CHAPTER -IV
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Empowering women means creating an environment for them to take independent decisions for their personal development and the development of society in general. Empowerment of women is a socio-political idea envisioned in relation to the wider framework of women’s rights. It is a process that leads women to realize their full potential and their right to have access to opportunities, resources and choices with the freedom of decision making both within and outside home. Empowerment would be achieved only when advancement in the conditions of women is accompanied by their ability to influence the direction of social change gained through equal opportunities in economic, social and political spheres of life. The current status of women with respect to human development parameters, legal rights for women to life and freedom from violence, social discrimination and their rights to equality and equity shows that a lot still remains to be done. Hence it is necessary to reinforce the rights based approach to enjoy their rights.

SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

In the ancient Rig-Vedic age, women were held in a very respectable position in the social and public life. They were even allowed to perform and participate in religious activities and make decisions in the family. Women had the right to education and also the right to inherit properties. Widows were also allowed to remarry. According to Upadyaya (1991), with the passage of time, the condition and status of women deteriorated. The evils of Sati, Purdah system, polygamy, child marriage, dowry and prostitution entered into the society during the medieval
period. In the society of Kerala, the ancient days were dominated by the caste system. The upper-class people though less in number suppressed the rights and privileges of the low caste people. Further, untouchability denied the low caste people the right to live in dignity. The traditional society of Kerala imposed serious outmoded customs and traditions on women. They were not allowed to move freely inside their house. They had to cover their bosoms as a sign of submission. The heinous customs like Pulapedi, Smarthavicharam, Sambhandam, and denial to cover their upper bodies, were almost barbaric in nature.

4.1. Customs prevailed in the society of Kerala

The society remained divided by customs, castes, prejudices and religious beliefs. Social oppression and tax burden made the life of the lower class miserable. Hence the oppressed classes were ready to accept any social reformer who could do something to alleviate their condition. The social evils of different dimensions that prevailed among the socially downtrodden sections of the region offered a rich ground for the Christians to accelerate their programme of Gospel propagation. At first, the L.M.S. missionaries had the opportunity to do ministry in the South Travancore. They fought against the injustice and social exploitation. The advent of Christianity changed the complexion of the society. They gave more importance to education, establishing cottage industries and medical service in different places.

Kerala women were not considered as an equal sex and their status in the society varied from caste to caste. One of the missionaries wrote in 1820 that, “A female is despised as soon as she is born: she comes into the world amidst the frowns

of her parents and friends, disappointed that the child is not a boy. It is said that no generalization is possible that women were respected in the society. Generally the people did not welcome the birth of a girl. The cultural construct of preference for a male child added to the psychological diffidence of the female child. Dowry deaths and violence against women have its roots in the subordination of women at the social level and their vulnerability has not decreased but increased. The social evils like caste system, child marriage, sati, smartha, pulapedi, devadasi system, dowry system and mode of dress enslaved the womenfolk of Kerala.

4.1.1. Caste system

The most striking feature of the Kerala society was the predominance of the upper castes and the subordinate position of the lower castes. This traditional caste-ridden society of Kerala underwent significant changes as a result of the activities of the missionaries. From the very outset, the missionaries raised their voice against the social inequalities and evils of the caste system. The society of Kerala consisted of Hindus, Christians, Muslims and other minor groups. In the southernmost part of South Travancore, they were divided into twelvepidakais or regions. The chiefs of the region met annually and dealt with caste rules and imposed punishments upon lower castes for violation of caste rules. The inhabitants of the region belonged to several castes such as Brahmins, Nayars, Nadars, Kurubs, Mukkuvar, Ezhavas, Muslims, Parayas and the Pulayas. Traditionally, the Brahmins were priests who

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2. Letter addressed to the editor of the Liverpool Courier, Evangelical Magazine, December, 1820, p.531.
performed poojas in the Temples\textsuperscript{6}. The hereditary occupation of the Nadars was climbing the palmyra trees and making coarse sugar or jaggery from the palmyra juice\textsuperscript{7}. The Parayas and Pulayas were the descendants of aborigines\textsuperscript{8}. The Nadars, Parayas and Pulayas were considered to be the low-castes and were treated as slaves by the high-castes\textsuperscript{9}. The Ezhavas were experts in Toddy tapping from the palm trees and were experts in agriculture also\textsuperscript{10}. The Muslims who formed the minority section of the region were generally traders by occupation.

The evils of untouchability, unapproachability and prohibition of entry to temples were rampant in the society\textsuperscript{11}. The cost of a slave was fixed from three to four rupees. The social condition of Kerala society during 19\textsuperscript{th} century was no better than that of a primitive society. The order for the Nadars started with the accession of Marthandavarma (17253/458) went unchecked till the advent of Protestant Christian mission called the London Missionary Society\textsuperscript{12}. The work of Protestant Christian Missionary among the Nadars was recognized by an order by MarthandaVarma. The lower classes were not permitted to enter the temples and the schools were administered by the privileged classes\textsuperscript{13}. Women began to involve in political issues like temple entry agitations and India’s struggle for independence which earned them a fair position in the society. The people of the regions worshipped many Gods. They

\textsuperscript{6} Dr. Hamilton, “A Geographical Statistical and Historical Description of Hindustan and its adjacent countries”, Vol. 2, Travancore, 1820, p.278.
\textsuperscript{9} John A. Jacob, op.cit, p.13.
\textsuperscript{11} KunjanPillai, Senses of India, 1931, Vol. XXVIII, Part-I, Travancore, 1932, p.6.
\textsuperscript{12} Travancore Administrative Report, 1941-1942, Trivandrum, p.3.
\textsuperscript{13} Thurston, E., ap.cit., p.190.
sacrificed animals and birds to please their Gods so that they would not do any harm to them. Arrack and toddy were given to their deities\textsuperscript{14}. They had many superstitious beliefs. In the case of sickness first they consulted the magician\textsuperscript{15}. Sometimes the devil dancer foretold the fortunes of the devotees and the people listened to them with reverence\textsuperscript{16}.

