PUBLIC SPHERE AND MUSLIM WOMEN:
A STUDY OF KOZHIKODE DISTRICT, KERALA

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This thesis entitled 'Public Sphere and Muslim Women: A Study of Kozhikode District, Kerala' submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university. It is my original work.

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We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of PhD Degree of this University.

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Khadeeja Mangat

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CHAPTER-1

Introduction: Text and Context of the Study

"I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves"

-Mary Wollstonecraft

The concept of public sphere has always been a contested one for women for ages across the globe and it has undergone a tremendous process of evolution over the years. This has been the same in the Indian context as well, with the processes being mostly unique to the Indian situation. The active domains or the visibility of women were often confined and were defined and determined by the patriarchal norms. Rather than a biological norm, the division of private domain as the space for women and children and public domain for men were socially constructed.[1] It has been said that before industrialization such a demarcation was not very much visible as domestic spaces itself were the production sites.[2] But the industrial revolution changed the social structure and production sites were moved from the domestic and thus the boundary between the public and private domain became very visible. This simultaneously led to gendered spaces and thus public sphere became the uncontested realm of certain privileged group in terms of class and gender. Even though struggle for gender equality has been gaining momentum from many sections of women across the world, patriarchy is still very dominant in many societies, including the Indian society, with its various manifestations.

Muslim women of Kerala are also not an exception as they are also the constant subjects of patriarchal agencies. The whole idea of public and private domains as far as the Kerala society was concerned, pretty much like many other societies in India, are often defined by men.[3] The role played by religion in reaffirming and validating these demarcations has been very crucial. This has often resulted in Muslim women themselves disregarding the fact that they are part of the larger society and confining to what has been given to them

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[1] Habermas, Jürgen (1989),*The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere,* Cambridge, Polity Press, p. 3
[2] Ibid, p.4
[3] Devika, J (2012). "Re-inscribing 'Womanliness': Gendered Spaces and Public Debates in Early Modern Keralam, India", in Charu Gupta (ed), *Gendering Colonial India: Reform, Print, Caste, and Communalism,* Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad, p. 137

and expected from them by the religious orthodoxy. Thus often Muslim women internalized the fact that they are and should restrict themselves to the domestic or private space, thereby having any access to the public realm.

Muslim women of Kerala have been portrayed as unqualified and incapable for a long time in the popular culture of Kerala. Studies have been conducted on Indian Muslim women in general taking them as a homogenized group. Thus Muslim women of Kerala as a diverse group comprising of a varied socio, economic, political and cultural group has not been studied intensely.[4] Recently there has been some works which have just focused on either the political or economic status of Kerala Muslim women.[5] It is interesting to note how the academicians as well as the scholars have often considered and studied Muslim women in Kerala as a homogenous group in spite of a large diversity within themselves which varies from region to region. This homogenization of the identity has strictly debarred the existence of a local Islam which is very much the 'lived Islam' or the 'practical Islam' or the 'day to day Islam'.[6]

Muslims of Kerala has a rich history and they are one of the earliest Muslim communities in India. The religion reached the Kerala coast mainly through the Arab traders. The indigenous people, who found the new religion free of any caste stratification, accepted it very quickly, resulting in mass religious conversion. It has been understood that, in spite of their accepting a new religion, their ways of life remained the same. This included their adherence to various rituals and lifestyles which were often in contradiction with the textual religion. Matriliny among the Mappila Muslims of Malabar is one such example of religious syncretism seen among the Muslims of Kerala. Since patriarchy was the norm in the Kerala society even during those days, some scholars are of the opinion that

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[4] Lately there has been a few research works being carried at various universities inside and outside of Kerala on the lives of Muslim women considering their historical, social, political and economic specificities. The works like B.S, Sherin(2011), "The Labyrinth of Dissonance: Islam and Women in Kerala", PhD Diss., Mahatma Gandhi University, Saittu, Abid K (2015), "Contextualising the Veiling Practice" A study of Muslim Women in Kerala", PhD Diss., Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi are in this direction.
[5] Cherayi, Shanuga& Jose, Justin P (2016), "Empowerment and Social Inclusion of Women: Towards a new Conceptual Model", *Journal of Rural Studies,* 45(1), pp. 243-251
[6] Ahmed, Imtiaz (1981) *Ritual and Religion among Muslims in India*, Manohar, New Delhi.

matriliny never gave women any social or political advantage.[7] Robin Jeffery in his studies on matriliny observed that matriliny in Kerala is not common to the Kerala society as only a few groups practised it and matriliny doesn't mean it was matriarchy as Kerala society has been and is still a strong patriarchal society.[8]

According to Habermas, public sphere is an arena in the social life in which public opinion can be formed and most importantly it is accessible to all, irrespective of their social positions.[9] The public sphere is part and parcel of a democratic system. But what I consider by public sphere here would be more precisely spaces which are often out of the private or domestic realms, spaces which are often defined for men and prohibited for women by the patriarchal structures of religion, caste, and state; and even for that matter by women itself. The idea of public sphere or domain is not encumbered to physical, concrete spaces as there are abstract and ideological domains as well which has been demarked for men and women. Thus the whole dynamics of the public/private spheres in terms of both the physical aspects as well as intellectual aspects have been controlled by men and any alteration in these were often done by men thereby neglecting the agency of women.

So the study would basically try to sketch upon the changes in the domain of public sphere of Muslim women in Kerala or how the present day public sphere have evolved or transformed in the course of time by taking into account education and political participation as factors influencing the public/private lives of Muslim women. The changes would be studied primarily by highlighting the role and agency of the Muslim women in shaping and defining their public/private domains. The study would be focussing on the Muslim women of Kozhikode district, Malabar region, the northern part of Kerala, which is occupied by more than 70 per cent of the total Muslim population of Kerala. The Muslims of Kerala are generally known as Mappila Muslims with the

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[7] Jeffrey, R (2004-05) Legacies of Matriliny: The Place of Women and the "Kerala Model", *Pacific Affairs,* 77(4), 647-664, p.653
[8] Ibid
[9] Habermas, Jürgen (1989), *op.cit.* p.175

majority of the population occupying the northern region.[10] Unlike the North Indian case, Islam in Kerala flourished through peaceful conversion.[11] And due to this a lot of practices which were part of the older culture got syncretised with the Islamic culture.[12] The reform movements which emerged among the Muslims thus tried to take the religion to the basic text. The reform movement was not restricted to that alone since it could be seen as the continuation of the reformism which was happening among other communities in Kerala during the early nineteenth century.[13] The reformist project also stood for the modernization of the community, especially in matters of education, since the community was lagging behind all other communities in education.[14]

> *The 'modernisation' implied in this reform reflected attempts to negotiate the new social situation, which now urged Muslims to become a part of modern Kerala where literacy, political participation and abolition of evil practices became the agenda of reform, even if this reform also had a pan-Islamic context.[15]*

The existing literature on the Muslims of Kerala suggests that, since the changes in the socio-political and cultural realms of Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular in the Kerala society have been very gradual, the changes in the public/private domains were simultaneously less dynamic. Thus by taking the early decades of twentieth century as the reference point to study a certain process and its present status, would be logical only if we take into consideration the fact that the changes has been very gradual with few changes happening in a longer period.

