases, the dowry is being spent for the marriage expenses, renovation of house etc. The girl is thus left without any saving/ balance from the hard earned money of her father or the share in the parental property. In rare cases, a part of dowry is deposited in bank in joint account of the bride and groom, seldom in bride's name. This practice has to be promoted so that the dowry, as girls share in parental property can be utilized for her benefit.

\textsuperscript{596} Nirmala Arvind, Video, Fridge and a Bride deals with the dowry issue in Syrian Christian community.
In all the seminars related to women the issue of dowry invariably came up for discussion. In response to the questionnaire, all women agreed the practice of dowry as a share in the parental property, willingly given by the parents without coercion from the bridegroom or his parents. Only 12 out of 48 demanded equal share in the parental property, the rest pointed out that if sons are looking after the parents they have to be given more share.

**Legislation and Syrian Christian women**

However the reactions of the conservative Syrian Christians and religious authorities in the initial stages towards the Judgments of Mary Roy case in 1986, concerning intestate succession of property (AIR 1986 Supreme Court 3011) and Mary Sonia Zacharia case seeking divorce (Kerala High Court, February 1995), raised many questions about the validity of the assumption of the higher status of Syrian Christian women, and their role in the decision making process of the family. The Syrian Christians are governed by archaic Christian personal law, the main criticism of which being the anti-divorce attitude, gender biased divorce laws, discriminatory succession principles, absence of clear provisions related to the adoption and guardianship and right to life. Following the KHC ruling in Mary Sony Zachariah case, the court also dismissed the argument that striking down section 10, meant disrespect to Christian principles. While referring to this case, advocate Latha Desai opined that the courts have acted as agents of
social reform. The minimal benefit provided by the Indian Divorce act 1869 and Indian Christian Marriage Act 1872 were not available to Syrian Christians of Thiruvuthamcore, prior to these Judgments, as they were governed by canon laws. The lack of interest of the community and religious authorities in amending the Christian personal law shows a reverse trend.

**Indian Christian Marriage Bill**

Various governments at the center formed after independence adopted a policy of noninterference in the personal matters of different communities and the personal laws remained as such without any amendment. All the personal laws were religion oriented. However Parsi, Hindu and Muslim marriage laws have undergone several changes and have even recognized divorce by mutual consent, while the laws governing Indian Christian marriages remained unchanged, for a long time. This was mainly due to the attitude of ecclesiastical authorities against divorce. Divorce for women was not heard off in the past and there was no place for a divorced or separated woman in Syrian Christian community. In most of the Christian denominations, marriage—the union between the bride and the bridegroom was compared to that of the church and Christ. The Christian church as a whole, uphold the sanctity of marriage. The heads of the

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597 Arundhati Roy (1997) in her novel ‘God of Small Things’ describes the trauma of a separated woman who married outside the community.
community tried their best to prevent divorce in order to keep intact the family structure.

A common Christian law was not in existence. The Indian divorce Act 1869 and Indian Christian Marriage Act 1872 were the two civil laws existed till August 2001 for the Christians for marriage and divorce. Indian Christian Marriage Act 1872 extended to the whole of India, except the former Travancore-Cochin areas, the state of Manipur and Jammu and Kashmir. The provisions of these acts were in force in the former Malabar Areas. The Christian marriage act of 1910 (1095 M.E.) was in force in Cochin area, but not in Travancore. The provisions of Indian divorce Act of 1869 made applicable to Travancore and Cochin areas after independence. These laws were relics of Indian colonial past but the minimal benefits provided by these laws were not available to Syrian Christian women before. According to this the Christian women had to prove dual grounds and adultery along with cruelty or desertion in order to obtain divorce while Christian men could obtain divorce up on a single ground of adultery.