\textbf{4.1.2 .Upper Cloth Movement (1813-1859)}

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the privilege of women to cover their bodies with an upper cloth became an impulsive issue in Kerala. In Travancore, caste rules imposed restrictions on the mode of dress, ornaments and the appearance of the depressed classes in public places. The low caste women had to move about with their bodies exposed. But the Protestant missionaries brought about a change to this tradition. Ringel Taube got the permission to wear clothing above the waist. This was sanctioned by an order of the Government in May 1814. Accordingly, the female Nadar converts wore jackets. Mrs. Mault made three types of jackets like kuppayam, ravikkai and plain jacket with loose sleeves for women. The missionaries encouraged even the older women to wear such blouses when they went to church, market and the shops. This was resented by the upper castes. These attempts to stop the Nadar women from using the upper cloth resulted in riots that erupted periodically in South Travancore and raged for nearly forty years in every area where the Nairs and Nadars lived in close proximity. The upper cloth riot developed in three stages. The first upper cloth riot was in 1822 to 1823. The Christians using upper cloth were ill-treated in May 1822 in public places and on roads. Rev. Charles Mead complained to the local

\textsuperscript{14}. Samuel Mateer, \textit{op.cit.}, 1883, p.85.
\textsuperscript{15}. Samuel Mateer, \textit{“The land of charity”}, Delhi, 1991, p.192.
court of Padmanabhapuram. Based on the complaint the judgment relieved the Christians from ill treatment by the high castes for the time being. The second upper cloth riot was in 1827 to 1830. During this period also the women were flogged in public bazar for wearing upper cloth and their clothes were stripped publically. They threatened the people going to attend Christian worship and forced them to render oozhiyam services. Chapels and schools were burnt down. The upper cloth riots reached its climax in 1828. Rev. Mead and Rev. Mault wrote letters\textsuperscript{17} to Colonel Morrison seeking protection for the Protestant Christian women. Rani Gouri Parvathi Bai issued a Royal proclamation on 3 February 1829 to maintain law and order. It took away the right to upper cloth from the Nadar women. The Rani’s proclamation said that Christian women had only the right to wear the ‘Kuppayam’. The third phase of the riot that started in 1858 was more significant than the first two. The Nadar women were undeterred and appeared in public places wearing jackets and upper clothes.

On 27 December 1858, Dewan Madhava Rao issued a proclamation\textsuperscript{18}. It warned the Nadars not to break the existing rules and customs. When the Nadar women continued to uphold their right, the Sudras and the government officials resorted to more violent measures. At the Kaliyikkavilai market near Parassala, a government official ripped the breast cloths and jackets of Nadar women. On 11 January 1859\textsuperscript{19}, two women on their way to the market were assaulted in Araliumoodu near Neyyattinkara. When the revolt spread missionaries like John Cox, Russel, Locins and Baylis took steps to put it down. They wrote letter to the Resident

\textsuperscript{17} Letter from Rev. Mead LMS missionary to the Resident, Trivandrum, 1828.
\textsuperscript{18} From Dewan to Resident, Copies of official papers, 1859, pp.8-10.
\textsuperscript{19} Samuel Matteer, ‘The land of charity’, pp.299-301.
informing him of the inhuman treatment. They wrote letter to Raja UthramThirunalMarthandaVarma (1842-1860). Dewan of Travancore and the Maharaja agreed to give some liberty to the Nadar women. Accordingly UthramThirunal Maharaja issued a proclamation on 26 January 1859. It declared that there is no objection to Shanar women either putting on a jacket like the Christian Shanar women or to Shanar women of all creeds dressing in coarse cloth (Kattisila) or covering their bosoms in any manner whatever but not like women of high caste. This proclamation empowered the Nadar women alone to enjoy the right to cover the upper part of the body, but the women of other castes were denied the right to wear upper cloth. On 7 February 1859, the missionaries James Russel, John Abbs, John Cox and Frederick Baylis petitioned to the Maharaja of Travancore. In response to the representation from Sir.Charles wood and Charles TrevelynMaltby took the matter to the Raja of Travancore. AyillyamThirunal Maharaja (1860-1880 A.D) issued a proclamation in 1865. It permits the women to wear upper clothes to cover their breasts. The upper cloth revolt became one of the most transformative aspects of Christian ministry for social upliftment of Indian society in general and South India in particular.

4.1.3. Child marriage

Child marriage was one of the social evils which enslaved the womenfolk of medieval Kerala and other parts of India. In the beginning of the 19th century, girls were married off before attaining puberty. The custom of marrying girls in their early childhood was common to all castes. In 1891, there were twenty six child wives between the ages 0-4, 1125 between 5-9 and 13559 belonging to the group of 10-14 in
This wicked custom of child marriage arose “from distrust of female virtue”\(^{21}\). When the missionaries began their religious and social work they pointed out that “child marriage is one of the greatest hindrances to the welfare and education of women in India”\(^{22}\).

### 4.1.4. Sati

Sati was one of the most cruel and widely followed Indian customs. If a woman lost her husband she would also put an end to her life by ascending into the funeral pyre. This custom was known as ‘Sahagamanam’ or going with her ‘lord’ or ‘sati’\(^{23}\). In Kerala this practice was common in the Kingdom of Malabar\(^{24}\). In 1876, a widow dug a pit inside her house, filled it with sandal wood and dressed herself as a bride; she shut the doors, lit the pile and leapt inTinneveli district in the southern part of Travancore\(^{25}\). Different customs and practices were followed in different castes. In some upper castes, when a woman became a widow, she was not immolated or burnt upon the pile, but she was prohibited from marrying a second time and had to remain a widow till her death. The life of a widow was very pathetic. Widows were held in much less respect than other women and if they happened to have no children, they were generally looked down with utmost scorn. Shaving of the widow’s head was the visible sign of their social degradation\(^{26}\). The very sight of a widow was believed to bring ill luck. She was prohibited from wearing jewels or beautiful clothes, eating

\(\text{\textsuperscript{20}}\) Census of Travancore, 1894, p.40.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{22}}\) Indian Female Evangelist, 1883, p.153.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{23}}\) Ayyar, \textit{op.cit.}, 1925, p.92.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{24}}\) Digby, \textit{op.cit.}, 1823, p.29.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{25}}\) Thomson, \textit{op.cit.}, 1928, p.125.
\(\text{\textsuperscript{26}}\) Indian Female Evangelist, \textit{Booklet}, 1890, p.301.
tasty food and intermingling happily with other people\textsuperscript{27}. The funeral ceremony of a woman was nearly the same as that of a man. Rather less attention was paid to a widowed mother of a family. At the same time when a man becomes a widower he could marry again and again. Remarriage of widows was prohibited among some of the communities.

4.1.5. Devadasi System

Devadasi System was another social evil which prevailed in the society of Kerala. Devadasis were the dancing girls in the temple\textsuperscript{28}. They were regarded as the maid-servants of God. But in reality, the devadasis were considered as ‘the temple prostitutes’\textsuperscript{29}. Historians pointed out that the devadasi system began in Kerala at about the commencement of the Malayalam Era and it gained strength during the period of the Cholas. The main occupations of the devadasis in Kerala were singing, dancing and acting in dramas. Devadasi system degraded the status of women in the society.

