NEGOTIATING WOMEN'S SPACE
Introduction: **BLURRED THE DISTINCTIONS**

The ideal of modern society as fundamentally divided into public and domestic domains continues to strongly inform attitudes towards gender in today's Keralam. However, its survival was not so much the result of a lack of questioning or alternate models; nor was it preserved unchanged until the present. Rather, it has persisted against questioning, and co-existed with modified versions of itself. Towards the middle of the twentieth century, a particular version began to gain prominence that is arguably found continuing in contemporary Malayalee society. This was probably crucial in ensuring the survival of the ideal of the order of gender, in minimising the force and number of alternatives to it, such as the ideal of gender-neutral personhood and the vision of modern society it entailed.

The core of this re-vision lay in an increasingly-frequent assertion that the capacities attributed to ideal women had application in an ever-increasing number of institutions other than the home, situated in the public domain. This worked to make the neat bifurcation of

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1. The discussion on the issue of women's role in society in Keralam in the wake of the International Women's Year fell clearly within the terms set by this ideal of modern society. See, a compilation of articles, *Vichara Samanwayam*, presented at the International Women's Year celebrations conducted by the Thrissur-based cultural organisation, *Sahridaya Vedi*. That this continues to enjoy prominence in contemporary Keralam is well-illustrated in Sharmila Shreekumar, 'Keralayatayum Streetvavum: Oru Kerala Piravidina Samvadathe Patti' (*Keralayata and Womanhood: About a Debate on Kerala Day*) in *Kerala Padhanangal* (7), forthcoming. This article is about a debate on Womanhood that was conducted in a Women's College in a town in Keralam on Kerala Day, November 1, 1996. It clearly shows how the terms of discussion about gender are set by this ideal of modern society.
space into domestic and public domains less important in reckoning the order of gender. In practical terms it justified the entry of women into the public domain, particularly into institutions such as schools, hospitals, charity organisations, reform institutions or orphanages. It even served to justify the carving of specific areas in institutions that seemed crucially dependent on 'Manly' capacities, such as those of economic production, or human management and political struggle, where women, it was claimed, could function with greater efficiency than men. In fact, this version was sometimes extended in such a way that Womanhood and Manhood seemed associated with forms of power that seemed not only different but even antagonistic.

The first section of this chapter is a brief examination of the debates around gender in the early twentieth century when different versions of the order of gender were produced and circulated. In this section it may be shown that by the end of the 'twenties, 'Women' had begun to figure ever-more commonly as a group that had common interests, claims on the State and specific role to play in society, especially in Kochi and Tiruvitamkoor'. But the justification of such demands (which included reservation of government jobs for women, support for their professional training etc. which certainly seemed a far cry from demands for the fashioning of the Domestic Woman) hardly involved a rejection of the 'different capacities' argument. The second section focuses on those institutions in which 'Womanly' capacities were found to be of use. Indeed, their number and variety progressively increased, and this seemed to justify ever-greater avenues of employment for
women in the public domain. Even today, working in such institutions is considered respectable and the employment of modern-educated middle-class women in Keralam is still concentrated in these institutions. In the third section, a text that figures the ideal new Woman is examined. Through this reading it may be made apparent that the ideal new Woman is no longer associated exclusively with the home but with the exercise of 'gentle power' in general. Another text which associates Womanhood with 'gentle power' is also examined in which this power is pitted against what is identified as 'male power'. This evokes the vision of a 'Womanly Society' seen to be more beneficial than what it replaces, a 'Manly' one. Here the idea of complementary sexual exchange itself is revised—it is no more an exchange between domestic and public domains, but one that takes place between 'Womanly' and 'Manly' capacities in the management of society itself, in which 'Womanly' capacities are seen to enjoy a definite superiority. However, this does not mean that by this period, the reinterpreted order of gender was unanimously accepted; nor did it mean that women were freed of obligations towards the home. The fourth section makes these necessary qualifications.

I. **RETHINKING WOMANHOOD**

By the 1930's appeals made on behalf of the 'Women of Tiruvitamkoor', 'Women of Kochi', 'Malayalee Women' or simply 'Women' regarding their participation in the public
domain were to be found much more frequently in writings especially in contemporary newspapers and magazines. In these appeals, 'Women' often appear as a distinct collectivity which is supposed to have interests and problems, sometimes opinions, specific to them, beyond considerations of caste or class. Anna Chandy, for example, speaking on behalf of the 'Women of Keralam' in 1929, identified such a collectivity on the basis of a 'common-condition' above and beyond considerations of caste and class. She said:

"How is one to say that women in Keralam are not slaves? The condition of women of various castes and creeds in Keralam are varied. There are Anarthanams who stay in their inner-courtyards with the female servant, the cadjan-umbrella and bronze bangles; there are the Muslim sisters who suffer constant hell in Ghosha (seclusion) who are made the target of their men's derisive laughter for lacking the Adam's apple; Brahmin girls, who, after being widowed in the prime of youth, are tonsured and left to lead a miserable existence, cursing life itself; Christian women who are cursed for life due to the sternness of the dowry-system."

What is striking about this speech is not merely that it strongly criticises the denial of modern knowledge and ways of life to large sections of women in Keralam. In fact, it is striking because it does not endorse the ideal of domestic Womanhood as the ultimate goal of female self-transformation. It is actually a very strong argument made in favour of the entry of women into the public domain, in favour of paid employment for women. The 'Women of Keralam' are found united in their common grievance regarding the lack of adequate circumstances for the development of their internalities and hence Womanliness.

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2. Anna Chandy, 'Stree Swatantryathe Patti' (About the Freedom of Women), Speech delivered at the Vidyabhivardhini Sabha at Thiruvananthapuram in 1928; published in the Sahodaran, Special Issue, 1929, pp.135-36.
itself. But the relevance of this Womanliness is found to be not only within the home. Indeed, Anna Chandy strongly argues that women must be given the circumstances to employ their capabilities in public institutions and earn incomes. 'Womanly' capabilities do not seem entirely distanced from the world of economic exchange; there seems to be a need for them within public institutions which women must be allowed to fulfill.

Indeed, by this time, this argument about the participation of women in public institutions was getting stronger, appearing alongside invocation of 'common interests', 'common grievances' etc., of 'Women'. By the 1920's women's participation in modern political institutions was being increasingly permitted in Tiruvitamkoor and Kochi. In 1919, women in Tiruvitamkoor were partially enfranchised; in 1922-23, women were made eligible to sit in the House as members of the Shri Mulam Popular Assembly, and the Legislative Council. In Kochi too, women were partially enfranchised— and the demand that 'Women' must be treated as a separate constituency with representation proportional to the number of voters along with other special constituencies like 'Industry and Commerce', 'Jews' or 'Planters' was voiced in Kochi in 1925. More or less the same demand was made

4. ibid., pp.63-64.
5. 'A Cochin Lady', 'Cochin Legislative Council', Malayala Manorama (henceforth, M.M), March 28, 1925.
in Tiruvitamkoor by the Malayala Manorama in the same year.⁶ By the 1930's there were women-members in both Houses actively supporting the 'needs of Women', voicing their grievances, arguing for a fair share for women in reservation of government jobs etc.

Not that by now 'Women' had managed to oust considerations of community or class in such bargaining. However, it is found that this category was often upheld over and above, in some cases, even against, community or class. In an editorial published in 1929, the Malayala Manorama congratulated the Tiruvitamkoor government on the appointment of the three lady graduates in the Huzur Cutchery and High Court. It elaborated on the advantages of giving government jobs to women thus:

"...through the competition between women of different castes and creeds we may hope that consciousness of caste will decrease, that the consciousness that ultimately there are only two castes, men and women, will increase and that the co-operation of both parties will be acknowledged to be essential to the welfare of the nation, putting an end to unnecessary competition (between them)...."⁷

⁶ M.M., Editorial, 'Tiruvitamkoor Niyamanirmana Sabha' (Tiruvitamkoor Legislative Assembly), June 4, 1925. By then Dr. Mrs. Punnan Lukose was already a member in her capacity as Durbar Physician and Head of the Medical Department. The Madras Mail had described her appointment as Head of the Medical Department as an expression of 'Feminism in Travancore'. The Mail's report under this title was reprinted in the M.M., October 4, 1924. Reports of requests to appoint women-members were frequent enough. For instance, a plea submitted to the Madras Government by the members of the Kannur Streetsamajam was reported in M.M., August 12, 1924 in the local-news column, 'Swadeshakaryam'; another report on a resolution seeking to appoint a woman-member to the Thiruvananthapuram Municipality appeared in M.M., August 25, 1925. Women were urged to enter the sphere of modern politics, as a definite group, conscious of the 'specific' role they were assigned in modern society and their 'specific' interests. (Editorial, 'Streekal Iniyum Unarukayille?' (Will Not Women Awake?) in Vaniteekusumam, Vol.1(II), 1928, pp 1-2).

⁷ M.M., Editorial, 'Streekalum Sarkarudyogavum' (Women and Government Service), September 27, (..continued)
Responding to the Tiruvitamkoor government’s decision to nominate five women from different communities to the Shree Mulam Praja Sabha in 1931, *The Mahila* sought to assert their commonality of interests above communal considerations:

"If anyone was to opine that Womankind as a community, being different from men, needed to speak only their needs and grievances, and not make communal arguments, then one cannot but agree that this is a superior thought."

In 1930, Gauri Pavitrnan, woman-member of the Kochi Legislature who belonged to the Ezhava community, introduced a Nambutiri Family Regulation Bill, and her speech began with the clarification that she was introducing the Bill".... on behalf of my dear brothers, the Human community and your sisters, as your representative...." Her Bill included special provisions that gave more economic independence for Antharjanams; these efforts were welcomed as attempts to ensure the welfare of women which probably

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1929.


10. *M.M.*, ‘Vanita Pangti’ (in which the salient features of Gauri Pavitrnan’s Bill were discussed), 1 January, 1930.

11. *M.M.*, Report on the meeting of the Upasabha (sub-unit) of the Nambutiri Yogakshema Sabha, (continued)
justified the creation of family legislation for the Nambutiri community by the member of a different community. The meeting of the Nambutiri Yogakshema Sabha in 1930 also passed a resolution requesting Muthulakshmi Reddy, member of the Madras Legislature, to introduce a Bill that would help the reform of Anharjanams.\textsuperscript{12}

By the 1930's, several women had begun to emerge in the public domain as active and able participants. The reform movements saw the emergence of figures like Mutukulam Parvati Amma, Arya Pallom, Parvati Nenminimangalam, Devaki Narikkatiri and many, many others; a galaxy of women-writers had also emerged as prominent literary figures—B. Kalyani Amma, Taravathu Ammalu Amma, Balamani Amma, Kadathanattu Madhavi Amma, Lalitambika Antharjanam, Mary John Tottam, T.C. Kalyani Amma and K. Saraswati Amma; legislative assemblies in Tiruvitamkoor and Kochi by this time had articulate and active women-members—Tottaikattu Madhavi Amma, Anna Chandy, T. Narayani Amma, Mrs.K.K. Kuruvila or Gauri Pavitran; individual women had also entered professions like law, medicine and journalism, and begun to occupy higher positions in teaching and education: Anna Chandy, Dr. Mary Punnen Lukose, Dr. Mathilda John, B. Bhageeraty Amma, Gauri Sankunni, Dr. C. Rugmini Amma; in the political upheavals of the '30s, women were active as organisers and participants—Mukkapuzha Karthyayani Amma,

\textsuperscript{12} ibid., above.
T.C. Kochukutty Amma, A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, K.E. Sharada, Lalita Prabhu, C. Kunhikkavu Amma, C.R. Devaki Amma, Devaki Narikkatiri, Akkamma Cheriyan, Ratnamayi Devi and many many others. More and more women continued to emerge successful in university examinations, and these were events found worthy of being news, reported in dailies. Communities feted their young women successful in examinations by organising public meetings. There were also other signs that women were actively seeking to gain space

13. See for instance, the report of the success of Thangummoottil Thresya Joseph in the B.Sc. examination in the firstclass, from the University of London, (M.M., 'Swadeshakaryam', 6 August, 1924); report of the success of U. Devaki Amma in securing M.A.LT degree (M.M., July 14, 1925); of the success of Ms. Mathilda John in the FRCS examination from Edinburgh University; (M.M., July 21, 1925); of a Muslim woman Havva Beevi, the first among her peers to join the intermediate class at Women's College, Thiruvananthapuram (M.M., August 8, 1925); report of the success in B.A. (Hons.) exam of Ilavavamma Tampuran, the first woman to gain this degree in the Kochi royal family (M.M., October 29, 1925); report of the attainment of M.Phil, Ph.d degrees by E. Janaki M.A. from an American University (M.M., May 13, 1926); report on the attainment of M.A. degree by a Vellala woman, V.S. Chellamma, the first to do so among Vellala women (M.M., May 15, 1926); report of the return of C. Kunhilakshmi after obtaining an LMP degree from Madras, becoming the first lady-doctor of the Ezhava community, (M.M., March 8, 1926); report on the return of Paru Amma, a Thiyya woman from the U.S. after earning medical degrees (M.M., March 12, 1927); report of the success of K.C. Annamma in the Matha B.A. (Hons.) exam of the Madras University, she being the first woman to do so (M.M., May 31, 1927); report of the success of C. Meenakshi Amma, in the preliminary part of the Barristership Examination (M.M., March 14, 1928), editorial on 'Mrs. Anna Chandy B.A.B.L.' congratulating her on her success in the B.L. degree exam, being the first Malayalee woman to attain such success (M.M., January 11, 1929); report of the success of Kamalamma, the first Nair woman to have secured the M.B.B.S. degree from Madras Presidency Medical College (M.M., November 5, 1928).

