

## ***Malayali Hindu Patriarchy: Gender and Jati***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper contextualizes the emergence of Malayali Hindu Patriarchy in Keralam during the period between the late decades of 18th c and early decades of 20th c. The works of the leaders of Socio- Religious Movements are subjected to revision, questioning the usual connotations like women emancipation. The paper attempts to view how the jati norms with respect to the marriage rules, family structure, family bonds etc. were altered.*

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Malayali Hinduism, jati, swajativivaham, patrivratya.

### **Introduction**

*Malayali Hinduism* was shaped in the period between the last decades of the 18th century and early decades of the 20th century. It was a dual process, simultaneously from the upper strata of the society- in which the colonial State had an active role- and from the lower strata in which the socio- religious leaders and their followers actively participated. Though the intentions of both these segments were varied, one complemented the other in many ways.

Keralam was a conglomeration of diverse *jatis*, which were placed in different socio- economic- political situations. All these *jatis* had different sets of internal mechanisms with respect to gendering, familial relationships, marriage rules, etc. Thus there was no homogenous conceptualization of women, or universally accepted gender codes as far as traditional society of Keralam was concerned.

In this discussion we shall briefly analyse how the patriarchy in the society of Keralam was structurally adjusted so as to fit to the Hinduization processes of the society by focusing on three themes. This process was never homogenous and had diverse attires contextualized to diverse jati locations. Thus it was a complex process which had created great impacts in the jati societies. The process of restructuring the patriarchy was a subterfuge programme which was under pretense that it was emancipator (Bhattathirippad, 2010:3; Chandrika, 1998:11)

to the women and thus pro- women. Here lies the first theme of discussion- how far was the entire programme of women emancipation connected with the socio- religious movements was emancipatory? Secondly; how the familial relations and ritual content associated with various stages of ‘womaning’ and jati codes were reformulated so as to fit into the new socio- economic-political situations which emerged during that age. Finally, how these emancipatory masqueradings were designing the new women who was supposed to handle the micro- *jati* family.

As these themes are very much interconnected and at some points monitored and designed by the state interventions, these three themes will be verified at specimen sites where there were reformulations to fit women into the structures of patriarchy- which the present author proposes as Hindu patriarchy- under the pretense of emancipation.

Keeping the discussions generated around the processes of transformations in matriliney, the enactment of various bills, the pressures for such bills on behalf of various *jati* associations or communities, the construction of shame etc.,<sup>1</sup> in the background, that the present scholar is attempting the discussions on the formulation of *Malayali* Hindu patriarchy. It is to be noted that all these studies expose lived histories in specific contexts and locations. These studies are seen as the elucidations of multiple realities through which the society of modern Keralam was emerging.

In the attempt of formulating the approaches towards the emergence of *Malayali* Hindu Patriarchy, the present scholar has heavily depended on the concept of Brahmanical Patriarchy, Conceptualized by Uma Chakravarti (2003; 2006).

The umbilical relationship between caste and gender in Indian society is an accepted fact. The central factor of this relationship is the ‘subordination of upper caste women’ which was designed for the ‘effective control over such women to maintain not only patriarchal succession, but also the purity of the caste, an institution unique to Hindu society.’ (Chakravarti, 2006:138) Thus the central issue in Brahmanical Patriarchy according to Uma Chakravarti is the ‘purity of women’ belonging to the ‘upper castes’. This is a result of the “anxiety about polluting the ritual order and the quality of the blood through women is best demonstrated in the horror of miscegeny” (Chakravarti, 2006:139). She observes that “the ideologues of the caste system had a particular horror of hypogamy- pratiloma... and reserved for it the severest condemnation and the highest punishments” (Chakravarti, 2006:140). Also, that the caste structure is safeguarded through the

'highly restricted movement of women or even through social seclusion'. This is because the women are considered as the 'gateways to caste system'. Hence the gendering within the Brahmanical patriarchy was a device to check the 'lower caste male whose sexuality' is seen as a 'threat to women of higher castes'. The logic of the careful guarding of the women is to be seen in this milieu. The *pativrata* concept was the ideological tool used in the Brahmanical Patriarchy, which is used to tie up the women successfully, which demands and compels women to control their sexuality. The norms of *pativrata* acted as the tool to conceal the mechanisms and institutions which controlled the sexuality of women and thus subordinated them to the patriarchal system effortlessly. Uma Chakravarti sees *pativrata* as the device through which "patriarchy was firmly established as an ideology, since it was naturalized". (Chakravarti, 2006:147). *Pativrata* was culturized as *streedharma*, which is 'clearly an ideological mechanism for socially controlling the biological aspect of women' (Chakravarti, 2006:148). This norm was strictly restricted to the women belonging to the *jatis* situated at the core centre of *jati* system. The women belonging to the rest of the *jatis* were devoid of the norm of *pativrata*.

This ideology was not exclusively pertinent to the *jatis* belonging to upper varnas alone. Those *jatis* aspiring to reach the upper status used to make shifts from their traditional gender norms and follow the Brahmanical codes and practices. This has been elucidated by Uma Chakravarti. She says:

An important dimension of the caste mobilization and the attempt by lower castes to change their status was to create new norms for the gender practices of their respective castes. The high value to restrictive mobility and tight control over the sexuality of the women of the higher castes was regarded as crucial basis for being granted the right to high status for the uppermost castes whether brahmana, kshatriya or vaisya. The control over the female sexuality was in common even though other cultural practices might vary among these castes: meat eating for example, among kshatriya. It was to be expected therefore that upwardly mobile castes would adopt new practices for women-folk... these developments were a reflection of the aspirations of the men of these castes and it is difficult to discern what women of these castes were thinking about these changes in their lives. (Chakravarti, 2003:129)

Conceptualising on Brahmanical Patriarchy as the foundation floor for approaching the processes of gendering, the present scholar is attempting to view the age under discussion- especially the decades of

late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the process, attempts will be made to detect how the norms pertaining to Brahmanical patriarchy were reframed so as to build a religious patriarchy in Keralam- the *Malayali* Hindu Patriarchy. Certain historical vantage points are traced and elucidations are made focusing on such vantage points. These are particularly focused on the reformist tendencies among the Namboothiri, Kshathriya, Nair, Ezhavas, Viswakarmas and Pulaya *jatis*.

### **Tatrikkutty Episode and After**

*Smarthavicharam* of Thatrikkutty, which was held in 1905, was an episode which invited serious discussions in the Keralam society. This episode of *smarthavicharam* of Tatrikkutty was seen by the later generations of Namboothiris who took to the path of reformism as the beginning point of ‘renaissance’ among Namboothiris and Thatrikkutty as the protagonist of this renaissance. V.T. Bhattathiripad has pointed that episode as one of the main reasons for the establishment of Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha. (Bhattathirippad, 2010:626) Eventhough V.T. Bhattathirippad had stated the Tatrikkutty episode as igniting point of Namboothiri renaissance; it will be interesting to note how the episode and the resultant trauma over the Namboothiri males affected the women among the Namboothiris. Devaki Nilayangode has written about how the future generations had conceived Tatrikkutty. She writes:

The name that most people of my generation would have heard repeated most often must be Kuriyedathu Thatri. During my childhood I too had heard this name uttered in muted whispers. It was after my marriage, at my husband’s house, that I came to know more about Thatri. Thatri’s notorious Smarthavicharam (the namboodiri system of trial of a fallen woman) took place in 1905, 23 years before I was born. Vedic teachers, artists, Sanskrit scholars, the social elite – all were implicated in the case and ostracized. Even 25-30 years later, the storm raised in the namboodiri community by Thatri’s trial had not died down.