4.1.6. Slavery

Slavery prevailed in the society of Kerala. Apart from the hereditary slavery, often it was imposed as a form of punishment. Slavery existed not only in South Travancore but also in the other parts of Travancore. The lives of slaves were in vain. They were suffering from untouchability and unapproachability. They were not permitted to enter temple premises and schools, run either by a Brahmin or by a Nair. The slaves were forced to observe certain distance in their dealings with higher caste people. They could not move freely in the market either to buy or sell their products.\textsuperscript{30}

As per the custom of the country, if a high caste man was polluted by the touch of a

\footnotesize{27. Vanithakusumam, \textit{Booklet}, South Travancore, 1102 M.E., p.191.  
30. Shobanan, S., \textit{“Genesis of the Social Emancipation among the Ezhavas”}, Vol.II, Madurai, p.75.}
low caste he had to undergo purification ceremony. Hence, the low castes were commonly spoken as “out castes or untouchables”.\textsuperscript{31} If a Pulaya touches a Brahmin, he had to take bath immediately and change his Brahminical thread. On the other hand, if a Pulaya touches a Nair, he had to take bath and no other ceremony was required to this effect. According to the custom of the country, the low caste people had to keep distance from the high caste people in proportion to their status in the social order.\textsuperscript{32} Debtors, who could not repay their loans, according to the custom of the period, were forced to do labor till the liability was over.\textsuperscript{33}

Entering into the temple premises was considered to be a sin. Walking on the roads leading to the walls of the temple was a violation of caste and religious rules. These rules were very severely adhered to Suchindram temple in South Travancore, Vaikom and Guruvayur in North Travancore.\textsuperscript{34} Women were considered inferior to men.\textsuperscript{35} It was even believed that girls were taught the three R’s namely reading, writing and arithmetic would become widows soon and widowhood was the bitterest misfortune for women.\textsuperscript{36} So education was forbidden to them. They were not allowed to cover the upper part of their body whereas the high caste women were allowed to cover their upper part. This was a degradation of the women of South Travancore.\textsuperscript{37} The kings who were the protectors of the rights of the people could not do anything in this regard, because the high castes opposed them and considered it as treason. In

\begin{enumerate}
\item Francis Buchanan, “A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar”, London, 1870, p.151.
\item An Ezhava should keep 36 paces from Brahmin, 12 paces from Nayar.
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addition, most of the kings were pleasure seekers, who were under the control of the feudal Lords. So they would not treat the low castes on par with the high castes. Any violation was dealt with severely. Sometimes they suffered deportation.

The people of South Travancore worshipped varied gods and goddesses according to caste restrictions. The Nairs worshipped communal heroes as their gods. They conducted festivals namely Murajepam and HiranyaGarbaha and arranged for dance and dramas. The Shanars (Nadars) worshipped many gods such as putham, pey and pisasu. They lodged their gods in their homes. They worshipped female deities like Bhadrakali who is the tutelary deity of the Nadars. They feared that if these goddesses were not appeased, there will be epidemics like small pox and cholera. They worshipped many other gods such as Madan, Marudhu, Neeli and Sudalai. They sacrificed animals and birds to the gods to ward off evil effects. Moreover the society was divided by customs, caste prejudices and religious beliefs. Social, communal and religious oppressions made their life miserable. Hence, the oppressed classes were willing to accept any social reforms that could bring relief to them. Thus on the eve of the advent of the L.M.S. Missionaries, the society in South Travancore was under the clutches of superstition.

The Protestant Mission areas took active interest on healing the wounds of the people and stayed in the interior parts of Tamil Nadu and then came to South Travancore where the people were willing to accept any new dogma that would help

42. Yesudhas, R.N., op.cit., p.28.
them for a social change from the existing situation. At this deplorable situation, the L.M.S. came forward with an array of missionaries, who longed to keep the socially disabled to live in a secured position. The people who were suffering from disability were eagerly waiting for an opportunity not only to attain social status but were ready to accept any change that was capable of delivering them good from this state of affairs.

4.1.7. Smartha

An evil custom which existed in Kerala that endangered even the higher castes and reduced themselves to slaves was smartha. When a Brahmin woman was suspected by her relatives or by her Brahmin neighbours of illegal connection with men, the suspected women had to face a severe process of trials before her excommunication from her caste and it was known as Smartha\textsuperscript{45}.

4.1.8. Pulapedi

Pulapedi, another evil custom was a curse to the women of Kerala. If a Pulaya man met a Nair woman without being accompanied by a Pulaya man might seize her and she would lose her caste and connections with her relatives. This was known as ‘pulapedi’ and the time of pulapedi was known as ‘pulapedikalam’\textsuperscript{46}.

4.1.9. Dowry System

Another degrading custom which still continues in the society is the dowry system. Marriage among most Indians irrespective of religious groups, are arranged by parents or relatives. The amount of dowry was fixed by the girl’s parents. The rates went on according to the academic and economic position of the bridegroom. This system was an unbearable burden to parents and those who were not well off.


financially found it hard to get partners for their daughters due to the System of dowry. However, this dowry system was nothing but the sale of girls. Though the Government of India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act in 1961, the sale of girls like cattle continues even today.

The London Missionary Society that came to South Travancore worked for social changes. William Tobias Ringel Taube founded many schools and worked for the welfare of the people, opposed slavery and served for the cause of the poor. During the period of Mr. and Mrs. Mault the first upper cloth revolt broke out in 1822. But Mault and Mead continued their work with determination. In 1829 the second upper cloth revolt broke out. Consequently a proclamation was issued by the King in the same year. According to that proclamation Christian women were allowed to wear upper cloth. The primary motive of the protestant women missionaries in Travancore was evangelization, but their activism contributed much towards eradicating social evils, promoting literacy and improving the health status of the natives. They took steps for establishing boarding schools and day schools giving no space for discrimination on grounds of caste, creed, religion and gender. They had to face much resistance from the conservative sections as their radical ideas about female education and demand for the removal of the social disabilities of the marginalized sections openly challenged established customs and practices.

The Constitution has granted equality of the sexes but still there is considerable number of crimes and violence against women. Constitutional laws were formed to give justice to women. Though, different laws were enacted to safeguard women.

freedom and socio-economic gender equality in this society, the social injustice such as sexual harassment, rape, female feticide, female infanticide, gender discrimination, prostitution, domestic violence, eve-teasing, child marriage, rape against widows and other related crimes faced by many women continued to persist. The period between 1956 and 2010 was a period of growth of the South Kerala Diocese in many respects. This growth and progress of the South Kerala Diocese had social and spiritual reputations.

4.2. Charitable Services

Many of the original foundations of benevolence and charity had their beginnings in religious institutions. “The desire to help others and the beginning of social welfare appeared to have developed as a part of religion”.50 The roots of social welfare go deep into the soil of the Judeo-Christian tradition.51 From the beginnings of the biblical narrative, we find the concept of loving and caring for others. “The Old Testament law specified how the community should provide care and to whom.”52 The Laws in the Bible addressed hospitality to strangers and foreigners (Exodus 22:21, Hebrews 13:2), allowing the poor to glean the field to obtain grain (Leviticus 19:9-10, Ruth), and the provision of care for widows and orphans (Deuteronomy 14:28-29, 26:12). The New Testament added a new and more challenging idea of the care of the poor.51 South Kerala Diocese has been engaged in many charitable services right from the beginning.