14. Mary Poonen was presented with a gold medal by an association of Syrian Christians at a public meeting in 1906 after she passed the first Arts Examination. She received another medal at a public meeting when she graduated in 1909 (R. Jeffrey, Politics, Women and Well-being, New Delhi: OUP, 1993, p.93). U. Devaki Amma was awarded a gold medal for her success at the M.A. L.T. exam by the Thiyyas of Kannur, at a meeting presided by Koravathu Krishnan in 1925 (M.M., July 11, 1925); the Vilakkithala Nair community awarded a medal to K.P. Janaki Amma, the first woman of that community to gain the LMP degree (M.M., October 19, 1928). Local organisations also organised congratulatory functions for women-scholars. The Sanmargoposhini Sabha at Vaikom awarded a gold medal to the first lady graduate from Vaikom taluk, N. Gauri Amma (M.M., November 30, (..continued)
within the public domain, and consolidating the space gained. In 1927, a 'Tiruvitamkoor Lady Graduates' Association' had been formed with the aim of putting an end to the unemployment of well-qualified women;\textsuperscript{15} in 1925, the 'women of Kunnamkulam' submitted a Memorial to the government of Kochi requesting that women of sufficient qualification and talent be given jobs in different departments of government.\textsuperscript{16} In 1927, a separate organisation of women-teachers was operating at Kochi.\textsuperscript{17} In 1929, the President of the Women-Teacher's Conference at Kochi, Mrs. Velayudha Menon, justified a separate

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1926); a felicitatory function was organised at Kothamangalam to award a gold medal to the first woman graduate in the Muvattupuzha taluk, Ms. Pulikkal Mary. (\textit{M.M.}, November 13, 1926). Women's entry into public employment, especially to higher posts in teaching etc. was reported in the newspapers and also formed occasions for public meetings. When V.K. Kothyayani Amma was appointed Sanskrit tutor at Women's College, Thiruvananthapuram, a public meeting was held at the Aranmula Girls' School in her honour in 1926 (\textit{M.M.}, October 23, 1926); the appointment of K. Easwari Amma as English lecturer at Lady Wellington College, Madras was reported, (\textit{M.M.}, November 6, 1926). In his \textit{Travancore State Manual} (1940), T.K. Velu Pillai acknowledged this development. Describing the circumstances under which the Tiruvitamkoor government decided to allow the entry of women into legislative bodies, he wrote. "The women of Kerala have always been better circumscribed than their sisters in other parts of India and the countries of the west... (by 1922) many women had already proved their capacity for successful leadership in liberal professions as well in humbler callings. Several had risen to high rank in the service of Government. "ibid., Vol III, Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1996, pp.684-85.

\textsuperscript{15} 'Tozhilillatha Birudhadharinikal' (Unemployed Women-Graduates), in \textit{Vanitakusumam} Vol.1(11), 1927, p.349. Also, 'Streekalum Governmentum', (Women and the Government), \textit{The Mahila Vol.11}(1), 1931, pp.3-5. More or less the same demands for job-reservation were put forth resolutions in a women's conference in 1936 at Thiruvananthapuram, presided by Mrs.R. Krishna Pillai, (E.N. Meenakshi Amma, 'Vanita Lokam', \textit{M.N Nair Masika Vol} 1(2), 1936, pp. 122-26).

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{M.M.}, 'Swadeshakaryam', July 30, 1925.

\textsuperscript{17} This \textit{Upadhyayini Sanghom} (Lady Teacher's Organisation) had appointed a sub-committee to devise a new scheme to reform Women's education at Kochi. \textit{M.M.}, 'Kochiyile Streevidyabhyasam- Putiya Scheme', August 16, 1927.
organisation for women-teachers, claiming that the issue of Womanly education needed to be contemplated with great seriousness, through active discussion amongst lady teachers.\textsuperscript{18}

There were also signs that authorities were at least partially responding to these aspirations - the Committee appointed by the Tiruvitamkoor government to investigate unemployment observed in its Report (1928) that the problem of unemployment among educated women needed to be solved on an immediate basis, and that an employment bureau for women must be set up;\textsuperscript{19} in 1925, a special class for women in typing and short-hand was set up at the Fort Technical School at Thiruvananthapuram;\textsuperscript{20} in the same year efforts were being made to move a resolution in the legislature to admit women-students to the Law College at Thiruvananthapuram;\textsuperscript{21} in 1927, women-students were actually admitted there.\textsuperscript{22}

However these developments were not interpreted always in favourable light. Indeed

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\textsuperscript{18} M.M., March 13, 1929.
\textsuperscript{19} M.M., 'Tozhilillaima Committeeyude Report' (Report of the Unemployment Committee), July 6, 1928. The Report observed that every year there were about 450 women who secured pass in examinations and could seek employment in Tiruvitamkoor.
\textsuperscript{20} M.M., 'Swadeshakaryam', February 28, 1925.
\textsuperscript{21} ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} M.M., 'Pradeshika Varthagal' (Regional News). July 19, 1927. Four women had applied and Sarah Pothen was the first to join, followed by Anna Chacko (M.M, July 21, 1927). However there were also criticisms against women joining the legal profession. See, speech by Justice Changanacherry Parameshtwaran Pillai at first meeting of Thiruvananthapuram Girls' College Association, \textit{Vanitakusumam} Vol 1(8), 1927, pp.271-74.
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throughout the '20s and '30s, one comes across persistent complaints that they went against the spirit of complementary sexual exchange and were detrimental to the creation of ideal modern society, especially in contemporary Women's Magazines. "How many women do we come across these days who after higher education hanker after employment?" wrote an author in the *Mahila Mandiram* in 1926, "...One cannot but say that they themselves are responsible for their pathetic condition". It was repeatedly argued that women who had received modern education were actually negligent of their 'natural' role:

"Our women who have received modern education are usually found negligent in the performance of domestic duties. If a woman who has had the fortune to be a wife and the mistress of a home surrenders the welfare of her spouse and children to servants and the preparation of food to hired cooks, then the home will itself suffer badly...For peace and comfort to reign in the home the mistress of the household must assume all responsibility."24

The complaint that Western-style education eroded women's 'natural' qualities and


that "... women are turning wanton and disobedient in their imitation of the West"\textsuperscript{25} had begun to be heard since the turn-of-the-century years, but now it came to be linked to modern educated women's aspirations regarding entry into the public domain.

"At first it was the Education Department that was chosen as the battle-field. When the pushing and pulling, kicking and pinching in that field was more or less over, young girls have begun to move into other sorts of training, like medicine.... Respected sisters! Have you ever contemplated on why we fuss so much over this totally meaningless higher education?... As women our god-ordained duty is the care of the home and service towards our husbands. Government service and political activity are beyond its purview. Because it is universally seen that they impair the performance of the duties mentioned above...."\textsuperscript{26}

Women-members in legislative bodies in Kochi and Tiruvitamkoor made repeated requests to the government to institute education that would train women in domestic management and childcare in schools.\textsuperscript{27} In 1929, the \textit{Malayala Manorama} admitted that there were two opinions regarding women's education in every country, one recommending

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\item \textsuperscript{25} Taravathu Ammalu Amma, Speech at Chittoor Balika Pathashala Sahitya Samajam, \textit{Lakshmibhavir} Vol 20(10), 1924, p.358. But such complaints had been made much earlier. For example, ten years back, an author writing in the \textit{Nazrani Deepika} opined thus: "Today's modern-minded women are far behind old-fashioned women in qualities essential to women such as (the ability for) care of husbands and children, home-management, good morals, etiquette and so on ". 'Oru Pazhamakkaran' (An Old-Fashioned Man), 'Nammude Streesamajangal' (Our Women's Associations), \textit{Nazrani Deepika}, March 31, 1914.
\item \textsuperscript{26} Mary Kurien, 'Streekalum Utkrishta Vidyabhyasavum', (Women and Higher Education), \textit{M.M}, April 4, 1926; also see A.V. Kora Ancheri, 'Keraleeeya Mahilamanikalude Grihakrityam', \textit{M.M.}, September 10, 1928.
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special domestic-oriented training, and the other, one that would make women men's competitors and give them access to the public domain, and that the debate between the advocates of these two forms was not really settled. It, however, sought to stress that a domestic-oriented training was really important and that

"...there is no doubt that since men and women have different positions in society, their education and socialisation must be in accordance with their respective roles they must occupy.... Men's aim is to become part of the struggle of life. Women ought to be their helpmates, helping them achieve victory in the struggle of life..."

But the non-availability of Womanly education did not seem to be the only problem: it seemed as though at least in Tiruvitamkoor, Womanly education was being actually rejected wherever it was made available. The Statham Committee Report on educational reform in Tiruvitamkoor noted regretfully in 1933 that

"...in no grade of girls' schools are domestic science, home-craft, nursing, first-aid etc. taught as part of the regular course. And it may also be assumed, generally speaking, that girls in the state are receiving almost identical education as the boys..."

But the problem did not end there...


29. Ibid, above.

The few experiments that have been tried in the Girls' High Schools have shown that the pupils themselves or their parents are not anxious to take advantage of separate or special courses of study, unless these courses can be made use of ultimately, with the same advantage, as the present courses terminating in recognised certificates.\(^{31}\)

The root cause of such neglect was identified in the tendency to see education not as something of cultural value in itself, but as a direct means of securing employment and competing with men in the open market.\(^{32}\)

There were some authors, like Parvati Ayyappan or Dr. C.I. Rugmini Amma, who argued against separate sorts of education, arguing that men and women were equally equipped with mental abilities.\(^{33}\) But how far this posed a real threat to the endorsement of Domestic Woman is not clear. In any case, the ideal of personhood for women was the target of persistent criticism in the '30s. In E.V. Krishna Pillai's play *Pennarashu Nadu*,\(^{34}\)

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31. ibid, pp. 265-66.

32. ibid, above.


(The Land of Woman-Government) the target of criticism is the firebrand Bhageeraty Amma who refuses to take up a domestic role. The championing of women's rights is interpreted as stemming from a desire to usurp Man's role, and the play ends with the taming of the shrew. Sanjayan, writing in 1936, criticised women-speakers:

"Have you heard any of our women make speeches these days ...(they) begin by scolding men quoting from Manusmriti of long ago ... These women have not understood that to claim that a woman can truly realise herself (only) by being like a man is nothing but low lack of self-respect".  

Against this was set up the ideal of Domestic Woman—personified in Vasanthy of Pennarashu Nadu who acknowledges the home as her true domain and is willing to devote her well-trained mind to its well-being. Woman's 'true duty' is established when Bhageeraty Amma is shown her 'place' by her husband:

"You must go straight to the kitchen, you must attend to the children. You must guide the formation of my character. You must help, serve, nurse me, as my Queen, my servant, my mother, my teacher."  