The struggle for amending the archaic statutes has been very long extending to several decades. The orthodox and conservative opinion within the various churches thwarted every move by the women’s organizations to modernize the statute. The various decisions of the Apex
court as well as those of various high courts over the years declared many of the provisions of the Indian Christian divorce Act as obsolete antiquated and gender biased. Kerala high court called for legislation following which a draft bill was evolved and circulated. Four high court judgments also suggested changes (Kerala high court Judgments. February 1995 in the Mary Sonia Zachariah vs. Union of India). The court has ruled out, "Section 10 compels the wife, who has been deserted or cruelly treated, to continue her life with a man she hates, ... such a life is sub human". The court struck down Section 10, overruling the argument that it meant disrespect to Christian principles, so long as the infringed provisions are part of an act common, it must pass the test of constitutionality even if the provisions are based on religious principles". Bombay high court Judgment dated, May 20, 1997 recognised cruelty and desertion as independent grounds for the dissolution of a Christian marriage. The Bombay High Court ruled that section 10 discriminated against women and therefore violated the constitutional right to equality and right to life. Here the courts have acted as agents of 'social reform'. In 1958, the central government had asked the National law commission to prepare a new bill regarding Christian marriage and divorce. In 1962, the bill was presented in the Loksabha but due to various reasons it was lapsed. This archaic and out dated law continued to oppress Christian women for a century and a half. Again the Christian bill was presented in the parliament in 1989 and in
1994 (by Joint Women’s Programme), but lapsed again. Jyotsana Chatterjee of Joint women’s Programme struggled hard to obtain consensus of all the churches for a new Bill. A combined Bill for marriage and divorce along with two other bills concerning succession and adoption among Christians was presented to the government in 1994, with the support of various churches but no action was taken. Again a petition for immediate action on the Bill was made through National Minority commission in 1997, but in vain. The amendment passed by both houses of the Parliament in August 2001, is a culmination of two decades of struggle of Christian women to change this law and “are a milestone in the direction of ‘reform from within’ in the realm of personal laws”598. This had been a very tedious task, required constant dialogues between the law minister, Christian women’s groups and the church hierarchy. The most significant aspect of the bill is to make cruelty, adultery and desertion independent grounds for divorce for Christian women as well. Mutual consent for divorce was also included in the bill.

**Christian personal law**

The family law in India, especially that are state administrated under went important changes and the constitution includes directives banning discrimination on the basis of gender. Various communities in Travancore were governed by their customary laws in the traditional period, in most of

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598 E P W October 20-26 2001, No 42, p 3975.
the cases connected with religious practices. The people of Travancore, no
matter to what religion they belong, their adherence to customary practice
‘maryada’ was well known. Any deviation from this was strongly resisted.
Among the different denominations of Christians in Travancore, Cochin
and Malabar there were diverse practices regarding the inheritance and
succession. Some denominations, mainly non-catholic Syrians of
Travancore and Cochin followed the customary laws while some others
were governed by ecclesiastical authority. The provisions of Indian
Succession Act were applicable to the Christians of Malabar area. All the
customary practices advocated the continuous perpetuation of patriarchal
norms, supported by religious authority. This may have the basis in the
concept of Christ as the head of the church and the church as the bride.
However there was no definite law governing the rights of women in the
matter of inheritance and succession. The state of uncertainty in
Travancore and Cochin continued even in the later half of the twentieth
century. Anantha Krishna Aiyar observed that there had been several
instances in which the chief court of Cochin has applied the Indian
Succession Act to the Syrian Christians and there were occasions on
which the court declined to follow the principles of the same Act,
upholding the customary law. Due to the absence of clear-cut procedure
and provisions for the unmarried daughters and the widows, the women of

599 A S. of 1054 and AS 59 of 1055 (ME), cited by Anantha Krishna Ayyar, p 121.
Syrian Christian community suffered serious disabilities. The community felt much inconvenience in early twentieth century, in the absence of a concrete law for the succession and inheritance that resulted in litigation and dispute. Dr. Punnen in his presidential address at the second session of the Travancore and Cochin Christian Congress held on 3rd May 1911, pointed out, “the absence of a settled law of inheritance is at present a fertile source of litigation among the Syrian Christians. At present affairs are managed in a very unsatisfactory manner. The rich and the powerful are having their own way in all matters. The courts have to decide the disputed questions on evidence as to the custom followed by the community, and it is no difficult matter for the rich to make customs ‘by evidence. The weaker side thus invariably goes to the wall’\textsuperscript{600}. In this background the vulnerability of women to protect their right can be assessed.

**Rules and regulations of Succession of Christians in Travancore**

Prior to July 1949, the state of Travancore was a princely state and the law in force in the territories of the state in regard to intestate succession to the property of members of Christian community was Travancore Christian Succession Act 1092, M. F. This act was promulgated by His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore with a view to consolidating and amending the rules of law applicable to intestate succession among Christians in Travancore. Similar to canon law, the Travancore Christian Succession act

\textsuperscript{600} ibid
also considered the son as the legal heir, and daughters entitled only to dowry. Section 16 and 19 laid down the rules of law applicable to intestate succession among Christians. So far as the succession to the immovable property of the intestate was concerned, a widow or mother becoming entitled under sections 16, 17, 21 and 22 shall have only life interest terminable at death or on remarriage and that a daughter shall not be entitled to succeed to the property of intestate in the same share as the son. She will be entitled to one-fourth of the value of the share of the son, or Rs. 5000, which ever is less. And even to this amount she will not be entitled on intestacy, if 'streedhanam' was provided or promised by the intestate.