The Possibilities of Locating Muslim Women in Terms of Public/ Private Dichotomy

Devika in her article has explained how by the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a nascent 'public sphere' was unconsciously developed in the Kerala

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[10] Punathil, Salah (2013) "Kerala Muslims And Shifting Notions Of Religion In The Public Sphere", *South Asia Research,* 33(1), p.5
[11] Miller, Roland E. *(1992) Mappila Muslims of Kerala. A Study in Islamic Trends.* Orient Longman*, Bombay
[12] Osella, Filippo& Osella, Caroline (2007) Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India. *Modern Asian Studies,* 42(2/3)*,* p.322
[13] Ibid, p.320
[14] Dale, Stephen F. *(1980) Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier. The Mappilas of Malabar, 1498–1922,* Clarendon Press, Oxford
[15] Punathil, Salah (2013), *op.cit.* p.13

society, due to the increased popularity of modern education.[16] Thus a certain number of people who were privileged to get exposed to the modern education, dwelled very much into extensive reading of magazines and newspapers, which were till then not a trend. Thus public opinions were formed and these were very much visible in the activities of students as well as in the literary world. According to her, "this new public sphere paved the way for a new form of hegemony based on gender which replaced the existing social order based on caste."[17] The three broader domains of State, Civil society and family were dominant in the day to day interactions of the people. But what is interesting here is that these domains itself were gendered and it reflected very much in the public spheres. The male agents were involved in issues on politics and religion which were very much male dominated arenas whereas women confined to discussions on modern domestic domain which were strictly devoid of any interaction with politics or religion.[18] These were clear from the various women magazines published during those times to the various discussions they carried out in their gatherings. But for women, especially the Hindus, this itself was very liberating considering their earlier life where, irrespective of their caste, they were denied access to any form of education.[19]

But studies by scholars, including Devika, have shown that the emergence of a public sphere and the simultaneous evolution of public opinions were confined to a certain class of women and more specifically Hindu women. This is to say that the above mentioned development was not inclusive. There has been no mention of any Muslim woman's presence in such public spaces and discussions. This might be mainly because Muslims in Kerala were undergoing a process of revival whereby the propounders were involved in reforming the community in an attempt to bring back the textual religion into the Kerala Muslim culture.[20] Even though Muslim women were never the direct participants of the revivalism nor they had any agency, they were the main subjects of the revivalist project. In their attempt to revive the religion they discouraged Muslim women from involving in

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[16] Devika, J (2002) *Imagining Women's Space in Early Modern Keralam,* CDS Working Paper No. 329, p.5
[17] Devika, J (2012). *op.cit.* p.138
[18] Menon, Dilip M. (2002) 'Religion and Colonial Modernity: Rethinking Belief and Identity', *Economic and Political Weekly,* 37(17),1662–67
[19] Ibid
[20] Osella, Filippo& Osella, Caroline (2007), *op.cit.* p. 329

rituals and practices which gave them certain social roles as well as access to public sphere. And also they were discouraged from learning the religious lessons in vernacular language and those of them who taught girls in such languages were less promoted.[21] This led to the disappearance of Muslim women from a lot of spaces outside the private domain, or so to say the public sphere/space. Thus the Islamic reformism could be seen as part of the reconstitution of patriarchy which aimed at improving the status of the community through individual liberation, but without considering the gender aspects.[22]

Muslim women were not introduced to the formal education before the reformist period but were a part of the traditional religious education system. But the reformist intervention brought a change in this situation and women started to go to formal schools. But how far has this attainment of education brought in a change in their social spaces is a matter of concern. Even though they progressed in some aspects like to read and write languages other than the vernacular language Arabi-Malayalam, which was the script used by the traditional Muslims of Kerala and to be exposed to other forms of knowledge, they were denied of a lot of other freedoms like engaging in certain ritual practices which were practiced traditionally. Even though the claim of the reformists was that such practices were out of the textual religion, women lost a space of their own.

The study, thus, in a broader sense would be very interesting as the Muslim women of Kerala has never been an extensive issue of research by the scholars as often they are just studied as part of the larger whole of the Indian Muslim women. It is also very pitiable to see that the Muslim women are always viewed by the larger community in terms of certain stereotypes which has been highlighted by the media as well as some academicians. So it would be a unique attempt to analyse a different aspect of the Muslim women in Kerala by inquiring her presence in the public domain.

Kerala has been in the limelight for its achievement in the matters of education and Muslims, even though not in par with other religious groups, have fared well in the national level educational statistics. But their political consciousness, be it direct or

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[21] Hussain, Shamshad (2009) *Neunapakshathinum Lingapadavikkumidayil*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, p.7-8
[22] Ibid, p.20

indirect participation in the process, has never been studied. It is also interesting to see that in spite of being an educated lot, the idea of nation and nationalism was never seen in the mainstream imaginings of Muslim women in Kerala. As pointed out by Partha Chatterjee, the social reform in India was fading out by the end of the nineteenth century but at the same time the nationalists were projecting the domestic realm of women as a sacred 'inner space' which needed to be protected from the colonial intervention.[23] This was never applicable to the Kerala society in general as the nationalist movements never had an enormous impact on the lives of Kerala women. But at the same time this agenda was carried out by the reformist movements which came into action during the early twentieth century among almost all the communities.[24] Muslims in Kerala were also part of this project. Moreover, the period saw the reform movements gaining momentum over the nationalist movement as community development was seen as an urgent necessity to achieve a better social status.

Unlike many other states in this highly populated country, literacy level is very high for women as well as men in Kerala, and the gender disparity in literacy is relatively low, thereby contributing to a high level of recorded GDI in the state.[25] Health indicators are likewise remarkable, with high levels of female life expectancy for women and men, and with a strong positive incline towards women, which is as the case is in all developed countries. Not only in literacy levels women have fared well in higher education indicators as well giving the Kerala women a very high status in the Indian society thereby reinforcing 'The Kerala Model of Development'. But recently a number of studies have come up which have challenged this model by referring to 'the enigma of Kerala women', 'the gender paradox' whereby they have shown that in spite of the high status of Kerala women in terms of conventional indicators of development, they have a very poor performance as per the non-conventional indicators. The non-conventional indicators like employment rate, social mobility have Kerala women performing very

[23]Chatterjee, Partha (1992) *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories,* Princeton University Press, Princeton.

[24] Punathil, Salah (2013), *op.cit.* p.13

[25] Mukhopadhyay, Swapna (2006) The Enigma of Kerala Women: Does High Literacy Necessarily Translate into high Status?, MIMAP Gender Network Project, Phase III, Working Paper: GN(III)/2006/WP5, p.1

low, and sometimes far below other states which are low in the conventional indictors. The cases of suicides, domestic violence and dowry abuses are very high and are increasing at an alarming rate.

The distorted modes of developmental activities or the short-sighted government policies are not always the culprit for such an alarming disparity rather the existing social structure needs to be blamed for often regulating the individuals and their choices. Patriarchy and its various manifestations have defined the social and cultural specificities of societies across India and Kerala is no exceptional. The structural domination and the consecutive appropriation of subjugation make it possible to relate patriarchy to any other dominant form of oppression experienced by women. Irrespective of the academic and popular engagements fighting patriarchy it has been still successful in being the major force in determining the destinies of women across region, religion, caste and class. The extent of functioning of patriarchy as well as its legitimacy gets a wider 'recognition' when it is often combined with religion.

The question of autonomy and agency are very important in analysing the empowerment of women in any society. High levels of Gender Development Index (GDI) is naturally expected to show a high level of autonomy and agency in the matters related to one's lives and choices.[26] A higher autonomy and agency should necessarily be translated into a higher level of access to public sphere. So the present study would like to look upon how the better educational attainments of women in general and Muslim women in particular have had an impact on their imparting of agency and autonomy in matters of their lives especially in the matters of education as well as their shaping as a 'political being.'

Thus the idea of nationalism and the need to fight for the freedom of the country was not in the popular imagination of the Kerala women in general and the various reformists belonging to different communities also didn't highlight the need for national freedom. Even though the Muslim reformers found out that the colonial invasion had a destructive impact on the socio, political and economic lives of Muslims in Kerala, there were only a

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[26] Kabeer, Naila (1999) Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women' Empowerment, *Development and Change,* 30(1), pp. 434-465

few of them who realized the importance of freedom in the empowerment and wellbeing of the community. The less or no presence of Muslim women in the history of freedom struggle needs special attention.[27] The study would like to analyse whether women of Kerala have carried ahead the burden of a 'politically inactive' category to the present generation as well and how high educational attainments have changed the approach of women to the political processes.[28]

The Revolt of 1921, which is popularly known as the Malabar Rebellion or the Mappila Rebellion, was the greatest tragedy in the history of Muslims in Kerala as Muslims fought against the British and the Hindu landlords against their atrocities towards Muslim tenants.[29] Thousands of Muslims lost their lives and many were sent to jail. But there has been no mention of any Muslim woman participant in this major rebellion and has been recorded as a completely 'male rebellion'. The Khilafat movement which was a major part of India's freedom struggle was popular in Kerala during the same period. But this also didn't have any women's name to claim as being their part. Thus to think beyond the boundaries of religion or community was never in the day to day lives of Muslim women nor was it encouraged by those who worked for the empowerment of the community. Thus the 'idea of India' or a nation was not seen in the popular imagination of Muslim women in the past and to an extent in the present time also. So the study would specifically like to ponder over the political consciousness of Muslim women and their activism by taking into account their political participation as well as their awareness of the political developments within the entity of India.