Along with this, the pleasure to be had from conforming to the subjectivity given by


one's sex was stressed. "Motherhood is a state of great importance and responsibility", wrote an author in *Shreemati* in 1935. 37 "There is no other position that will give greater pleasure and satisfaction than being the mothers of ideal children." 38

However, those who advised women to remain at home did not deny them power within the home. In fact they inevitably stressed the importance of making Woman the focal point of the home, the guiding light of the family—as T.K. Velu Pillai did when he argued that Women are, and must aspire to, being *Grihachakravarthinikal* (Empresses of the Home) instead of competing with men. 39 Between the two positions—i.e., between those who argued that women had a role to play in the public domain, and those who assigned the role of domestic guardian to them—there was fundamental agreement that women needed to be active agents in social life, and make 'positive' contribution to the collectivity: the dispute was more about the specific domain in which they were to assume such agency. Secondly, taking a job was not *necessarily* interpreted as a travesty of true Womanliness. That is, much of the writings that defended women's entry into the public domain did not venture to


38. ibid., above.

39. 'Sadasyatilakam' T.K. Velu Pillai, Speech, Published in the *M.M.*, November 15, 1929; November 29, 1929, in the 'Vanita Pangti', the women's column.
reject Womanhood in unequivocal terms; indeed, one even finds the argument that taking a job, bringing an income etc. are signs of Womanliness, not the reverse. This was sometimes palpable in the literary representations of ideal Woman. The theme of romantic Love continued to appear persistently in popular novels of this period too, but sometimes with interesting modifications as in V.I. Mannadiyar's Kamalam.\textsuperscript{40} This reworks Indulekha's\textsuperscript{41} theme-- of Love triumphing over impediments. The narrative unfolds around the Love of two modern-educated members of a Taravad and it proceeds in more or less the same fashion as in Indulekha, between the emotionally self-controlled Woman and the Man less capable of this. The heroine Kamalam earns a B.A. degree, works in a Girls' School in Madras away from home, takes tuitions, writes books, and saves money to support her beloved's education abroad. Kamalam's capacity for Love is expressed in her willingness to labour for pay; it does not signify a lack of Womanliness but an abundance of it. Also, in Anna Chandy's remarkable speech quoted earlier, there is the dogged effort to establish that women's efforts to enter the public domain was really in support of their homes.\textsuperscript{42}

Here there seems to be at work a redefinition of Womanliness intimating a reconfiguration of the order of gender, not an outright rejection of it. There was also no

\textsuperscript{40} V.I. Mannadiyar, Kamalam, Kozhikode: P.K. Brothers, 1949, first published, c. 1924.


\textsuperscript{42} Anna Chandy, 'Streeswatantryathe Patti', op.cit., n.2, p.142.
necessary rejection of 'Womanly' capacities as defining Woman, though the interpretation of such capacities were often disputed in defence of women's entry into the public domain. In Anna Chandy's speech mentioned above, the interpretation of 'Womanly' capacities that excluded the capacity for physical labour is contested. However, she pointed out that educated women were too sensible to seek work in departments like the Police and the Army. Such an argument was often used against sarcastic comments about women's employment, such as that made by a member of the Shree Mulam Praja Sabha in 1934, to which the woman-member, T. Narayani Amma, responded this way:

".....women who seek entry in public service are generally educated and enlightened, and I hope our well-meaning brothers will concede to them sufficient wisdom and discretion not to apply for any post in the Police, Military and Excise Departments."

In fact, many of those women who were active in public life as legislators, public speakers or reformers actually endorsed the domestic ideal. In the legislatures of Kochi and Tiruvitamkoor, for instance, women-members were arguing affirmatively for both Womanly education and the reservation of jobs for women. The same could be seen happening in

43. ibid., above, p.144. For another example of such questioning see, K.P.M. 'Streekal Abalakalano ?' (Are Women Weak ?) LakshmiBhagy Vol 3(8), 1908, pp.329-37.

44. ibid., above, p.146.


46. T.Narayani Amma, Discussion on the Statham Committee Report in the Shree Mulam Assembly, (..continued)
reformist meetings in which women who made public speeches were found advising other women to adhere to the modern domestic ideal.47

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Demands for Supplementary Grants, Education, November 15, 1933, *Proceedings* Vol 2, 1935, pp.98-99. Devaki Antharjanam, Speech, General Discussion of Budget, 26 July, 1937, *Proceedings* Vol.10, 1938, pp.214-16. In this speech she calls for Womanly education as necessary for women. But elsewhere she supported a motion that pleaded for posts that would employ women, T.Narayani Amma's motion requesting the government to appoint an Inspectress of Co-operative Societies to encourage the spread of the Co-operative movement among women. (T.Narayani Amma, Motion no.391, Demands for Grants made by the Co-operative Department, 3 August, 1937, *Proceedings* Vol 10, 1938, p.862). However, the observation that demands for Womanly education made in legislative bodies hardly reflected the ambitions of women was often made. The M.M's correspondent in the Assembly commented upon such a demand made by a member, K.Narayana Pillai, that "...this opinion might earn the contempt of today's womenfolk. He could have demanded instead that women should be given more representation in the Praja Sabha or that a woman should be appointed Deputy President of the Legislature. Is it not a great error that in these days in which women are seeking to entrust not only the job of cooking food but even that of giving birth, to men, that Mr.Narayana Pillai should condemn them to training in cooking?". Manikantan, 'Sandarshakabhiprayam' (Visitor's Opinion), March 5, 1927. Obviously an exaggeration, this comment nevertheless reflects the debates over women's space in the period. Such debates about women's space were more frequent in the '30s. For example P.Narayanan Nair remembers a debate sparked off by Sanjayan's article titled 'Sheelavatium Pativratyavum' (Sheelavati and Wifey Devotion) which appeared in the *Mathrubhumi*, in which more women than men took part. P.Narayanan Nair, *Aranootandilude* (Through Half-Century), Kottayam : SPSS, 1973, p.133. See also, Sanjayan's concluding essay in this debate, titled 'Sahodarare Namukku Pinvanguka(Bretheren, let us Retreat), published in *Mathrubhumi*, April 15, 1935. Reprinted in Sanjayan (M.R. Nair), *Hasyanjali*, Kozhikode : Mathrubhumi, 1974, pp. 174-79.

47. In an interesting report, the M.M. covered the *streesammelana* (women's conference) conducted along with the 9th Meeting of the Keralaeya Catholic Congress at Paia in 1927 in which a speech on Womanly Duty was made by A.T. Mary which stressed the need to be obedient to the husband, and to maintain silence at times. Apparently, this speech was sharply attacked in the concluding speech in which asserted women's right to protection and dignity as wives was asserted. (M.M., May 7, 1927); See also, speech by Junior Maharani of Tiruvitamkoor at VJT Hall, Thiruvananthapuram, M.M., November 24, 1927; Report of the Meeting of the Malabar Branch of All-India Women's Educational Conference at Kozhikode, M.M., December 13, 1927. Speech by Sali Koyi, Principal of *Kraistava Mahilalakayam* (Home for Christian women), Aluva, at the annual meeting of the Thiruvananthapuram branch of the All India Women's Conference, 1936, reported in *M.N.Nair Masika* Vol 1(2), 1936, pp.123-25.
It is, then, rather difficult to find conclusive evidence in the debates or in the developments of the '20s and '30s that Womanhood, or the ideal of modern society structured in terms of the order of gender, was being unequivocally rejected. However, as we may see in the following section, there is plenty that indicates that 'Womanly' capacities were being found to be useful in an ever-increasing number of institutions, not just the home.

II. **SOCIETY AND 'WOMANLY' CAPACITIES**

In many modern institutions increasingly familiar in Keralam in the twentieth century, it was recognised that 'Womanly' capacities did have significant use. Take, for instance, the modern school. It was established early enough that the modern school, ideally, should not rely upon the application of violence to secure discipline. Instead, discipline was to be secured through establishment of regular contact between pupils and teachers through words, minimising the application of physical violence. The Director of Education of Kochi in a circular issued in 1890 forbid corporal punishment in schools thus:

"No corporal punishment is to be inflicted on a pupil in any class of a Sirkar School except by the Headmaster of the School, or at his express order and in his presence. Teachers stand in the place of parents to their pupils and kind and encouraging words are generally better than blows to make boys work, so there should be no cane or strap in a teacher's hands to be an
object of terror to his pupils."**

Thus the teacher’s words, rather than his blows, are judged to be more important in securing obedience from pupils. However, it was often claimed that words were useless if she/he who pronounced them did not prove to be an exemplar of whatever ideal that was being pronounced. Regarding the correct upbringing of children, Dewan T. Madava Row had advised that "...If the father's conduct is exemplary, the effect of such an example to imitate will be far more useful than the father's advice..."** Ideal conduct, therefore, seemed at times more potent than words in disciplining students.

One may be easily convinced of this by examining portraits of ideal teachers found in biographies and autobiographies of people who lived in this period. The ideal teacher is she/he who is able to substitute the power of words for blows; more crucially, she/he is one

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48. Alfred Forbes Sealy, Director of Education, Circular No.26 regarding Corporal Punishment, 19 July 1890. Reprinted in the *Archives Treasury*, Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala State Archives, 1993, pp.99-100. Of course, it should not be supposed that corporal punishment was avoided in modern schools—rather the contrary. There is ample evidence to show that this continued.

49. T. Madava Row, *Hints on Training Native Children*, V. Nagam Aiya (trans.), Kottayam: CMS Press, 1889, p.60. This work also claimed that the Ruler - Subject relation was similar to the parent-child relationship, and that the State must be revered by its subjects in the same way children respect their father, as a benevolent protector and guide. Interestingly enough, early missionaries often stressed the necessity of such a relation between the converts and the missionary. The missionary Ringletaube who carried out proselytising work in Tiruvitamkoor, answering thirteen queries put to him by Col. Munro regarding the Protestant Mission in South Tiruvitamkoor in 1813, stressed this. In reply to the query about the nature of the missionary's control over his juniors and converts he begged the querist"...to consider that among infant congregations raised among the most stupid of Indians, the Missionary ought to have the authority of a father among children, the more so in point of joining the congregation or leaving it, they experience not the smallest compulsion. A Church that is governed on the patriarchal principle stands in need of very few regulations..." The queries and answers are given in full in C.M. Agur, *Church History of Travancore* (1903). New Delhi: AES, 1990, pp.593-94.
who scrupulously adhered to what was said. R. Easwara Pillai, himself a venerated teacher and educationist in Tiruvitamkoor, a student at the Maharajah's College in the late nineteenth century, remembers that his teachers educated their pupils not only by transmitting knowledge but also by their exemplary life-styles. This, he claims, was a lesson he never wavered from. One may also mention the figure of Vamana Baliga, as he is etched in E.V.Krishna Pillai's memoirs, whose success as a teacher gets linked in this account to his exceptional sense of non-violence, his uncompromising rejection of all worldly temptation to luxury. This is true for figures of ideal teachers in literary writing as well.

In Vamana Baliga as he is made to appear in E.V.'s memoirs, many of the qualities that make him a successful disciplinarian seem distinctly 'Womanly': his gentle disposition, lack of shame in performing domestic chores and caring for children, special

51. ibid., above.
53. See, for instance the figure of the ideal teacher who appears in Paravur K.N.Gopala Pillai's Unmathan (The Drunk), Kollam : Sree Rama Vilasom Press, 1938. This tells the story of the entanglement of a modern-educated youth in the politiking and power-struggles in the official circles at Thiruvananthapuram.
54. What these were supposed to be has been discussed in Chapter I.
55. E.V. Krishna Pillai, op.cit., n.52, pp.529-50.
consideration for unruly children,56 his willingness to listen and to display affection and so on. This ideal teacher resembles a parent, specifically the ideal Mother. When the teacher was female, this association was explicitly made.57 Inspectors reporting on Mrs. Baker's school for girls at Kottayam in 1879 remarked thus:

"We could not be but struck by the beautiful order of the school-room, and the clean and happy appearance of the children who feel that they have in Mrs. Baker not only a most able mistress, but a most kind and loving mother.58

Order and happiness, mistress and mother, seem entwined in the success of the School. The significance of motherliness in making the teacher an effective disciplinarian was voiced early in the twentieth century, in the discussion of the issue of employing Assistant Inspectresses in the Department of Public Education. In 1909, the Director of Public Education received a report that it was not advisable to make married women permanent officers, which was accepted. Against this, a memorandum was submitted to Dewan P. Rajagopalachari which claimed that it was mostly married women,

56. ibid., above.
"...who are more capable of greater kindness to pupils, of caring for children, paying considerate attention to their wishes, of seeking out their mental abilities and weaknesses, and suitably instructing them."