In the report of the Christian committee, Travancore, it is stated that a daughter to whom a dowry has been paid by her father should according to the customary law, be considered to have received her share in the estate. The unmarried daughter shall not be entitled to succeed to the property of the intestate in the same share as the son. She will be entitled to one-fourth of the value of the share of the son or Rs. 5000 which ever is less. In July 1949 the former states of Travancore and Cochin merged to form part B state of Travacore-cochin. Parliament enacted part-B states (laws), 1951 providing for extension of Part-B sates of certain parliamentary statutes prevailing in rest of India. One of these statutes was Indian succession act1925. The schedules S.2 and S3 were to extend the provisions of Indian Succession Act 1925, to all Part-B states including the state of Travancore.
Cochin with effect from April 1951 which was the appointed date under part B states (Laws) Act 1951. But Travancore Christian succession Act 1092, continued to apply to Christians in the territories of the erstwhile states of Travancore. The Supreme court judgment in 1986 in the Mary Roy case reinforced that, “on the coming into force of Part-B States (Laws) Act 1951, the Travancore Christian Succession Act, 1092 stood repealed and chapter 11 of part v of Indian Succession Act, 1925 became applicable and interstate succession to the property of the members of the Indian Christian community in the territories of erstwhile state of Travancore was there after governed by chapter 11 of part V of Indian Succession Act, 1925. But the law remained a toothless tiger due to the intense resistance by the church authorities and the community.

In a seminar on “Consultation of Christian marriage bill 2000” the heads of the Episcopal churches, were in favour of equal status for man and women, in society, church and family. They were in favour of passing the proposed bill with certain amendments.

There was difference of opinion among Christians themselves. In an article by Mar Mathew Arackal, Bishop of Kanjirappally Diocese, “Christians should avail opportunities for review petition on the
retrospective aspect of Mary Roy case"). According to Justice K.T. Thomas the question of retrospective effect does not arise at all, for Part B States (laws) Act was applicable here also from 1951 onwards. He commented that the church authorities reluctance to demand for the timely revision of the laws of inheritance was the main issue behind the family disputes that may have arisen due to the judgment of Mary Roy case. He opines that it is not right to victimize Mary Roy, instead of appreciating her, who fought for the rights for women and achieved it. A progressive attitude is seen recently in Catholic Church also. Zero Malabar Majour Archy Episcopal Assembly directed the synod to support equal rights and shares in the family property. It put forward the suggestions to encourage marriage without dowry and to avoid luxury during marriages.

The Kerala women’s commission, constituted under the Kerala women’s commission Act 1990, observed, “the main criticism towards the Christian law are colonial introduction, ecclesiastical dominance, control by the clergy etc.”. The commission also pointed out that for 19 million Christians which form 3% of Indian population there is no uniform personal law and emphasized the need to resolve anti divorce attitude, discriminatory succession principle, absence of clear provisions related to

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603 Malayala Manorama, August 1, 2002, p 5
604 Malayala Manorama, August 7, 2002, p 5
605 Malayala Manorama, November 11, 2004, p 9
adoption and guardianship etc, for the progress of the society (note on the Indian Christian marriage bill 2000 (draft)).

Political space

In independent India, although the constitution provided equality to every citizen irrespective of gender, except as voters, women’s participation as contestants, elected representatives, members of the government and other responsible bodies were negligible. There were concerted attempts to prevent the entry of women in political field, projecting the role of mother and domestic responsibilities, emphasizing the functional role of women. The position of women in Kerala is not different. Many congressmen were not willing to accept the role of women in politics. The main argument they put forward was the minimal contribution of women of Kerala in the freedom struggle, unlike those of the rest of India.

The best example is the political career of Accamnia Cherian. Her role in the freedom struggle has been noted in the previous chapter. The Malayalam daily ‘Keralbhushanam’ reported unusually large number of women in her election meetings. Nevertheless her political career was only for a short duration. She was defeated in the 1952 election. Her opponents used every means to belittle her personhood by character assassination, caricaturing her in newspaper cartoons, using religious

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607 Ibid. Keralabhushanam, Nov 24.1953, p 1
whip against her and spreading rumours about her family's lack of support. Thus she was forced to retire completely from political life, however her sister Rosamma, later married to a prominent communist leader, P.T. Punnose and continued in the political field. Her traumatic experience may have prevented women, especially those of her community to enter into politics.

