CHAPTER III

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN KERALA:

PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

The word Kerala refers to the south western region in India. Till the states' reorganisation in 1956, Kerala continued to be divided into Travancore and Cochin - the two princely states and Malabar which was under the Madras presidency.

The state of Kerala is famous for its progress in the fields of education, political awareness and general health care. It is also well-known for the matrilineal joint family system where women got dominance and which existed for a long period of time. It also has the unique distinction of achieving hundred percent literacy, the only state in India to do so. According to the 1991 census, the female literacy rate stood at 83.93 percent, a creditable achievement.

A relatively tiny state of the Indian union it is, both in terms of population size and geographical area; its women folk enjoy, relatively, a very high status in the society. Certain demographic indicators like normal sex-ratio, life expectancy at birth, level of literacy, high social priority given for education for both sexes etc.\(^1\), point to this fact. But this is not the whole story. Despite high literacy rate and education
women of Kerala too are not free from many of the problems which they share with their counter parts in other parts of India.

Kerala represents a mosaic of socially different groups of people. In the pre-independence era Kerala was strictly divided into numerous castes and subcastes. The three major religions Hinduism, Christianity and Islam prevailed there. Untouchability was much in vogue. Every caste had its own identity, individuality and prejudices. The social attitude of each community towards their women folk also differed. Even though women in this part of India enjoyed considerable respect and freedom in the earlier centuries, women suffered the lack of both.

The two types of family organisations,- 'matrilineal'\textsuperscript{2} and 'patrilineal'\textsuperscript{3}- existed in Kerala from time immemorial. The difference rested on the system of inheritance.\textsuperscript{4} One of the distinctive features of Kerala was the matrilineal system of the Nair community which has prevailed for centuries. This has created the general impression that women of Kerala enjoyed absolute freedom and equality. The matrilineal system has certainly afforded high status to women. But the system has never been a feature of all the communities of Kerala. The Brahmin community for instance followed patrilineal system. Like-wise most of the Muslim and Christian communities also followed the patrilineal system.
It is difficult to list accurately the several castes and communities following either matrilineral (marumakkathayam) or patrilineal (makkathayam) system of inheritance as there were considerable regional variations.


Namboothiris in Kerala strictly followed patrilineal system of inheritance. One of the special features of their family which
they called *Illum*, was that only the eldest son was allowed to marry within the caste. Other brothers were not permitted to marry. They can only have *Sambandham* with Nair women. And their wives and children were excluded from the circle of kinship.

In Namboothiri family discrimination between boys and girls was prominent. Girls were denied education while boys were given education. Strict segregation was observed in the case of girls in families. Condition of Namboothiri women during 18th and 19th century Kerala society was deplorable indeed. As the people who always stay inside the illams, they were called *antharjanams*. *Antharjanams* were not given freedom. Purdah, polygamy, *smarthavicharam*, enforced widowhood and dowry system—all contributed to their suffering. Illiteracy added to their woes. "They observed Purdah and strict segregation was maintained. Polygamy was allowed to the extent of having three wives. The younger brothers were not supposed to talk or even see their eldest brother's wife or wives".⁶ Girls were discriminated against from the time of birth itself. The birth of a girl child in a Namboothiri family was an unwelcome event while that of a boy was celebrated with fan fare.

The payment of dowry was another important feature in the marriage of the Namboothiris. Very huge amounts were demanded as dowry and this has caused the ruin of many Namboothiri families. The Travancore Raja’s Proclamation of 1823 says that ‘those Namboothiris who demanded more than seven hundred *kalian* money
for one girl will be punished by the 'Court of Law'. This clearly shows that a heavy Varadakshina in marriage prevailed during that time. Naturally many women of poor Namboothiri families, had to remain unmarried till death.

The practice that only the eldest son could marry had brought about already a situation where there were excess of Namboothiri women. It is quite natural to conclude that the founders of this custom completely ignored the fact that there are as many Namboothiri women as there are Namboothiri men. While men were free to marry or to have Sambandham with many women as they liked, widows were strictly prohibited from remarrying. Even a child widow must remain unmarried till her death. This was the law of the time.

"The consequence was that while the Namboothiri bachelors solace themselves with their sudra lovers, Namboothiri spinsters secluded and vigilantly guarded in the privacy of their house, must live and die unmarried."  

Though Polygyny existed, that custom was not a boon but a curse on the poor women and that worsened their married life. P. Bhaskaran Unni says that all antharjanams during that period were included in any of the three categories namely, i) unmarried ii) sapatni or iii) widow. High dowry and non-availability of elder sons of Namboothiri families made many women remain unmarried. The majority who got married had to share their husbands with other wives. As young women marrying old
Namboothiris was common, a majority of them easily slipped into the category of widows. P.K. Balakrishnan describes the condition of Namboothiri women in the nineteenth century Kerala. From the reports of Cochin (1881) it can be calculated that the average number of persons in a Namboothiri illam was ten. In 1891 the population of Namboothiris in Travancore was twelve thousand three hundred and ninety five including six thousand seven hundred and eighty seven men and five thousand six hundred and eight women. This means that there were five thousand six hundred and eight antharjanams in about one thousand two hundred and thirty nine illams. But the number of available Namboothiri men to marry them were only around thirteen hundred. Even if each of them married three women, two thousand women remained as spinsters till their death.  

V.T. Bhattathirippad in his autobiography Kanneerum Kinavum (Tears and Dreams) has presented a clear picture of the life of an average Namboothiri woman. Even in his last days, an eldest Namboothiri of a poor illam marrying a young woman was not uncommon. Due to this type of veli (marriage) of old Namboothiris and the system of polygyny, even those women who got married did not enjoy a long marital life. The polygyny of the Namboothiris and practice of young women marrying old Namboothiris might lead to extra marital sexual relationship.

The women accused of adultery were treated very badly under the heinous custom of Smarthavicharam. The women accused of
adultery were subjected to mental torture under this system. *Smarthavicharam* provided for an enquiry followed by a trial of the accused woman which lasted months. The Jury called *smarthas* were appointed by the Raja (King) of the state. During the trial she was mentally forced to confess her guilt. After the confession, she might be excommunicated. Her male partners of guilt were also ostracised.