By the 1930's, there was much greater acceptance for the argument that stressed the use of 'Womanly' capacities in the ideal modern school. In 1926, the Director of Public Instruction of Kochi admitted that

"It has been quite evident that it is women who possess the natural skill and efficiency in the instruction of children, than men. My wish is to appoint women as teachers in lower classes not only in girls' schools but also in boys' schools."

The Junior Maharani of Tiruvitamkoor, speaking in 1929, affirmed the propriety of appointing women-teachers in primary schools, identifying in them 'natural' capacity to be good teachers, and recommended 'teaching, medicine, nursing to women. The President of the Women-Teachers' Conference at Kochi in 1929 pointed out that not only women-teachers but all women are engaged in teaching and that all women must pay special attention to teaching children in their homes. In 1931, the same argument regarding the

60. 'Mahilabhashanam' in The Mahila Vol. 6(7), 1926, p.395.
62. 'Kochiyile Adhyapika Sammelanam' (Lady-Teachers' Conference at Kochi), M.M, 13 March, 1929.
merits of appointing married women-teachers was being reiterated.\textsuperscript{63}

The number of modern schools in Tiruvitamkoor and Kochi generally grew in this period. Between 1865-'66 and 1904-'05, the number of vernacular schools in Tiruvitamkoor rose from 12 to 1483,\textsuperscript{64} attendance rose from 865 to 99757 pupils.\textsuperscript{65} Women were gaining ever-greater access to schools as students and teachers. In 1898, 19\% of all girls of the primary age group in Tiruvitamkoor and 14\% in Kochi were going to school.\textsuperscript{66} By the late 1950's, 87\% of the girls of this age-group in Kerala were in school.\textsuperscript{67} In 1941, 15\% of all the teachers in Tiruvitamkoor, and 30\% in Kochi were women.\textsuperscript{68} Ever since, this figure has continued to increase.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{63} R. Easwara Pillai, 'Udyogavum Vivahavum' (Employment and Marriage), \textit{The Mahila} Vol.11(2), 1931, pp.9-13. Regarding the marital status of Inspectresses, the dispute was still going on. T. Narayani Amma, woman-member of the Sree Mulam Praja Sabha, strongly objected to the denial of this post to married women, as was proposed by the Satham Committee Report. See, Demands for Supplementary Grants – Education, November 15, 1933, \textit{Proceedings} Vol.II, 1934, p.98.


\textsuperscript{65} ibid., above. In 1901, there were 3683 educational institutions in Tiruvitamkoor providing 1 school for 792 persons, and 1.9 square mile area, and 119 schools per Taluk on an average. (P.K. Michael Tharakan, 'Socio-Economic Factors in Educational Development : The Case of 19\textsuperscript{th} Century Travancore', Working Paper No.190, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, 1984, p.4).


\textsuperscript{67} ibid., above.

\textsuperscript{68} ibid., above, p.69.

\textsuperscript{69} Recently women have outnumbered men in teaching at the school-level. See, Dr. S. Radha, \textit{Women, Men and Development in Kerala}, Thiruvananthapuram, 1994, p.68.
A second set of institutions found open to women as employees were those of health. As early as 1905, *Sharada* carried an article recommending the medical profession to women, claiming that it suited their 'natural' talents. In Tiruvitamkoor women were being trained in the Health Department in modern midwifery, much before and had also begun to work as nurses by early twentieth century. The article in *Sharada* argued:

"...It is necessary to consider whether a woman possesses all the special qualities essential for a doctor. A doctor needs to be thoughtful, sharp; besides, endurance, compassion, patience with the sick and love for fellow-beings are necessary. Since these qualities are inherent in a woman, she is far more eligible for this profession than men. Moreover we know by experience that Woman displays greater efficiency and firmness in nursing the sick than Man. The talent for nursing is inherent in women. They have only to gain experience in the clinical side."

For nurses too, there were restrictions upon marriage imposed on the basis of the purely practical consideration that married nurses would have to divide their time and

70. Women were part of the medical establishment in Tiruvitamkoor early enough. See, *Travancore Administrative Report 1869-'70*, p.112. Here the need for women-employees was stressed in the context of popularising vaccination among women.

71. *The Administrative Report* of Tiruvitamkoor of 1869-70 reported that four midwives had been attached to the Lying-in hospital as nurses (p.112); the previous year, eight Nair women had begun to receive training in modern midwifery (*Administrative Report 1868-69*, p.69). In the *Administrative Report 1898-'99*, female health workers ranged from Surgeon to sick nurses, including Assistant Apothecaries, Matrons and Licensed Midwives in maternity care (p.99). Efficient nursing was first introduced in Tiruvitamkoor State Hospitals in 1906 employing eight European nuns (*Travancore Administrative Report 1932-33*, p.179). Hospitals for women were extended. The Zenana Mission Hospital for women received a special grant from Shree Mulam Tirunal to add a number of beds for women. The Victoria Hospital for Women at Kollam was founded in 1897. In 1927, a Women's Medical Service was operating here, and midwifery calsses were begun at the District Hospital at Alappuzha. See, T.K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual* Vol 3, (1940), Thiruvananthapuram : Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1996, p.678; pp.702; p.715.

energy between domestic and official duties.\textsuperscript{73} Again, this was objected to on the very same grounds raised against the necessity of unmarried status for Assistant Inspectresses. In 1926, P.K. Narayana Pillai criticised this rule thus:

"It is totally meaningless to insist that nurses must necessarily be unmarried. Everyone will agree that women, in comparison to men, have greater natural talent, patience, and maturity for this profession. This is why, of course, women are appointed in hospitals for this job. But such qualities are found in greater brilliance in married women. It is married women, rather than unmarried ones who have greater experience, patience and skill in nursing."\textsuperscript{74}

Here the government's objection was not that 'Womanly' capacities are irrelevant in the health-care institutions, but that these would be wastefully utilised, to the disadvantage of the health-care institution, if divided between the home and the official domains. Such objections were advanced by the government in other instances also, as, for example, when the eligibility of women for clerical jobs was being considered. Regarding this the government argued that it was difficult to arrange accommodation for women-staff during circuit visits, especially when all other staff were men.\textsuperscript{75} In this case too, only unmarried

\textsuperscript{73} Report of Question-Answer Session in the Tiruvitamkoor Legislature, \textit{M.M.}, August 8, 1926. Mrs. Punnen Lukose, the Head of the Medical Department advanced this reason.

\textsuperscript{74} ibid., above. Of course, this reply was not really an answer to the practical difficulty raised by Mrs. Lukose. In fact, when fairly the same objection was raised with regard to the Assistant Inspectresses of Girls' Schools, T.Narayani Amma gave a much-more pointed reply when she argued that domestic duties affect both married and unmarried women more or less alike. \textit{Proceedings Vol.II}, 1934, p.98.

\textsuperscript{75} 'Mahilabhashanam' in \textit{The Mahila} Vol. II(1), 1931, pp.9 - 13.
women were to be considered.\textsuperscript{76}

In the 1930's, the variety of institutions in which 'Womanly' capacities were found essential increased. In 1934, Sanjayan, writing in the \textit{Mathrubhumi} identified civic government as such an area:

"...in reality women have greater ability to govern municipalities than men. The delineation of public government as an exclusively male preserve is a relic of those older times when brute force was the law. The chief qualities that rulers need these days...are womanly qualities like patience, gentle disposition, tact and resourcefulness. There is not much difference between governing the home and governing a municipality."\textsuperscript{77}

What is interesting here is the association of 'brute force' with men. This (i.e., 'brute force'), which was earlier associated with the traditional order, now gets linked to 'men'. In turn, 'Women' get associated with the sort of power of modern governance— that which is non-coercive and proceeds from qualities such as love, compassion, patience etc. In fact such redefinition of State power was at least as old as T. Madava Row's text on the training of `native children'\textsuperscript{78} in which the father-figure is moulded in a benevolent form, and then it is argued that the State resembled the benevolent father who would protect and guide his

\textsuperscript{76} ibid., above.

\textsuperscript{77} Sanjayan (M.R.Nair), 'Bharanadhikaram Streekalkku' (Political Authority to Women), (1934); reprinted in \textit{Hasyanjali}, Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi, 1974, p.49.

\textsuperscript{78} T. Madava Row, op.cit., n.49. In fact the figure of modern father that replaced that of the \textit{karanavar} in writings was often a benevolent one. But such qualities were found more characteristic of Woman, than Man.
children without excessive violence or the use of superstitious faith. In fact such redefinition opened up certain institutions of State power as potential sites in which 'Womanly' abilities could be utilised. In the definition of many other modern institutions too, such potential was opened (whether it was fully explored or not in practical terms is a different question). For instance, in one text, the modern community was said to be held together not by coercive bonds but by the power of love, and it was claimed that its leaders needed not only "knowledge" but also "patience". Further, the trading organisation and the factory are recognised to be similar to the community in these respects:

"The community must be envisioned as a large trading organisation or factory and only those who have the necessary capacity to manage must be assigned to leadership. In both, the leaders, besides being clear about the objectives and the practical means, must also possess the discretionary sense to recognise the different skills and abilities of particular individuals, and assign different tasks accordingly, and the knack to make individuals perform duties happily without subjecting them to pain."

This text, A.Gopala Menon's *Samudayolkarsham* (Progress of Society), nowhere recommends that women should be assigned leadership tasks in the modern community. But from the list of qualities found necessary for leadership of the community (and by extension, of the trading-organisation and the factory), and given the fact that by this time it was

79. ibid., p.60.
81. ibid., above.
common enough to identify many of these as more natural to Woman, it is obvious that it leaves open the potential for arguing in favour of women's eligibility for employment in these institutions as managers.

Besides, certain spaces for women began to be carved out in institutions that initially seemed to admit no such space at all -- for instance, in the institutions of economic production and exchange. The *Tiruvitamkoor Co-operatives Enquiry Committee Report* (1934) sought to draw upon 'Womanly' capacities in encouraging the growth of the co-operative movement.

"Women who by birth possess frugality and the propensity to save must be trained in such qualities, and the facilities for these are not provided by institutions that merely provide finance."^82

The woman-member in the Shree Mulam Praja Sabha was insisting in 1937 the need to appoint an Assistant Inspectress of Co-operatives to provide encouragement and advise to women in this field.^83 The marketing and production-efforts undertaken by women's

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82. *Travancore Co-operatives Enquiry Committee Report* (1934), Chapter 1, p.101. Speaking at the Tiruvitamkoor Co-operatives Conference in 1930, B.Anandavalli Amma argued that women too had to bear part of earning subsistance, and more significantly, that "the principles of co-operation may be more naturally found in women's nature....women, when together, are more likely to co-operate with each other than, men...." B.Anandavalli Amma, 'Streekalum Sahakaranavum' (Women and Co-operation), Speech published in *Mangalodayam* Vol.17 (8), 1930, pp.592-94.

83. T. Narayani Amma, Motion No.391, Demand for Grants made by Co-operative Department, 3 August, 1937, *Proceedings*, Vol.10, 1938, p.862. Replying to this, the Registrar of Co-operative Societies P. Parameshwaran Pillai, admitted that "Women with their inborn habit of thrift and their particular knack for effecting savings are quite fitted to come into the movement" (p.862). But he remarked that women's response had been hitherto quite inadequate—out of 1766 registered Co- (..continued)
organisations were mentioned approvingly in the Report. Cottage-Industry' was also being widely recommended to women and this encompassed a wide variety of activities including weaving, preserving food, basket-making, sewing, vegetable-farming, animal-husbandry etc. Middle-class women were urged to set up such units both for their good and as a form of social service, employing poor women, and the example of lace-making industry in South Tiruvitamkoor organised by white women who trained and employed local women, exporting the products successfully, was cited. Indeed, after the '20s and '30s which saw important legislation sanctioning the partitioning of joint-family properties, cottage-industry was often prescribed as the panacea to the multifarious operative Societies, only 9 were of women. Streesamajams were found to be effective as focal points for the formation of co-operative societies—the Report mentioned the Thiruvananthapuram Hindu Vanita Sangham and the Adoor Shree Chithira Vilasom Vanita Sangham (Report, pp.101-104). In 1926 the M.M. reported the inauguration of the Mahila Bhushanam Cooperative Society, at Moovattupuzha (M.M., 'Moovattupuzha Varthakal', July 20, 1926).