The condition of women in other political parties was not different. The presence of women in the trade unions was visible from early 1930s. K. Devayani, secretary of The Ampalapuzha Kayarupiri Thozhilai Union. K.Meenakshi a dedicated full time activist were a few whose presence was felt in the trade union activities, but none of them were able to reach the top level leadership. K.R. Gouri, who stood for the first election in 1948 from Shertalai, member of the assembly from1952 onwards except for 1977, minister of all the communist governments, except that in 1996, also the president of the communist party's women's wing for a number of years is no exception. She was forced out of the party and formed a new party. Robin Jeffrey (1992) pointed out that, like Accamma Varkey, she also paid a price and 'her career stands as a warning about the place of women in Kerala'. Gouri's own view is that, Kerala has had strong women movements but of working women, not feminist intellectuals and they are

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608 ibid, p 148, Keraabhushnam Oct 29 , 1953. p 2
609 Deepika, Oct 28, 1953. p 5
not capable of institutional public politics. Only 28 women contested the 1987 election and only 8 won. 13 women elected to the Kerala Assembly in 1996 and only 9 in 2001 (out of 140 seats). It seems that this situation is well accepted by women of Kerala. In response to the questionnaire 50\% (22/44) were against political participation of women, the main reason they projected was the corrupt practices existing in the politics. 25\% were of opinion that those who are able may enter politics, but not at the cost of family. 25\% had no opinion at all.

Disposition of women

During the period of my thesis work, I had conducted a number of one-day seminars and workshops for women related to the topic, followed group discussions. Questionnaires were given four some seminars. (Two types of questionnaires were prepared. in one direct questions were asked about women’s participation in politics, religious institutions family etc. to 44 middle aged married women. Indirect questions such as what they expect from their family, religious and political institutions to improve the position of women were put to 62 women of all age group in the other questionnaire). The main factor emerged from these interactions was that, for women family was the most important institution in their life, in which
all their aims and aspirations were focused. The domestic space was undergoing changes, allowing more participation for women in the decision making process. (In direct questionnaire all, both employed and unemployed stated that they had equal participation in decision-making process of the family, in the second questionnaire, 38.6% (24/62) wished equal participation in family decisions) but it was not yet universal phenomenon. The Attitude of men about household chores have changed and more men extend a helping hand. (75% (36/48) told that their husbands helped them in the household chores, but not in front of the parents).

Arranged marriages were supported by 91% (44/48), even those who supported love marriages preferred the consent of parents. For women the good will of parents and brothers were important. 50% of women were against divorce, the rest agreed only in extreme cases, justifiable if the husband or wife had extra marital relationship. All were of opinion that for children’s sake, both husband and wife had to adjust. The reason they put forward for easy divorce was the economic independence of women. Endorsement of filial love and kinship practices are some of the means to subordinate women.

The aspiration in life for a considerable percentage of women (38.6% (24/62) was to become ideal mothers and to get acceptance from family and society, indicating a tendency ‘to keep the order of the things’
as such without any change. This shows the conditioning of women to traditional patriarchal practices.

All agreed equal participation of women in church activities, including voting rights and membership in the decision-making bodies. Only 8% (4/48) suggested priesthood for women. Others strongly opposed, put forward biological reasons and Bible teachings for the same. 32% gave importance to religiosity, rather than social activities.

In response to the second questionnaire 64% (40/62) wanted more interactive space for social involvement. 61% (38/62). Women felt that they did not have equal opportunities and equal position in society and wished to change the situation. 17.7% (11/62). pointed out that women had a feeling that they are inferior to men, mainly due to biological reasons. 16% (18/62) believed that consumerism, attraction to luxury goods and imitation of others, the main impediment of the progress of women.

All these findings point to the conditioning of women according to the patriarchal norms of the society, although some change in the disposition of women had taken place due to education and the individuation process. The domestic space as well as religious space changed considerably, with more interactive space and with the participation in the decision-making process. In the overall social space much changes have not been materialised, especially in power relations of
the society as a whole. They are able to rise to middle levels of authority in salaried jobs, only very few could attain the top positions. Equal opportunities for girls to go to school and for women to make decisions within families, employment, membership in various organisation and participation in campaigns about local problems, do not ensure dramatic changes in the social position of women, especially in political structures.