When the accused did not confess, various modes of torture were resorted to extract a confession; The torture methods included rolling up the accused in a piece of matting and letting the bundle fall from the roof to the court-yard below or leaving rat snakes and other vermin into her room; in certain cases cobras were turned in and if, after having been with the cobra for a certain length of time, and she was unhurt, it was accepted as conclusive evidence of her innocence.12

Compared to the condition of Namboothiri women, Nair women enjoyed better status in Kerala. Their family organisation was matrilineal and that contributed positively to their high position. A Nair family was known as *Tharavadu*. The *Tharavadu* of the Nairs was a large lineage, the members of which reckoned descent from a common ancestress and consisted of all the descendants through the female line. When it grew unwieldy it might be divided with consent of all the members for the sake of convenience into *tavazhis* (mother’s lines), family units clustering round a mother.13
Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi remarks that the Nairs represent a form of family organisation in opposition to the patriarchal structure of the North Indian Brahmin family, where property is owned in common by the men and inherited through the male line, and the men have control over the women's sexuality. In the Nair family, property is owned in common by the men and the women, and women and men are in control of their own sexuality within certain broad limits. They add that as the people with whom the Nairs engage in sexual relationships are not the people on whom they depend upon for economic survival, there will not be economic exploitation within the sexual relationship. So there is no question of economic dependency. And a Nair woman never regarded her husband as master or lord.

Nairs were among the few castes who gave education to girls. Boys and girls of the community were given education in the nearby schools known by the term Kalaris. Education was in Sanskrit and Malayalam. However girls after talikettu kalyanam ceremony did not attend the classes. Though descent was traced from the mother, the family was governed by the senior most male member called karanavan. However the eldest of female member also enjoyed an honourable position in the family. All female members of the family received special attention. After marriage the girls remained in the tharavadu only and the husbands visited them.
In the case of females of Nair community two types of marriages existed. Padmanabha Menon observes: "marriage among the followers of marumakkathayam law of succession may mean either what is called talikettu kalyanam, which is a mere formal ceremonial or sambandham, which latter alone creates the relation of husband and wife between the parties. While the former is an essential ceremony with females, the males have no corresponding ceremonial". Talikettu kalyanam was not the real marriage. It is only a ceremony to be performed on a girl before she attains puberty. It includes tying of a tali around girl's neck by a Brahmin or a relative of the girl. Eleven was the ideal age. In every tharavadu, the ceremony was performed once in ten years, or twelve years, in a mass scale for a batch of girls. The ceremony was elaborate and involved much expenditure. The tali tier was not intended to be the girls' future husband.

Marriage among Nairs was known by the term sambandham. The ceremony includes 'giving cloth' to the bride by the groom. Sometimes the giving of cloth was done by close relatives of the bridegroom. Mannathu Padmanabhan in Jeevitha Smaranakal (Memories) says that no freedom was given to bride and groom in choosing their partners. But the wife could divorce the husband at any time and the husband could discontinue visiting his wife. Women were allowed remarriage also.

Besides Namboothiris and Nairs there were many other castes, in Kerala including Kammalars (artisans), Kanisans
(astrologers), Ezhavas (toddy tappers), Valans, Arayans or Mukkuvans (fisher men), Cherumars, Pulayas and Parayas, Nayadis (hunters) and various hill tribes. They were designated polluting castes or untouchables.

The polluting castes were graded according to the degree of pollution. Hence they were to keep away, by a certain distance prescribed by custom violation of which could bring corporal punishment to offender. For example, a Mukkuvan must keep twenty four feet from a Namboothiri, an Ezhava thirty two, a Cherumar sixty four, and a Nayadi seventy two. Such severe limitations were placed on the movements of these castes. Polluting caste women were not allowed to wear cloth above the waist.

Of the polluting castes, Ezhavas constituted the bulk of the Hindu population. Among Ezhava women polyandry existed. The system of a common wife for many brothers of a family also prevailed. C Kesavan in Jeevitha Samaram (The struggle of life) says that his mother married her husband’s brother after the death of the husband. Until 1785 it was forbidden for women of the Ezhavas and of those of the lower castes to wear any clothing above the loins. Their women did not have property rights. Polyandry existed among Kammalars also.

Christians and Muslims form two other major communities in Kerala. The former were concentrated in the northern parts. Muslim women were not allowed to enter mosques. Their right to property was only half of that of men. Men observed polygamy and
all these had religious sanction. Men had the right to divorce their wives on flimsy reasons or none at all. Christian women enjoyed greater freedom comparison with Muslims. Christian girls were given education. Syrian Christians followed patrilineal system. Early marriage of their girls was not uncommon.22

Christian missionaries arrived in Kerala in the early part of the nineteenth century. Though their prime aim was the propagation of their religion they did charity work and started schools for giving education to women. Christian missionaries succeeded in converting low caste people to their religion. Also they could instill in them an awareness about their rights. As a result the converted Channar women agitated for their rights, the agitation developed into a movement which is generally known as Channar Lahala. During that period Channar women were not allowed to wear cloths above the loins. The converted Channar women's first struggle was for getting that right recognised. In 1829, the riot started through out South Travancore when the converted Channar women started wearing dresses above the loins. This provoked the caste Hindus. High caste people burned the churches and schools of new Christians. And the government had to seek the help of the army to quell the commotion. Finally Colonel Monroe granted Channar women the right to use *kuppayam* (jacket) but not the separate upper cloth.

This subsided the riot for a short period. But soon demands came from both Hindu and the Christian Channar women for rights
to wear separate upper cloth. They submitted various memoranda to Thiruvithamcore Government. But they did not get a favourable reply or orders. They appealed to the Madras Presidency Government, and received an unfavorable response. However by this time Channar women started wearing the upper cloth without waiting for the permission of the government. They received ample support from Christian missionaries in challenging caste Hindus.  

Again riots broke out in 1859. Channar homes, churches and schools were destroyed. At last in July 1859, the government granted Channar women the right to wear upper cloth with the strict direction that it must not be in the style of high caste women. Hindu Channar women were also given the right to wear jackets. In Central Travancore also riot occurred occasionally. In Kayamkulam when an Ezhava women walked along the public road by wearing the upper cloth, caste Hindus and some Muslims insulted and harassed her. This incident also led to riots. Similar incidents which followed riots were not uncommon in Travancore. The courage showed by the women of Channar and Ezhava communities to fight against discrimination and for their rights was immense. Channar Lahala was a remarkable example of women’s awakening in Kerala.

Towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century Kerala witnessed a profound awakening which expressed itself in a number of socio-religious movements. The custom ridden society underwent
revolutionary changes. A spirit of reform and rejuvenation swept over the whole of Kerala and every community felt its impact in varying degrees. The percepts of Brahma Samajam and Arya Samajam and the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda in addition to the influence of English education and of western science, were chiefly responsible for the generation of the new spirit.  

All castes and communities had many problems and hurdles on their way to progress. To reform their castes, they organised movements but under strict caste identity. In their struggle for social equality, with high castes riotings occurred. Riots were largely for and against giving admission to low caste pupils to schools, temples and for the right to walk along public roads. Under the impact of all these new developments, the caste-ridden society began to change.