84. The institutions mentioned above were engaged in selling milk, rice-preparation or weaving.

85. Chengannur Bhargavi Amma, 'Nammude Dhrmam', The Mahila Vol.6(5), 1926, pp.161-66. Streesamajams were once again identified as the most effective organisations to encourage cottage industries among women by the Director of Industries during the discussion on the Motion proposed by T. Narayani Amma in the debate over the Demand for Grants for Industry. This urged the government to introduce a scheme of home industries for women. The example of the Hindu Mahila Mandiram in Thiruvananthapuram was pointed out. (Discussion of Grants for Industry, T. Narayani Amma, Motion No.395, p.868; Response to discussion from Director of Industries, 3 August, 1937, Proceedings Vol.10. Such demands were being made earlier itself in the legislature (T. Narayani Amma, Discussion on the Budget, 28 July, 1934, Proceedings Vol.3, 1935, p.354).


87. The Kochi Nair Regulation of 1919 which limited the Karanavar's powers, followed by the Kochi Nair Bill of 1937-38 which ended the Karanavar's authority and facilitated partitioning of properties;
ailments that, it was feared, would strike various social groups. Nair women were advised to employ themselves in such activity to ease the difficulties of the Taravad. E.M.S. Nambutiripad gave Antharjanams the same advice in 1944. Addressing young Nair men in 1956, Mannath Padmanabhan advised them to convince their kinswomen that fulfilling domestic tasks was not enough, and that they must engage in income-generating activity around the home. Such proposals were being advanced in a society in which large numbers of women were labouring in agricultural, artisanal and industrial production; but 'cottage-industry' was clearly distanced from that labour. This income-generating activity was firmly tied to the apron-strings of Woman's role as resource-manager of the Home.

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the Nair Bill of 1925 in Tiruvittamkooor which allowed partition; the Madras Marumakkathayam Act of 1933 which allowed individual partition on demand by a majority of members of the joint family; the Mappila Marumakkathayam Act of 1933; the Madras Nambutiri Act; the Ezhava Act; the Nanchilnad Vellala Act etc. in Tiruvittamkooor etc.


89. E.M.S. Nambutiripad, 'Nambutiri Manushyanakanamenkil' (If the Nambutiri is to Become Man), Speech at Yogakshema Sabha Annual Conference, Kozhikode: Desabhimani, 1944, p.22.


91. One interesting after-effect of this reworking of the Home seems to be the increasingly positive revaluation of Marumakkathayam (matriliney). It may be remembered that earlier, the contemporary condition of the matrilineal way of life was diagnosed to be one of decay which left women without succour and support (Sir C. Sankaran Nair, Speech at the 4th Annual Meeting of the Keralaeya Nair...
An advocate of cottage-industry suggested that "with industrial training women will be able to make productive use of things that are mostly thrown away as useless, in their homes themselves." Larger ventures were seen to add to the perfection of Womanliness by taking up the idle time of Domestic-Woman, thus contributing to her self-culture, at the same time, enabling her to do her "duty to society" by uplifting poorer women. And this activity too, was seen to be in tune with 'Womanly' capacities: "I believe that women have a natural talent to produce commodities efficiently—what is needed is adequate training."

Similar developments may also be observed in the attitude regarding the entry of women into the Police. It might be remembered that advocates of women's entry in to the

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Samajam at Thiruvananthapuram, published in the M.M., June 11, 1910). Also, it was often charged that it encouraged greed among Nair women. In Indulekha (op.cit., n.41) for instance, a Brahmin character remarks: "How awfully cruel! What will not the females of these dirty Nairs dare to commit, who would take as husband the richer man..." (p.119). A similar criticism was also voiced in Meenakshi (Chenuvalathu Chathu Nair, Meenakshi (1890), Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1990). But by the '40s, it seemed to be seen in different light. Dewan C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyer of Tiruvitanamkoor showered praise upon it at the opening ceremony of, not surprisingly, the Women's Work Exhibition at Thiruvananthapuram in 1946: "...the matriarchal system was responsible, in a sense, for the high level of education, and was at the foot of all progress made in Kerala. There was no greater misfortune that would encounter Kerala than the substitution of the present social economy by a system prevailing on the East Coast which reduces the Woman to an ornamental appendage and economic nullity". (Report of speech, Travancore Information and Listener Vol.7(2), 1946, p.12). That the economic interests of women were firmly linked to an altruistic domesticity could have possibly been one reason why this became possible.


94. ibid., n.92, p.48.
public domain had often insisted that educated women would not aspire to 'un-Womanly' vocations such as the police department. But by the 1940's, the Tiruvitamkoor government was boasting of its women-police. Now the duties of the Police did not seem entirely incompatible with Womanliness: special tasks were identified within the general business of maintaining law and order that seemed to call for 'Womanly' capacities. In 1947, *The Travancore Information and Listener* proudly carried a photograph of its women-police with the following caption: "The State's pioneer experiment in the enlistment of Women Police has been marked by unqualified success both in dealing with the problem of the woman-delinquent and in the performance of the wider duties of citizenship.'

In the political struggles that marked the 1930's, especially in Malabar, the rising tide of Gandhian nationalism was accompanied by remarkable participation of women as activists, speakers and organisers. Gandhian ideals of political struggle gave special

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95. Refer notes 44-45 of this Chapter.


97. Women took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement in Malabar in many ways ranging from indirect support to Khadi popularisation, anti-liquor actions, social work, 'Harijan work' etc., to participation in high-level political committees as organisers and activists, leading demonstrations, courting arrest as volunteers, assuming 'Dictatorships'. Several women's organisations sprung in the course of the Movement such as the Rashtriya Stree Sabha of Kannur in April 1931, the *Balika Bharat Sangh*, the *Kerala Mahila Desasevika Sangh* etc. For details, see P.K.K. Menon, op.cit, n.3 pp. 172 - 265. It also saw the rise to prominence of notable women-writers—such as the poetess Kadathanattu Madhavi Amma. For a note on her work, see Prof.M. Achutan, *Swatantrya Samarakum Malayala Sahityavum*, Thirssur: Current Books, 1994, pp. 311-12. A number of activists and intellectuals who lived through these times recall women's participation as an 'event' in itself. See, P. Narayanan Nair, (...continued)
emphasis to 'Womanly' qualities--love, compassion, etc.-- in the many forms of satyagraha. Often it was in the constructive activity that women-activists rooted themselves even while actively participating in agitations and organisational work. It may be remembered that when Courage figured among 'Womanly' qualities, it seemed to follow Woman's capacity for Love. This apparently, made it different from 'man's courage':

"Only when a Woman's love is aroused does she become capable of praiseworthy deeds of courage.... A Man's courage is absolutely animal. It is displayed only in occasions that give rise to fame and honour. But Woman's Courage? It is sublime. Woman does not hope to earn fame by her courage. On the contrary, it is through love and strength of mind that women become courageous".

And patriotism is, after all, Swarajya Sneham (love for one's own country).

The two extreme poles of 'Womanly' participation in political struggle were already laid during the Vaikom Satyagraha in Tiruvitamkoor in 1924. On the one side there was the...

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98. See, for instance, the reminiscences of the prominent Congress-woman of the 1930's, Mukkapuzha Karyayani Amma, Mathrubhumi Weekly, November-January 1983-84. Another prominent political figure, A.V. Kuttimalu Amma was also active in constructive work—the orphanage at Kozhikode and the children's home at Vellimadukkunnu were founded and run at her initiative. (C. Achyuta Menon, Avar Rajyadhimu Vendu Jeevichchu. (They lived for the Country), Thiruvananthapuram: Prabhatam Publishing, pp.41-44, 1980). Many of the Streesamajams established during the Civil Disobedience Movement in Malabar were engaged in constructive work. (P.K.K. Menon, op. cit., n.3)

99. This has been discussed in greater detail in Chapter I.

100. B.B. Amma, 'Streeyude Jeevitam' (Woman's Life), The Mahila Vol. 16(8), 1936, p.338.
"Pidiyari" (Handfulls of Rice) Fund raised by the housewives of Mayyanad from their homes and their neighbourhoods which enabled the opening of a canteen for satyagrahis in July 1924. At the other extreme was the call issued to women to actively participate as satyagrahis to "deliver the sacrifice", interestingly, in the cause of other women who suffered from Jati disabilities, and both these were voiced together. In 1932, during the Civil Disobedience Movement, a furore raised over the Talashery Joint Magistrate's order to confiscate the Tali of Mrs. Prabhu, a 'Dictator' of the Congress, as part of a fine imposed on her. This was interpreted as a gross insult to Indian Womanhood and chaste wifehood, the Tali being the symbol of a woman's married status (thus to remove the Tali could be interpreted as making the woman a widow). One could be at once a chaste wife and a dedicated political activist; i.e., one's Womanliness was not compromised in Satyagraha;

103. This issue was brought before the British House of Commons, see P.K.K. Menon, op. cit., n.3, pp.249.
104. Kamala Visveswaran, 'Small Speeches, Subaltern Gender, Nationalist Ideology and its Historiography', *Subaltern Studies IX*, Shahid Amin, Dipesh Chakravarthy (ed.), N. Delhi; OUP, 1996, pp.87-118. She challenges the thesis that the 'Women's Question' ceased to be an item of negotiation with the colonial state in the twentieth century in Indian Nationalism, and shows through an examination of the debates over sexual segregation and gendering jail attire during satyagraha, that women's bodies continued to figure as nationalistic signifiers, commenting that "...now the terms are reversed. The point is that now it is the colonial state that is unfit to rule because it degrades women by forcing them to live as widows." (pp 99-102). Nationalist satyagraha, therefore, needed women-participants as 'Women', saturating this signifier all the more with qualities such as non-violence, compassion etc. Visveswaran sees in this a strategy of containment (p.117). She further points out the unmistakable elitism involved in this strategy which privileged upper-class women (pp.89-90).
indeed it was these qualities that were being called upon.

The specificity of this justification of Woman's presence in the public domain cannot be stressed enough. It was, on the one hand, different from the endorsement of employment of women in institutions such as schools, hospitals etc. in the hope of attracting more girl-pupils or women-patients. For example, in 1893, the Malayala Manorama recommended that more women should be appointed as small-pox inoculators to popularise inoculation among women folk generally averse to male inoculators. This continued to be advanced even in the 1930's, for example, in the call for more intense reformist activism by Antharjanams which, it was supposed, would attract more Antharjanams to reformism.

On the other hand, it was also different from the argument that women's intellectual competence being equal to men's, they deserved equal recognition in the public domain, found voiced as early as the late nineteenth century, for instance, in Kuttikunhu Tangkachi's play Ajnathavasam in which the work of the female playwright is affirmed to be no less worthy of public attention than the male playwright's.

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105. Educating women, employing women as health workers and teachers, it was calculated, would enable the penetration of the seclusion of women in local society. The cumulative effect of reaching women was recognised early enough in the 19th century. It was during the small-pox epidemic in Kochi in 1893 that the MM made this suggestion MM, 'Kochi Government Dristiveppan' (For the Attention of the Kochi Government), May 27, 1893, it is to be found in the Travancore Administrative Report 1869-70, p.112, also.