53. Ibid., p. 107.
The Charitable Society of the South Kerala Diocese was inaugurated in 1967 and the very next year in 1968, the Church of South India Balikamandiram (Home for girls) was opened in Kollam and Parassala. It was in 1971 that the Charitable Society of the South Kerala Diocese registered under the Travancore-Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act XII of 1955. In 1972 the Church of South India Balikamandiram orphanage at Attingal and Church of South India Training Centre Home, Parassala started. In 1973 all the KNH institutions of South Kerala Diocese started functioning under the Charitable Society. In 1974, the Diocese inaugurated its Creche programmes in different places for the underprivileged sections of the society. The Polio Home Trivandrum and Centre for Training and Rehabilitation of the Mentally Retarded and Shalom KEM Vattappara were also inaugurated. It was in 1975 that the South Kerala Diocese ventured into a Day Care Centre at Christhumangalam and in 1976 it got the approval of KNH for a Day Care Centre. In 1977 the CSI Wills girls Boarding Home was launched. In 1980 new Day Care Centers were planted at Balaramapuram, Pannimala, Idinjar, Veeranakavu and Vithura. In 1981, one more Day Care Centre at Chathannoor emerged. In 1986, the South Kerala Diocese decided that all its Creche Centers should be modified as Daycare centers. 1990 Community Development Centers were inaugurated. In 1997 the Community Based Programme (CBP) was started at Maruthoor and

54. Minutes of Executive Board Meeting SKD, August 1971, p. 37.
57. Minutes of Charitable Board SKD, November 1976, p. 38.
Veeranakavu. At Present in the South Kerala Diocese, under the administration of the Charitable Society there are a certain number of charitable institutions such as Balikamandiram and BalaBhavan (Home for boys) in Quilon, Light to the Blind (school for the blind) in Varkala, Balikamandiram in Parassala, Balikamandiram boarding home for girls in Attingal, Will’s boarding home for girls in Trivandrum, Home for the Handicapped [polio home] in Trivandrum and school for the deaf and dumb in Valakam.

4.2.1. Navajyoti Child-Focused Community Development Project (NCFCD), Vithura

One of the major Community Development Projects of the South Kerala Diocese is NCFCD and was inaugurated on 30 June 2006 by the Most Rev. Dr. J. W. Gladstone, the Moderator of the Church of South India and the Bishop of the South Kerala Diocese. The project prepared its first proposal in June 2007 and launched the programme on 4 March 2008. This project covers nineteen hamlets villages in three panchayaths of Vithura, Tholicode and Peringamala of Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala. The nineteen villages are namely Narakathinkala, Heruvakonam, Undappara, Makki, Adiparampu, Oolankudi, Kavummoola, Planthottham, Arukannankuzhi, Kundrappankadu, Koppathuvila, Chathichachamanpuram, Kannancode, Choondamala, Ozhukupara, Kumminpuram, Kochupanangode, and Velankonam having 1683 families with a population of 6586 including 417 children below five years of age.

The purpose of the project was to provide quality education, health services, adequate nutrition, food security and opportunities for future employment, income and security to the marginalised communities. The goal of NCFCD is to provide
sustainable improvements in quality of life and well-being of children and
downtrodden people of the selected hamlets in Kerala. The scope of the project is to
help out the community and children to be decision-makers for their integrated
development regarding the social issues which they faced. The Activities under this
Project include:

4.2.1.a. Early Childhood Care

During March 2008, there were 69.12% of the newborns who were reported
underweight (below 2 kg) in the identified villages and 64.1% of children between 3-5
age groups who were not attending any Anganwadi. 22.5% of children in 6 villages
who were suffering from breathing problems and 35.33% of children in 20 villages
who were reported that are commonly suffering from diseases like fever, cold, cough,
and diarrhea. Therefore supplementary nutrition was provided, medical camps for
children and for community members were arranged, blood donor forums were
organized and kitchen gardens were promoted in 407 households. Forty six mothers
were trained in the Krishi Vinjan Kendra, a department under Central Government
called the Indian Council for Agriculture and Research about agricultural activities
such as seed bank, seedlings and bio-manure. Active and interested members from the
mother’s club were selected for this NCFCD project. They compiled recipe books
about nutritive food at low cost. The aim of this book was to encourage families to
follow good and well balanced diet, to remove unhealthy food from their daily diet
and to make use of the locally available resources. People were informed about the
need to start rainwater harvesting in order to meet the scarcity of water. They were
also informed on how to collect water from the terrace and the cost incurred for it.

64. Ibid., p. 5.
4.2.1.b. Education

During March 2008, nearly 91.4% of families were reported that they needed additional coaching for their children. But they were unable to provide such coaching. 50% of families reported that the quality of education in schools is not up to mark. 70% of the children were not regular in school due to the lack of adequate educational materials. 90% of girl children usually dropped their education after High School because parents were not interested to send their girl children for higher education and skill training. Almost 100% of children are unaware of child rights. 80% of girl children do not have enough freedom. They are not considering as equal to boys and they had no right to say about their decisions related to marriage. 70% of boy children are dropping their education after High School level because parents are not interested to send their boy children for higher education and skill training. 70% of boy children are dropping their education after UP level and going for coolie work in order to support their family. Career guidance programme was started for high school students: This was helpful for children to select different higher courses and vocational training programmes as per their aptitude and interest. Students were also provided different awareness programmes and talents training programmes.

4.2.1.c. Community Health

Fever, cough, cold bronchitis, measles and scabies are the commonly reported diseases among children. During March 2008 around 35.33% of children in the age are suffer from these diseases. 34.5% do not have safe drinking water facilities. 78.06% of the children are malnourished and unhealthy. 23% of families do not have

65. Ibid.,p.12.
66. Ibid., p. 12.
toilet facilities. People often have to travel 5-10 kms to reach the hospitals. 95% of families do not have Kitchen Garden.⁶⁸ There are 78.06% families living in very poor conditions. Their annual income is less than Rs. 24,000/-. 37.6% are living in dilapidated houses. 50.9% of the people between the 19-60 age groups do not have any type of work.

4.2.1.d. Awareness programmes

The project NCFCD encourages need-based awareness programmes in 2008. Awareness classes are conducted on environment and sanitation, prevention of communicable diseases, seasonal diseases, lifestyle disease, and adolescent health for boys and girls, low cost nutritive food, alcoholism, substance abuse and the importance of immunization.

4.2.2. Community Based Organizations (CBO’s)

Almost 100% of the villages did not have CBOs like children’s club, Teen club, Youth Club and Mothers club for the development of the community. There is no cluster level mechanism for sustainable development. Along with these, there are no CBOs to address the issues of Children and other social issues of the community. The position of women in families is very low. 19% women do not have any kind of assets and savings. Only 15.4% of women in between 19 – 60 age group of have some type of seasonal coolie work. The wage disparity between men and women is significant. Women are not in a position to take decisions, mainly taken by a male in the family. Most of the women in these places are not even aware the rights of women and Protection Acts.⁶⁹

A Revolving Fund was started for micro-enterprises under Community Based

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⁶⁸. Ibid., p. 18.
⁶⁹. Ibid., p. 19-25.
Organizations project. The project helped forty three individuals to start micro enterprises namely goat rearing, tailoring, poultry keeping, cow rearing and umbrella making. Apart from this, forty five families were helped to start micro enterprises namely jewellery making, banana cultivation and equipment purchase thirty eight members were assisted to start buffalo and calf rearing. 164 members were given newly hatched chicks. These enterprises help women to spend their time productively. The income was utilized for the purchase of household assets and children’s education.