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[27] Shamshad Hussain (2015) in her work on the oral history of Mappila Rebellion have studied how the revolt was conceived by the women folks who were never the part of the struggle but were witness and were indirectly influenced since most of their men were part of the fight with a lot of them even losing their lives.

[28] Velayudhan, Meera (1999) "The Growth of Political Consciousness among Women in Modern Keralam", P.J. Cheriyan (ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History, Kerala State Gazetteer,* Vol.2, Part 1, Government of Kerala.

[29] Panikkar, K.N. (1989) *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprising in Malabar 1836-1921,* Oxford University Press, p.6

Theoretical Understanding of the Public Sphere and Muslim Women in Kerala

According to Habermas, "the bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public."[30] Thus public sphere is seen as a domain composed of private individuals whose societal interconnectedness go beyond the boundaries of their private/personal lives. Calhoun has defined public sphere as the public of the private individuals who join in debate of issues bearing on state authority. This explains the fact that public and private spheres are mutually inclusive rather than mutually exclusive social realms. The importance of the public sphere in terms of sociology lies in the fact of its potentiality as a mode of societal integration.[31] Thus for Susen, "public and private spheres are two unavoidable conditions of the social as every private person is represented by the foreground performativity of a public persona, every public persona is embedded in the background subjectivity of a private person."[32] Since the socialization process is something every individual living in a society has to undergo, the purest form of privacy is never achieved thereby discarding the chance of eliminating individuals' dependence upon society. Thus the individuals can assert their privacy only in relation to, rather than in isolation from, the presence of other individuals. Thus the public sphere could be seen as the socialized expression of individuals' reciprocally constituted autonomy.[33]

Further Susen elaborates that, "the historicity of the public/private dichotomy manifests itself in the different meanings attached to the notions of the private and the public in different societal contexts".[34] Thus these terms had a different meaning in the ancient Greek society when compared to its usage in the later bourgeois society and again a new meaning in the modern societies. Thus in the Greek society *polis* (public) was strictly detached from the *oikos* (private) as the former was based on open interactions between free citizens in the political realm and the latter as the sphere based on concealed

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[30] Habermas, Jürgen (1989), *op.cit.* p.27
[31] Calhoun, Craig (1992) "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere". In Calhoun, Craig (Ed), *Habermas and the Public Sphere.* Cambridge, MIT Press, p.6
[32] Susen, Simon (2011), Critical Notes on Habermas's Theory of the Public Sphere, *Sociological Analysis,* 5(1), p.43
[33] Ibid
[34] Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p. 38

interactions between individuals in the domestic realm.[35] But since the autonomous citizens who are active in the public sphere are simultaneously part of the private sphere or the domestic environment, the power structures of both these domains are related, making the public/private polarity perceived as public/private reciprocity. And according to Susen, by analysing the different societal manifestations and conceptual representations the material contingency and ideological contingency of the public/private dichotomy becomes evident.[36]

The conceptual separation between the public and private has to be understood in order to have an idea about the private/public ontology. Thus according to Somers, "given the socio-historical variability of this distinction, we need to acknowledge that the meaning of the "great dichotomy" between the public and private, is multi-layered and complex, rather than one-dimensional and straightforward."[37] Thus three different meanings have been attached to the public/private dichotomy. Accordingly, the first one is society versus individual or collective versus personal, the second one is visibility versus concealment or transparent versus opaque and the third one is openness versus closure or accessible versus sealed.[38] These classifications of the public/private dichotomy needs to be understood as ideal-typical distinctions as these three has been conceptualized in different ways and used to varying degrees in the socio-political thoughts.[39]

As said above the public/private dichotomy has to be conceptualized by taking into account the socio-political and historical bearings of each society during a given point of time. Thus if we analyse the emergence of a public sphere in the Kerala society we can see that, unlike the Western societies, it was not industrialization and political developments that lead to the emergence of a public sphere. The reformist enterprise from all the socio-religious communities invoked among the people the need for modern education and this lead to a good number of people into modern education. Thus the

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[35] Habermas, Jürgen (1989), *op.cit.* p.28
[36] Ibid, p.45
[37] Somers, Margaret. (2001), "Romancing the Market, Reviling the State: Historicizing Liberalism, Privatization and the Competing Claims to Civil Society" in Colin Crouch, Klaus Elder & Damian Tambini (Eds.) *Citizenship, Markets and the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.24
[38] Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p. 40
[39] Ibid

educated lot of Kerala (without neglecting the fact that this was a meagre lot, as not all the people, especially those belonging to the lower castes and class had the privilege to be part of the modern education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century) constituted the early public sphere of Kerala where they discussed and debated about the existing social order, ideas and institutions critically.[40]

The reformism which happened among Muslims in Kerala was a double folded one. The social conditions of the Muslims were pathetic primarily due to their hesitation towards education. Also there was need of a certain kind of religious revival due to the syncretism of Islam with the local cultural practices. According to Osella and Osella, "Kerala's Islamic reformism is simultaneously local-in that it emerges within a specific social, political and historical context-and also pan-Islamic or transnational, in that it embodies orientations which historically characterise the development of Islam across the world."[41] Thus the Islamic reformism among Muslims of Kerala differ from the similar activities among the Muslims of other parts of India in that they had a certain level of universal appeal. Or it could be also defined that there were earnest efforts within the Muslim community to go back to a 'textual religion' or a 'universal religion' which was often seen as the pure form. Thus the Kerala Islamic reformism must be understood as being simultaneously part of a global Islamic impulse towards purification and also as an extremely locally rooted and explicit phenomenon, which produces itself on the ground through practice and through dialogue with significant others, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.[42]

If we discuss about the idea of agency we could see that the Western feminists have often explained it as a synonym for resistance to relations of dominations.[43] For them human agency is "one that seeks to locate the political and moral autonomy of the subject in the face of power".[44] But this explanation often limits the ability to understand and question

[40] Devika, J (2012). *op.cit.* p.140
[41] Osella, Filippo& Osella, Caroline (2007), *op.cit. p. 318*
[42] Ibid
[43] Mahmood, Saba(2005) Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject, Princeton University Press, Princeton, p 14
[44] Mahmood, Saba (2001) Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival. *Cultural Anthropology,* Vol. 16, No.2, p.206

the lives of women who are part of patriarchal religious traditions like Islam and whose desires and will are shaped by completely non-liberal traditions. In such contexts agency would be explained as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create. This concept of agency would be looked into in the entire study.

The logic behind using reformist period (the 1920's) as a benchmark for the study has been explained before. As said above, the changes were very gradual. This was not a phenomenon happening only among the Muslim women of Kerala. Since the early twentieth century Kerala was under the strong waves of reformism happening in almost all the socio-religious communities, women of all communities were directly or indirectly the participants of the process. But various literatures prove that the changes happened among the women in general were very gradual. According to Jeffrey, "the autonomy of women in Kerala has not expanded steadily since the 1920's, nor has the influence of women in politics and domestic affairs constantly increased. Women's roles have changed; but we need to consider the subtleties of the evidence before attempting to decide whether the lot of women has 'improved'." [45]

Education and Public Sphere: How Are They Related to Each Other?

Education and discourses associated with it has always been central to discussions on Kerala and development. The unique educational achievements of Kerala were not an abrupt and easy task. And the process has been initiated primarily during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by the various social reform movements[46] and the momentum was carried ahead by the various governments which came into power after 1956 irrespective of the political underpinnings. Women's education was an important area of concern for the reformers, regardless of their community affiliation and the later governments were also equally enthusiastic in promoting women's education and placing it on the top of their policies and priorities. These initiatives and the subsequent effect

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[45] Jeffrey, Robin (1992): Politics, Women and Well-being: How Kerala became 'a Model', Macmillan, London, p.5
[46] See Kodoth& Eapen(2005), Devika (2006)

have given Kerala an image among the rest of India as a society which is comparatively free from any restrictions on women's education.