107. Kuttikunhu Tangkachi, 'Ajnathavasam' in Dr.S.Guptan Nair (ed.), Kuttikunhu Tangkachiyyude (..continued)
With 'Womanly' capacities finding application in ever-greater number and variety of institutions, the relevance of the public/domestic divide as the organising-model of 'Manly' and 'Womanly' capacities relatively faded. One consequence of this was the increased association of Womanliness with a specific, non-coercive power and less with domestic space. Along with this, manliness came to be associated with "brute-force" -- as in

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*Kritikal, Thirssur; Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1979, p.240. Later, even the literary sensibility was found to conform to 'essential' qualities of Women. Ambady Kartyayani Amma, speaking at the All-Kerala Sahitya Parishat (Literary Conference), opined that "...the knowledge and pleasure to be had from literature has been compared to a flower. Whom does a flower suit more? If only those persons who have natural taste in music are to write poetry then women who have natural talent in music must be encouraged to take this up". (M.M., Reports of All-Kerala Sahitya Parishat, May 3, 1927). Similar arguments were frequently made regarding the issue of women's entry into the literary domain. To mention examples, K.M.Kunihilakshmi Kettalamma, writing in 1916, argued that women are capable of literary creation because of their inherent innocence and compassion. See, K.M.Kunihilakshmi Kettalamma, 'Sahityavum Streesamudayavum' (Literature and Women), *Mahila Ratnam* Vol 1(3), 1916, pp.50-52; also, B.Bhageraty Amma, 'Kalayil Streekulla Shhanam' (The Place of Woman in Art), *The Mahila* Vol 7(1), 1972, pp.1-16. This, of course, is far from Kuttikunnu Tangkachi's justification. However, the standards by which 'literature' was to be sifted from mere writing were not to be gender-specific. C.P.Achyuta Menon, reviewing Tottaikathu Ikkavu Amma's play *Subhadrarjunam* (1891), remarked that "women who are not content with the glory that may be earned through the performance of domestic tasks, beauty and good character, and are hell-bent on displaying their cleverness in the literary field also, do not deserve any sympathy. One need not give any thought to the author in criticising a poem, in judging, it to be good or bad." (C.P.Achyuta Menon, 'Subhadrarjunam', *Vidyavinodini* Vol 2(11), 1892, reprinted in T.T. Prabhakaran (compiler), *C.P. Achyuta Menonote Niroopanangal* (Critical Writings of C.P. Achyuta Menon), Thiruvananthapuram: The State Institute of Languages, 1994, pp.106-9. Whether this was challenged in the early twentieth century is not clear. Many women-authors who engaged in literary production in the 20th century—were traditionally-trained. One may mention here now-little-known poets like Mangalasheri Kochukutty Amma, Karuveli Gaurikkutty Amma and Paruvakkattu Ammukkutty Amma, named in R.Narayana Panikkar's *Kerala Bhasha Sahitya Charitram* (History of Malayalam Literature) Vol 5, Thiruvananthapuram, 1942, p.223, p.316. Besides being poets or short story-writers, women were also active as writers of children's books and as translators. To cite just one example, the work of T.C. Kalyani Amma may be mentioned. She retold Aesop's fables and stories from Banabhatta's *Kadambarikathasagaram* for children; she was also noted as the translator of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novels. For a note on T.C. Kalyani Amma, see, P.A. Menon, *Innalathe Gadyoakaranmar* (Yesterday's Prose-Writers), Kottayam: SPSS, 1988, pp.174-80.
Sanjayan's text, quoted above. With such institutions growing in a densely interpenetrative fashion\(^{108}\) for the entry of women into these institutions also grew. This entry of women into the public domain—without any necessary threat to their 'Womanliness'—has come to figure prominently in the picture of Kerala's 'progressiveness':

"Kerala Women have benefited from the expansion of educational opportunities. Educated women in Kerala find jobs in teaching, nursing, social work and related fields".\(^{109}\)

### III. 'WOMANLY' POWER, 'WOMANLY' SOCIETY.

Along with the increasing assent to the application of 'Womanly' capabilities in an ever-growing number of spheres in the public domain, the figure of the ideal Woman also underwent change. Now it seemed quite possible to be Womanly without being necessarily limited to the home. Womanliness came to be associated ever-more with the power of, fashioning individuals and not necessarily circumscribed by the domestic domain. This was

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108. N.R. Krishnan in his *Smarana* (Memoir) mentions the expansion of the network of the social service institutions begun at Cherthala in the 1940's. Along with what was originally only an orphanage, a first-aid clinic was begun, and then, nursing and midwifery-trained volunteers began operating from there. Soon, an organisation called 'Young Women’s Hindu Association' was begun to manage the orphanage; soon a midwifery and nursing training school and a lying-in hospital was begun. A creche for the children of poor families was also begun afterwards. The YWHA had charge of all these institutions, including a weaving-school. N.R.Krishnan, *Smarana* Vol 2, Cherthala, 1958, pp.34-83.

firstly distinguished from that power of subjecting the body using violence; secondly, it was distinguished from a mechanical discipline that ignored individual particularities of the subjected. As Balamani Amma pointed out:

"The old-timers insist: "only children brought up with punishment will improve". The new reformers who treat those old-timers with contempt, on the other hand, are insistent in the name of discipline that each movement of the child must be assigned a particular time and yield a particular advantage.....Many of those who are overly concerned about the health and education of children do not realise the truth that only health that is built upon happiness is lasting, and that in a slavish mind, education does not shed light but merely produces smoke."

Attentiveness to the individual characters of students, and the ability to mould them through pleasing and soothing interaction were upheld as those qualities that made women better teachers at the primary-school level.111

To demonstrate the reconstructed image of ideal Woman, we may examine a text in which such reconstruction is actively undertaken, the biography of a reformer and philanthropist of Tiruvitamkoor, K. Chinnamma, (1882 - 1930).112 Actively involved in Nair


111. M.M., August 9, 1928, Report on a motion brought by a woman-member of the Kochi Legislature requesting that only women be posted as teachers in primary schools. She attempted to justify this demand claiming that women possessed the natural ability to recognise the specificities of individual minds and develop them accordingly.

reformism, she was a teacher and Assistant Inspectress of Girls' Schools and the founder of a philanthropic institution, the Hindu Mahila Mandiram at Thiruvananthapuram. In this text, Chinnamma is projected as ideal Woman, a figure worthy of emulation. This reading shall try to explore what elements go into the making of this image, and how they are connected.

In the opening chapters, the image of Chinnamma-as-ideal Woman is already build up through a combination of several elements: her training under the missionary Augusta Blandford; her steadfastness in Love; her successful marriage and perfect rendering of wifely duties, her skill in music, embroidery, home-management and other 'Womanly' accomplishments, highly moral influence upon inferiors and servants, great charity, piety, self-control and frugality. But even as this image gets clarified, Chinnamma is not

113. She was actively involved in organising streesammelanams of the Nair Service Society, and was one of the earliest women-speakers in Nair reformist meetings. See, M.M, 6 May, 1929, Report of Streesammelanam at Karuvatta titled 'Karuvattayile Samudaya Sammelanangal' (The Community-Meetings at Karuvatta). Her speech at the Nair Conference at Perumna in 1911 is cited in N. Balakrishnan Nair, ibid, pp.187-92.

114. ibid., pp. 10-12. Another account of her school-life at the Zenana Mission School may be found in B.Kalyani Amma's memories Ormayil Ninnu (From Memory) B.Gomathy Amma (ed.), Kottayam: SPSS, 1968, Chapters 1 and 2.


116. ibid., p.45.

117. ibid., pp.46-47.
identified with the ideal Domestic Woman. Service as an Assistant inspectress of Girls' Schools,118 it is pointed out, did not make her turn away from Womanly values. In official capacity, she is said to have been committed to encouraging Womanly education119 and to posting teacher-couples together, believing that this "was very agreeable to the culture of their minds."120 She is made to emerge as an ardent votary of employing married women as teachers claiming that they were more experienced in handling young children.121 Her speeches, in which the home is identified as the child's first school, and the mother as its first teacher,122 are profusely quoted from:

"...the dignity or indignity of a home or a community are in women's hands. Women whose minds are cultured by interaction with good people, who lead moral lives andknow their duty, need to be present in every community. Those who make life in the world peaceful and happy, those who bring forth great men and women to the world are those who have realised the true intention of education."123

118. B. Kalyani Amma, remembering those times, remarks that poorer school girls, like herself and Chinnamma were often looked down upon by their well-off classmates. She points out that gaining employment was a way in which the former could, later, attain equality with the latter. "...In later days, when we attended social gatherings as teachers or inspectresses after passing examinations, those very 'ladies' who had once made fun of us prepared to receive us with respect and assume a friendly manner". From B. Kalyani Amma, op.cit., n.114, p.66.

119. N. Balakrishnan Nair, op.cit., n.112, p.44.

120. ibid., above.

121. ibid., pp.42-44.

122. ibid., pp.66-68.

123. ibid., p.68.
But, then, the duty of Woman does not seem to end here. The author quotes from a speech made by Chinnamma at the Nair Conference at Perunna in 1911:

"Do not imitate the Westerners or any other community worth emulating merely in dress or manners. Instead, imitate their noble deeds and act in accordance with their noble ideas. Civilised Western women have been engaged in, and prepare to engage in, curing the sick, spreading education, popularising religion, working for the promotion of social welfare, striving to ease the difficulties of prisoners, nursing the wounded in war, and other virtuous activity useful to the world. Let us imitate them in such deeds." 124

With the establishment of a home for destitute women, the Hindu Mahila Mandiram, Chinnamma is shown to be questioning the centrality of the home in defining Womanliness. To a relative's anxious query whether she had forgotten her home, she is said to have replied: "My individuality does not require a home for itself..." 125 Apparently, social work had distracted her from domestic responsibilities. 126 The text projects the Mandiram as one big family, and Chinnamma as the mother. 127 Her struggle to maintain normal life in the Mandiram and find resources for its upkeep is described in a series of anecdotes—her journeys in search of funds; sacrifice of food and other resources meant for her family;

124. ibid., p.189.
125. ibid., p.120.
126. ibid., above.
127. Mandiram means home, and Balakrishnan Nair points out that Chinnamma was usually referred to as 'Amma'—Mother—by all the inmates. ibid., pp.140-41; p.109; p.113.
neglect of personal problems and ailments. One particularly harrowing account is that of her labour to find resources for the Mandiram while her own son was dying.

Such willingness to suffer excruciating material constraints is linked to Chinnamma's project of redeeming the Individual from destitution. The author distinguishes it from "the older sort of sacrifice" like Sati, the which entails a loss of resources, material or human. Chinnamma's is recognised as 'true sacrifice' which, unlike the former, does not proceed unilaterally from a lower to a higher social class, or necessitates loss:

'Real sacrifice is mostly for the benefit of lesser people. A mother would serve an unruly or unhealthy son with greater diligence. A nurse abandons her sleep and toils not for the healthy, but for the ailing, all the teacher's labours are not for bright students ...but for the less intelligent ones. Public servants spend more resources not on law-abiding citizens but on law-breakers ...Social workers labour harder to uplift ignorant and depressed communities..." 

All these institutions are akin in that the inequality in the relation between reformers and objects of reform is maintained in and through such sacrifice, though both parties are ensconced within a common regulation in them. The charity that is enabled by such sacrifice is different:

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128. ibid., pp.127-32.
129. ibid., pp.145-6.
130. ibid., pp.176-77.
131. ibid., above.
"In the old order, charity worked to confirm the distance and hierarchy between groups, but now, charity works to transform those who receive it." 132

This is in contrast to the familiar notions of charity—such as that embodied in the story of Maveli, 133 in which the enormity of loss is all-important (which probably ensures the giver's dominance) and not whether it served a 'good' purpose. Modern charity, in contrast, is said to be intended to make the recipients productive, disciplined individuals, "...to promote the physical and mental development of those people whom society has rejected as inferior and make them capable of self-help." 134 Just as the ideal mother was not expected to overindulge children, Chinnamma's effort was not only to provide inmates with a comfortable life but also to give them sound training. The text quotes Chinnamma's letter to her spiritual mentor:

"...we are preparing to establish a weaving house...the children have been sent to school (it is attached to the institution). A Eurasian woman has been appointed to impart sewing lessons.

132. ibid., p.103.

133. This is the story of the Malayalee festival of Onam. Maveli (Mahabali), the great Asura King, once ruled over Keralam and during his reign, all were alike and there was no cheating or falsehood. But the jealous gods conspired to oust him and persuaded Mahavishnu to incarnate as Vamana, the Brahmin midget. The Devas knew that Maveli, famous for his boundless charity, would not refuse anything Vamana asked of him. Approaching Maveli, Vamana demanded three paces of land which the King granted him. But Vamana grew into gigantic proportions and scaled the earth with one foot and the heavens with the other. He then asked Maveli from where he was to take his third pace, to which he offered his own head, thus keeping up his reputation as great giver. However, he was allowed to visit his subjects once a year in the month of Chingam (August-September), and the festival of Onam is said to coincide with this visit, when Maveli's subjects prepare to receive him with festivities.