4.2.2.a. Skill training for unemployed youth

During March 2008 nearly nine unemployed youths were identified from this area and they were linked with Indian Overseas Bank (Sneha Trust) for availing benefits from their rural self-employment training Institute. Three youths were selected to undergo six weeks mobile phone repairing course, three youths qualified for gas welding course for a duration of six weeks, two youths underwent a driving course and one underwent a beautician course. These training programmes help them to get employment opportunities.

4.2.2.b. Skill training to women

Community Based Organization in collaboration with the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry arranged for six months course on tailoring, machine and hand embroidery, glass and fabric painting. Seventy women took part in it in 2008. A one day umbrella making course, five day jewellery making and five day cotton carry bag making class were also arranged for women. It became necessary to have a suitable market for the sale of these products. The Indian Overseas Bank and Industries Department provided training in money management.

4.2.2.c. Achievements of the NCFCD

There have been tremendous improvements and changes in community life in Vithuradue to the efforts of the Diocese and its ministry of Navajyoti. There are sustainable improvements in early childhood care for children in the age group below five years. The low weight children was reduced from 69% of births to one. Therefore birth weight increased from 2 kg to 3 and 3.5 kilograms during 2008. Infant mortality rate was reduced from 1% to 0%. 100% immunization was achieved in all villages. The supplementary feeding program has helped 596 children to get nutritious food. 92% families have adapted healthy food practices. 100% children enrolled in schools and the dropout rate has been reduced from 70% to 1%. During 2008 all villages have a recreation-cum-reading facility. One hundred and nine children got scholarships and 1074 children are availing other government schemes. 93% of families started to access the government service. 98% of families are benefited by government and NGO programs. 86% of families now have adequate toilet and sanitary facility. All disabled, destitutes, widows and bedridden are supported by the government and NGOs. Forty types of enterprises were started and 92% of these are run by women. This reduced unemployment from 51% to 10% and the income of 95% families increased.

This project has ensured quality education, health services, and food security and provided opportunities for women to earn additional income.

4.2.3. Charisma-Child Focused Community Development Project

(C.C.F.C.D.P), Kuttichal

Charisma Child Focused Community Development Project was launched on

71. Ibid., pp.61-62.
72. Ibid., pp.61-62.
30 May 2006 and it was inaugurated by the Most. Rev. Dr. J.W. Gladston, the Moderator of Church of South India. The project focused on the ministry of child development programmes, educational programmes, protection of health, women empowerment, youth empowerment and creating employment opportunities. On the basis of these projects, plans and programmes were established in twenty different places of five Panchayaths in Vellanad and Perumkadavila Blocks. The Charisma project focused on children and women empowerment. Wheel chairs were distributed for the differently abled children, health awareness programmes and medical camps were conducted. This project encouraged reading and provided career guidance, vocational training and focused on many charitable activities for the uplift of women and children.

4.2.4. Navajeevan-Child Focused Community Development Project (NCFCDP), Vattappara.

Navajeevan CFCDP is the one of the charitable projects of the South Kerala Diocese. It selected 2040 families from twenty different places in Vattappara, Vempayam, Manickal and Pullampara. These families were culturally educationally and healthily backward. The project focused on the protection of children and women’s health, education, women empowerment and standard of living. This project specially took care of health and hygienic programmes in the society and organized medical camps, awareness programs and cleanliness programs. They specially organized programs for women conducted awareness classes, skilled training, promoting kitchen garden, energy conservation programmes, personal hygiene, rain water harvesting and empowering them to making self-sufficient. To increase their

standard of living, the women were given training and loans through the Rural Development Committee. It inculcated the habit of saving through their income and many families become secure and self-sufficient.

4.2.5. Centre for Rehabilitation of the Disabled, Thiruvananthapuram.

Centre for Rehabilitation of the Disabled is the home for handicapped children known in short as the Polio Home is one of the charitable institutions of the South Kerala Diocese of the Church of South India. The founder of the home, Dr. S. Jones was struck by polio at the peak of his career as the Director of Marine Biology when he was 53 years of age. Dr. Jones had five polio children in an old bungalow in 1974. In 1977, there were sixty polio children from tribal and coastal areas. Vocational guidance is a vital part of Rehabilitation. Fabric painting, cutting and tailoring are taught. Horticultural programmes and flower arrangement classes were arranged. Children learned Bead chains and earrings making for all vocations. By the year 2000, polio was completely eradicated and the number of polio children dwindled and they had to accommodate physically and mentally challenged cerebral palsy children. In the year 2002, the name of the home was changed to “Centre for Rehabilitation of the Disabled”. More than 350 ex-foster children are happily settled in their communities with jobs in government and private sector. Some children are studying in professional institutions.

4.2.6. Church of South India Balikamandiram, Kollam

The child care ministry under the Charitable Society of South Kerala Diocese was started in 1968 during the period of Bishop Rev. William Vachalan (1967-1972).

75. Ibid., pp.56-57.
76. Ibid., pp.37-38.
More than 350 girls completed their studies from this home. Many girls completed their vocational training and professional course. Most of them got employment. This home provides Career guidance programmes, Health awareness programmes, personal hygiene, christian nurture, vocational training like umbrella making and fabric painting and also providing them physical, mental, spiritual upliftment.\footnote{Ibid., p.28.}

4.2.7. Church of South India Balikamandiram, Parassala

Rt.Rev. William Paul Vachalan, the first native Bishop of South Kerala Diocese, had realised that the group of the people in this Diocese were poor and could not even feed and clothe their children adequately and much less to educate them and give them a chance in life. He realized that only by equipping them with education, technical and vocational training will be empowered. In June 1968, CSI Balikamandiram at Parassala was started with twenty children. Ten were added in 1969 and further ten in 1970. In the beginning, the children could not do well academically. Due to the combined efforts of all the staff members, children started showing improvement in studies. Many came out with flying colors in SSLC and after finishing Higher Secondary Course, girls joined nursing allied courses. They got jobs both in India and abroad, the Gulf countries. Many got jobs in the medical field and earned handsome salaries. Good academic achievers worked as nurses, teachers and pharmacists and in State Government services. Yet few represent the local administrative set up as local, ward, Jilla Panchayaths members.

Vocational training was given to those who were academically backward in handicrafts, type writing, short hand, tailoring, needle work and garment making, printing and book binding. All who have completed tailoring course were
presented with a sewing machine as farewell gift. These gifts are a means of livelihood to many and nearly 400 girls were rescued from poverty.