I heard Thatri’s name for the first time from the gossip of the antharjanams who passed that way and stayed back at our illam. They would mention the name in fear and in low tones. And would keep repeating it too. (Nilayangode )

One of the main arenas which were concentrated in the afterdays of the Tatri episode was the spaces and mobility of the *Antharjanams* (women among Namboothiris). When we go through the documents regarding the smartavicharam<sup>2</sup> the striking feature we note in it is the freedom of mobility for *Antharjanams*. There was freedom to visit their

relatives' houses on occasion of festivals and temples; they had freedom to watch Kathakali or such performances in the temple premises or in the houses of other Namboothiris. They stayed in the houses of relatives or non-relatives belonging to their *jati* and were not restricted from staying overnight in these places. Devaki Nilayangode has written about this as follows:

Besides those who came regularly to the illam for their meals, there would be Namboodiri women, on their way to or from the Mookkuthala temple. Each would have a chaperone who would loudly announce their presence as they walked. They would stay on at the illam for three or four days. No one would ask them why they did not leave immediately. A large hall was always kept in readiness for them. A single huge rush mat covered the entire floor and it would be laid out by dusk. (*Nilayangode*)

Though these opportunities were not fully curtailed, strict monitoring on the movements of *Antherjanams* were affected. The traditional norm was giving liberty to the women independently without having the escort of the male members of the family. The escorting of an *Antharjanam* by the male members of the family- let him be her husband or her relatives- was considered as violation of the tradition and thus harming the normative structure. This was even treated as a sin for which ritual remedies were sought. (Namboothirippad, 1101ME) Mutthiringatt Bhavathrathan Namboothirippad, the firebrand among the reformers had ridiculed this norm and suggested strict escorting of women moving out for the reasons he observed:

It is even unthinkable about the secret affairs of some women in the disguise of going for worship in the great temples like Guruvayur. Hence it should be affirmed that the married women should travel only with their husbands. (Namboothirippad, 1101ME)

From these words, it is evident that there was a tendency on the part of the Namboothiri reformists to curb the freedom of mobility and the independence of the women in their travel matters. It is seen that there was a tendency among these reformists to picture the independent mobility of women as something heinous. Here, one thing to be noted is that the reformists were eager to suppress the nominal freedom enjoyed by the women in that community by generating fear regarding female sexuality.

There were also attempts to raise examples of women who led 'aberrated lives' thus by demonizing those women. See for example how V.T. Bhattathirippad has portrayed such women whom he considered as aberrant. He writes:

One day three girls belonging to Kambrath Mana of Pulamanthol left their home. They had already attained puberty. There after they used to earn their livelihood by maintaining sexual relations with prominent persons who would stay at rest houses situated at taluk and district headquarters. I personally know this matter.

An Antharjanam belonging to Ashtath Illam situated at Chalavara established sexual relations with the servant in that illam and lived as his concubine. At last the husband of that Antharjanam died of physical torture from that servant. (Bhattathirippad, 2010:626)

Such stories are added to the existing narratives on Tatrikkutty about which Devaki Nilayangod has stated in her autobiography. There is an element of demonizing those women. These gossip stories were circulated through each family reaching the children also. Thus, along with of *Seelavaticharitham*, *Ramayanam*, *Rugmangadacharitham* and similar other narratives which portrayed positive women characters, who wholeheartedly submitted their lives to their husbands, and which were meant to instruct the girls about the significance of *pathivrathya* and *sthreedharma*, these negative characters in the gossip stories got negative popularity and served as lessons to be learnt lest one thought of transgressing. Thus through the narratives on demonized women-lived and living- from among the community, their fate in the society for the aberrative life they led, the same moral codes were being transacted. The element of compassion generated by the characters of the narratives of early family/ community curriculum was absent in the new demonized women. The desired results from these new set of characters were hate, fear, detestation and repulsiveness; not empathy.

Apart from the curricular goals of such stories, there were elements of voyeurism, of peeping into the personal lives of those women. Not only gazing and gossiping, the narrators as V.T. Bhattathirippad took the freedom to publicize them as if that was their right. This attitude sprouted from the obsession that the women have no freedom in their private life and no decision over their sexuality apart from the privacy they were accorded at their respective homes and in their divinized marital lives. When V. T. Bhattathiripad declares, 'I personally know this matter', he was assuming the chair of witness and judge. Elements of 'moral policing' clad in new attire and the penalties declared for the moral aberrant were emerging in the society. In the past, the culmination of this moral policing was *smarthavicharam*, whereas, the hands of reformers as V.T.Bhattathirippad, it was publicizing the identity of women and demonizing them.

True that some of the Namboothiri women were gaining social positions and were considered as agents of change. One of the person whom we can take as an example is Parvathi Nenminimangalam. She got representation as a member in the select committee of Namboothiri Bill. (Kesari, 1932 June 8) This has been viewed as the evidence of women agency in the law making and has been attributed as a reflection of the victory of the reformers upon the traditionalists among the Namboothiris. This is because, the berth in this select committee was given to Parvathi Nenminimangalam discarding the protests and objections raised by traditionalists. The traditionalists had earlier made a representation before the authorities that they would not be attending the Select Committee if it accommodates Parvathi Nenmininmangalam, as she was a woman who has given up the traditional practice of *ghosha*. (Kesari, 1932 June 8) While praising such incidents in public demonstration, it is very important to verify how these reformists reacted to the women who had taken the agency of their lives denying the instituted social norms and conventions. Let us take the historical life of Uma Antharjanam who lived in the 20th century. The following details about Uma Antharjanam are from *umādē étattēnam*- article by V.T.Bhattathirippad:

Uma was born in Naripatta Mana. She was married to Cholayil Mana as the wife of Parameshvaean Namboothiri. They had a daughter and a son. In course of time, Parameshvaran Namboothiri had his second marriage. But this second marriage did not pull her position in that family. She was beloved to the family members (emphasis added). One fine morning, the family members found Uma and her children missing. Later they came to know that she is in her ancestral house. The reason for her quitting Cholayil Mana was the tussle broke there on the issue of her stealing habit (emphasis added). As an act of repentance she was asked to observe a tough sacrament. This lady who lacked any kind of regret in her action was not ready to observe that. As a person who was devoid of the thought regarding virtue and sin and who lacked the capacity to respect the words of elders, Uma was suffocating within the walls of that building. As a kindled kid who was born and brought up in a wealthy family, she couldn't cop- up with the strictness of a priestly family (emphasis added). The act of Uma had a natural reaction- Uma was thrown out from the family of her husband. In course of time, Uma stranded her morality in the paths of life. She had lots of lovers. If she is here today, tomorrow she will be somewhere else (emphasis added). When they found she could not be rectified, her family members and in laws decided to break the ties of relationship with her

completely (emphasis added). Settlement was done at the registrar office. There as per agreement, she handed over the male child (emphasis added) into the hands of an elder lady of the house of her husband. It was during these days that Devaki Narikkattiri, the renowned social activist, returned from North India. With her, Uma and her daughter was sent to Wardha Ashram. But her stay at Wardha didn't last long. She returned after one year. There was a saying that she fell ill and was under treatment at Madras. Some others were talking that one of her old lovers went to Wardha and there she became pregnant from him and that at Madras she got aborted off that pregnancy (emphasis added). Even though nothing else was earned from her life at Wardha, she got a name- Uma Behn. After returning from Wardha, she was living near the house of her former husband- in the property which she got as her share from that family. She was helped there by a teacher belonging to the Ezhuthachan jati. Soon it became evident that she was not maintaining the property, but was selling it in installments (emphasis added). One morning, a group of people reached in front of the house of V. T. Among them were Uma and the Ezhuthachan [his name was not mentioned]. They had approached V.T. seeking his help for register marriage. V.T. exploded and asked the proposer: 'Why are you marrying Uma Behn? She is a mother who has delivered twice. She doesn't have an attractive figure. I am sure that you are proposing her by keeping an eye on the properties she had received through partition. I won't stand with this. Legally, a Namboothiri woman has no right for divorce' (emphasis added). Later, Uma Behn and her daughter accepted Islam faith and lived with a man named Muhammad, who a driver- was popularly known in the region as Idon. They were living in a hut situated in the property of mosque. Uma had a son from Idon. But fate was against Uma Behn. Idon was previously married. He had family and children. Uma Behn is mother to two children and a prostitute for her lovers (emphasis added). The intention of Idon in marrying Uma was to grab the properties she got from her husband's family. But most of the properties were lost prior to that relationship. Idon grabbed the rest of her properties including her jewelry and household utensils and later physically assaulted her and left her. Later Uma Behn decided to leave the region. She left the region with Rishiram from Ponnani and Buddha Singh from Kozhikkod. They were members of Arya Samaj. They reached Lahore in a week. There she and her children were converted into Hindu religion (emphasis added). Without any delay she married a Punjabi Brahman. Later during the communal riots of 1946, she was forced to flee from Lahore. Later she was settled at Savithri Nagar in Delhi. (Bhattathirippad, 2010:322- 328)



This article by V.T.Bhattathirippad gives a clear view on how the Namboothiri reformists (not generalizing- but V.T is considered as the spear head among these reformers along with Muthiringott and others) viewed the matter of agency by women when it comes to the matter of their personal life. Historically speaking, Uma Antharjanam had created history by challenging the caste codes; violating the rule of obedience; demanding and possessing her share from the husband's family; travelling to and settling at Wardha; coming back and committing to a relation with a man positioned in outer circles of jati system and willing to get married to him; embracing the faith of Islam and getting married to a man belonging to Islam religion; getting converted into Hindu religion at Lahore through Arya Samaj; pulled into the ruthlessness of the communal riot; so on and so forth.

But the historical value of this life of Uma Antharjanam was never a matter of concern for V.T. Bhattathirippad. Instead he was making notorious comments on her- even copying gossips which had spread about her- and was paraphrasing the accounts on her by the family of her husband. Not only these, see the abusive language used by him while talking about her: 1. this lady who lacked any kind of regret in her action was not ready to observe that. As a person who was devoid of the thought regarding virtue and sin and who lacked the capacity to respect the words of elders, Uma was suffocating within the walls of that building. As a kindled kid who was born and brought up in a wealthy family, she could not cope- up with the strictness of a priestly family. 2. In course of time, Uma stranded her morality in the paths of life. She had lots of lovers. If she is here today, tomorrow she will be somewhere else 3. There was a saying that she fell ill and was under treatment at Madras. Some others were talking that one of his old lovers went to Wardha and there she became pregnant from him and that at Madras she got aborted off that pregnancy 4. Uma Behn is mother to two children and a prostitute for her lovers.

V.T. Bhattathirippad- who valourised and hailed Tatrikkuty as the initiator of the 'renaissance' among Namboothiris- was demonizing the lives and persona of women who independently took the decisions with respect to their lives. It was the same V.T who contributed the inspiring slogan- *adukkalayil ninnu arangatthekk* (From the kitchen to the centre stage) - through the title of his drama, was attempting to malign, demonize and marginalize a woman who broke all the restrictions inflicted by the caste codes of Namboothiris and thus was creating history. V.T. Bhattathirippad was not a person who stood against *mishravivaham*. V.T was the person who stood with Raghavappanikkar for getting

his sister Ittipapthi (Parvathi) married to him. Raghavappanikkar was a Nair by jati. Still V. T. managed to get permission from his father for that marriage. (Bhattathirippad, 2010:307- 311) In the case of Uma Antharjanam, she was also seeking his support for her marriage with the 'Ezhuthachan' who supported her. But that was denied by V.T.

In the case of remarriage of Nangema- widowed sister of V.T.'s wife- too, the desire for remarriage was raised by her in a conversation with her sister- V.T.'s wife. (Bhattathirippad, 2010:299) But, she was as if a tool to fulfill the dreams of social reforms of V.T and his fellowmen. Thus in this case, the total agency- that of decision and execution- was shifted to the male, keeping the woman as a mere consent giver for her remarriage. The historical decision she took breaking age old norms of widowhood thus became a plot for the male protagonist to ensure his role in any occasion of the lives of women- whether it be the maintenance of tradition or the wrecking of it.

Keeping all these in mind, if one searched for the reason why V.T. was venomously critical to Uma Antharjanam, we may strike on the problem of agency, in the questions on who decided, and who executed will leave a total absence of male recognition in the case of Uma. Thus one can recognize that her total life was controlled and guided by her own decisions and executions. Even when she approached V.T seeking help for her marriage, she was asking him to stand with her and extend help to enact her decision in her life. Here lies the problem with Uma Antharjanam. She, through her life was spreading light into the nature and content of the Namboothiri reformation and the patriarchal aspects latent in the programmes and mentor attitudes subscribed by the reformers. When viewed through the life of Uma Antharjanam, both the traditionalists and the reformers stand as the twin sides of the same coin. Both these groups were representing the same values displayed/enacted differently. Both were valourising same patriarchal mentality where every decision upon the women and their sexuality were to be sanctioned and carried over by the male members of the society. In case, if any of the women violated this privilege, there would be relaxations in the positions of the reformists towards the activities of traditionalists, sometimes going to the extent of legitimating it and neglecting/ erasing many cruel incidents associated with such activities. Uma Antharjanam's life gives us ample evidences for such extensions of relaxations, legitimation and erasing.