Starting of printing presses and publishing of newspapers and journals contributed to the new awakening in the society. Various heinous customs and practices including superstitions existing in the society were widely discussed by these newspapers and journals. Gradually novels and short stories were published by Keralites who got the benefit of education.

In Indulekha written by O. Chandu Menon in 1889, rudiments of feminism could be seen. Chandu Menon through his novel ridiculed the prevailing practices in the society and presented to Keralites the image of an educated girl with intelligence and
courage to decide her future and to choose her life partner according to her wishes which was really unthinkable in those days. In 1887 a women's magazine Keraliya Suguna Bodhini was started. It was the first women's magazine in Malayalam.

Sreemathi the first Women's weekly in Malayalam was published by Anna Chandy,28 from Trivandrum. After a break of two years, in 1940 it restarted publishing from Changanacherry. Along with stories and articles about home management, general health, household industries, it widely discussed women's freedom, their rights and question of widow remarriage.

The reform activities initially came from men as they were the people who enjoyed all freedom. Influenced by western education and modern ideas they felt the need to reform their community especially the women folk. In the first stage women's participation in the movement was minimal as they were kept under strict rules and regulations. Only Nair women had the freedom of expression and the freedom to come out of their homes.

The major force behind women's education in Kerala was Christian missionaries. Wives of the protestant missionaries took a lead in this work. They started modern education for girls in Kerala. At first there was a lot of prejudice against women education. This became a great obstacle to their education. Christian missionaries started the first girls' school in 181929 in Nagercoil. Also in north Travancore the first school for girls was started at Kottayam by Ametia Baker in 1820.30 After that
many schools were started by missionaries in different parts of Kerala. But due to social opposition, the attendance was minimal. The school authorities had to give free food, clothes and boarding to attract girls to schools. They imparted vocational education also. Meanwhile near Nagercoil a school for caste Hindu girls was also started. This helped the caste Hindus who from the early years were reluctant to mix up with other communities.

Church Mission Society (C M S) was mainly responsible for the education of girls in central Kerala. In 1820 Norton started a girls school in Alleppey.\textsuperscript{31} Baker Memorial School was established at Kottayam in 1869. The missionaries imparted free education in Malabar and Cochin also. These missionaries lit the fire of education and paved the base of modern education in Kerala. The progress in education especially of women contributed much to the social reform movement of the time. This influenced the government also to think about starting girls' schools and in 1864 Travancore Government started the first government school. Though less in number the educated women became aware of their condition in society and urged for a change. Educated women were soon absorbed as teachers in schools as there were few women to teach in girls' schools. Education modernised and reshaped the life of women.

The reform movements in each community and caste led to the formation of organisations such as Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham, (S N D P), Yogakshema Sabha, and Nair Service
Society which in turn acted as a medium to struggle for their rights and to work for economic prosperity and social reforms.

As early as 1887, pained by the social disabilities to which the low castes had been subjected at that time, Sree Narayana Guru began work to reform the Ezhava community. He started his campaign by consecrating a Siva idol at Aruvippuram. Temple consecration by low caste people for low caste people was a revolution, the high castes could not tolerate. This was a great challenge to high caste people. The Guru urged his community men to do away with the expensive and superstitious customs like thalikettu kalyanam, thirandukuli, pulikudi. He advocated women's education and asked his people to work for the same.

In 1903 Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (S N D P) was formed to propagate the ideas of Narayana Guru and act as a powerful instrument of social reform. S N D P Yogam concentrated mainly on issues like education for men and women, freedom of movement on public roads and representation for Ezhavas in public services. Such type of organisations were formed in other communities also.

Namboothiris who occupied the highest position in the social ladder had been suffering from many disabilities. However till the last part of the nineteenth century they remained indifferent to modern education and the changes occurring all over the state. The Namboothiri women spent their time in the gloomy interior of their residence, behind purdah. In the Administration Report...
of Travancore for 1910, it is recorded that in that year only nine hundred and seventy six children of the Namboothiri community had joined school. The first instance, perhaps of the education of a Namboothiri girl on modern lines was when Karimanthur Parameswaran Nampoothirippad in north Malabar sent his daughter in 1911 to an elementary school. The Namboothiris were over-ridden by custom and it was extremely difficult for them to break the shackles of tradition.34

In 1908, the Yogakshema Sabha was formed with the objective of reforming the Brahmin community. Kuroor Unni Nampoothirippad and Chittoor Narayanan Namboothirippad were the early organisers of the group.35 A weekly called yogakshemam was also started. 'Yogakshema Sabha' gave emphasis on English education. They tried to make the community aware of the need of English education. The other objective was to improve the plight of Namboothiri women. However no substantial progress was made by the Sabha in the case of women.

Meanwhile a 'Namboothiri Yuvajana Sangham' or 'Youth League' came to be formed as a radical organisation under the leadership of V.T. Bhattathirippad and K N Kuttan Namboothiri. They published a monthly, Unni Namboothiri, to disseminate progressive ideas of reform among the members of the community.36 Tremendous changes occurred among the community after the formation of the Youth League. The great revolutionary who took up the cause of Namboothiri women and devoted much of his time for that was, V.
T. Bhattathirippad. He was the person who laid the foundation of the reform activity among women. *Rajaneerangam* - the collection of short stories published by V.T. Bhattathirippad presented before the community the silent sufferings of Namboothiri women.

V.T. Bhattathirippad wrote a play *Atukkalayilninnu Arangathekkku* (From the Kitchen to the Arena) which portrayed the inhuman customs existing in Namboothiri illams and the pathetic condition of Namboothiri women. The staging of the drama was opposed greatly by the conservatives. But against all obstacles, the drama was staged during the twenty second yearly conference of Yogakshema Sabha at Edakkunni. Later, in many places which include many illams, the drama was staged and women also got an opportunity to see and enjoy the play which made a conscientising effect on the community.

Another literary work which promoted reforms was the novel *Apphante Makal* (Father's Daughter) written by M. Bhavatratan Namboothirippad. The works *Iruthumathi* (The Fertile Female) by M.P. Bhattathirippad, and *Marakkudaykkullile Mahanarakam* (The Inferno behind Parasol) by M.R. Bhattathirippad were also aimed at the reformation of Namboothiri women. The drama *Marakkudaykkullile Mahanarakam* was staged in the year 1930. These works advocated English education for Namboothiri girls and boys and laughed at the system of polygyny, the marriage of young girls to old Namboothiri men, the practise of younger sons marrying girls of lower communities (being forbidden to marry
The first ever widow re-marriage was conducted in 1939 under V.T. Bhattathirippad’s initiative, with his blessings and also due to his efforts. The woman who came out with courage was "Nangema", V.T. Bhattathirippad’s wife’s sister. The bridegroom was M.R. Bhattathirippad. Though it roused much protest from the caste people, it triggered off a revolution which was to happen in Namboothiri community.