4.2.8. Church of South India Balabhavan, Kollam

Church of South India Balabhavan is functioning at L.M.S. compound, Kollam since 12 June 1969. The project was dedicated and declared open by Late. Rt.Rev. William Paul Vachalan, Bishop of South Kerala Diocese in the presence of Mrs. Taylor, H and C Limited, Kollam. The centre started with five children and now they have the facilities to accommodate more than 100 children. The main objective of the project is to provide and fulfill the primary needs of children such as food, shelter and clothing and provide them proper health care, education and spiritual care. The Social Welfare Department approved the project and affiliated it with the Board of Controls of Orphanages, Kerala. This project is the nucleus of programme, “SanadhanaBalyam” of Kollam District. More than 400 children were benefited from this project. It came to know that all the children were well settled in their life. Some children are in Government service, few are working in private sectors and abroad.

To develop the hidden talents of children, they conduct indoor games and cultural competition. They admit children without any discrimination of caste, creed or religion. Preference was given to orphans and destitute children and children from broken families. Medical check-up was conducted by Medical Association once in a year with the help of doctors. They celebrate all the festivals. Children are taught to earn while they learn. Children are using leisure time in vegetable planting and gardening work, minor repairs and white washing. To motivate children in goal setting, they arrange field trips, vocational guidance talk and provide them periodicals

78. Ibid., p.32.
of modern knowledge\textsuperscript{79}.

4.2.9. Church Of South India Wills Girls Boarding Home, Thiruvananthapuram

Under the supervision of Charitable Society, South Kerala Diocese the C.S.I Wills Girls Boarding Home began to function in 1977 after inauguration by the Bishop Most.Rev.I.Yesudasan. They admit economically, socially and educationally poor girl children in this home. They were given protein foods, education and medical helps. The main aim of this project is to raise the children into the high position in the society. It was glad that all the children were well settled in their life. Some children were in Government service, some working in private sectors as nurses, tailors and few went abroad.

4.2.10. Church of South India BalikaMandiram Orphanage, Attingal

C.S.I.Balikamandiram, Attingal was inaugurated on 19 June 1972 by former Moderator and Bishop Most.Rev.Dr. I.Yesudasan in the presence of Mr.LurderLuers, the representative of KNH in India. In 1972, this home was started with thirty inmates from different areas in Kerala State without any caste or creed. Bishop is the Chairman of the committee. All the staff were working together to mould the girls to be good ambassadors. Till now the home has admitted about 350 children. Within thirty eight years, most of them reached in a good position. It came to know that all the children have well settled and are leading a peaceful life. Many got jobs in Government service, in private sectors as nurses or teachers, tailors and some went to abroad to get employment. Most of them are leading a good family life. Totally thirty eight girls are working as staff nurse\textsuperscript{80}. This home arranged many “outreach”

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p.33.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., pp.37-38.
programmes for the community. Sr. Elizabeth Joel has leaded the home with her dynamic leadership from 1972 to 2008. She was the Superintendent from the beginning of this project till her death on 26 August 2008 and she was succeeded by Sr. Christeena.

4.2.11. Church of South India Training Centre and Home, Parassala

The Church of South India Training Centre and Home, Parassala was started in 1972, as an extended home for the KNH children who were studying in the C.S.I Technical Training Centre. Miss. G. Sims from Australia was the Superintendent and Mrs. Lilly Bai was the Matron. Miss. G. Sims was also the Superintendent of the C.S.I. Embroidery Industry and C.S.I Balikamandiram, Parassala. In 1975, eighty seven children from the KNH homes in Kerala and Tamil Nadu studied needle work and garment making course for the KGT exam. Gradually the number of children decreased because they were not interested in studying tailoring. Therefore, the KNH closed the institution in 2003. The management admitted the children who had passed the SSLC and interested in studying the nursing course from the other C.S.I homes and decided to send them to Higher Secondary course. Out of 786 students, during the period from 1972 to 2009 three hundred and eighty one children completed the tailoring course and 186 children completed the nursing course. Sewing machines were supplied to those who completed the tailoring course. Most of them earn their livelihood by themselves. Some of the nurses are working in foreign countries. Others work in the government and private hospitals in different parts of India.81

4.2.12. Centre for Training Rehabilitation of the Mentaly Retarded, Vattapara

Centre for Training Rehabilitation of the Mentally Retarded, Vattappara was

81. Ibid., p.41.
started on 1 October 1974 in the Auditorium of the Lourdes Mount English Medium High School, Vattappara. The formal inauguration of the centre was done by Sri. N.N.Wanchoo, Governerof Kerala on 23 November 1975. The Kerala Ecumenical Mission Mental Health Centre is a Joint venture of Dioceses and Missions and is registered under the Travancore-Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act (XII of 1955) Reg. No. 90/70. The Kerala Ecumenical Mission Mental Health Centre planned to construct a building with proper facilities to educate and accommodate hundred mentally retarded children. After completion of a proper residential and school building, the training centre was shifted to the new building on 28 July 1982.

At present Kerala Ecumenical Mission Centre takes care of 160 mentally retarded children, boys between the age of 5-15 and girls 5-25, irrespective of caste, creed or income. They try their maximum to train and nourish these children with knowledge. The teacher - student ratio is 1:10. They follow the Kiranam Curriculum for mentally challenged children, published by the Educational Department of Kerala. It includes activities of Daily living skills, Motor skills, Communication skills, Functional academics; time, money and related cognitive skills, Yoga, Physical education, extra-curricular activities like music, dance, drawing, painting and sports are parts of the curriculum. Depending on individual capacity and personal preferences they train children in various skills like gardening, horticulture, house-keeping, candle making, greeting card and flower making.

4.2.13. Child Development Centre, Christhumangalam, Peroorkada.

The Child Development Centre was inaugurated in 1975 by Rt.Rev.Dr.

Yesudasan, the Bishop of South Kerala Diocese. There were forty children admitted in this institution. They aimed at the physical, mental educational and social development of the child. Many programmes like fabric painting, fancy ornaments making and tailoring classes were trained under this project with the collaboration of State Library Council, women organizations, GenshikshanSansthan programme of the Central Government.

4.2.14. CSI Day Care Center, Maruthoor

CSI Day Care Center, Maruthoor was started on 12 March 1977 under South Kerala Diocese. This institution not only aimed the child development but also for women empowerment. Therefore they organized literacy classes, information technology, computer classes and painting classes. Besides this, medical camps, free medicine distribution also carried out.

4.2.15. CSI Day Care Center, Veeranakavu

CSI Day Care Center, Veeranakavu was started in 7 January 1980, under South Kerala Diocese Charitable Society. This institution not only aimed at the child development but also the community development and women empowerment.