Education has been a direct indicator of development and empowerment in the mainstream theories and it has been considered as a basis to measure various other non-conventional indicators of development.[47] Kerala has been in the top of the development chart with regard to women's performance as per the conventional indicators and has thereby validated 'The Kerala Model of Development'. But later studies by scholars[48] have challenged this acclaimed model by analysing the non-conventional indicators of development along with the conventional indicators and have shown how in the process of accentuating the larger indicators and thereby generalising the development process have sidelined the less profound indicators and their nuances. My attempt here, thus, would be to critically look into this paradox and to analyse whether the perceived notion of higher education of women in Kozhikode district have necessarily and effectively made their easy access to public sphere.

It is essential to look upon how education as well as access to it among women acts as a tool in determining and formulating perceptions about their lives. It helps to mould their capability to question, to reflect upon, and to get access to information and ideas which would facilitate them to act on the conditions of their lives.[49] The impact of education in shaping women's lives could be further understood from various instances across the world and accordingly,

> *In Kenya, it was found that women with at least four years of schooling were able to correctly understand instructions for administering oral rehydration salts; but only those with at least secondary education were able to explain the environmental causes of diarrhoea. In Nigeria, less educated women were as likely as educated ones to have their children immunised; educated women were*

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[47] Literacy rate, access to higher education, better health figures including the mortality and fertility rates are some of the conventional indicators of human development in general in most of the popular theories dealing with empowerment. But the non-conventional(Jeffrey, 1992) indicators like mental illness, domestic violence including the dowry related violence, are less pronounced by the development theories and are often very specific with regard to each society.

[48] See Kodoth& Eapen(2005), Scaria (2014), Mukhopadhyay(2007)

[49] Jejeebhoy, Shireen. (1995), *Women's Education, Autonomy, and Reproductive Behaviour: Experience from Developing Countries*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.32

more likely than uneducated ones to know about family planning; but only secondary schooled women revealed an in-depth understanding about disease and prevention. Education increases the likelihood that women will look after their own well-being along with that of their family. A study in rural Zimbabwe found that among the factors that increased the likelihood of women accessing contraception and antenatal care - both of which improve maternal survival and well-being - were education and paid work (Becker). In rural Nigeria, 96 per cent of women with secondary and higher education, 53 per cent of those with primary education, and 47 per cent of those with little or no education had sought post-natal care.[50]

These cases from the African region shows how education have a bearing on the lives of women especially in matters related to their health and well-being along with that of their children. It is also interesting to see how the amount/level of education has a defining role in the extent of welfare achieved by women in terms of their role in the family. Along with this, a lesser educational achievement compared to their male counterparts, also has an impact on the well-being of the family wherein women becomes less competent, authoritative and confident on matters of family, especially children.[51] Kabeer further adds,

There are also other effects associated with education that suggest a change in power relationships within and outside the household. In rural Bangladesh, educated women in rural areas participate in a wider range of decisions than uneducated ones. Whereas the latter participated in an average of 1.1 decisions, the number increased to 1.6, 2.0, and 2.3 among women with primary, middle, and secondary education respectively. A study from Tamil Nadu found that better-educated women scored higher than less educated women on a composite index measuring their access to, and control over, resources, as well as their role in economic decision-making. Educated women also appear less likely to suffer from domestic violence. A study by Sen in West Bengal noted that educated women were better able to deal with violent husbands: 'access to secondary stages of education may have an important contributory role in enhancing women's capacity to exercise control in their lives ... through a combination of literacy and numeracy skills, and enhanced self-esteem.[52]

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[50] Kabeer, Naila (2005) p.16

[51] Kabeer, Naila. (1999), "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment", *Development and Change*, p.15

[52] Ibid, p.16

Education appears to increase women's capacity to deal with the outside world. But at the same time there are certain other studies which show that changes associated with education are most probably defined by the context in which it is provided as well as the social relationships that it embodies and promotes. In societies that are defined by patriarchy a woman's higher education might be translated into carving them out as better wives and mothers. [53]This often undermines the aspirations of women thereby having a less access to public sphere.

Objectives of the Study

The research, in a broader sense, would be an attempt to explore the social life of Muslim women in Kerala which so far has been done on their certain aspects but in a detailed manner, is still unexplored. The evolution of a public sphere would be studied by understanding the dichotomy between the public and private spheres in the Kerala context. Since the study deals primarily with the Muslim women of Kerala in general, focus would be given to the Kozhikode district in Kerala where the Muslim population is high, but keeping in mind to include all those relevant individuals and incidents which are beyond the Malabar region, but had an impact on the social lives of Muslim women in Kerala. The study would consider the period of reformism which happened among the Muslims in Kerala in the early twentieth century as the benchmark to understand the process of evolution of the public sphere.

Since Muslim women also fall under the broader categories of women in general and also Muslims, it would be very interesting to analyse the presence of a Muslim women in the public spaces in Kerala and its relation to the above mentioned broader categories. Various factors like education, political developments, religion and their influence on shaping the thought process of Muslim women would be also specifically looked into. Since Muslim women in the earlier time were part of the informal education system, I would like to see how this gave them a certain vantage point over their counterparts in other religious groups who were completely shunted from any form of learning. An important aspect of the study would be to explore the role and agency of Muslim women

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[53] Ibid, p.17

in defining their spaces and how the whole idea of freedom is conceived by them. Like I have explained earlier agency of Muslim women would be studied in a way as not just resistance to the existing sources of subordination rather as the capacity to action in the given social circumstances.

Research Questions

- How can the domains of public and private spaces be defined in terms of a feminist perspective specific to the Kerala context?
- How have the idea of a 'public space' or 'public sphere' evolved among the women of Kerala in general and Muslim women in particular and how the reformist enterprise had an impact on them?
- Can we draw any parallel between the access to public sphere between Muslims and Hindus/Christians?
- How the whole idea of public space was related to the agency of women and how this was dealt by the reformist enterprise?
- How have education and politics had an impact on shaping the boundaries of public and private spaces among Muslim women in Kerala and promoting their role and agency in these spaces?

Research Methodology

The study would primarily analyse how the domain of public sphere have changed among the Muslim women of Kerala by taking into consideration the impact of education and politics in the process. The study would be primarily a qualitative one with the process relying on both primary and secondary data available. The studies conducted so far on Muslim women in Kerala are very few as they have been often studied as part of the Indian Muslim women in general or part of the women in Kerala. But as mentioned earlier, recently some studies and surveys have been conducted by several regional organizations and NGO's on various aspects of the social lives of Muslim women in Kerala. These data would be collected as a primary source to understand the present status of Muslim women in Kerala. Various literatures

including books, articles, journals, online resources, governmental and non-governmental studies and data, archival sources would be used as secondary sources in order to have a broader understanding of the topic. The same would be also used to build the theoretical framework of the study. Recently some research works are either completed or being done by researchers on various aspects of Muslim women in Kerala, inside and outside India and that would be also used to have a better understanding of the present study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study is done primarily through a survey conducted at the Kozhikode district using various sampling techniques and employing survey tools.

   a) **Sampling Technique**

A multi-stage systematic random sampling technique is used for the study. For the purpose of the present study Kozhikode district is divided into 13 divisions based on the total 13 Legislative Assembly Constituencies of the district. From the 13 Assembly Constituencies, a random sample of 202 respondents has been selected for the study. The sample has been drawn-up using multi-stage systematic random sampling technique with electoral list of voters as the sampling frame.