Meanwhile the members of the Yuvajana Sangham removed the sacred thread from their bodies, condemned Polygyny in which the leaders indulged and advocated the remarriage of widows. Under the auspices of 'Namboothiri Yuvajana Sangham', a marriage sub committee was formed to compel the unmarried Namboothiri youngsters to marry from the same caste. Picketings were organised by its members to prevent marriages of young girls with aged Namboothiri men and the second marriages of Namboothiri men. The resistance did not yield results immediately, but it created a feeling among Namboothiris against this type of marriages. Moreover, the fear of picketings compelled many Namboothiri families to do away with these marriages. E.M.S. Namboothirippad- the veteran Communist leader- participated actively in some of the picketings aimed at preventing marriages between young girls and old men. He describes these picketings in his Atmakatha (Autobiography) Many Namboothiri married from the
same caste. It is apt to recall here that in Namboothiri community, only the eldest brother was allowed to marry from the same caste. Others were not allowed to marry from the caste. Challenging the old custom, V.T. Bhattathirippad and Pandum Vasudevan Namboothiri married from the same caste. The girl whom V.T. Bhattathirippad married was to have been given in marriage by her parents to an aged Namboothiri.

Gradually women also came forward to be active participants in the reform movement. The reformist Namboothiri women began wearing blouses instead of the ghosha. The first woman who rejected ghosha and came out was Mrs. Manezhi. She attended a meeting of Yogakshemasabha at Edakunni in December 1922 without wearing ghosha. Though only one woman attended the twenty second meeting of the Sabha, seventy five women having rejected the ghosha took part in the meeting of the Sabha when it celebrated its Silver Jubilee. After Mrs. Manezhi, of the many women who rejected ghosha are Parvathi Nenminimangalam and Arya Pallam. Parvathi presided over the meeting of 'Yuvajana Sangham' held at Thaliparambu. She later represented Namboothiri women at the time of discussion on Namboothiri Bill of Cochin. Lalithambika Antharjanam and Pathanadi were also among the active women leaders of the time.

V.T. Bhattathirippad took the initiative for Intercaste marriages also. His sister Ittippapti was married to a Nair youth named Raghavan. Here again V.T. Bhattathirippad had to suffer
insults from his own people. But nothing would deter that great revolutionary.

At the thirty fourth annual conference of the 'Yogakshema Mahasabha' held at Ongallur in December 1945, E.M.S. Namboothirippad who presided stated that the Namboothiris should be free to marry girls from any other community and that similar privilege should be extended to the Namboothiri women as well. At that conference resolutions were passed on the disabilities of the Namboothiri women concerning marriage, the abolition of dowry system and adhivedanam, the formation of Women’s Associations, and desirable amendments of law concerning the Namboothiri community in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar.47

Nair Service Society was formed by Mannathu Padmanabhan - a great social reformer of the time - for the upliftment of Nair community. Nairs were given education irrespective of their sex and their women enjoyed considerable freedom. So reformation among Nairs became easier than in other castes. Nair Service Society concentrated its activities on stopping the ceremonies like talikettu kalyanam, on reforming the system of marriage and starting educational institutions for the education of Nair boys and girls. Later Nairs agitated for the abolition of marumakkathayam and individual partition of properties. Mannathu Padmanabhan devoted his entire life time for the society and for the welfare of the community.
Though women of Nair community enjoyed comparatively greater freedom, they did not attend public meetings and discussions. A change came about through the efforts of Mannathu Padmanabhan and Nair Service Society through the historic annual conferences conducted throughout the state every year. The first annual conference of Nair Service Society was organised at Karuvatta in 1929. The most noticeable event of this conference was an exclusive session for women. The session was presided by Thottakkattu Madhavi Amma a well-known social reformer of the time. A very large number of women attended the session. The interesting aspect of it was that the majority of speakers were women. This conference is considered as a milestone in the history of women's emancipation in the Nair community. From that session onwards women's session become an inseparable part of Nair conventions. The conventions discussed various issues concerning women and it instilled in them a sense of equality and freedom.

In all communities reform movements started which in turn resulted in making laws and regulations. On 20 February 1931 was passed the Travancore Malayala Brahmin Regulation to define and amend the law of succession and family management of the Namboothiri community. Provision was made for the better administration of tharavad affairs, the improvement of the rights of junior members and the prescription of rules of intestate succession in respect of self-acquired property. The impediments
to healthy family life put in the way of junior members as well as the uncertainties in the law of succession were removed. In 1913 the First Nair Regulation Act was passed. In 1925 a Nair Bill providing for individual partition, monogamy and the right of wife to the self-acquired property of her husband also became law.

The Government of Cochin decided to pass regulations on the model of Regulation in Travancore, the Nair Regulation which was put into effect from 5 June 1920. Thus laws were passed for different communities according to the demand from the people.

The reform activities among various castes and communities led to a new awakening in Kerala and it raised the status of women to a great extent. This caste based movements soon got transformed to a wider political movement which sought freedom for the country.

While revolutionary ideas spread and changes were taking place in different communities in Kerala, Nationalist Movement also began to take roots in the state. The National movement had close links with the reform movement and the resultant renewal among various communities here. Though the political ideas reached the interior of the state very slowly, the educated Keralites imbibed the spirit of the freedom movement at once.

Mahatma Gandhi’s ideas influenced men as well as women of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. His crusade against
untouchability and his idea of high thinking went straight to the hearts of the people of Kerala where the struggle against untouchability and caste system had already begun. As the educated belonged to middle class elite they were the majority who participated in the freedom movement. Malabar witnessed vigorous satyagraha movement from the early years as it was the only region which was under direct British rule. It was during the political developments in Malabar in the wake of the famous salt satyagraha one can observe the active participation of women in the freedom movement in Kerala. There is hardly any political writing about women in Kerala. Even the books which deal with the National movement in Kerala did not go into detail about the women's role and their participation in it. However The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala written by P.K.K Menon gives a bird's eye-view of the women's role in the freedom movement in the state. Women's role was only supportive during the early years of the struggle. They encouraged sathyagrahis and volunteers in ample measure. One instance for this is that at the time of civil disobedience movement, through an article in Mathrubhumi - a nationalist triweekly in Malayalam T.C. Kochukuttyamma of Cochin Educational Service exhorted her sisters in Kerala to help the freedom movement and take to the constructive programme outlined by Gandhiji. On 10 February 1929, C. Rajagopalachari attended the first 'All Kerala Hindi Prachar Sammelan' at Ernakulam. It was attended by prominent officials and non-officials including nearly two hundred women.
Lakshmikutty Nethyaramma the consort of the Ruler of Cochin, was the president of the reception committee.