Take for example how V.T pictured the second marriage of Parameswaran Naboothirippad and the effect of the same on Uma Antharjanam. He writes: 'In course of time, Parameshvaran Namboothiri had

his second marriage. But this second marriage did not pull her position in that family. She was such a beloved to the family members'. V.T., a person who had spent his entire youth in popularizing the atrocities involved in the polygamous system among Namboothiris and the nauseating situations faced by the women in such families, made a simple comment 'this second marriage didn't pull her position in that family' and that 'it was a common feature in those days and nobody cared for it that much'. There upon, the family version from the Cholayil Mana for her leaving the family was retold. Thus for V.T., without any further clarifications, the hearsay that she was caught for theft and asked for repentance- which she denied and for that reason she left home- became valid reason to dump statements of character assassination on her, about whom V.T. himself has commented as 'such a beloved to the family members'. The cruelty of maintaining the silence is seen in the case of the daughter of Uma Antharjanam. She was legal child born in the marital relationship between Uma Antharjanam and Parameshvaran Namboothiri. V.T., the reformer, who furiously reiterated the traditional logic that the Namboothiri woman has no state of divorcee when Uma and 'Ezhuthachan' approached him seeking help for their register marriage left a lacuna regarding the rights of a legal daughter and about the cruelty of pushing out her too, along with her mother, taking away the son alone. V. T., the emancipator of the womenfolk among Namboothiris, was also less considerate about the motherly feelings of Uma Antharjanam when she was compelled to hand over her son into the family of her husband knowing that she was actually losing him from entire life. This irony is classic, so is the narrative on Uma Antharajanam by V.T. as a lens to look into the entire work aimed at emancipation of women among Naboothiris by him and other comrades lauded as reformers.

### **Reforms and Penile Anxieties**

It is also necessary to look into the internal dimensions of the reforms and the designing of programmes to that effect. Muthiringatt had suggested what he saw as relevant as the agenda of reforms. He says:

Once it is settled that the traditional practices are of no value and that the aspirations of the old generation and that of the new are different, we should state what is to be done for the general good of the community. The thrust areas in which reforms are to be brought are the following: the mobility of Antharjanams, the present style of dressing, the present form of family, the schooling of Namboothiri girls, ghosha system and the notorious priestly power. (Namboothirippad, 1101ME)

Thus the agenda of the reforms as suggested by Muthiringatt

which were to be undertaken by the Namboothiri Yuvajana Samgham had four fold goals to be achieved: (1) modernizing the women and through that the modernization of the households (2) curbing the power of the traditionalists by curbing the power of the elderly and dominant priestly class (3) achieving these two thus targeting the third- to get into the marriage circles within the jati (4) reforming the financial norms within the community. The historical situations which made the Namboothiri youngsters to assemble and raise these demands have to be verified.

The movements and the reformist tendencies among the *jatis* which maintained conjugal relationships within the Brahmins had a profound impact upon the Namboothiri youth. The changes within the Nair community were evident. With the striking interference of Chattampi Swamikal, the superiority claims of the Brahmins stood questioned. *Āçārapaddhati adhavā Malayakshatriya Nāyaka Samayapaddhati* (Theerthapadaswami, 1915) a treatise on the rituals prescribed to the Nairs written by Neelakanta Theerthapadaswami, who was an important disciple of Chattampi Swami (Theerthapadaswami, 1915: 35) is to be mentioned with special reference. Theerthapada Paramahamsaswami has commented on the goals of writing this book. He says:

The book was written with an aim to bring acceptable scientific religious- ritual rules for Nayars. Many well known persons belonging to Nayar jati were seeking somebody to compile such a work. It was in this juncture, renowned scholar Neelakanta Theerthapadaswami wrote the valuable work, *açārapaddhati*. This work brought in the much needed authority to the religious rituals of the Nairs. (Theerthapadaswami, 1915: 31)

It has also been noted that this prescription for the rituals in this work was accepted in many parts of Travancore. Mannam Padmanabhan, Rayingan Shankaranashan and Arambil Govindan Unnithan were the reformist leaders who popularized the text far and wide. (Theerthapadaswami, 1915: 31) The text was designed in such a manner that it would aid the people belonging to Nair *jatis* to rule out the opportunities for the priestly class in their everyday lives. This was important- any person who could read and understand the book could sit in the role of the person to officiate the ritual. Neelakanta Swami himself has given direction about this as follows:

There is no rule prescribed in the text for a particular officiator. There is also a call in the foreword to remove such persons from such occasions. If there is any difficulty for any person to learn mantras and

tantras it is enough to hear such portions read by somebody. (Theerthapadaswami, 1915: 34)

This text has in it discussions regarding marriage rules too. The text prescribes *kanyadana* with rituals in which the bride is handed over to the bridegroom. It prescribes permanent marriages, not the temporary ones. It says:

The marriage rituals prescribed here is for permanent marriages, which will be counted as a matter of pride in the future life. For marriages too, there should be uniform rituals. The practice of seeking temporary partners from among others should be stopped and there should be tendencies to seek husbands for marriages. Even if it takes ages to get such a husband of one's choice, it is better to stick on to waiting for such marriages... here is no sin in marrying a girl after attaining puberty. (Theerthapadaswami, 1915: 123)

This was in fact an attack on the popular attitude towards *sambandham*, among the Nairs and the jatis belonging to the Kshatriya community of those ages. M. Ramavarma Thampan had portrayed the attitude of the Kshatriya families, as follows:

In the regions where polygamy was in practice, it is the duty of the husband to provide for all his wives. So those people who cannot afford to provide maintenance for a second wife stuck onto monogamy. In Kerala, the Brahmins were not to provide for their women. This situation provided them with the opportunities to fulfill their lust. In the given situations where these people could engage in reproduction without providing anything even to the children converted them as mere sexual mongers. There was a popular conviction that only the Namboothiri women should maintain pativratiya and the women belonging to the rest of the jatis are free from observing it. It was also maintained among the Namboothiris that they have right to establish conjugal relationship with any number of women and that too at the same time. There was also a feel among the Keralaites that even if the Namboothiris are married or that they are maintaining relationships with other women, it should not be a bar for accepting them in a sambandham. A woman belonging to a matrilineal family, entering into relationship with a Namboothiri will never enquire whether that Namboothiri is maintaining other connubial relations. Even the women belonging to powerful and rich matrilineal families express no hesitation in entering into relationship with an ordinary priest of temples. Even at Thrippunithura palace such a matter has happened. A woman belonging to that caste was married to a Namboothiri who is maintaining relationship with another woman. He is maintaining both these relationships even now. (Thampan, 1101ME)

Thus if we go through this text *açārapaddhati*, which was accepted as the basic ritual text for Nairs in Travancore we get an impression regarding the consolidation of jatis and prescription of a uniform ritual-religious code for the Nairs. This text very explicitly asks for the expulsion of the Namboothiris from all domains of life of the Nairs. It was in effect directing the people to give up their subscriptions to the Brahmanical texts which subordinated the Nairs to the Namboothiris. It was also a ritualistic challenge to the prescription in *Keralamahathmyam* that the nair women could not maintain *pativratya*.<sup>3</sup> Thus the call was for swajathivivaham (same caste marriage) and abandoning of conjugal relationship with the Namboothiris.