Table 1.1: Selection of the sample size from various LACs of Kozhikode District

Sl. No	Legislative Assembly Constituency(LAC)	No. of booths	% of total booths of district(approx.)	Selected no. of booths	No. of respondents from each LAC
1	Vadakara	138	7%	7	14
2	Kuttiadi	150	8%	8	16
3	Nadapuram	167	9%	9	18
4	Quilandi	142	8%	8	16
5	Perambra	145	8%	8	16
6	Balusseri	163	9%	9	18
7	Elathur	141	7%	7	14
8	Kozhikode North	142	8%	8	16
9	Kozhikode South	130	7%	7	14
10	Beypore	142	8%	8	16
11	Kunnamangalam	160	8%	8	16
12	Koduvally	125	7%	7	14
13	Thiruvambady	138	7%	7	14
	TOTAL	1883	100 (Approx.)	101	202

From the table above first from each assembly constituency, proportionate number of electoral booths has been picked up using systematic random sampling technique. Two respondents each have been similarly selected from each of the selected electoral booth using systematic random sampling technique. (See Table1.1) Thus a total of 202 respondents have been selected. Out of the total 202 respondents only 195 respondents could be interviewed as seven of those respondents refused to be part of the study. Since the respondents are met within the household, all seven of them primarily refused to be part of the study because they didn't intend to share their personal details. Three of the respondents were speculative and asked why they were specifically chosen for the study and why not their neighbours. In spite of telling them repeatedly about the pattern to be followed in the survey process they declined to respond. Two of the respondents were not happy with the institution under which I was doing my research and refused to co-operate

to the survey claiming that there is some 'hidden agenda' behind the survey. Two of the respondents who are women told that their husbands are out of India and so they can't participate in the process since they might get scolded if their husbands get to know about it. Even though I tried to convince them that the survey was just for a study purpose and their identity would be kept completely anonymous they said they don't want to get into trouble.

b) Characteristic Information of the Sample

Out of the total 195 respondents 94 are Hindus, 87 Muslims and 14 respondents belong to the Christian community. Even though the focus of the study is Muslim women, the selection of samples across various religious groups would give a larger picture on the women in general and simultaneously give a clearer image of the aspects of Muslim women vis-à-vis others. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 80. Respondents have different educational qualifications which would be discussed in detail in the coming chapters. Since the 13 Assembly Constituencies spread across both rural and urban areas, the respondents spread across these domains.

c) Note on the Gender of the Sample

Out of the 202 samples, 195 have been part of the study. Out of the 195 samples, 86 were males and 109 were females. I didn't interview the males since my target were only women. Thus for those males, I interviewed either their wives (in case the man is married) or their mother (in case the man is unmarried). Thus the total respondents of the survey are only women.

Site of the Study

Kozhikode district is chosen as the site of the study. Women belonging to the district comprise the universe of the sampling. Kozhikode district (also known as Calicut) is one of the fourteen districts of Kerala and is situated at the Northern part of the state. The district has two parliament constituencies and thirteen legislative assembly constituencies. As per the Census 2011, the district has a population of 3,086,293,

comprising 1,470,942 males and 1,615,351 females.[54] The population of the district comprises 9.24% of the total population of Kerala.[55] Out of the total population of the district 56.25% are Hindus, 39.2% Muslims and 4.3% Christians.[56] The district has the second maximum Muslim population (13.7%) among the districts in Kerala behind the Malappuram district (31.6%).[57] The district has a sex ratio of 1098 females for every 1000 males and a literacy rate of 95.08%.[58]

The district has an important place in the history of Kerala as well as Muslims of Kerala. The first European encounter of India was with the Portuguese and the first Portuguese who landed in India was Vasco da Gama in the year of 1498 and he landed at Kappad in Kozhikode district.[59] Kozhikode district was the major centre of the Malabar province of the Madras Presidency during the British regime.[60] Since the district is bounded by the Arabian Coast on the west side, the place has been a major sea port in the past with traders from across the world, most importantly the Arabs, having access to the place.[61] Religions like Islam and Christianity reached Kerala, before any other place in India, during the early years of the spread of these religions and Kozhikode was also a favourite hub of these religions.[62] Unlike North India, where it is through invasion Islam spread, it was a rather peaceful entry in Kerala, including Kozhikode, where Islam spread primarily through the Arab traders who had a long and faithful trade relationship with the province of Malabar.[63] It was primarily through conversion, by the influence of the Arabian

[54] Census Data, 2011

[55] Ibid

[56] Ibid

[57] Ibid

[58] Ibid

[59] Miller, Roland E (2015), *Mappila Muslim Culture,* new York: SUNY Press, p. 30

[60] Randathani, Hussain. (2010), *Mappila Muslims: A Study on Society and Anti Colonial Struggles.* Calicut: Other Books, p.20

[61] Miller, Roland E (2015), *op.cit.* p.26

[62] Miller, E. Roland. (1992). *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: A Study in Islamic Trends*, Madras, Orient Longman, p.40

[63] Nadvi, S.S., (1934)"The Muslim colonies in India before the Muslim Conquests", *Islamic Culture*, VIII, Cited in Kerala State Gazetteer, Vol. 2, Part I, by Adoor K. K. Ramachandran Nair, State Editor, Kerala Gazetteers, 1986, p. 283

traders, Islam flourished in Kozhikode and they had the support from the local rulers as well.[64]

The Muslims of Kerala are generally known as Mappilas.[65] But at present seventy percent of the Mappilas occupy the Malabar region which comprises the six districts of Northern Kerala and lately reducing the identity of Mappila Muslims to those residing mostly in the Malabar region.[66] This also traces back to the Mappila Rebellion or the Malabar Revolt of 1921 which happened in the Malabar region primarily and which has been considered as a milestone in the history of Muslims in Kerala which determined their trajectory of development in the following decades as well as in claiming an identity of their own in the public domain of Kerala. The Islamic reformism among Muslims in Kerala, which got momentum predominantly after the rebellion, also regarded Kozhikode as their important centre of activities.[67]

The important criteria for choosing this region is that, as said above, more than 70 per cent of the total Muslim population occupy the Malabar region of which Kozhikode is a part making the site rich in Muslim presence and activities. A very few studies have been carried out on the Muslim women of this region. Secondly, the region is also unique in the history of Muslims in Kerala as matrilineal kinship pattern was very much prevalent among the Muslims of this region.[68] The matriliny gave certain kind of freedom for women in the domestic space as the households were matrilocal and women had control over their property. But this never meant to say that these households were matriarchal as older men had the power to control the household. Thirdly, the only Muslim dynasty of Kerala, the Arakkal dynasty was from the Malabar region. The dynasty was headed by a

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[64] Dale, Stephen F. (1980), *Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier. The Mappilas of Malabar, 1498–1922,* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

[65] Kunju, A. P. Ibrahim, (1989), *Mappila Muslims of Kerala: Their History and Culture,* Trivandrum: Sandhya Publications.

[66] Sadath, Anwar KT. (2014), "Education and Socio-Economic Status of Muslims in Kerala", PhD Dissertation, New Delhi: Jamia Hamdard, p. 222.

[67] Osella, Filippo& Osella, Caroline (2007), "Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India." *Modern Asian Studies,* 42(2/3)*,* pp.317- 346.

[68] Kunhikrishnan, U.V., (1995), "Matriliny among the Mappilas of Malabar", in Engineer, Asghar Ali (Ed), *Kerala Muslims: A Historical Perspective,* New Delhi: Ajanta Publications.

number of women rulers known as Arakkal Beevis, making this region very unique in the history of Muslim women in Kerala.

Interview Schedule

The survey is conducted primarily using a semi-structured interview schedule. The questions for the interview are structured in a way to get the maximum and accurate information out of the respondent which would enrich the study. Since it is easy and legible to interact with the respondents in the local language, full set of questions in the interview schedule are translated accordingly during the field work. Answers in Malayalam are then translated into English for the purpose of coding. The questions are mostly close-ended. The questions are framed and divided under various content domains to maintain a pattern, congruity and to get the precise information from the respondent.

The interview schedule is broadly divided into three parts with various sub sections under each part. The first part of the interview schedule is framed to get the basic information on the respondent and her background. The first part is divided into five sub sections. The first sub section focuses on the basic information of the respondent like the name, age, religion, and marital status. This part also deals with the family features of the respondent. The second sub section deals with the educational background and employment details of the respondent. The type of school and colleges attended, whether received religious education and reasons behind choosing the particular course in higher studies are some of the questions asked in this section. Questions on the employment status of the respondent are also included in this section. The third section under part one deals with the dressing of the respondent. The type of dress worn on various occasions to who decides on what to wear, are included in this section. The next section deals with the decision making power of women in matters related to their personal lives and choices as well as matters of the family. The last section in this part deals with questions on discrimination against women and their gender roles. Questions related to women's mobility, dowry and their role as a wife and a mother.