In March 1930, at a meeting arranged under the auspices of the satyagraha committee at Purameri in North Malabar, Devaki Kettapalam made a donation to the satyagraha committee. On April 1930, women led by Gracy Aron took part in a grand reception to K. Kelappan and his first batch of Sathyaagrahis who reached Payyanur to inaugurate the 'Salt Satyagraha'.

On 20 July 1930, when Hassan Koya Mulla was elected president of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, M. Kartayaniamma was co-opted as a member of the same body. The civil disobedience movement was gaining momentum day by day. Women had already entered the political field though they did not break the law till then. Meanwhile the news of the arrest, at Bombay of Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Madan Mohan Malavaya and some other members of the congress working committee on 1st August caused much excitement in Malabar. The Congress Working Committee called on the people of India to observe 10 August as 'Political Sufferer's Day'. The leading members of the Mahila Sangh and the Swadeshi League at Calicut went round the town organising a hartal which was highly successful. The volunteers were headed by A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, E. Narayanikutty Amma and Mrs. U Gopala Menon.

On 16 November 1930, women leaders in Calicut decided to take out a procession to protest against the cruel treatment
emet out by the police to the women satyagrahis at Bombay. On the previous day the District Magistrate served on them, orders under section Cr. P C 144 by which they were prohibited from taking out processions or meetings. But it did not deter them. They assembled at Verkot house at Tali, Calicut and started the procession. The women who led the procession were Kartyayani Amma, A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, K.E. Sarada, T. Narayani Amma, P.G. Narayani Amma, E. Narayanikutty Amma, Mrs. K. Madhavan Nair, Mrs. T.V. Sundara Iyer and Gracy Aron. The procession was stopped by the police and M. Kartyayani Amma, E. Narayani Kutty Amma, Gracy Aron and Jayalakshmi were arrested. All except Kartyayani Amma were sentenced to undergo imprisonment till the rising of the court. Kartyayani Amma was sentenced to two months simple imprisonment. This was the first occasion on which women were arrested in Kerala in the course of the freedom movement. The arrest of the women aroused great protest among the public. In protest against the arrest, the students of most schools and colleges in Calicut observed hartal on 17 November 1930.

The system of appointing dictators for the satyagraha movement began in Kerala during 1930’s. The dictator was to lead the entire satyagraha movement for a certain period. The dictator is supposed to be an efficient person who can take decisions independently, chalk out and implement programmes for the movement. Women of Kerala played a remarkable role as dictators of the movement. Many women were appointed as dictators during
the civil disobedience movement. Gracy Aron, Eswari Ammal, K. Kunjilakshmi Amma and Pavamani were some among those who acted as dictators and proved their leadership qualities and dedication to the movement.

Potheri Madhavan was nominated as the first dictator. Raghava Kurup, the second dictator on his arrest nominated Gracy Aron\textsuperscript{59} as the next dictator. She gave prior intimation to the authorities about her programme of action. On 13 January 1931, she conducted a procession to the Calicut beach accompanied by P. Devaki Amma, L.S. Prabhu, Ganesh Pai, Vedavathy Ammal and two men-volunteers, K Kumaran Nair and T.K. Ayyappan Pillai. She hoisted the tri-colour flag as the crowd sang the flag song in chorus. There was also a bonfire of foreign cloth on their return from the beach. All the women and men-volunteers were arrested by the police. Calicut observed a partial hartal on that day. This was the second occasion when women were arrested in Malabar.\textsuperscript{60} Gracy Aron and the two men-volunteers did not take part in the trial proceedings. But the other women made a statement demanding maximum punishment for themselves. All of them were sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment and asked to give security for good behaviour for six months after release from jail. They were taken to the Presidency Jail for women at Vellore. Mrs. Ganesh Pai had a child also with her.

Eswari Ammal, wife of T.R. Krishna Swamy Iyer, was the fifth dictator. But when Gandhiji appealed to the nation to
observe 15 February as Motilal day, giving out a programme to be followed by the country. Eswari Ammal, the fifth dictator had already been arrested on the Calicut beach for breaking the salt law on 2 February. The sixth dictator K. Kunjilakshmi Amma and other prominent leaders appealed to the people of Kerala to observe Motilal Day in accordance with Gandhiji’s instructions. Thus it was observed in all solemnity, even in villages with complete hartal.

The National movement saw many women becoming leaders in their own rights. K. Kunjilakshmi Amma was one such. She was a teacher in Cochin Government service. N. Sanjivi Bai was another prominent woman who was a teacher under the Malabar district board. Both resigned their jobs to join the satyagraha movement. These two were the first women to undertake picketing in Malabar. On 12 February they picketed a piece-goods shop at Big Bazaar in Calicut. They were arrested on the third day and were remanded to jail for a fortnight. They were tried on 28 February and awarded six months rigorous imprisonment by the Magistrate of Calicut. On her arrest Kunjilakshmi Amma nominated Margaret pavamani as the next dictator. Meanwhile arrests and convicting of picketers were taking place in large numbers in Palghat, Calicut and several other centres of north Malabar.

Under the joint auspices of Bala Bharat Sangh and Balika Sangh, a large procession of boys and girls led by Jayalakshmi
and P G Swarna Kumari went along the important roads of Calicut on 25 February singing national songs in response to the call of Pavamani, shops, streets and residential houses in all important places in Malabar were decorated with tri-colour flags on 27 February. Vigorous house to house propaganda was conducted in North Malabar by the members of the ‘Yuvak Sangh’ and ‘Desa Sevika Sangh’ headed by E.C. Kunjikkannan Nambiar, Kartyayani Amma and Matilda Kallan.

The Gandhi-Irvin pact signed on 5th March 1931 was welcomed in Kerala. On 6 March Pavamani, the seventh dictator and other leaders (K. Kelappan, K. Madhavan Nair and Dr. Ganesh Pai) issued a communique calling on the people to observe the terms of the Pact strictly and not to break law.