4.2.16. CSI Day Care Center, Idinjar

CSI Day Care center, Idinjar was started in 20 May 1980, under South Kerala Diocese. This center is situated in the very backward area. This center mainly focused on the community development. They conducted many awareness programmes, medical camps, seminars, vocational training programmes, Self Help Groups, children’s clubs, youth’s clubs and small deposit programmes.

4.2.17. CSI Day Care Center, Pannimala

CSI Day Care Center, Pannimala, was started in May 1980. The main aim of
this Center is to motivate the growth of the child. This Center focused on the community development and the women empowerment\textsuperscript{83}.

4.2.18. CSI Day Care Center, Vithura

CSI Day Care Center, Vithura, was started in 1 April 1980. This center gives help to the poor children and also conducted many community empowerment programmes. For community development, this center collaborated with Polytechnic Nedumangadu, Social Welfare Board, Janshik Shansanthan, Anert, Field publicity office, State Resource Center, Science and Technology Development Department, Forest Department, Botanical Garden Palode, Panchayath office Vithura, Primary Health Center, Nehru Yuva Kendra, BharathSevakSamaj, Gandhiyan Study Center, Child Development Center, Trivandrum Medical college and Karakkonam Medical college. These institutions arranged many awareness programmes, seminars and self-employment trainings for the community development\textsuperscript{84}.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

The struggle of the Indian National Congress for political freedom in India influenced very much. Some of the Travancore Christians leaders like A. Nesamony, were active politicians. Therefore, the Indian Christians never indifferent to political freedom. This is clear from the resolution adopted by the Lucknow meeting of All India Christian Conference. The resolution states that British government should fix a definite data after the end of the world war for the establishment of self-government in India. As a first step, a national government, responsible to legislature should be

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., pp.35-36.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p.52.
formed at the center immediately. Women began to involve in political issues like temple entry agitations and India’s struggle for independence which earned them a fair position in the society.

In the modern period particularly after India attained independence, the national leaders realized the importance of making Indian women empowered. They rightly understood that political participation is very essential for empowerment of women. From 1956 onwards, effective steps were taken in order to increase the participation of women in State Legislature and Parliament. Women alone can understand the problems of women. Therefore the presence of women in the law making bodies is essential to represent the problems of women and to enact suitable legislations for the welfare of women. In Kerala, since 1956 women in large numbers took part in the political process, contested in the elections, represented the people in the law making bodies and presented the problems of the people particularly of the women and insisted to enact suitable legislations for their upliftment. Consequently, the barricades on the way of their progress were removed. Now women in Kerala have better position compared to other states in India. Political participation of women led to the political empowerment and it paved the way for women empowerment in other fields.

In Kerala, major political parties realized the significant role of women in capturing power and seats in the State Legislature. During the early elections, women hesitate to vote because of the social taboos. But later women in Kerala showed greater response to the elections. Unlike other States, participation of women as voters is tremendously high. After 1970, the participation of women voters had never fallen

below 70 percentages and in some general elections women elector outnumbered men. Women are generally more concerned about the problems that affect them personally such as food shortage, rising prices, unemployment and poverty. Political or national integrity also plays as a motivating factor in determining their voting preference.

The number of women contestants in general elections both in State Legislature and LokSabha gradually increased in Kerala. In 1957 there were only nine women contestants in the Kerala Legislative Assembly elections, while there were 423 male contestants. It showed marginal participation of about one percentage of the total contestants. In the assembly elections of 2006, seventy women participated, which is about five percentages of the total contestants. Within fifty years, number of women contestants had increased from nine to seventy. In the 140 member legislative assembly, the women legislators increased nominally and it had never crossed 10% of the total strength.86

The political parties other than the national parties in Kerala rarely nominate women as candidates. This is one of the reasons for the less representation of women in assembly. Many women contestants lost their seats with narrow margin. For instance 13 women were elected to the eleventh Kerala Legislative Assembly. Most of the women politicians acquired their positions through hard work and participation in the political parties from the grass root level. Despite this adverse situation, women in Kerala fought in the field of political arena and marked the success in the history of Kerala. K.R Gouri Amma, Suseela Gopalan, Leela Damodara Menon, K.O.

86. Ibid., p.23.
Aysha Bai, Bhargavi Thankappan, Rossamma Punnoose and M. Kamalam, are few outstanding women leaders who are the inspiration and role model for the women politicians.

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments helped one-step further towards women empowerment by implementing 33% reservation in local self-governments. These acts helped rural women to contest in the elections and won the election. Then they participated in the village assemblies and discussed about their problems to find the solutions. It is interesting that after the implementation of reservation for women in local self-governments in 1994, the women contestants increased rapidly from 26 to 55. The reservation in the local self-governments was an instrument for the empowerment of women and it accelerated women empowerment with great courage and phase. Political empowerment was an objective of Tenth Five Year Plan in India. By which National Policy on women empowerment was adopted in 2001. By this policy, the National Plan of Action was implemented to create an environment for women to exercise their rights both within and outside their homes. The government of Kerala also directed the local bodies to distribute 10% of the funds allotment for projects related to women.

The women leaders in Kerala demanded 50% reservation in Local Self-government after successful elections of Panchayati Raj with 33% reservation. Reservations change the structure of representation by the process of fast track women’s entry into politics. The women members of the Legislative Assembly insisted the need of increasing reservation in Local Self Government. Accordingly Kerala Panchayati Raj (Second Amendment) Act 2009 was passed and by that women

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got equal status at par with men in Panchayati Raj. Similarly Kerala Muncipality (Amendment) Act 2009, allotted 50% reservation for the women in the Municipalities and Muncipal corporations. The subsequent elections of 2010 opened up unprecedented political space for women at the local level in Kerala. Now women in Kerala enjoy equal opportunity in political field and won courage and capability to run the government effectively and to fulfill people's need in time.

4.3. Women’s Movements

The political participation of women in any society needs to be examined on the basis of the position and status they enjoy in that society or the level of their empowerment. It is closely related with the political efficiency of a person. Democratic systems provide the people opportunities for political participation. Politics in the present day society is mainly a skill controlled area. Persons skilled enough to control the environment are definitely active in politics.

The influence of modern education on the political life of Kerala was significant. The missionary schools produced eminent leaders who in course of time took an active part in the struggle for responsible government in the State of Travancore. Through the influence of western education and enlightenment, many youth and a few young women participated in the political affairs of Kerala. Another result of education was the introduction of the ‘rule of law’. It was recognized that “All citizens are equal at law and public servants do not enjoy any special privilege likely to threaten the rights of the citizens.”