134. op.cit., above, n.130.
From the 19th onwards a music teacher will be appointed.\textsuperscript{135}

A regular routine was established for inmates with fixed time-segments for various activities, so that "... these orphans who have never ever taken their bath, prayer, food, schoolwork, craftwork, music lessons, rest and recreation at regular hours have now learned to do so...."\textsuperscript{136}

However, discipline in the Mandiram is shown to be maintained through 'love'. The text mentions Chinnamma's words to two young women found guilty of violating the Mandiram's norms of sexual conduct:

"I have decided not to let you spoil others outside by throwing you out as a punishment for succumbing to evil desires. Till I am convinced that you are morally sound, till I see in you the ability to bear the responsibility of life upon yourself, you are in need of instruction. For this to be achieved, I prefer not to hate but to love you. Hate is useless."\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{135} ibid., p.112. The First Yearly Report of the Mandiram (1920) mentioned that the institution included "an orphanage, a school for general education, a workshop, a technical school and a girl students' hostel". It claimed to have provided training in sewing, weaving and making articles out of grass and cadjan-leaf in the workshop and technical school (pp.4-10).

\textsuperscript{136} op.cit., pp. 115-16. The report (ibid.,above) of the Mandiram mentions that a regular routine was established there, with slight variations for children of different age-group. (pp.19-20). Interestingly, the routines and rules of conduct in the orphanage and the students' hostel were more or less the same. Compare the above with the routine and conduct-rules prescribe for the hostel, published in \textit{The Mahila} Vol 6(7), 1926, pp.394-95. Also, the reformatory school of the Tiruvitamkooor government followed the same lines, providing training in printing, book-binding, weaving etc. besides in drill and scouting. T.K.Velu Pillai, \textit{The Travancore State Manual} Vol 4(1940), Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers Dept.; 1996, p.308.

\textsuperscript{137} ibid., p.198.
Self-correction was not to be achieved through force or the mechanical execution of punishment, but through self-evaluation. One of Chinnamma's letters is quoted:

"Why do you beg pardon of me? You must ask yourself a few questions, and if you feel that you have indeed committed an offence, then ask forgiveness of yourself. You may hide from me. But you can never hide from yourself. Hence try and be your own disciplinarian." \(^{138}\)

It ended with the advice: "Read this letter carefully, and you must re-read it everyday." \(^{139}\)

In this text Womanliness gets reinscribed in a new space traversed by 'Womanly' power. This is not limited to the domestic yet does not fully encompass the public. \(^{140}\) The potential concerns that may be raised in this are health, education, hygiene, nutrition, fertility etc, which straddle public and domestic domains, blurring, though not blotting out their distinctiveness, an area where non-violent, non-materialistic values operate. Populating it was a reticulation of institutions-- ranging from State agencies to local Streesamajams -- all of which call for specifically 'Womanly' capabilities, and cluster around the project of

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138. ibid., p.232.

139. ibid., p.233.

140. D. Riley, "Am I that Name?-' Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995. Here the author discusses the construction of the 'Social' as the 'special realm' of 'Women' in 19th Century Europe. See pp.44-66.
fashioning the individual. By the '40s, these were proliferating in mutually-linked networks. Reform organisations, for instance, established schools, hospitals and orphanages with hostels, creches, health-centres or workshops attached; charity institutions were sometimes linked to hospitals, schools, prayer-halls, Streesamajams, or with State agencies of health, public welfare or law and order; schools and colleges had service organisations, women's samajams or prayer-groups. For example, the 'Young Women's Hindu Association' formed at Chertala in the '40s, first began managing an orphanage. By 1944, its network included a first-aid clinic, creche for children of poor labourers, a lying-in hospital, a weaving-school, and a nursing and midwifery training centre. This network drew actively upon other similar networks. The first-aid clinic was modelled upon Ranganayaki Ammal's Streedharmalayam at Thiruvananthapuram, and with the help of women-volunteers from that institution, attending to patients, touring the neighbouring

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141. The need for such a network of institutions was stressed by Shree Narayana Guru. Observing the general tendency towards building temples as part of reformist activity, he advised that this was not enough to promote worship (which, he pointed out, should take place "in every home, and every heart"). Sree Narayana Guru, 'Oru Sandesham' (A Message) 1908, Reprinted in P.K. Balakrishnan (Compiler and Editor), Narayana Guru- Anthology, Kochi: Publications Sub-Committee, S.N. Centenary Celebrations, 1954, p.75). By 1917, he was arguing that "the important temple must be the school". (Narayana Guru, 'Kshetrangalekkurichoru Sandeham' (A Doubt About Temples), ibid., p.81) In another message given in 1910, he recommended educational institutions for both men and women, factories, institutions for the promotion of trade, technical schools, literary organisations and libraries (ibid., p.77).

142. N.R.Krishnan, Smarana (Memories) Vol 2, Chertalla, 1948, p.34.

143. ibid., p.83.
countryside offering advise on health and hygiene, and examining pregnant women.\footnote{144} State-sponsored efforts for the promotion of health, hygiene etc. drew upon non-governmental institutions. The State-organised National Baby Week Celebrations in Tiruvitamkoor held regularly in the '20s which targeted women in order to improve the health of infants drew upon voluntary organisations like the YWCA also.\footnote{145}

In some imaginings of ideal future society, greater prominence was given to such institutions as the above which seemed to call for 'Womanly' capabilities, than to institutions like the army, the police or judiciary, which were projected as 'Manly'. An essay published in 1924 in \textit{The Mahila} \footnote{146} attempted to imagine this vision with remarkable clarity: it made a distinction between two kinds of society, one based upon the power to destroy life, and the other, upon conserving it. The former was characterised 'Manly' and the latter, 'Womanly'. Indian society when examined in this framework was found to be one subjected not only to colonial rule but also to 'Manly' priorities:

"Our rulers claim that there are not enough doctors, schools and hospitals in the country because military expenditure takes up most of our income, leaving little for these items. They believe that it is more important to destroy life than conserve it. If women possessed as much

\begin{footnotes}
\item[144] ibid., pp.42-43.
\end{footnotes}
power in public life as men, it is definite, such a view would never circulate in any
country. 147

Western societies in which women are active in social work seem more 'Womanly'
and by virtue of this, appears closer to the ideal. 148

It puts up a strong defence of applying 'Womanly' capabilities not only in the home
but also in the public domain, and women are granted power in the public domain as
preservers of life. In fact, society is redrawn to resemble the family. 149 Women are unlike
Men and this, precisely, enables them to make a different intervention:

"No woman can walk past the bullet-ridden corpse of a full-grown human being in a carefree
manner. She will remember that each of these now-dead human beings were products of
women's labour." 150

And this intervention which is important in a society that values human life can be
made only by Women: "As long as Motherhood is assigned exclusively to women by God,
Women's intellect and opinions must be given prime importance (in social affairs). Man

147. ibid., pp.253-54.
148. ibid., pp. 250. Feminism in 19th century Britain was, interestingly, trying to infuse colonialism with
'Womanly' values - in reforming the empire. See, D. Riley, op.cit., n.140, pp.53-55.
149. ibid., p.250.
150. ibid., p.255.
can never know the value of human life like a woman does."\textsuperscript{151}

In such a society, the quality, not the size, of the population is what is important:

"We are not living in an uncivilised age. If we were then it would have been necessary for us to increase the population at any cost. But in the twentieth century, it is not the size but the quality of a society that is the sign of progress. Have not four crores of Englishmen conquered thirty crores of Indians and crushed them in their fists? It is better to have few subjects who are strong and healthy than many who are weak and ignorant."\textsuperscript{152}

Women are therefore urged to enter social work and other such activities and not just be mothers. The close connection between such work and domestic life is unequivocally emphasised:

"If the city's sanitation services are not satisfactory then even if women keep homes spotless, there will be no respite. If foodstuffs sold at the market-place cause disease, then however much housewives may slog in kitchens, no good will arise. If there are not enough doctors to cure illness and midwives to attend to births, then however much women may cover their children with affection, child-deaths will not decrease."\textsuperscript{153}

Here the complementarity emphasised in the sexual exchange almost recedes: 'Womanly' and 'Manly' forms of social power are competitors, and this article is a vociferous argument in favour of the former as superior to the latter. Such assertions were

\textsuperscript{151} ibid., p.252.

\textsuperscript{152} ibid., p.256.

\textsuperscript{153} ibid., pp.253-54.
frequently encountered in the post-War years. "For women, politics represents good sense and hygiene", said Dr. C. Rugmini Amma in a radio-talk broadcasted in 1944,

"men are faithful to ideas, women to human beings...In the field of social regeneration again women have an important part to play......for Woman is the true fountainhead of social virtues and she by her gentle and loving but nevertheless wise influence can restore society to its normal condition"154.

IV. END-NOTE

Yet the developments discussed in the foregoing sections did not herald the dawn of an era of 'liberation' for women. The number of women attaining higher education and securing employment, at least in Tiruvitamkoor, was not negligible.155 In 1931, there were

154. C.Rugmini Amma, 'Women and Post-War Reconstruction', Travancore Information and Listener Vol 5(4), December 1944, pp. 43-44. This seems to have been a common-enough theme in the post-war years. See, Report of Sir C.P.Ramaswamy Aiyer's speech, Travancore Information and Listener Vol 7(2), 1946, p.12, also see M.M, Report on Annual Conference of the Othara Sreessamajam in which Anne Mascrene spoke on the same lines, January 4, 1951. In fact it sometimes surfaces even in arguments that were completely opposed to women seeking space in the public domain. Puthezhathu Raman Menon, a staunch opponent of women moving out of the (modern) home, quoted a "thinker" who is said to have claimed that "...if the ruling authorities in all countries were women then not even the sound of war would have been heard". Puthezhathu Raman Menon, 'Streepurushamalsaram' (Competition between Women and Men) in Arivulla Ajnanikal, Kollam: S.T.Reddiar Press, 1955, pp. 41-56.

155. M.M, 'Swadeshavarta' (Local News), April 11, 1928. That year 200 women were studying in colleges in Tiruvitamkoor.
412 women-employees in the Tiruvitamkoor Public Administration—25 for 1000 men,\textsuperscript{156} a considerable increase from 1921 when there were no women employees at all.\textsuperscript{157} But the memoirs of women who lived in those times are full of accounts of the struggles involved in embarking upon such effort. Akkamma Cherian, a leading political activist in Tiruvitamkoor of the 1930s, remarks: "In those days most men, especially Syrian Catholics, were reluctant to marry young women with college education. This was probably out of fear that it might erode male domination...."\textsuperscript{158} Very often, it was against such opposition that women like her went to college and worked (she was a B.A.LT holder and a school-teacher till her entry into politics in 1938). C.K.Revati Amma has written that she could take up public life only after her last child was born, when she was forty;\textsuperscript{159} Lalitambika Antharjanam recounted that the opposing pulls of domesticity and the public world generated such tension between them that her body broke down before it;\textsuperscript{160} Mutukulam Parvati Amma gave up her ambition to become an ascetic at her mother's entreaties, though

\textsuperscript{156} Census of India 1931, Travancore- Part-I, p.240.

\textsuperscript{157} ibid., above.

\textsuperscript{158} Akkamma Varkey (nee Cherian), Appendix to 1114-nte Katha (The Story of 1114), Kottayam: D.C Books, 1977.