On 7 March, public meetings were held to celebrate the event all over Kerala. At Calicut, a huge procession was organized by the Bala Bharath Sangh, Balika Sangh, the Mahila Sangh and the Student’s League. At the mammoth meeting held at the beach and presided over by Pavamani, T. Prakasom the great Andhra leader who had been released on the previous day from Cannanore jail, congratulated Kerala on the splendid part played by her in the historic movement. Pavamani then nominated a new Kerala Provisional Congress Committee as an emergency measure. The new working committee which was constituted included Kartyayani Amma also.
Pavamani and P.M. Kamalavathi organised the picketing at Tellicherry while Mrs. M. Narayanan, Mrs. Madhava Pai, Mrs. Bhandarkar, M.K. Kausalya, M.K. Yasoda, M.K. Vani, M. Rudrani, S.Chandrika Bai, N. Madhavi and N. Revathy, besides a few girls organised picketing at Cannanore. They were helped by Sambavi Amma, Sumathi Bai and Chandramathi. At all these towns the nationalist activity, as reported by the police, was regular and peaceful. On the whole the women who entered the political field hailed from respectable middle-class families and were educated. Their participation in the movement enhanced its popularity and was bound to contribute to its ultimate success.

Meanwhile vigorous picketing campaigns were organised by women in Cochin and Travancore also. Women of Cochin including P. Amritamma, P. Visalakshi, T. Lakshmi Kutty, M. Kartyayani Amma, M. Lakshmikutty Amma, Poduval Ambadikochammini, K. Kamalam, T. Subhadra, Mrs. Achuta Menon, Mrs. Ikkanda Warrier and others launched the picketing campaign in Trichur on 25 April 1931 with the co-operation of A.V. Kuttimalu Amma and Pavamani from Calicut. They were led by E. Ikkanda Warrier, K.N. Namboothirippad, and K Madhava Menon.

As regards Travancore, K. Kumar organised an effective picketing of foreign cloth shops at Alleppey. Women and young boys and girls also were very active at Alleppey. Mrs. T.K. Madhavan, Dr. Rugmini Amma, K. Lakshmi Gopalakrishnan and
others led by M. Karyayani Amma from Trichur did not spare themselves, during the campaign. In May 1931, together with the Fifth Kerala Provincial Political Conference, the Provincial Women’s Conference also was held at Badakara in Malabar. Mrs. Padmavathy Asher in her presidential address called the women to keep the tri-colour flag flying aloft until the attainment of independence. This conference turned to be a historic one for the women of Kerala. It demanded the recognition of the equal rights of women, in all administrative institutions. Besides, the conference resolved that all Hindus irrespective of caste difference should have free access to all public places. It was decided to organise the ‘Kerala Mahila Desa Sevika Sangh’ for carrying on nationalist work and serving the cause of women in the country and to set up night schools and handicraft training centres for providing education and employment for poor women.

‘Kerala Mahila Desa Sevika Sangh’ was formed in Calicut on 13 June 1931 at a meeting of women at Verkot House, with Margaret Pavamani as president, Kunjikkavu Amma as vice-president, A.V. Kuttimalu Amma as treasurer and P.M. Kamalavathi and K.Kunjilakshmi as secretaries. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee resolved to organise Kisans and labourers in factories and so a committee was appointed; (Pavamani, U.Gopala Menon, K.A. Damodar Menon and Mohammad Abdur Rahman were the members). Meanwhile the women leaders of Calicut had decided to organise an All Kerala Women’s League with head quarters at Calicut for national reconstruction work.
During January 1932, when Gandhi-Irvin pact had come to an end, a second period of dictatorship began in Malabar. After the arrest of the dictator K C K Naha of Parappanangadi, Lalitha Prabhu took up the leadership of the movement. She was arrested at Tellicherry for picketing shops. She was awarded six months imprisonment and fined Rs.1000/- by the Magistrate (D.W. Dodwell). Towards the fine, she surrendered all her jewels except the tali, as it was considered sacred. But the Magistrate ordered the police constable to remove the tali also.

The high-handedness of the British Magistrate and the callous disregard of sacred custom provoked universal indignation in India and several women’s organisations including one at Nagpur started an agitation for an enquiry into his conduct. V.P.N. Nambiar raised the issue in the Madras legislative council, which also came before the British House of Commons. Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi, Jinarajadasa, Ammu Swaminadhan and Sen brought the matter to the notice of M. Krishnan Nair, then law member. Finally the government of Madras condemned, in a press note issued on 23 February the action of the magistrate and got the tali restored to Prabhu. Dodwell himself later expressed regret for his action. But Swami Anand Tirth, a relative of Prabhu was refused permission by Dodwell to interview her. Also when she was taken to the Velloor jail, she had to travel in third class and was escorted by two constables but no women-warden. All this created protest from the public.
Meanwhile picketings and arrests of women continued unabated. The forth day of every month was celebrated as Gandhi day at Calicut under the leadership of Kunjikava Amma, Pavamani, Padmavathy Amma and others. On 10 February Matilda B. Kallan with a few other volunteers, was arrested for leading a procession at Quailandy. The women of Palghat including P. Devaki Amma, P. Janaki Amma and P. Padmini Kutty were sentenced to imprisonment for varying terms during that period. The women at Tellicherry, Sambhavi Amma and K. Madhavi Amma met with the same fate for having picketed foreign-cloth shops. At Calicut A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, the ninth dictator together with her co-workers were arrested on 22 February; charges were framed only against the women who were later sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for two years.

The women leaders were conscious of their rights and they would fight for them. This is how A.V. Kuttimalu Amma stood her ground against heartless dictatorship. She had a two month old child on her hand when she was arrested. But as the trial was over, Kuttimalu Amma was not permitted by the Magistrate to take her baby to jail. She protested and stuck to her decision and finally the court accepted her arguments and allowed her to take the baby with her. In Kasargod Taluk, a conference was held in front of the customs office, on 9 July. It was presided over by T.Kamala Bai. As usual, the agitators went on a procession which was asked to disperse. On their refusal to do
so, police caned them. The President of the Kuttiyadi village conference, Narayani Amma and three other volunteers were sentenced, to rigorous imprisonment for six months. A.V. Lakshmi Amma president of the Azhikodu village conference which was held on 4 September was given one year's rigorous imprisonment.69

During the Swadeshi movement of 1931-32 there was vigorous picketing of foreign cloth shops in all parts of Kerala. Educated women, assisted by men volunteers including lawyers and students came out of their homes and picketed shops in all important towns. The table below gives an idea of the course of the civil disobedience movement in Malabar from January to August 1932.

Number of persons convicted up to 31-7-1932

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<td>Men</td>
<td>408</td>
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<td>Women</td>
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Except in the town of Calicut and a few other places in Malabar, the Civil Disobedience Movement had been overshadowed during 1932 by the 'Guruvayur Temple Entry Satyagraha' and antiuntouchability campaign. Women including Dr. Rugmini Amma and M. Kartyayani Amma were actively associated with this struggle.70 A special committee was formed under the leadership of P.M. Kamalavathi to organise the Temple Entry Satyagraha. Women in large numbers attended the conferences and participated in satyagraha.
In September 1934, C Kunjikkavu Amma was elected by majority vote the president of Kerala Provincial Congress Committee. During the civil disobedience movement in August-September 1938, Accamma Cherian become the twelfth president of the State congress. As the president she led the All Travancore State Congress Volunteers Jatha to the Padmanabhapuram palace of the reigning Maharaja, on 23 October (being Maharaja's birthday), demanding immediate granting of Responsible Government and an unconditional release of political prisoners.