The social relation of domination

This study reveals that the masculine domination remain unchanged in all social formations, its influence extended to all social, political and legal institutions. There had been some changes in the established order of domination over the centuries but these changes appear to be only in a superficial level. The traditional division of roles weakened to some extent everywhere with the growth of educational capital, but not disappeared completely. In India women were brought to the forefront of the political agitation, only because their mobilisation was essential to strengthen the struggle for freedom. After independence, they were forced to confine themselves in the domestic space. Ammu Joseph observed that, “the situation of women in Kerala, where highest female literacy, the lowest number of households below the poverty line, the highest level of human development, and so on. - provides ample proof that literacy/ education, employment and other such indicators of development do not, in and by
themselves guarantee freedom and equality to women. New strategies and movements are used to ensure masculine domination. Gossip, character assassination and violence against women are some of them. The effects of domination are exerted in all life situations, through the objective complicity (between the structures embodied in both women and men and the structures of the major institutions through which not only the masculine order but the whole social order is enacted and reproduced starting with the state) structured around the opposition between its male ‘right hand’ and its female ‘left hand’, and the educational system responsible for the effective reproduction of all the principles of vision and division and itself organised around analogous oppositions.

The social relation of domination underlies all these phenomena of the subordination of women. The division between sexes appears to be ‘in the order of things’, as normal and natural. In the objectified state, it exists in things, in the whole social world and in the embodied state, in the habitus of the agents, functioning as systems of schemes of perception, thought and action. Essentialist (biological and psycho analytical) views the difference between the sexes as innate and natural. Simón de Beauvoir questioned this by distinguishing biological sex and the social creation of the ‘eternal feminine’. It was these supposed differences that

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have been used over the centuries by men to justify discrimination against women and their exclusion from full social and political citizenship. "What appears in history as being eternal is merely the product of a labour of eternalisation performed by interconnected institutions such as the family, the church, the state, the educational system and also, in another order of things, sport and journalism". "The order of the world that we find it ... that the established order, with its relations of domination its rights and prerogatives, privileges and injustices, ultimately perpetuates itself, so easily, apart from a few historical accidents and that the most intolerable conditions of existence can so often be perceived as acceptable and even natural".

The Masculine domination is an effect of 'symbolic violence' a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part, through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (misrecognition), recognition or even feeling. The concept of symbolic violence was introduced by Bourdieu to describe how power relations are internalised and operated through individuals. It is symbolic violence that acts upon women to maintain a relation of domination both in family, inside the normal course of family life and in the social fields outside the family. Symbolic violence is a "subtle, euphemized, invisible

616 Ibid. p 1
617 Ibid. p 2
form of domination that prevents domination from being recognised as such and therefore, as misrecognised domination is socially accepted and it works when subjective structures- the habitus - and the objective structures are in accord with each other\(^6\)\(^1\).

Symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and mis cognition that lies beyond–or beneath–the controls of consciousness and will, in the obscurities of the schemata of habitus that are at once gendered or gendering. In this sense ‘the gender domination consists in an imprisonment effected via the body’\(^6\)\(^1\)\(^9\). From childhood onwards women (as well as men) acquire a gendered habitus, inscribed in the bodily ‘hexis’ in the way of dress, in manners, their movement in the house and outside, in the way which women carry themselves, or in brief all the behavioural patterns that constitute a woman. The parents, grand parents and elders of the house, inculcate this any deviation from this is strictly admonished. The position of a girl child in the house in an average Indian home is clearly demarcated, as the wealth of a different house, while the boys the wealth and rightful owner. This distinction is carried whole lifetime till she is married. At the husbands house more restrictions await her. Education or awareness of women’s rights alone is not sufficient to change the position of women without any structural changes, for history is


\(^6\)\(^1\) Bourdieu and Wacquant, An Invitation. Op cit. p 172
embedded in the ‘collective habitus’ and other institutional structures. “The symbolic representation of the social structure is incorporated as part of agent’s habitus. History is objectified in two forms, one form being objectification in the human organism, history turned into human nature, as habitus, the other being. Objectification as institutions, works and social structure and the logic of action works by activating these two objectifications of history. The meaning objectified in institutions is reactivated by habitus. The continuation of these institutions depends on its capability to incorporate the revisions and transformations that are counterpart and conditioned of the reactivation.