\textsuperscript{159} C.K. Revati Amma, Sahasrapoornima (Autobiography), Kottayam: SPSS, 1977, p.205.

she managed to remain unmarried to pursue a reformist and literary career;\textsuperscript{161} Kochattil Kalyanikutty Amma too remembers her early struggles—especially the confusion that followed from her partaking in inter-caste dining;\textsuperscript{162} the poetess Mary John Koothattukulam had to abandon her husband's home and her own family to escape an oppressive marriage, and seek refuge in the home of the reformer Dr. Palpu, and find a job in the Postal Department (she was one of the earliest women to be employed in the Tiruvitamkoor \textit{Anchal} (Postal) Department); only later did she engage actively in literary activity;\textsuperscript{163} the nun, teacher and poetess Mary John Tottam has written about her first struggle, to escape marriage and enter into union with god in the Church, and her subsequent toils to pursue her passion for poetry within the constraints of the Church.\textsuperscript{164} The ideological armour to be donned in such struggle was more or less available in the 1930's, but the practical difficulties remained. Higher education and employment did not necessarily mean the attainment of equality with men, not even in marriage. The first Malayalee woman-graduate,

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  \item \textsuperscript{161} See, 'Short Biography' appended to \textit{Mutukalam Parvati Amma Shashtypoorthyuphara Grandham} (Commemorative Volume in Celebration of her 60th year), op. cit., n.57.
  \item \textsuperscript{162} Kochattil Kalyanikutty Amma, \textit{Pathikayum Vazhiyorathe Manideepangalum} (The Traveller and the Wayside Lamps), Thrissur, 1991.
  \item \textsuperscript{163} Mary John Koothattukulam has related this in her \textit{Kattu Paranja Katha} (The Tale the Wind Told), Kottayam: D.C Books, 1988.
  \item \textsuperscript{164} Sr. Mary Benigna (Mary John Tottam), \textit{Lokame Yatra} (Farewell, World), Bharananganam: Jeevan Publications, 1986. Also see, \textit{Elanjipoo: Mary John Tottam Saptati Upaharam} (Commemorative Volume on her 70th year), Kottayam: Saptati Celebration Committee, 1971.
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B.Kalyani Amma, who was in many different ways set up as the model of Modern Woman\(^\text{165}\) herself admitted that she did not interact with her husband as his equal:

"I was obedient to my husband, and other than this, in no way did I fulfill the duty of advising him... I knew that it would not be liked by him... He would at times ask my opinion when embarking on some new endeavour. In such situations, I would give only such replies that he would find agreeable."\(^\text{166}\)

Sexual segregation was still strictly followed in most institutions. Ch. Kunhappa in his memoirs remembers how women-students were assigned a stair-case of their own, how they were granted special facilities for borrowing books and how professors had a different way of interacting with them in the premier institution of modern education in Kochi, the Maharajah's College at Ernakulam.\(^\text{167}\) However, the argument that special concessions for women should be ended because women were seeking equality with men,\(^\text{168}\) that special


\(^{166}\) B.Kalyani Amma, *Vvazhavatta Smaranakal*, ibid; pp 62-69.


\(^{168}\) Women teachers in Tiruvitamkoor received greater pay than men-teachers, and in 1929, it was suggested that these be ended, and equal pay be given to both men and women. The *MM* wrote an editorial against this suggestion. *MM*, 21 May, 1929. However this was accepted in 1930. See, *MM*, January 24, 1930.
posts must be ended, was sometimes advanced in the late '20s and '30s. The limitations placed upon married women seeking employment did not fully end even by the '50s. In 1951 the meeting of the branch of the All-India Women's Conference at Ernakulam passed a resolution requesting the Tiru-Kochi government to end limitations imposed on nurses regarding marriage.\textsuperscript{171} The issue of birth-control, which would have significant relevance to women's entry into the public domain, remained a taboo subject in the '30s, even to Women's Magazines like \textit{The Mahila}, otherwise 'progressive'.\textsuperscript{172} The discussion on birth-control at the All-India Women's Conference at Thiruvananthapuram in 1935 saw heated debate.\textsuperscript{173}

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\item \textsuperscript{169} In 1937 a member of the Shree Mulam Praja Sabha moved a motion urging the abolition of the post of Assistant Inspectress, arguing that this post was redundant. He, further, pointed out that "Now when an attempt is made to set both males and females on the same footing and the females are asserting equal rights with males in all walks of life, I do not know why we must allow the retention of this old custom of giving separate treatment as far as the Inspectress is concerned". \textit{Proceedings} Vol 8, 1937, p.403.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Robin Jeffrey points out that nursing was not so very popular in Keralam even in the '50's (op.cit; n.66, p.195) several reasons could be thought of in order to account for this; one reason might have been the disabilities that were imposed on nurses regarding marriage.
\item \textsuperscript{171} \textit{M.M}, September 7, 1951, 'Nezhsukal Vivaham Cheyyanuthenna Niyamam Swagatarhamallennu' (The Rule That Nurses should Remain Unmarried is not Acceptable), p.6.
\item \textsuperscript{172} In response to the \textit{Kasari}'s suggestion that women-legislators should petition the government to initiate family-planning measures in Tiruvitamkoor, it was asked, "... is the notoriety of being 'deniers of Motherhood' an ornament to the women of Tiruvitamkoor? Surprising!" (Mahilabhashanam', \textit{The Mahila} Vol 1(10), 1931, pp.5.
\item \textsuperscript{173} Akkamma Varkey remembers how Margaret Sanger's speech about birth-control and its relevance for women at the All India Women's Conference at Thiruvananthapuram in 1935 unleashed much revulsion. (A.Varkey, \textit{1114-Nie Katha},op.cit,n.158, p.17). For a brief account of the debate on the (..continued)
Reinscribing Womanhood thus did not also mean that differences between women were drastically reduced. Often evocations of 'Women' and their 'common condition', like Anna Chandy's speech displayed sharp awareness of differences between women: the common condition of 'women' is referred to in this text as something that exists above such difference which is, however, accepted as real.\(^{174}\) Much of the social work undertaken by women was in the direction of 'uplifting' women of lower social standing. The identification of some occupations as 'Womanly' meant also that others were excluded as not 'Womanly'. Women-activists and social workers were active in efforts to dissuade women from such activity as, for instance, the sale of liquor.\(^{175}\) Other professions such as dancing had to undergo a sanitisation before being accepted as Womanly;\(^{176}\) this also applied to professions

\(^{174}\) Anna Chandy, op.cit., n.2, pp. 133-46.

\(^{175}\) *M.M.*, August 4, 1928, 'Kochiniyamasabhasammelanam' (The Meeting of the Kochi Legislature). The woman-member demanded that if the government could not implement prohibition then it should at least make laws to prevent women from buying and selling liquor. A motion was moved later requesting such a law. *M.M.*, August 9, 1928.

\(^{176}\) Dancing was rehabilitated by Mahakavi Vallathol in his institution, the *Kerala Kalamandalam*. The
related to theatre and cinema such as acting and singing. The reinscribed Womanhood was hardly able to resonate with the struggles of women-agricultural workers which were beginning to surface in the 1930's or with the unionisation of women-industrial workers.

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necessity of such ‘sanitisation’ was emphasised by an intellectual figure of no less stature than Sahodaran K.Ayyappan. Sahodaran K. Ayyappan, ‘Vallatholum Devadasitvavum’ (Vallathol and Devadasi System), in Sahodaran Weekly, August 9, 1952. Appended to M.K. Sanoo, Sahodaran K. Ayyappan, Kottayam: D.C Books, 1989, p.292. The last court-dancer of the Tiruvitamkoor palace, Indirabhai Tangkachi, was of aristocratic lineage, and she remembers the opposition to what was perceived as ‘Dasi Attom’ (A derisive way of referring to dancing) when she started training in dance at the age of five. For a note on Indirabhai’s life, see, ‘Nrittsam Rajasadassil Tudangi...’ (Dancing began in the Royal Court...), in Vanita, December 15-31, 1997, pp.87-88.

177. In the note referred to above (n.176), Indirabhai Tangkachi remembers that she had to quit acting in films due to opposition from the palace authorities. When Kumaran Asan’s Karuna was adapted for the stage in 1932, the female roles were all played by men—the courtesan Vasavadatta being played by the famous Oachira Velukkuty. (C.L. Jose, Nadakathinte Kanappurangal (Unseen Faces of Theatre) Vol I, Kottayam: D.C.Books, 1996, p.31). By the 40s, a galaxy of stage-actresses had emerged—Thankom Vasudevan Nair, C.K.Rajam, Omallur Chellamma, Mavelikkara Ponnamma, Ambalappuzha Meenakshi Amma, C.K. Sumatikkutty Amma, Kodungalloor Ammini Amma (ibid., pp.39-40). The activity of the KPAC too brought on stage a number of actresses; in the ‘anti-Jap Melas’organised by the communists in the ‘40s, women were active in organising and participating in plays etc. Mrs. M.R.Bhattatiripad, Arya Pallom, Bhargavi Amma (See, P.Narayanan Nair, Aranoottandilude (Through Half-century), Kottayam: SPSS, 1973, p.228).


179. Women-workers were also beginning to be unionised in the ‘30s. K. Devayani (ibid.) refers to the first women’s trade union of coir-workers, the Ambalappuzha Kayarupiri Tozhilali Union, with herself as secretary. However, the general absence of women in the early trade-union leadership has, been noted, though they were active in agitations (K.T. Ram Mohan, ‘Material Processes and Developmentalism: Understanding Economic Change in Tiruvitamkoor 1800-1945’, Unpublished Ph.d Thesis, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, pp.158-59). This is despite the fact that often separate factory committees were organised for women workers with full-time women activists. They were also given special representation in union management committees. Along with annual union conferences, (continued)
However, one can hardly deny that this has proved to be one of the most durable ways of conceiving gender and of justifying women's participation in the public domain. One reason for this was probably its flexibility, which permitted women to move out of their homes without losing their claims to be Women, both resting upon and perpetuating a cultural milieu in which gender continued to be considered a valuable quality in the Individual. Another reason could have been that its boundaries were never very rigid, that potentially, any realm in which a highly Individualised and Individualising disciplining was necessary could be marked out as needing 'Womanly' capabilities—as was seen in a previous section. A third reason could be that the challenges to Womanhood were never mounted powerfully enough. It is true that the leftist critique of women's philanthropic work as bourgeois tokenism had already begun to appear in the '40s, and continued to be made till the '70s. The communists had also acknowledged a need to penetrate institutions such as the School and the Family, but did not recognise anything particularly 'Womanly' about them. Other ideals for women were often put forth in leftist literature—such as in the work of

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women's meetings were also held. It was in such a conference, that the Mahila Sanghom was formed. P.J.Cheriyan, 'The Communist Movement in Travancore: From Orgins to the Uprising of 1946', Unpublished Phd. thesis submitted to University of Calicut, 1993, p.332-35.

180. C. Achyuta Menon's play Sevanathinte Peril (In the Name of Service), written in 1940, launched a caustic critique against women-social workers. It was published only 1975 (Thiruvananthapuram: Prabhatam Publishers).

Cherukad Govinda Pisharody,\textsuperscript{182} notably, his depiction of the lawyer and dedicated party-worker, Rajamma of \textit{Devalokam}\textsuperscript{183} or the school-mistress and activist Nani of \textit{Muthassi},\textsuperscript{184} (who is an able teacher, home-manager and political activist, but has nothing marked ‘Womanly' in her). The ideal family itself was sometimes reconstituted in leftist writings: it was no longer an enclosed space constituted through gender-difference, but more a center of political and social activity, of debate and discussion, open to the world outside, with all members, male and female, as equal and energetic participants.\textsuperscript{185} But whether all this gathered enough force to seriously question the reinscribed Womanhood is yet to be investigated. All these are but initial speculations into the question regarding the remarkable persistence of Woman as ideal in Keralam. But it may be quite obvious that with the reinscribed Womanhood being available as ideal, it was easy to make a caricature out of

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\item \textsuperscript{183.} \textit{Devalokam}, op.cit., n.179.

\item \textsuperscript{184.} Cherukad Govinda Pisharody, \textit{Muthassi}(1959), Thrissur: Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1989.

\item \textsuperscript{185.} Cherukad Govinda Pisharody, \textit{Jeevitappata}(1974), (The Path of Life), Thiruvananthapuram: Deshabhimani Publications, 1984. In this work, Cherukad describes his attraction for a reconstructed ideal of family in which male and female members would be equal and active partners in social and political work(pp.250-55). Also for an interesting account of a progressive marriage, see M.R. Bhattatiripad, `Varan Delhikkum, Vadhu Kollathekkum! (The Bridegroom to Delhi, the Bride to Kollam)! Reprinted in \textit{M.R B yude Upamyyassangal}, Kozhikode: Mathrubhumi, 1988, pp.30-55; also see, A.K.Gopalan, \textit{Ente Jeevitha Katha} (The Story of My Life), Thiruvananthapuram: Deshabhimani Publications, 1980, p.176. In the ’40s, communists organised a domestic labour-union in Alappuzha, which indicates a reconceptualisation of the family as constituted by householders and servants. However this was short-lived. See, P.J.Cheriyan, op.cit., p.29.
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women's aspirations to move away from Womanliness—to describe them as 'Man-hatred', 'hysteria' or 'unreasonable discontent'. Writing in 1936, Sanjayan advised those women whom he perceived to be rabble-rousing liberationists:

"Raising impractical hullaballoo is Man's special foolishness; to make things work without any commotion is Woman's special skill. All they (i.e., Women) need to do is to put into action that domestic practice in the literary field or in any other field they may choose to enter."  