The other prominent women who took leadership in the agitation for responsible government in Travancore were T.N. Kalyanikutty Amma, Matilda Kallan, C.R. Devaki Amma, Anna Kuruvila, Rosamma Punnoose and Saramma Mathew. T.N. Kalyanikutty Amma effectively used her magazine Vanitharatnam to fight for the responsible government. But the government proscribed the magazine as anti-government. She later started another publication Vanithamitram which was intended to encourage a struggle for Responsible Government. S S Miranda was another important leader of the agitation for Responsible Government. She joined the Travancore State Congress as a volunteer and took part in its struggles. During civil disobedience in 1938, she was arrested at Attingal and was brutally tortured for having participated in a procession from Chirayinkil to Attingal. Rosamma Punnoose also participated in the movement and organised the Desa Sevikas, the women's wing of the Congress Volunteers Corps.
Women’s contribution to the propagation of khadi and spinning is remarkable. They fully imbibed the true spirit of Gandhiji’s message on khadi and organised committees and conducted classes in spinning all over the state. They were effective examples as they wore khadi to propagate the importance of khadi among the people. On 17 May 1930 when the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met at Payyannur, a committee was constituted to organise khadi work in Kerala in order to satisfy the increasing demand for it. Meanwhile a committee of women was formed at Calicut for effective khadi work. The committee consisted of T. Narayani Amma, Mrs. U. Gopala menon, K.E. Sarada and Margaret Pavamani.75 Its members and other leading women soon organised a number of classes in spinning, carried on home propaganda and distributed charka and cotton among the people in Malabar.

A ‘Rastreeya Stree Sabha’ was formed in Cannanore on 28 April 1931 with Madhava pai as president and O.K. Madhavi Amma and Mrs. M.Narayanan as secretaries. The committee included 35 women. The objective of the body was to organise classes in spinning, popularise Hindi and conduct propaganda for prohibition and ‘swadeshi movement’. Those who could, were also asked to picket foreign cloth shops.76 In Calicut a large number of educated persons including young women formed the Khadi Pracharana Sangh during 1931. They distributed Charkas, Taklis and cotton free of cost among the people in different centres. P.I. Kaimal served as the secretary of the Sangh and Kuttimalu
Amma as the treasurer. Kartyayani Amma who had given up her job for national service was the most active worker of the Sangh.

Women organised classes in Khadi Spinning wherever possible. E. Narayanikutty Amma took a lead in the formation of Swadeshi Committee in the meeting held on 5 June 1931. When the first Swadeshi Art and Industrial Exhibition was held at the premises of Annie Hall in Calicut, the Women’s Indian Association and the Mahila Sangh cooperated with the exhibition committee\(^7\). In 1937 Khadi producing centre was started at Pulikkal in Ernad Taluk. It was admittedly a great boon to a large number of Muslim women and girls. Under this centre four subsidiary branches also functioned in places where the members of the Moplah Community constituted the majority. Nearly thousand women got the necessary training in spinning\(^8\). In the states of Cochin and Travancore many women came forward to enforce prohibition and popularise Khadi.

When Mahatma Gandhi launched Quit India Movement in 1942, it had a tremendous impact on Kerala. Women of Kerala offered enthusiastic and dedicated participation. Many assumed leadership role also. Notable women leaders were Kamala Nambeesan, E. Ammukutty Amma, M. Kartyayani Amma, P. V. Madhavikutty Amma and G Suseela. E. Ammukutty Amma picketed the Zamorin’s College, Calicut during the Quit India Movement. She was awarded one month’s rigorous imprisonment in the special sub jail, Calicut as ‘c’ class prisoner\(^9\). Lakshmikutty Amma was sentenced to one month’s imprisonment for having made a
'prejudicial' speech in 1942.\textsuperscript{80} Karthyayani Amma was one among the leaders who organised the mass movement in Cochin state during 1942. Likewise Kamala Nambisan played an important role in organising youth and students during Quit India Movement.

When Indian National Army (INA) was organised by veteran freedom fighter Nethaji Subhash Chandra Bose, women of Kerala served as dedicated soldiers in its women's wing. Lakshmi Saghal from South Malabar served as a doctor and commanded the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. She was imprisoned in 1945, when Singapore was re-occupied by the British. Nalappattu Narayankutty joined the Indian National Army as a fighter in the Rani of Jhansi Regiment in September 1942.\textsuperscript{81} She later become an officer in the Regiment. During 1942-45 Lakshmi Krishnan also served as a soldier in the women's wing.

The reform movement side by side with the nationalist movement and the success of various satyagraha namely Vaikom Satyagraha and Temple Entry Struggles aroused egalitarian values and democratic consciousness among Ezhavas and other low caste people in Kerala. This new consciousness led to the emergence of working class movement where the participation of women especially from the low caste people could be seen. Many women from the women's wing of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam became leaders or activists in the labourers' struggles later.

Trade unionism began to spread in Travancore from the year 1922. The Travancore Labour Association, formed during this time,
got encouragement from Congress Socialist Party. Women workers, many a time exploited by the landlords or their employers, joined hands with men to conduct agitations. The struggles to be singled out are those which were organised by Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union in October 1938; the protest movement organised by 'Quilon Factory Workers' Union (cashew workers) in 1939; the struggle against dismissal of workers by Goodcare company and the agricultural workers movement in Kuttanadu in 1940's.

The general strike organised by Travancore Coir Factory Worker's union in October 1918 was the first of its kind in Kerala. The workers protested against wage-cuts, fines and retrenchment and demanded payment in cash, a minimum wage of Rs. 30/- a month, unemployment allowance, maternity benefits, educational facilities for themselves and their children, medical aid and recognition of the union.82

They raised political demands such as adult franchise, responsible government and release of political prisoners. During picketing of factory gates, women also participated. They led the agitation when male workers were lathicharged. They played a great role in distributing information among workers through letters, circulars and statements of the strike-committee. The women's movement got an impetus as efforts were made by the union to mobilise them and many women activists like Kalikkutty Asatty who was a member of S N D P women's committee joined the movement.
In Quilon, during 1936, Factory Workers' Union was formed. The process of conscientisation of workers of various sectors of the economy including women workers gained momentum by 1939 as the Communist Party was formed. The political education campaign led by the party helped to conscientise the workers in general and women workers in particular. Various campaigns led by women workers themselves were clear examples of this new awakening. The earliest of such struggles was the one for Onam festival advance, undertaken by women workers and led by Meenakshi, a thirteen year old ratt-spinner, of the British multinational, Darragh Smail, the first and the biggest coir company in Alleppey, in 1941; the second one, for maternity benefits, was held in the company premise under her own leadership. The employer was forced to accept both the demands.