This quest for abolishing the conjugal relationships between Nair ladies and Namboothiris was not new among the Nairs. *Indulekha* which was published in 1890 had portrayed a similar issue as the theme of novel. (Menon, 1989) It has portrayed several types of marital alliances that existed in the Nair *taravadus* during that period. Most of them were based on connubial relationships based on sexual relationships without any surety of permanency. Thus the novel has, in a way, archived the various forms of expressions of the diktat in the Brahmanical text- *Keralolpathi*- regarding the non-observance of *pativratya* by the Nair women. It is into this plain of living reality, that the novel launched the concepts of 'new woman' and 'new man' through the protagonists Madhavi alias Indulekha and Madhavan. Both these characters are blend of Sanskritic and Anglican values- with knowledge in and about these two languages. Their tastes too were different- which has less in common with the native men and women of their age groups or their ancestors. Conceptualization of Indulekha as an anglicized-sanskritized woman, with less native and traditional *jati* elements in her was a proposition before the Nair community- regarding the new culture their women should inherit. Madhavan- the lover of Indulekha, whose horizons were ever widening through the British Indian map with expanding relations with new economic and cultural middle class, was portrayed as a representative of the new Nair male. These models were widely accepted and influenced the conceptualizations of aspiring youth among Nairs. The acceptance for the protagonist woman Indulekha is to be seen not only from the plain of twin rebellion she unleashed against the 'powerful', 'wealthy', 'influential' and 'desirable' Soori Namboothirippad and her *karanavar* Panchu Menon, through her wit, boldness, knowledge and cultured behaviour but also from the plain of metamorphosis she attained once she came to understand that Madhavan has left her, doubting that she has left him and his love. In that

stage the transformations, that Indulekha underwent were so new as far as the Nair households were concerned. Carving out the features in Indulekha was, in another way, the expression of the desirable features in 'wife' by an aspiring Nair youth, who was groomed with the colonial setting. The knowledge that Madhavan had left for doubting her pulled out the *pativrata* within her- who sees her world has collapsed. Thus, Indulekha was designed as a character having new features which was not known in the ordinary Nair women who were maintaining connubial polyandrous *sambandham* relations in their lives. The protagonist Indulekha thus was a desired conglomeration of 'modern values' imbued into her through English education and 'inherited values' from the tradition which was not her lived- historical one but planted in her through the Sanskrit education. Women like her were proposed not to the interiors of the *taravadus* as concubines of Namboothiris or a links in the *sambandha* chains that existed in those ages but were to be the wives of the aspirant Nair youths who were dreaming their positions in the colonial bureaucratic system and who were also managing to widen their reaches out of the localized Nair matrilineal domains. Thus *Indulekha* was proposing three main points with respect to this issue: (1) a 'legal- pativrata permanent wife' instead of 'short term sambandhakka-ri (a lady who was in a temporary connubial relation with one or more men) for a man (2) a micro family having husband, wife and children as members which can be in any parts of the world independent of the taravadus (3) *swajativivaham*- permanent legal marriages among the people belonging to same jati.

If *Indulekha* as a literary work was the reflection of the aspirations and attitudes of Nairs belonging to the new generation of those ages, in later years, there were declarations and enactments for the establishment of such families. There were also certain attempts to break the age old taboos followed by the dominant jatis. One among such incidents was very inspiring as far as the aspirant Nair and Kshatriya youths were concerned. It was the journey in the ship and residing in England- a foreign land- for the purpose of learning, by a member of royal family of Kochi viz; Ramavarma Thampuram (Unninamboothiri, 1102ME)- both of which were considered as taboos in those days. (Unninamboothiri, 1104ME)

Data pertaining to the early decades of 20th century reveal that this mentality crept not only into the minds of people belonging to the Nayar *jati* alone but into the people belonging to many other *jatis* including the kshatriyas who generally preferred Namboothiri men as husbands to their women. M. Ramavarma Thampan has noted the

changes in the general attitude of the Kshatriyas. He writes:

The proliferation of western education has brought profound changes. Common people are looking at this sex mongers with contempt. Some Nairs have taken position that there is no need of Namboothiris for *sambandham* in their families. Such Nairs are ridiculing such relations. Also, there are now laws which make them accountable in relations. Abhorrent by these nauseating activities of the Namboothiris, Kshatriyas are working with all strength to gain freedom from Namboothiris. When the Namboothiris felt that they are not getting enough honour or sometimes receiving insult from people who in past had honoured them, they established *yogakshemasabha*, did arrangements for *swajativivaha*. (Thampan, 1101ME)

The general attitude of the kshatriyas in this matter is reflected in the decisions taken in the 10th annual conference of the Keralaeya shathriya Mahajana Yogam, held at Karunagappalli. Ravivarma Thampan presided over the session. In this conference, there were discussions on *swajativivaham* and the on the need for sending married women to the houses of their husbands. Decision was made that while sending women to their husband's home, atleast a cow should be given to her from natal home. (*Kesari*, 1932 May)

A controversy which emerged during this period reveals the nature of attitudes maintained both by the brahmin and kshatriya women regarding the Sambandham of Kshatriya women with brahmin men. Parvathi Nenminimangalam raised the controversy by saying that the kshatriya women who are entering into connubial relations with Namboothiris are giving trouble to namboothiri women. (Nenminimangalam, 1098ME) To this a kshatriya woman wrote a reply in Unninamboothiri stating that really the burden is on Kshatriya women and they are suffering because of this *sambandham* system. (*Kesari*, 1932 April)

It was also during this period that three sisters belonging to the family of Zamorins were taken to the houses of their husbands. Cheriyanujatthi Thampuratti, Anujatthi Thampuratti and Kunjianujatthi Thampuratti were the women who shifted to the houses of their husbands. This was the first incident of this kind in the family of Zamorins. (Mathrubhoomi, 1932 July)

It was in the Nilambur royal family that the historical enactment of *swajativivaham* was conducted, putting an end to the age old custom of accepting Namboothiris as partners for women belonging to *Kovilakam*. The daughter of Nilambur Valiya Raja was married to the son of Munsiff A.C.Kunjanni Rajah belonging to Ayiranazhi Kovilakam. It



was for the first time that a *swajathivivaham* was conducted among the *Samantha jati* in Malabar. (*Kesari*, 1932 November)

These were indicators of an age which was to be faced by the Namboothiri youth. That was really an anxious situation as far as the younger brothers- *kanishta*- belonging to the Namboothiri families were concerned. Among the Namboothiris, only the eldest male in the family had the right to marry from *jati*. Other male members were to establish connubial relations with women belonging to Kshatriyas, Ambalavasis and Nairs. *Kanishtas* were pulled to a situation in which they feared that they would be denied their sexual necessities. The programmes for women emancipations are to be seen from such terrains of penile anxieties too.