The part two tries to explore the aspects of public sphere participation of women. The part has two sub sections. The first sub section has questions to get information from respondent on their membership in various organizations like political party, civil society groups, residence welfare associations and professional organizations. The section also try to explore the extent of their social activism, both offline and online. The second section of part two has questions related to the political participation of respondents. Questions related to their contesting in elections, voting and decision on whom to vote are asked in this section.

The third and last part of the questionnaire has questions related to the socio-political awareness and opinions of the respondents. Questions are framed to get an understanding of the respondents' basic awareness of the political happenings around them. Some questions like the name of the country, its capital, name of freedom fighters and the day of India's independence are also asked. This is to analyse how the imagination of women are embedded with the political history of the country they are part of and what are their opinions as a woman and as a citizen on political and social issues which has a direct or indirect bearing on their lives.

Chapterization

The study, as I have mentioned above, would be focussing on two main aspects vis-a-vis its relation with public sphere and Muslim women. So these topics would be discussed in detail in respective chapters along with the field data. Accordingly, the whole study is divided into five chapters including introduction and conclusion.

The present chapter is Chapter 1 which is the introduction to the study and deals briefly with the text and context of the study. The chapter shortly explains the background of the study including the objective and methodology of the study. The sampling techniques and tools used are also discussed in the introduction, as we have seen it.

The second chapter titled 'Public sphere: A theoretical Review' is the theoretical understanding of the study in which the major literatures used in the study which helps to frame the whole project is discussed to give a broader understanding of the study. The

basic literatures which helps to conceive the idea of public sphere and its evolution as well as its significance in relation to Islam is also looked into. The chapter further explores the evolution of public sphere in the Indian context and tries to contextualise the public sphere and its discourses in the Indian specificities. The last section of the chapter deals with how public sphere as a realm of human interaction got evolved in the Kerala context. This section also looks upon how a woman was placed in the public sphere discourses in Kerala and what was the position of Muslim women in the whole process.

The third chapter titled 'Muslim women of Kerala: An Overview of the lived world' gives an overview of the situation of women in general and Muslim women in particular in Kerala. The status of women, highlighting the Muslim women, is critically looked into along with giving an introduction and brief history of the reform movement as well as its significance on the lives of Muslim women. The relationship between empowerment, development, agency and autonomy is analysed and how these are all related to the access of women into public sphere is also looked into. The educational attainments of women as well as the employment pattern are discussed followed by a brief introduction into the political participation of women in general and Muslim women in particular. The field work data on type of family, educational pattern of the respondents, religious education and employment pattern are used here to give a clear picture of the situation of women, especially Muslim women.

The fourth chapter titled 'Muslim women and public sphere: The present study' deals extensively with the data obtained from the field work. The chapter tries to analyse the various data available to show the extent of public sphere participation of women in general and Muslim women in particular. For the same the data is analysed under various sub themes like the traditional practices and gender roles, the individuality and decision making, opinions on socio-political issues and women and aspects of public sphere participation. The first sub theme has taken the dress pattern and doing of household chores as an indicator to explain the women's role in it. The second sub theme have analysed the data on choice of marriage partner, choice of clothing, travelling alone or with a male member during night and choosing candidates in elections. The third sub theme has data on opinions of respondents on various socio-political issues like political

participation of women, dowry, reservation for women etc. The last sub theme has data on aspects of public sphere participation like the membership in various organizations, casting vote and online and offline activism.

The fifth chapter of the work is the Discussion and Conclusion which gives a brief analysis of the entire study.

CHAPTER-2

Public Sphere: A Theoretical Review

The public/private dichotomy is not a constant set of ideas. Even Jurgen Habermas, who has contributed much to the study on public sphere, has commented to the definitional ambiguity of the dichotomy.[69] The historical analysis shows that the meanings attached to private/public is not static and has evolved spatially and temporally. These are two separate domains but are very much mutually dependent. The nature of this dependency has varied from society to society. As Simon Susen says, "given the structural interdependence of the two spheres, the public/private polarity can be conceived of as a public /private reciprocity."[70] In the ancient Greek society the two spheres were strictly separated from each other thereby giving both a closed nature. The private sphere was part of the house and was attached to it. But at a different level status in public was based upon the status as the unlimited master of the private sphere.[71] The private domain comprised of the reproduction of life, the labour of the slaves and the service of the women strictly under the authority of the master. In contrast to it, public sphere was interpreted as a realm of freedom and permanence and the domain of fame, popularity, representation, competition and recognition.[72] Thus from the description of the ancient public/private spheres what could be sensed ultimately is a strict patriarchal social structure in which women were completely barred from being part of the public sphere. Nevertheless, the status of women in the private sphere was also inferior because men were the masters in the private domain and their lives were controlled by men.

Public/private sphere is not just limited to the physical world and its attributes and extensions could well be seen in the abstract domain as well. Thus the discussions on public/private sphere would not be complete without engaging the ideological contingency also. According to Susen,

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[69] Habermas, Jurgen (1989), *The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere,* Cambridge, Polity Press. p.1
[70] Susen, Simon (2011), Critical Notes on Habermas's Theory of the Public Sphere, *Sociological Analysis,* 5(1), p.39
[71] Habermas, Jurgen (1989), *op.cit.* p.3
[72] ibid

> *The socio-historical analysis of the public/private dichotomy is essential in that it enables us to explore the material and ideological contingency of the public/ private reciprocity, which is rooted in the spatiotemporal specificity of every society.[73]*

He goes on further by explaining how to understand the material and ideological contingencies of the public/private dichotomy. Forms of public/private life vary with each society. Therefore by analyzing the different social manifestations of its historical variability we could comprehend the material contingency of the public/private dichotomy. Similarly by taking a look into the various conceptual representations of its historical variability, the ideological contingency of the public/private dichotomy could be appreciated. Since we have already mentioned that the public and private complement each other, the extent of its complementarity is proportional to the material and ideological features of respective societies. [74]

Moving from the historical understanding of the public/private dichotomy let's try to understand how the terms could be explained conceptually. Due to its complex nature the public/private dichotomy could be understood at various levels. Susen has given three different dimensions to the dichotomy. And according to him public/private spheres could be understood at three levels taking into consideration the socio-historical aspects of the dichotomy. Thus public/ private distinction could be either, "society versus individual ('collective' versus 'personal'), visibility versus concealment ('transparent' versus 'opaque') and openness versus closure ('accessible' versus 'sealed')."[75] And as per the above explanation state becomes part of the public whereas the civil society that of the private. Since these definitions of the public/private distinctions are more of an ideal type, the assigning of public to state and private to that of civil society is not fixed by all means. Similarly the openness and closure aspects of the public/private spheres are flexible in that there are certain public realms which are not fully open while certain private realms that are not fully closed. According to Susen,

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[73] Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p. 39
[74] ibid
[75] Ibid, p.40

There is little doubt that all states-regardless of whether they are republican or monarchical, liberal or socialist, laissez-faire or interventionist, libertarian or totalitarian-require a minimal degree of systemic self-referentiality and closure. Similarly, all families- regardless of whether they are part of a pre-modern or modern society, primitive or complex division of labour, control- based or freedom based life form, collectivist or individualist culture- requires a minimal degree of societal embeddedness and openness. [76]

Thus these distinctions should not be considered as the ultimate and ideal explanations in understanding the public/private dichotomy in the social and political analysis as they just provide the conceptual framework and reference point to start with at a broader level. They provide with a useful tool in analysing the social and political developments of various societies.