89. Ibid., p.235.
In the 20th century, some ‘women movements’ like Upper Cloth Movements and Temple Entry Agitation were formed in Kerala for their self-expression. As a result, Hepzibah, one of the lady teachers of the LMS and the first woman graduate from Nagercoil was nominated to the Legislative Assembly known as Sri Mulam Assembly in 1933. Sri Mulam Assembly consisted of seventy male members and two women. Moreover, several women in Travancore began to participate in the public affairs of the country. Some of the women like Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besent, Akkamma Cherian, Karthyani Amma, Rosamma Punnoose, Annie Mascarene and Elizabeth Kuruvila engaged in the national struggle for independence, along with Mahatma Gandhi. Due to the enfranchisement of women after 1914, twenty one nations in the world gave women the right to complete or partial enfranchisement. Around 1920’s the women Suffrage movement started in India and achieved the political enfranchisement of women in four of its more progressive provinces and four states. Among the four Indian States, Travancore was one and the first to grant that privilege. The missionaries played an important role in shaping the political history of Kerala and the participation of women in political affairs.

There are many elected women representatives in this South Kerala Diocese. In 4 December 2010, Socio-Political Board conducted political leaders of the SKD member’s meeting at L.M.S. Compound. Nearly 200 women represented the Jilla, Block, Grama Panchayat, Muncipality and Corporation. The Women’s Fellowship fought for women’s rights, privileges, protection and to get women’s political rights. In 2008, the Women’s Fellowship submitted a memorandum of demanding the women’s reservation in the political field to Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the Chair person.

90. India year book, 1924, p.45.
Congress party when she came to L.M.S. compound to inaugurate the women's center. This memorandum of reservation led to the participation of many women as award members and counselors.

4.4. Legal Advisory Board

A Legal Advisory Board was started in South Kerala Diocese in 2010. The majority of members are advocates and counselors and the members of the Church. These boards are working together for solving the legal problems of the Women’s Fellowship by conducting counseling, legal helping clinics and publishing legal guidance books. For the empowerment of women in India, certain existing laws have been amended and modified according to the need of time.

4.5. Constitution of India

The Indian Constitution has the following provisions for making women at par with men: Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees to all equal protection of laws and equality before the law. The equality before the law is guaranteed to all without regard to sex, race, colour or nationality. Article 15(3), empowers the State to make special provision for women. Women require special treatment due to their very nature. "Women's physical structure and performance and maternal functions place her at a disadvantage in the struggle for subsistence and her physical wellbeing become an objective." Article 16(2) lays down the rule that no citizen can be discriminated regarding employment by the State on the ground of religion, race, caste and sex. Constitutional 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, Article 243D provides reservation of seats for SC, ST in panchayat and not less than one third shall be reserved at village level and in the legislature of the State. Constitutional 74th Amendment

92. Ibid., p.46.
Act, 1992, Article 243T provides that one-third of seats in Municipal Corporations shall be reserved for women. Such seats may be allotted by rotation to different Constituencies in the Municipality.

4.6. Constitution of Church of South India

The Church of South India has a very democratic constitution. The Executive Committee appointed a committee headed by D.S. Sahayadas as Convener for drafting a Constitution for the S.K.D. in 1958. Accordingly the new Constitution was drafted and accepted after certain amendments and modifications. The new Constitution for South Travancore Diocese came into force in 1961. The main objective of the Church according to the new constitution were to develop the Pastoral, Evangelistic, educational, medical, industrial and other works belonged to the Diocese.

According to the Constitution of 1961, the whole work within the Diocese was divided into evangelistic work and institutional work for the convenience in administration. The Diocesan Council acted as a Parliament. The most important decisions were taken by the Diocesan Council. It consists of the rules for the Diocese. Bishop acted as ex-official, the President and Chairman of all Committees, Councils and Boards. According to the Constitution, the Diocese is organized into three categories. Each had an administrative body. They are Area Council, District Council and Church Committee. The areas were Northern area with its Headquarters at Quilon, Central area with its Headquarters at Trivandrum and Southern area with its Headquarters at Parassala. The Church of South India constitution has provided for a

93. Minutes of Church Board, South Travancore, 8489, 15 November 1958, p.20.
95. Minutes of Executive Committee of the Synod, C.S.I., E58A, p.46.
Federal Church policy with autonomous Diocese in the local areas and a Synod without much executive authority at the center.

The administrations of the Church of South India from the Pastorate to the Synod are based upon the principles of representative democracy\(^97\). The authors of the constitution were formally convinced that only a democratic structure alone would unite the Churches, as well as people’s participation in the affairs of the Church. Accordingly democratic methods of representation and election have been prescribed to constitute the councils and committees of the Church at different levels and to elect the various officials of the Church. The laity constitutes to be the backbone of the society\(^98\). There is provision for lay representatives in the Synod, Diocesan Council, Pastorate Committee, Executive Committees and Standing Committees. The Synod, Diocesan Councils and Pastorate Committees are composed of representatives, a majority of whom is elected by their representative constituencies. In the Dioceses, the Bishop is at the top. The Pastorate with the Presbyter as the Chairman. The structure and organization have facilitated administrative stability and continuity in the Diocese. Mutual co-operation and support between Dioceses have been promoted. The Church of South India has contributed the sound management and stewardship of the properties of the Church and has also stimulated several property development projects. The local congregations are responsible for the Church. They are the grassroots of the Church and their life and vitality determine the energy and dynamism of the Church.

\(^97\) The Constitution of the Church of South India, Madras, 1993.

\(^98\) CSI Synod Constitution, SKD, 2015.
4.7. Organizational Chart of the Church of South India

- Synod
  - Moderator
    - Deputy Moderator
      - Bishop
        - Executive
          - Presbitors
            - Diocesan Council
              - Pastorate committee
                - Laymen
                  - Congregation
4.8. Women's Fellowship and Political Empowerment

Women's organization was recognized as the main source of power, position and strength for women in modern India. Women’s Fellowship plays an important part in this regard. Women from different sections are united together and organized into an association to attack liquor shops and gambling dens and fight for abolishing age old practices like wife beating, polygamy, dowry connected harassment, devadasi system and child marriages. Besides, these organizations provide employment opportunities to large masses of illiterate, ignorant and suppressed womenfolk. At every meeting, Women’s Fellowship discuss the issues related to women and helps them to overcome these issues. It taught the women about their fundamental rights. Women’s Fellowship tries to create awareness about the government schemes for their upliftment. Women’s Fellowship also helps them in approaching the agencies for various schemes and benefits. The political atmosphere favored women to participate in other distinct fields’ sports and literature. Most of the women writers in Kerala have their own political concepts and worked in pro-political organizations for the upliftment of women. To propagate and to implement their ideology, they started many pro and non-political organizations to stop evils like dowry and violence against women.

The most resource to liberate people from poverty and empowers them is knowledge, through all constitutions endeavors to empower and enrich its people led to the knowledge society. Such knowledge society will need empowerment at all levels and among all the key actions of the society. At this juncture, it is essential to

see the possibilities of women empowerment through information technology. Access to information is the key to the economic, social and political empowerment of women. So far, no other technology claimed to have given the instant, uncensored, practically feasible, economically viable information to the womenfolk than the information technology. Information possess new forms of learning, education, health services, livelihood options, governance mechanism and e-commerce options which would lead to the ultimate goal of woman empowerment.