The humanitarian considerations towards the women who actually suffered in such polygamous marital relationships are to be considered and respected. But along with those, one of the real issues is not to be submerged- the penile anxiety of the *kanishtas*. The moves for strengthening *swajathivivaham* among the *jatis* with which the *kanishtas* were maintaining conjugal relations and which they were denied of through the marital relations within the caste, complicated the situations. As the allied *jatis* were shutting doors against the Namboothiri Brahmins, they were to seek women from among their castes. The push of the Namboothiri males, who were traditionally to seek women from outside their *jati*, upon the women belonging to Namboothiri *jati* created tensions in the society and chaos in existing familial and social structure. The pressures upon the women belonging to Namboothiri *jati* through the added demand for them by the new claimants too was there behind the raising of slogans for *parivedanam* (marriage from Namboothiri *jati* by *kanishta*) and widow remarriage. It was also the claim upon the women of their own *jati*, who were denied to them, traditionally. As the distribution of the women who were to maintain *pativrata*, was limited within the elder sons among the Namboothiris, the *kanishtas* had no claim or control over the sexuality of the women of their *jati*. At that level, *kanishtas* were placed along with other castes. The demand for *parivedanam* and widow remarriage thus had three fold utilities when observed from the domain of *kanishtas*- (1) that they could be members of the marriage circle within the *jati* which was hitherto denied to them (2) that they could be mating males within the *jati* thus by having an access to control the sexuality of the namboothiri woman (3) that they could have full membership in the *jati* by the possession of controlling power over the women belonging to *jati*.

Regarding the alterations in the dress codes of the Namboothiri women, the reformists were in an applauding mood. Premji has commemorated the incident of abandoning the *ghosha*. He writes:

That chapter of the convention of Antharjanams was at Rasikasadanam- house of V.T. as it was at V.T's house none of the traditionalist Antharjanams attended the meeting. Only a few Antharjanams who were seeking an opportunity to throw off the *ghosha* were attending the meeting. Parvathi Nenminimangalam and Arya Pallam were the prominent figures among them. In that meeting, they decided to throw off the *ghosha*. The decision was enacted there and then. After the meeting some eight Antharjanams entered the sit out of the house. V.T. was not there when they came. He was out in a school attending a meeting. Knowing this, the Antharjanams under the leadership of Parvathi Nenminimangalam marched to the venue of the meeting. The sudden appearance of these women in the venue left the people there- including V.T. wondering. (Premji, 1122ME)

Here too the agency of women was not fully accepted by the male reformists. Muthiringott Bhavathrathan Namboothirippad has written about the necessity of abandoning *ghosha* and the reason- at least from male point of view- for such abandoning. He writes:

We have already decided to spread the message on the need to proliferate the *swajativivaham*. But along with this it is to be noted that the living is not possible depending on the ancestral property alone. In that case we will have to shift to other countries or to towns for earning livelihood. In that situation it will not be good to leave wives back at home. It's not a respectful deed. That's not possible too. As such, the *ghosha* should be in such a style that it should ensure comfortable mobility... Instead of palm umbrella, if a veil is used, there won't be any fault even from the normative point of view too. It should be remembered that in the marriage hall, before the crowd, bride would used only a veil. (Namboothirippad, 1102ME)

This again revealed the attitude of Muthiringott Bhavathrathan Namboothirippad towards the materialization of reform agendas- it's just a shift from *ghosha* to *pardha*.

The words of Muthiringott Namboothiri make everything clear about the anxieties the Namboothiri youth had. The penile anxiety manifested among them, was along with the spatial, economic, and cultural anxieties. The anxiety/fear that they would be forced to migrate to distant unknown lands for earning livelihood had both cultural and economic overtones. On the one hand, the economic insinuation

was about the opportunities they would have in the new world, taking into account the skill and competency they possessed. The cultural allusions latent in the anxieties were multifocal- (1) the anxiety that how the new world will receive them, who had grabbed the pivotal position in the caste structure of traditional society of Keralam (2) the anxiety over *jati*- focusing the food and social position- was latent in the discussions on migration (3) the age old investment of fear of female sexuality and the fear for 'other' male was ringing in the words of Muthiringott Namboothiri. The demand for *swajativiv-aham* is to be understood through these tinges too. A wife- belonging to the Namboothiri *jati*- accompanying a migrant Namboothiri is the provider of both food and sex to him- which culturally ensured the continued membership of the male and his generations within the *jati*. As O. Chandumenon, Muthiringatt Namboothiri was also proposing the cultural and economic significance of micro *jati* family. Hence, when the mentalities of the males belonging to the Nair and Namboothiri *jatis* are juxtaposed to understand their attitudes on migration, it could be easily understood that though both these sections were ready to migrate to seek better fortunes, the Nairs were aspirants, where as Namboothiris were compelled to do so.

### **Matriliny and *Illam***

One of the important activities of Sree Narayana Guru was his intervention in reforming the rituals associated with marriages. It was something a diktat from above- which was proliferated through the organization SNDP and later accepted by the members of *jati*. The consolidation of *jati* was not without transformations in the inheritance rights.

In Travancore, among Ezhavas there were people who followed matriliney and patriliney. Ezhavas residing in the region from Karunagappalli to Paravur followed matriliney. The Ezhavas in Moovattupuzha, Thodupuzha, Meenachal and Kunnathunadu followed patriliney. Ezhavas residing in the regions from Karunagappalli to Valavamkodu followed mixed system. In the Nanjinadu area, the Tamil speaking Ezhavas followed matriliney and patriliney according to their choice. (Mithavadi, April 1914) One of the attempts of the socio- religious activists was to make the diktat of Guru materialized. He had called for change in the inheritance system. He observed that there are people following *marumakkathayam* among ezhavas and he was of the opinion that there should be laws which allows the legal wife and children of a person to enjoy atleast a share of personal earnings by a man. If it is not done, the marriages will become meaningless.(Jojo, 2009:

64) But among the matrilineal Ezhavas, majority did not favour the transition into patriliney. (Saradamoni, 1999: 108) Their wish was that there should be certain 'codification and legislations of certain customary practices with some reforms'. (Saradamoni, 1999: 108) But, 'in 1899 the Travancore Wills Act gave male members of matrilineal communities the right to will half of acquired property to wives and children... The 1912 and 1925 Nayar Acts, recognising de jure *sambandham* unions and providing for full inheritance of self-acquired property by wives and children and partitioning of joint matrilineal properties, paved the way for similar legislation in 1925 regarding matrilineal Izhavas.' (Osella & Osella, 2000: 85) The questions of neither the agency of women nor their consent for such transitions were not looked into. As Saradamoni has noted, these were enactments for and of 'superior maleness' (Saradamoni, 1999: 108).

In the princely state of Kochi, there was a curious suit filed before the District Court, Thrissur in the early 1930s. The suit was filed by a Thiyya woman for getting a share from her natal property. But, the suit was dismissed stating there is no 'traditional practice' among Ezhavas to give share for daughters from her natal property. It is to be noted that the legal advisor in this suit for the family was the social reformer and the editor of Mithavadi- T.C.Krishnan. (*Kesari*, 1932 November) This case and the arguments therein throw light on some interesting factors. The main argument of the lawyer T.C.Krishnan on behalf of the family was that the traditional practice among Thiyyas doesn't conform to give share to the married woman from her ancestral home. Krishnan himself was a person who advocated change and actively worked and voiced against the 'social traditions' and 'age old practices'. But when the issue was one among the members of the *jati* and that too between male and female, the argument became fine-tuned 'traditional practice'. But roughly the same period after the judgement, Sahodaran K. Ayyappan moved a bill in Kochi Legislative Assembly seeking rights for married women over properties of ancestors. The bill sought for enactment of laws proclaiming the legal validity of women to possess half the share of what a son possess in the ancestral family. (*Kesari*, 1932 October)

An important decision taken by the dominant people among the Ezhava *jati* was regarding the abolition of *illam*. *Illam* was a traditional concept of clan. A person belonging to an *Illam* was supposed not to marry from the same *illam*. Ezhavas maintained four *illams*.