Habermas and the Concept of Public Sphere

We have discussed earlier how the concepts of public and private have found space in the earlier texts and discussions dating back even to the ancient Greek society. But the terms got a more academic significance and systematic intervention after the serious engagement of Jurgen Habermas and his theory on the structural transformation of the public sphere. Even after acknowledging the complexity associated with engaging with these terms, his attempt was to study how the public sphere (often referred to as the 'bourgeois public sphere') has transformed in the course of time by developing an analytical framework. And thus in a broader level public sphere is explained as the sphere of private people coming together as a public. [77]

As Susen says,

Indeed, the public and private seem to represent two necessary conditions of the social: to the extent that every private person is represented by the foreground performativity of a public persona, every public persona is embedded in the background subjectivity of a private person.[78]

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[76] Ibid, p.42
[77] Habermas, Jurgen (1989), *op.cit.* p.27
[78] Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p.43

Thus public sphere and private sphere could be seen as mutually dependent and inclusive and in the becoming of the public, the individuals (private) surpass their personal boundaries and move to a different level thereby retaining their societal relation. Being a social animal, human beings are always committed to the domain out of their personal limits and a state of complete isolation from the societal commitments is impossible thereby making each and every individual dependable on the larger society. Then public sphere "is nothing but the socialized expression of individuals' reciprocally constituted autonomy."[79] Thus as a mode of societal integration and coordination, public sphere brings together interconnected and interdependent subjects to a common realm thereby exhibiting the innate nature of sociability of the human nature.

From understanding what public sphere is at a broader level by analysing its ontology and historical specificities, let us now go on to examine what public sphere is comprised of according to Habermas. According to him the bourgeois public sphere is a 'tension-charged' realm of various processes of social reproduction and social transformation situated between the state from above and society placed below.[80] Habermas has given a blueprint of the bourgeois public sphere prevailed during the eighteenth century. Thus the public realm was composed of two different sections, the first one being the realm of public authority and the second that of the public sphere. The sphere of the public authority comprised the state including the police and the court. The private realm was composed of the civil society which in turn was the realm of commodity exchange and social labour and also the family. The public sphere was coextensive with public authority.[81] The true or the authentic 'public sphere' was part of the private realm since it was comprised of private people. So "the public sphere in the political realm evolved from the public sphere in the world of letters; through the vehicle of public opinion it put the state in touch with the needs of the society."[82] The town as a centre of economic, cultural and political life hub got popularity and it therefore diminished the status of court as a realm of public. Institutions like coffee houses, the salons and the table societies functioned as centres of early public sphere in the world of letters. Thus bourgeois public

[79]Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p.43
[80] Habermas, Jurgen (1989), *op.cit.* p.141
[81] Ibid, p.30
[82] Ibid, p.30-31

sphere could be seen as a malleable realm with its extensions visible in the realm of private as well as that of public authority.

The bourgeois public sphere is unique in that it has its own characteristics and according to Susen the normative specificity of it is associated with its emancipatory potential. He says,

> *"From a Habermasian perspective, subjects capable of speech and action are also capable of reflection and discourse, because the validity claims that linguistic actors raise in everyday communication are, at least in principle, always criticisable. In the public sphere, the criticizability of validity, which is inherent in communicative processes oriented towards mutual intelligibility, can be elevated to the status of a co-ordinating drive force of rational sociability."[83]*

The so called bourgeois public sphere seen as a product of the public sphere in the world of letters was determined through the quantity and nature of rationality associated with it. The practical reason in the public realm was associated with the norms of reasoned discourse in which arguments were significant rather than the statuses of the participants and the traditions they carried.[84] Thus as far as a democratic polity is concerned the basic prerequisite for the flourishing of a public sphere to its fullest lies basically upon the quality of discourse (rational and critical arguments) and the quantity of participation and not the identities of the participants. Due to such a condition the ascribed status of the participants were devalued giving credentials to those with achieved status.[85] But from the early stage itself the nature of the participants of the public sphere has been contested since the criteria meant for the participation was subject to various sorts of interpretation. This made certain class of people having less access to public sphere based on their less rationality and quality of arguments. Women and business men were exempted from the public sphere with the explanation that they were not "subtle reasoners."[86]

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[83] Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p.45
[84] Calhoun, Craig (1992) "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere". In Calhoun, Craig (Ed), *Habermas and the Public Sphere.* Cambridge, MIT Press, p.2
[85] Even though the bourgeois public sphere claimed to rely on achieved status, it has been criticized widely for   its class bearings which would be discussed broadly in the coming sections.
[86] Ibid

The quantity of the participants also determined the nature and quality of the public sphere. Habermas has explained how the early public sphere of the eighteenth century was composed of with a very minor section of the European population. They included primarily the educated and the propertied men. A certain level of exclusivity the public sphere displayed based on the quality of participants had an effect on the quantity as well. It has been observed that with the addition of more and more participants the quality of the discourse has decreased. But with the transformations happening in the social structure Habermas contends that "both the requirements of democracy and the nature of contemporary large scale social organization mean that it is impossible to progress today by going back to an elitist public sphere."[87]

Further if we analyse the discursive nature of the bourgeois public sphere, Habermas has explained its manifestation basically in three forms. They are the critique of the absolutist state, the critique of the democratic state and the critique of the public sphere as a mediating force between state and society.[88] The aversion towards the authoritarian absolutist state has been one of the defining features of the bourgeois public and it also reflects the transition of the society during the early eighteenth century from pre-modern to modern. This transition could be seen in the material as well as ideological realm.

But this anti-absolutist stand of the bourgeois public didn't necessarily mean that the discourses following it had accepted the democratic state in all its manifestations. Being pro-liberalist in approach, the discourses formed by the bourgeois public sphere are very much critical of the lawful authority of the modern democracy and the states following it. This is to say that bourgeois public provides a situation in which citizens can come together and act as controllers of the democratic state and thereby making the democratic process more transparent. Thus "the rational-critical public debate forms a counter-controlling control of the authority exercised by the modern state."[89] But to what extent the transparency is applicable in different societies is a matter of concern and this has been one of the major criticisms of the 'Habermasian public sphere.'

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[87] Ibid, p.3
[88] Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p.45
[89] Ibid, p.46

The last characteristic, which seems absurd to an extent, is self critical in nature since various democratic processes are scrutinized by the bourgeois public discourses. This is because "public sphere is both a realm of mutually socializing individuals able to create integrative spaces of solidarity and a realm of mutually criticizing individuals able to construct discursive spaces of reflexivity."[90] The self-critical reflexivity of the bourgeois public sphere is an important feature which helps in rooting the individuals' ability to involve in co-ordination and regulation of their social life. But to what extend the self critical reflexivity has helped in defining the basic characteristic of the public sphere in practice has been questioned by the critiques of Habermas.

The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere

The structural transformation of the bourgeois public sphere from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century has been the key subject of interrogation by Habermas in his various studies. In his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* Habermas explains how the structural transformation of the public sphere was not an isolated process rather the product of social disintegration. According to him,

> *For about a century the social foundations of this sphere have been caught up in a process of decomposition. Tendencies pointing to the collapse of the public sphere are unmistakeable, for while its scope is expanding impressively, its function has become progressively insignificant.[91]*

This is to say that the rise and fall of the public sphere should be understood in terms of the developmental nature of the society as a part of the wider structural transition process.

According to Susen, the decomposition of the bourgeois public sphere could be attributed to mainly three reasons as per the analysis done by Habermas. They are the tension between universal and particular, the tension between communicative and instrumental reason and the tension between empowering and disempowering potentials.[92] The

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[90] Ibid p.46
[91] Habermas, Jurgen (1989), *op.cit.* p.4
[92] Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p.48

universal-particular tension arose primarily due to the confusion embedded in the emancipatory potential of the bourgeois public. The class specificity of the bourgeois public (which was never conceived as a defining ideological characteristic of the public sphere) reduced the idea of human emancipation to mere political emancipation of the bourgeois. This analysis of Habermas is attributed to his leanings towards the Marxist ideology by his critiques. So Susen says,

> *Habermas's conception of the society is firmly situated within the tradition of the Marxist thought in that it recognizes that political emancipation is not tantamount to human emancipation if it is defined in class-specific, rather than in species-constitutive, terms.[93]*

Thus the social exclusion by the modern public sphere has kept aside its characteristic as a realm of political inclusion.

The second reason for the transformation of the public sphere is attributed to the tension prevailing between the communicative and instrumental reason. According to Habermas,

> *The fully developed bourgeois public sphere was based on the fictitious identity of the two roles assumed by the privatized individuals who came together to form a public: the role of property owners and the role of human beings pure and simple.[94]*

Being the part of a capitalist society, the private individual is torn between the different roles of the *homme* (human being) and that of bourgeois. Being human, they are expected to be capable of communicative reasoning whereas being a bourgeois they are expected to be capable of instrumental reasoning. Subsequently their role as private individuals should not be disregarded in the public sphere as well as their existence as public beings should not be neglected in the private sphere.