During 1944-45, about 288 cases of maternity benefit was taken up by Travancore Coir Factory Workers Union and all were paid Rs. 0.49 per day for two months. It has to be noted that in Cochin, where the number of women workers were much higher than in Travancore, maternity benefit was paid by no employer though the Maternity Benefit Bill was passed in 1939 itself.

The third noteworthy struggle, against dismissal of workers by Goodcare company, was also won by the workers. The practice of using abusive language against women workers by mopans of the company was considerably reduced after this struggle. In the former issue women shouted slogans, though they were intimidated.
by the police, while in the latter case they applied a novel method of filling their betel boxes with pebbles and throwing them against the mopans whenever they abused any women worker. Thus it become a common practice for women to lead struggles for specific issues and also for other general demands of the workers. The courage and enthusiasm shown by the women in these campaigns was immense.

Women's trade union and political activities got a new dimension as they formed a radical organisation of their own. The Ambalappuzha Taluka Mahila Sangham (A T M S) was formed in 1943 with R. Meenakshi as secretary and Kalikutty Asatti as president. This was the culmination of the organisational efforts taken by women workers in coir factories. Struggles conducted within the factories led to the formation of Women's Factory Committees by 1941.

The struggles in the industrial field had its impact in the agricultural sector also. In agriculture many women were engaged in transplanting and harvesting work. 1939 onwards a trade union movement was developed among the agricultural workers of Kuttanadu. In 1940 'Thiruvithamcore Karshaka Thozhilali Union' was formed. Women in large number participated in the agitations against denial of work and demand for higher wages.

There were instances in which landlords were surrounded by women workers in the threshing fields and not allowed to leave the spot until they consented to the workers' demands, usually
for higher wages. In one instance which took place in 1940s, a big landlord was tied with ropes and paddy was taken away by the workers forcibly.89

Women resorted to gheraos for wage-rise in different places like Kottayam, Kumarakom, Vaikom and Ettumanoor. Mostly low caste women participated in these struggles for which they had to suffer a lot. But everywhere their enthusiasm and dedication for the cause was tremendous. In Alleppey women agricultural workers led a demonstration with broomsticks in their hands.90 Picketing by women in front of the farmers’ houses for days was common during that period. In 1943 when 'Kerala Mahila Sangham' was formed, the women leaders who took the initiative were Thankamma Krishna Pillai, Kamalakshi, Saraswathi and Radhamma Thankachy. Women participated in communist-led Punnapra Vayalar struggle also during 1946.

"Besides participating in the armed struggle women also engaged in solidarity actions by the families of workers during this period of repression. Many women activists were arrested, tortured and raped by the army and the police, though many of them went underground."91

Thus, together with their men folk, women fought battles for land and wages and against feudal repression. Their role was indeed commendable in these movements. Their participation in these movements encouraged and strengthened the women’s movement in Kerala.
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2. Martilineal:- The system in which mother takes precedence of the father in tracing line of descent and inheritance.

3. Partilineal:–Descend in the male line.


6. P. Sankunni Menon, Thiruvithamcore Charitram (Malayalam), Kerala Bhasha Institute, Trivandrum, 1973, 1988 (rpt.), p.66; Rao, n.4, p. 82.


23. Kerala History Association, n.21, p.1203.


25. Unni, n.9, p.751.


28. Anna Chandi was the first Woman High Court Judge in India.


34. Menon, n.26, p.469.


41. Kerala History Association, n.21, p.1288.


43. Ghosha - an Umbrella like covering used by Namboothiri women in front of other men. They were not used to go out without using this Purdah.

44. Kumaran, n.21, p.358.

45. Kerala History Association, n.21, p.1289.


47. Menon, n.26, p.472.

49. Thottakkattu Madhavi Amma was the first woman member of the Legislative Assembly, Cochi.

50. Menon, n.26, p.472.

51. Ibid, p.484.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid, p.182.


55. M. Karthyayani Amma : - Born at Trichur in 1905. Took active part in the National Movement in 1930 - and therefor suspended from service ( She was a teacher in a government School, Trichur ). Later practised as a lawyer, but at the behest of Gandhiji, 1946, left the Bar to become a full time Khadi Worker.


57. Ibid, p.207.


60. Menon, n.26, p.218.

61. Ibid, p.223.

62. Matilda Kallan : - born at Vadakara, Kozhikode district on 1904, August 31. She gave up her job as a teacher and joined the Civil Disobedient Movement in 1931. Selected as a dictator of the Kerala Youth League in 1932. Sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for leading the National Movement in 1932. Conducted the Kasthurba Harijan Balika Sadan at Ottappalam and Calicut and served as a Matron from 1935.


64. Ibid, p.231.


68. A.V. Kuttimalu Amma: - Born in 1905. Did her education at Santhivan. Entered active Politics in 1930, acted as President of Town Committee, Calicut, District Congress Committee, Malayala Pradesh Congress Committee, Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee and selected as member of KPCC and AICC. Elected twice to Madras Legislative Assembly (1937,1946). She held the responsible position of President, Desiya Mahila Samajam.


71. Kunjikkavu Amma : - born on 20th March 1895 at Ottappalam Palghat District. Joined Indian National Congress in 1930. At Calicut while leading women’s procession defying prohibitory order, she was detained in the sub jail. Again she was imprisoned for having addressed the meeting in front of the Zamorin’s College, Calicut, violating an order under section 144. She became the seventh dictator of Kerala Provincial Congress Committee in 1932. Devoted her life for the upliftment of Harijans.

72. Accamma Cherian : - born at Kanjirappally on 15th February 1909. Served as Head Mistress of St. Mary’s High School. In 1938 she resigned her job and joined the Travancore State Congress to participate the struggle for responsible Government. She became the 12th President of State Congress. During Quit India Movement (1942), she was detained for a year. In 1946, while leading a procession in defiance of Prohibitory order at Kanjirappally, she was arrested and awarded six months imprisonment.

73. Nair, n.54, p.190.


75. Menon, n.26, p.196.


79. Nair, n.54, p.25.


83. P.M. Mathew and M.S. Nair, Women's Organisations and Women's Interests, Indian Institute of Regional Studies, Kottayam, 1984, p.133.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.


89. Mathew, n.83, p.133.

90. Kamalasanan, n.88, p.94.

91. Mathew, n.83, p.137.