Practice manifest itself through the combination of structures and habitus and has the potential of generating new habitus. Through practice the social order is naturalised, internalized and reproduced. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is an acquired system of generative schemes, objectivity adjusted to the particular condition in which it is constituted. It refers to an ensemble of schemata of perception, thinking, feeling, evaluating speaking and acting that structures all the expressive verbal and practical manifestations and utterances of a person.

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620 Bourdieu 1990e, Beate Krais 1993, p 169
The dispositions and generative classificatory schemes that are the essence of the habitus are embodied in real human beings. Habitus has to be thought of as a modus operandi, a generative principle of regulated improvisations, which are called practice, an incorporated structure formed by the objective conditions of its genesis. It is embodied history, internalized as a second nature as the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. Habitus is inscribed in the bodily hexis. Bourdieu uses the word ‘hexis’ to signify the deportment, the manner and style in which actors ‘carry themselves’: stance, gait, gesture etc. It is in the bodily hexis that the idiosyncratic (the personal) combines with the systematic (the social). He describes ‘bodily hexis’, as a ‘political mythology realized, embodied, turned into a permanent dispositions, a durable manner of standing, speaking and there by of feeling and thinking. The principle embodied in this way, (in the manners, dress, bearing etc) are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness. The social construction of male and female identities is an antagonistic identities. By the example of the deportment of men and women in Kabylia, he shows that the politics of gender shape and are revealed in ways of walking, looking, and even standing still. He points out that the female ideal of modesty and restraint orients her body down, towards the ground, while the ideal male moves upwards and outwards in

625 Bourdieu1990e, 56.
his hexis, and his body oriented towards other men. Centrality of the body seems to be an important aspect of Bourdieu's inconceptualisation of habitus. For him the body is a mnemonic device upon and in which the very basics of culture, the practical taxonomies of the habitus, are imprinted and encoded in a socializing or learning process which commences in the early childhood. The habitus is inculcated by experience as well as by explicit teaching. Bourdieu states that, habitus is the eternalisation of the structure of the social order and 'to speak of habitus is to assert that the individual and even the personal, the subject is social and collective'. Habitus is 'socialized subjectivity'. Thus habitus is something incorporated and as generative principle not a set of fixed and finite rules.

Numerous examples are visible 'to keep the order' of the gendered identities. Admonitions to women in the churches to carry themselves with modesty, covering their heads in church, earnest attempt of the mothers (fathers also), to bring up their daughters according to the customs and practices of the distinct group to which they belong, thereby to maintain 'the good name' of the family to ensure the social and symbolic capital. Certain codes of conduct are expected of women, such as talking in a low voice, restrictions of behaviour before men especially after they have attained puberty. Any deviation from this is severely rebuked.

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627 Richard Jenkins, Pierre, Op cit, p 75, 76.
Bourdieu describes symbolic violence as the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning (i.e. culture) upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate. It is this legitimacy that obscures the power relations and permits that imposition to be successful. Culture adds its own force to these power relations and contribute to their systematic reproduction through misrecognition (the process where by power relations are perceived for what they objectively are, but in a form which renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder).

Bourdieu states that, to realise symbolic domination, “complicity” of the dominated is necessary. By “complicity” he implies that the person who is confronted by acts of symbolic violence is disposed to perceive the violence in these acts, to decode the relevant signals, and to understand their veiled social meaning, but without recognizing them consciously what they are and the intonations of domination, or the agent must be endowed with a “habitus” suitable to react in that particular space.

Symbolic violence is exercised through pedagogic action, of which there are three modes: diffuse education, take place in the course of interaction with competent members of the social formation such as the informal peer group, family education, and institutionalized education (education acquired in schools as well as age-set initiation rituals). The symbolic strength of any pedagogic agency is related to the structure of
power relations. Pedagogic action with reproduction of culture in all its arbitrariness, reproduces the underline power relations and represent the interests of the dominant class. in Bourdieu’s words, the social reproduction function of cultural reproduction’. Pedagogic action tend to reproduce the uneven distribution of cultural capital among the groups or classes occupying the social space, usually reflect interests of the dominant groups or in other words, it reproduces the social structure itself. For successful pedagogic action a pedagogic authority is necessary, which is an arbitrary and misrecognised power, although experienced as neutral or positively valued is not actually neutral or cultural free. It is so fundamental that it is often identified with ‘the natural’ or ‘primordial’ relationship with parent and child. Institutional authority, that claim educational legitimacy through its technical competence is another example pedagogic authority. Bourdieu points out each group or class has a different ‘pedagogic ethos – a disposition towards pedagogy (education) which is a consequence of family education and a recognition of the natural value of education to members of the particular group or class or “subjective expectation of objective probability”. Pedagogic action is achieved through pedagogic work, that is, a process of inculcation which must last long enough to produce a durable training, a habitus, the product of internalization of the principles of cultural arbitrary, capable of perpetuating itself after the pedagogic action has ceased. It is perpetuated
through practices of the principles of internalized arbitrary. Bourdieu's emphasis on the 'process of inculcation', describes as 'training, suggests that explicit training is more important than implicit experience in the internalization of the habitus. So unlike other forms of symbolic violence, pedagogic action and pedagogic agencies take longer duration and requires greater stability and consistency.