This was not peculiar to Ezhava *jati* alone. The influence of *illam* system is seen in other *jatis* also. A folk play enacted during the

performance of Kolamthullal, an art form peculiar to Kuttanad region in Kerala, reveals the impact of *illam* on the lives of people. The story line is as follows: A herdsman viz Kunjzhakan meets a lady, Kunjaali while grazing his cattle. They started talking and felt attracted to each other. Before taking decision to live together, Kunjaali asks Kunjzhakan about his *illam* and there every wish of Kunjaali and Kunjzhakan collapsed.

*aççante illamétorillamāṇaççā? tārā*

*ennillam ponnillam koççu*

*taççanillamedī penkoççé*

*ninnillam ponnillamétō-*

*rillamedī penkoççé?*

*ennillam ponnillam koççu*

*taççanillamāṇé tārā.*

*illam māttaççā illam māttaççā*

*tōṭṭankérilaççō tārā.* (Vattamattam, 2011: 26-27)

The practice of *illam* was abolished by the *jati* decisions during the early decades of 20th century in the regions north to Ashtamudi Lake, among Ezhavas. But it was prevalent among the Ezhavas on the southern side of the lake.

A situation emerged which demanded reconsideration in the *illam* rules. It was in the context of a proposal for marital alliance in between persons belonging to families on the north and southern part of the lake. The family of the male was at Kollam, a region in which the system was not in force. The family of the female was at Thiruvananthapuram where *illam* system was in force. The problem arose when they found that the *illam* originally maintained by the family of male was the one which is maintained by the family of the female. This made the situation complicated. To make a decision on the matter, a meeting was held on 31st Edavam, 1106 (13th June 1931) at Mankeezhu Veedu, an Ezhava family. Around 100 persons including M. Govindan, C.V.Kunjiraman, and K. Narayanan attended the meeting. There ensued a heated discussion regarding the abolition of the system of *illam* itself from among Ezhavas. The prominent view was that, the people north of Ashtamudi do not maintain the system and it has helped them in several matters. M. Govindan moved a resolution which demanded the annulling of such a system from among the Ezhavas. It also read that there should be no bar in entering in marital relationship between persons belonging to same *illam*. A group of members including Panayil Velayudhan

Vaidyan supported the proposal. But some prominent persons as Thotathil Padmanabhan talked against the proposal. In this situation the meeting did not arrive at a common decision on the abolition of *illam* from among the Ezhavas, but a decision was taken on the issue at hand. The jati council met there, found it permissible to conduct the marriage about which decision was to be taken on two grounds: (1) the male and female entering into marital alliance are not blood relatives (2) the family of male has abandoned the system of *illam* long back. (*Kesari*, 1931 June)

Thus going through the total project of reforms among the Ezhavas right from the times of Sree Narayana Guru, it can be seen that among Ezhavas, there were several attempts to restrict the freedom of women at multiple levels thus by bringing control over the sexuality of women. A matter that is to be noted with importance is that, on all matters regarding the reforms opinions of male members were taken into account. Take for example, the meeting held for considering *illam*. Among around a hundred persons who attended, there was not even a single woman, though the meeting took a decision pertaining them too. Thus when we go through the decisions taken on reforming the family system, male- female relationship, marital system, inheritance rights, conjugal rights- or any such matters, the decision makers were men and only men.

### **Imposing of Widowhood**

Along with the reform movements in other jatis, Kammalas too were experiencing reforms. The legislations on Travancore Kammala Bill reveal the nature of governmental measures and the responses among the Kammalas. As per the government records, 'Kammalas include the members of all communities commonly known or recognized following the profession of carpentry (*asari*), smithery (*karuvan*), jewelry (*tattan*), mason (*kallasari*) and brazier (*moosari*). (Legislative Department File No: 291/1936)

Some serious challenges were raised against the proposed Travancore Kammala Regulation Bill. In a reply to the objections generated against the bill, K. Parameswaran Pillai, Additional Head Sirkar Vakil had written as follows:

To the Hindus, marriage and to some extent inheritance also are mixed up with religious usages; as regards to marriage, it is itself a sacrament. The proposed measure affects marriage in many ways. Even if divorce, by consent or through court, is allowed, this will effect, I think a very fundamental change even in the very conception of a Hindu marriage.

In regarding to inheritance, the statement of objects and reasons says that “drastic changes in the rules of succession have been made”. I think that the Bill must in the circumstances be taken to affect the religious usages of the Dewan to enable its introduction in the Assembly. As such sanction has not, apparently been obtained the bill is inadmissible and the notice of motion is invalid. (Legislative Department File No: 291/1936)

Thus its motion on the floor of the house was terminated. In a letter written by G. Nilakantan, Member Srimulam Assembly, to the Chief Secretary to Government, the following points were raised:

1. Though the Kammalas are Makkathayees, and the Hindu law is supposed to govern their marriage, inheritance &c., the law is not strictly applicable on account of the changes in their maners and customs brought about by the influx of time and environment.
2. To establish, in cases of dispute, the right of succession, proof of marriage alone is not sufficient but that of *kudivaypu* (bring the wife to the home of husband and ritualistically making her part of that family) is also necessary. The insistence of the item of *kudivaypu* is also necessary. The insistence of the item of *kudivaypu* as an essential part of marriage rite has caused and is causing considerable hardships in the community. In olden times when marriage was contracted between the kammalas living within the limits of a village or group of villages or of a taluk, *kudivaypu* was not a costly function. With the opening communications throughout state and with the progress of education, territorial or sectional distinctions have vanished and the sphere of choice for contracting marriages has considerably been widened. The item of *kudivaypu* has become an expensive function. Further the *kudivaypu* item is not a necessary function in some parts of Travancore for instance in Trivandrum and Chirayinkil Taluks.
3. Polygamy and polyandry are permissible under the existing custom which is against the principles of Makkathayam law, not to speak on their incompatibility with modern socaila ideas.
4. The widow remarriage and divorce are permissible under the existing customs. But mischievous persons are taking advantage of the customs and manners of the Tamil speaking Kammalas very often making use of the usage for launching criminal prosecutions. (Legislative Department File No: 291/1936)

Thus what were the objectionable factors, as found by Dewan and Sirkar Vakil - for a section of the Kammala communities in the bill is

revealed. The explanation provided by G. Nilakantan, the Member of Srimulam Assembly gives us an idea regarding the movements going in the Kammala communities to impose 'widowhood' on the women belonging to those jatis, which was not a practice till those days. This imposition of 'widowhood' upon the women was also a matter of discussion in the third annual meet of *Akhila Thiruvithamkoor Vishvakarma Mahajana Sammelanam* held in 1935. The meeting was presided over by C.S.Umamaheswarachari M.A, who in his presidential address vehemently criticized the practice of imposing widowhood on women among certain sections of Kammalas. He said:

Before concluding my lecture, I should say a few words on the fate of our women too. If certain activities of some people among us are considered, there will arise a doubt whether we are the people now upholding the Manusmriti diktat 'na sthree swathanthramarhathi' ... there should be wise decisions on the issue of widow remarriage. Otherwise the fate of the community will be seriously admonished. (Legislative Department File No: 291/1936)

### **Pedagogical Writings**

An overview of the literature produced during the period thus targeted the womenfolk of the society of Keralam, instructing them on various subjects pertaining to the behaviour of women in the family and outside. Those were also reiterating the necessary criterions for a woman for becoming chaste wife. Citing some of the themes discussed will give an idea regarding the pedagogical aims of this corpus of literatures. *Unninamboothiri*, *Sanathanadharmam*, *Mangalodayam*, *Kairali*, *Mahila*, *Rasikaranjini*, *Keralachinthamani*, were the important periodicals which published articles containing pedagogical themes. The themes upon which writings were made were: Joint Family (*Unninamboothiri*, 1098ME), Freedom of Women (*Kanippayyur Namboothirippad*, Makaram 1101), Divorce (*Unninamboothiri*, 1104ME), Conjugal Relationship (*Unninamboothiri*, 1101ME; *Rasikaranjini*, 1081ME), Chaturvarnyam (*Sanathanadharmam*, 1913), Success in Life (*Sanathanadharmam*, 1913A), The Customs of Kerala (*Sanathanadharmam*, 1915), House Keeping (*Mangalodayam*, 1084ME; *Mahila*: 1932), Duties of Wife (*Kairali*, 1098ME; *Mahila*, 1921; *Sadguru*, 1099ME; *Aryasiddhanthachandrika*, 1892), Faith of women in God (*Mahila*, 1921), Character of women (*Mahila*, 1937), Marriage Rules (*Kerala Chinthamani*, 1092ME), Widow Remarriage (*Rasikaranjini*, 1078ME), Rights of Wives *Rasikaranjini*, 1078ME (1) etc.

One interesting feature regarding these articles is that most of these were written by male writers belonging to the dominant jatis.



Thus through these writings these writers and the periodicals were trying to popularize the themes of new form of patriarchy in which husband gains an upperhand instead of Karanavars of taravadus. New standards, codes and diktats were being issued through these writings to the 'new wives'.

There were horrifying instances of honour killing of women by relatives. One such incident is reported from Erattupetta, in present Kottayam district. The report states that a man belonging to Pulaya jati committed homicide of his sister. Thereafter he cut her head, packed it and proceeded to Ettumanoor police station and surrendered. The reason for his committing of homicide was stated as the prostitution of his sister. (*Kesari*, 1931 December)

Thus an analysis of the age of reformations in the society of Kerala through the feminist lens will provide some insights very different from the existing eulogizing narratives on the movements and on the 'leader's of the movement. The consolidation of jatis and development of communities not only structured muscle power of those by widening the population base alone but generated the gender codes and ordered gender relations within those jatis and communities by subjugating the women and restricting their sexuality. The call for *swajativivaham* was a tool at the hands of the male members of the jatis to dominate the sexuality of women. These processes of jati- community consolidation and the call for *swajativivaham*- for which women too were perpetrators- brought the sexuality of women to a jati- community matter and thus a matter to be put to the surveillance of jati- community collectives. The consolidation of the jati- community and the imposing of *swajativivaham* resulting in the surveillance of women sexuality checked the trans-jati- community exchanges or distribution of women sexuality. Therefore the jati- community consolidations in the colonial period in Kerala was also a reordering of the distribution of women sexuality within the frames of jati- communities. Thus a monopoly was established by the maledom of each and every jati- communities over the females of these jati- communities. The impact of these structuring on women were as follows: (1) the free mobility and rights enjoyed with respect to the spaces were curbed (2) the rights over the property were redefined (3) strict surveillance upon the sexuality of women were maintained and the tools like defaming, im/moral policing, gossiping were used to demonize the detractors.

Along with these developments, as the women were circulated within the jatis, the hypergamy and hypogamy were restricted. The

transformation of Brahmanical Patriarchy was subjected in this regard. As all the jatis were pushing them into the Hindu religious domain with restructured jati- community relations and grafted sexuality codes, *pativratya*- at least in theory- became the prerogative and duty of women belonging to every jati. Embedding of *pativratya* and moral codes associated with it into jati- community norms, the socio- religious reform movements and reformers were constructing *pativrata* in every woman of jati- communities and thus in every Hindu woman. The reservation of *pativratya* provided to the Namboothiri women and the free access to sexuality of women belonging to other jatis was transformed. This was not altogether a peaceful process. The lethal tools like shaming, honour killing and out-casting were used to impose the patriarchal codes and enforce maledom upon women.

Thus the creation of *Malayali* Hindu patriarchy is to be seen in the domains of jati- community consolidations and the proliferation of *pativratya*- at least in theory- among the women of entire jati-communities who were finding their spaces in Hindu religion.

### Notes

1. Some among these are: K. Saradhamoni, *Matriliny Transformed: Family, Law and Ideology in Twentieth Century Travancore*, New Delhi: Altamira Press, 1999; G. Arunima, *There Comes Papa: Colonialism and the Transformation of Matriliny in Kerala, Malabar c. 1850-1940*, New Delhi: Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd., 2003; Susan Thomas, 'Property Relations and Family Forms in Colonial Kerala', Mahathma Gandhi University, 2002 (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis); Praveena Kodoth, 'Courting Legitimacy or Delegitimizing Custom? Sexuality, sambandham and Marriage Reform in Late Nineteenth- Century Malabar' in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2, May 2001, p.354; J. Devika, *Engendering Individuals: The Language of Re- forming in Twentieth Century Kerala*, New Delhi: Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd., 2007; Sheeba. K. A, 'Caste, Sexuality and the State: The Changing Lives of the Nambudiri Women in the Twentieth Century', Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2002 (Unpublished Ph. D Thesis); Susan Thomas, 'Engendering Through Shaming: The Case of the Syrian Christian Women' in *Catholic Journal of Studies and Research*, Vol. 3, No. 1&2, December 2014, pp. 131-138; Kathleen Gough, ' Changing Kinship Usages in the setting of Political and Economic Change Among the Nayars of Malabar' in *The Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 82, Jan- June, 1952, pp. 71-88; Meera Velayudhan, 'Law, Reform and Gendered Identity: Marriage Among Ezhavas of Kerala' in *EPW*, Vol. 33, No. 38, Sep. 19- 25, 1998, pp. 2480-2483.
2. Smarthavicharam Records with respect to the trials of Tathrikutty are kept in the Ernakulam Regional Archives.

3. It says: *tavabharya ca putrartham brahmanal nithyameva ca/ tai:saakam ca rathimkruthva tishthanthamavaneethale* which means 'let your wives receive the Brahmanas without any fear for pativrata and get enough children from them'.

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