It is pointed out that one of the long-term functions of pedagogic work is 'the production of dispositions which generate ' correct’ responses to the symbolic stimuli emanating from agencies endowed with pedagogic authority'. Jenkins shows preaching as an example for this, for in adult life preaching activates the memory and experience of the childhood Christian upbringing. This is very true of the gendered habitus also. Internalized in the childhood itself, reasserted by the social institutions during the life-time of the individual. Thus pedagogic work and its results act as a substitute for physical constraints and coercion produced out of or by pedagogic authority and reinforced by it. Bourdieu points out that the experience, as a pupil, 'of pedagogic work is the objective condition which generates the misrecognition culture as arbitrary and bestows upon it the taken for granted quality of naturalness. The ongoing pedagogic work tends to obscure ' the objective truth of the habitus as the internalization of

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630 Richard Jenkins, Pierre, DP, cit., p. 107
631 ibid., p. 106
the principles of cultural arbitrary'. It is also pointed out that pedagogic work has the function of keeping order, also through link processes of self-limitation and self-censorship and the legitimate culture becomes an axiom.\(^6\)

**Division of labour and women**

The social world constructs the body as a sexually defined reality and as the depository of sexuality, defining principles of vision and division. This embodied social programme of perception is applied to all the things of the world and firstly to the body itself, in its biological reality. It is this program which constructs the difference between the biological sexes in conformity with the principles of a mythic vision of the world, rooted in the arbitrary relationship of domination of men over women, itself inscribed with the division of labour in the reality of the social order. The biological difference between the sexes that is, between the male and female bodies, and, in particular the anatomical difference between the sex organs, can thus appear as the natural justification of the socially constructed difference between the genders, and in particular of the social division of labour.\(^7\)

The hunting hypothesis of Maria Mies states that the first division of labour in history started women as gatherers and men as hunters. Hunting

\(^6\) ibid

is continued as warfare. Invention of weapons had allowed men to establish relationship of domination or exploitation over women, nature and other people. Modernity, specifically capitalism lead to devaluation and general degradation of women and their work. Patriarchy continued to exist as social system intrinsically connected to capitalism. Women were confined to the domestic sphere and their labour was unpaid and invisible. 'Housewifization of women' the necessary compliment to the proletarianization of men\textsuperscript{634}.

Beate Krais points out that in Bourdieu's line of thinking the division of labour between the genders rests on a cultural construction that guides all the practices: vision of the world, body experience, perception and action\textsuperscript{635}. Domination is not limited to a particular space, but has several methods of action, through physical violence, coercion, structural violence (as operated by power of economic forces and social institutions), intimidation, and symbolic violence. Bourdieu is of opinion that the modes of domination vary in different kinds of social formations. There are fundamental differences between social formations with objectified relations of appropriation (the modern – post modern social formations with self regulated markets, bureaucracy, literacy and educational system) and the traditional social formation (ancient Kabylia), which lacked market economic system. The former having relatively autonomous social fields

\textsuperscript{634} Maria Mies, 'Globalization of the Economy and Women's Work in a Sustainable Society' in Gender Technology and Development, vol 2, No 1, Jan April 1998

\textsuperscript{635} Beate Krais, Gender and ..., Op. cit, p 165
assure their own reproduction by their functioning itself, but the latter resort to elementary forms of domination or in these societies, relations of domination are made, unmade, and remade in and by the interaction between persons. Physical and symbolic violence is still present in differentiated modern societies with objectified social relations as a concomitant of structural domination. Every mode of domination presupposes a doxic order, shared by the dominated and the dominant, where as in general domination, the division of labour between genders represents it. The division of labour and masculine domination is effective in acquiring a gendered habitus especially for women and accepting it without questioning. During the childhood the knowledge of the girls acquired from the family is that of a dominated status, continuously instructed by the elders of the family, especially mothers, of the appropriate behaviour of girls. From childhood onwards girls are aware of their ‘womanly nature’ by public criticism, mothers rebuke etc., crippling the subjectivity by emphasizing the natural inferiority. From childhood itself, the division is visible in the way of dressing of girls and boys, inscribing the distinction in the bodily hexis. The distinction is visible in the selection of toys, dolls for girls and guns, cars etc., for boys. In the family projections, prerogative is for the dowry and ornaments etc for girls and higher education for boys. The subordinate position is reasserted in religious institutions and schools.

suggestions in selecting their subjects for studies and profession. The religious institutions through the hierarchy, rituals and practices perpetuate the state of affairs. The process of learning or inculcation is irreversible for, 'the dispositions are durable', and cumulative. The habitus acquired during family education is the basis for the receipt of class -room messages that in turn is the basis for their response to all subsequent cultural and intellectual messages.

Bourdieu pointed out that the logic of the division of labour between the sexes, gives precedence to women in matters of taste and to men in politics. The best illustration of political import of doxa is the symbolic violence exercised upon women--'the sort of socially constituted agoraphobia that leads women to exclude themselves from a whole range of public activities and ceremonies from which they are structurally excluded. (the women: not entering the 'madbaha', widows keeping themselves away from the forefront of auspicious occasions, women's reluctance to enter politics and so on). This is in accordance with the dichotomies - the public/ male versus the private/ female, especially in the realm of former politics. This exclusion is inscribed deep in their bodies and a lot of effort is needed to recognize their exclusion and overcome that.

Devaluation of women's work is another strategy used to discriminate women. Domestic work by women is grossly undervalued.  

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Housework was included in 1981 census. The Delhi high court has passed a landmark judgment recently, recognising the economic contribution that housewives make to the family income. This judgment states that women’s contribution cannot be treated lightly. It qualifies their income to be not less than Rs. 3000 per month. In U. N.’s National income & wealth calculation methodology, domestic work of women finds a place as a satellite account. But the law alone does not ensure women’s rights. Certain jobs are considered as women’s jobs. The best example is that of teachers and nurses. Their preponderance as teachers, and nurses turned these jobs as women’s jobs and the words ‘teacher’ and ‘nurse’ became synonyms for female teachers and nurses from the first half of the twentieth century, due to their overwhelming presence in these fields. The respectability attached to the teaching profession, especially for women resulted in higher percentage of women among the graduate and non-graduate trained teachers. Still they are exploited in these fields by giving meager remunerations and extra working hours in the private sector. It is a well known fact that women teachers, a majority of them postgraduate trained teachers, are the least paid, especially in the schools conducted by private managements. In most cases they have to give considerable amount of money as contribution to the managements at the time of appointments. Another way of exploitation is appointment as guest lectures in

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638 The Times of India, November 25, 2004, p 3.
professional as well as arts and science colleges and schools, paying either
a consolidated sum or remuneration per day. The commercialization of
education in the private sector became the order of the day. In the case of
nursing profession, many women were attracted due to job opportunities
with in India and abroad. Many families thrived by their income, however
it was degraded by a stigma of inferiority attached to it.

Family practices are decisive factor in developing the disposition of
women as evident from the following examples. Mary Punnen Lukose
(1886-1976) whose father was a doctor got the opportunity to study
medicine in London and Dublin and became the head of the medical
department of Travancore. Her uncle’s (T.C. Punnen, a judge in cochin)
dughter was married at the age of thirteen. Sara Chacko (1905-1954),
daughter of M.A. Chacko (police and excise commissioner of Cochin) was
able to hold many responsible positions at the national and international
levels (Principal of Isabella Thoburn college of Lucknow from 1945
onwards, President of the women’s commission of the World Christian
Council (1905), President of the World Christian Council (1951) by the
encouragement of her parents.639
Conclusion

Though equal rights are ensured for women in the Indian constitution and several amendments to remedy the loopholes in the existing laws from time to time and educational facilities are open to women in Independent India, equal participation of women was not realised. Devaluation of women's work, dividing the social space into public and private (private as domestic space), symbolic universe of religion, the gender oriented courses in education, the denial of equal property rights to women, the dowry system, the lack of institutional organisational structure for women to participate in socio-political structures constructed subjugated self in women. Bourdieu uses the word ‘doxa’ to explain undisputed and tacit part of the social order including the deep seated structures and embodied dispositions in the bodily hexis.