The final reason for the friction that led to the gradual disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere is the tension that prevailed between the empowering and the disempowering potentials of the modern society. This is again related to one of the

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[93] Ibid
[94] Habermas, Jurgen (1989), *op.cit.* p.56

paradoxes of the modern public sphere wherein the expansion of the public sphere resulted in its subsequent decomposition. As we have stated earlier, how by the integration of more and more individuals (that is to say, the increase in quantity) into the public sphere, its quality was gradually diminished. According to Calhoun,

> *Structural transformation came about, however, as private organizations began increasingly to assume public power on the one hand, while the state penetrated the private realm on the other. State and society, once distinct, became interlocked. The public sphere was necessarily transformed as the distinction between public and private realms blurred, the equation between the intimate sphere and private life broke down with a polarization of family and economic society, rational-critical debate gave way to the consumption of culture.[95]*

Thus the blurring division between the public and private realm also resulted in functional rationality getting momentum over communicative rationality. The realms of state and market attained remarkable role in the transformation of the public sphere. The state turned the public sphere into a space regulated by the functionalist logic of bureaucratic administration whereas the market transformed the public sphere into a realm controlled by the same logic of capitalist commodification.[96] The role of mass media in transforming and controlling the late modern society and its implication in understanding the decomposition of the bourgeois public sphere is very central. In the words of Habermas, "for the 'culture' propagated by the mass media is a culture of integration."[97] But this integrationist potential is so strong that it has the ability to overshadow the innate critical rationality of the public sphere. Thus the integrationist nature of the mass media has resulted in converting public sphere into a functionalist appendage of political reformism.

Habermas and the Theory of Burgeois Public Sphere: A Critical Analysis

Even though the existence of public sphere dates back to centuries, a detailed study and a theoretical framework for understanding the structural transformation of it was done by

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[95] Calhoun, Craig (1992), *op.cit.* p.21
[96]Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p.50
[97] Habermas, Jurgen (1989), *op.cit.* p.175

Habermas for the first time. The work has been extremely influential in that it has invited appreciations as well as criticisms simultaneously. Craig Calhoun's edited volume on Habermas's public sphere is one of the immediate responses to Habermas which contained sixteen chapters by various scholars across the globe analysing as well as criticizing his model. The introductory chapter is by Calhoun himself and the seventeenth and the final chapter by Habermas himself. Since the work by Habermas was the first one of its kind and paved the foundation for further academic discussions it is hard to discard it from any academic discussions and debates on public sphere and still remains as the entry into it. Considering the socio-political specificity of the period in which the work came out, its significance in the academic domain was irreplaceable.[98] Even after five decades of its publishing, the theory is still very much alive in the academic circle and multifaceted forms of criticisms keeps on coming in.

Habermas was widely criticized during the early years of student movement itself for his theories on bourgeois public which was very exclusive. The major attack was done by the elitist who found the idea of a bourgeois public sphere problematic since it completely rejected the presence of a proletarian public domain. The much hyped characteristic of 'emancipatory potential' of the public sphere was not sufficient enough to bring a societal transformation pertaining to each and every member of the society.

The major shortcoming of the Habermasian theory lies in its title itself. The theory talks about how structural transformation happened in the realm of bourgeois public sphere in the modern period. The term 'bourgeois' was regarded very much exclusive and a theoretical analysis on the nature of social life of a closed group was received with huge criticisms. This also disregards the possibilities of various other public spheres which might coexist with the bourgeois one and which would have the potential for a rational-critical engagement with the modern world. Habermas completely neglects the importance of the contemporaneous development of a plebeian public sphere

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[98] Habermas's work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* was published in 1962 in German. Since the political atmosphere during that time had the bearings of cold war, the idea of the existence of a bourgeois public sphere in the capitalist society during the eighteenth century and its subsequent decomposition in the later centuries were interesting topic of debates among the academia. The book got translated to English only after two decades in 1989.

simultaneously and in opposition to the bourgeois public sphere, a sphere built upon different institutional forms.[99] Susen relates the claim of universality put forward by the bourgeois discourse to the legendary slogans of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. He explains further,

> *The liberté bourgeois is defined primarily in terms of negative freedom as in "freedom from", rather than in terms of positive freedom as in "freedom to". The égalité bourgeois is, first and foremost, an equality of opportunity as a formal right, rather than an equality of outcome as a substantive entitlement. The fraternité bourgeois is, in practice, an exclusive type of competitive solidarity between privileged social groups, rather than an inclusive form of unconditional solidarity between all human beings.[100]*

Thus by limiting the study of modern public sphere to discourses on a set of dominant group, means disregarding the role of other social groups in the formation of a modern society. It is also strange that there is no mention of the role of religion in defining the public sphere and the discourses related to it. Since religion is a major social fact in the modern society, neglecting it to define societal structures seems absurd.

The societal construction as conceived by Habermas is based on the dichotomy of public/private distinction. But empirically this distinction seems absurd as a clear cut division of these realms are impossible and often both overlapping with each other. And also containing all the societal facts in the two separate blocks of the public and private spheres is also not feasible as some of them might not fit into both or some might extend to both. Nancy Fraser was one of the scholars, who had criticized Habermas and his theoretical framing of the public sphere. In Fraser's terms, "In general, critical theory needs to take a harder, more critical look at the terms "private" and "public". These terms, after all, are not simply straight forward designations of societal spheres."[101] So the combined effects of the public/private realms of human actors clubbed with the various contextual actions determine the social reality.

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[99] Garnham, Nicholas (1992) "The Media and the Public Sphere". In Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere. Cambridge*, MA: MIT Press, p. 359

[100] Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p.53

[101] Fraser, Nancy (1992) "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy". In Craig Calhoun (ed.) Habermas and the Public Sphere. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. p.131

The major criticism against the model of public sphere put forward by Habermas is its indirect highlighting of patriarchy.[102] The works of Jane Rendell and Catherine Moore are in this direction.[103] The existence of a heterosexist and masculinist form of society has become the normative order of the modern public sphere. To account for the normative significance of the gendered division of power in modern society requires acknowledging that modern public spheres cannot escape the ubiquity of materially and discursively constructed forms of patriarchy.[104] Thus the marginalization of women from the mainstream society as well as their consequent exclusion from high status roles could be seen as part of the patriarchal manifestations of the society. A similar reading was done by the feminist critiques who found the exclusion constitutive of the space rather than accidental. As Fraser contemplates, "we can no longer assume that the liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere was simply an unrealized Utopian ideal; it was also an ideological notion that domination served to rationalize an historically emergent form of class, race, and gender domination."[105]

It is very interesting that in the later discussions following the criticisms, Habermas had accepted the constitutive exclusion of women at the same time conceding the fact that "the exclusion of women had a structural significance."[106] He also praised the quality of the bourgeois public of its potential for self-transformation making the public sphere itself to be transformed with its interaction with the various social movements of the modern society including the women's movement. Thus he proposed the possibility and elasticity of the bourgeois public to transform according to the need of the hour and thereby accommodate the deserving elements into its domain. He also considered the chances of 'alternative publics' as response to Fraser's 'subaltern counter publics' where he distinct between weak and strong publics and also the relationship between social

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[102] Moore, Catherine (2003) "Women and Domestic Violence: The Public/Private Dichotomy in International Law", *International Journal of Human Rights,* 7(4), p.95
[103] Rendall, Jane (1999) "Women and the Public Sphere", *Gender and History,* 11(3), pp.475-488
[104]Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p.54
[105] Fraser, Nancy (1992), *op.cit.* p.116
[106] Habermas, Jurgen (1992) "Further Reflections on Public the Sphere", in Craig Calhoun (ed), *Habermas and the Public Sphere.* Cambridge, MIT Press, p.429

equality and political democracy.[107] Habermas took up the equality debate in the light of the need for having public and private autonomy together.

> No [legal] regulation, however sensitive to context, can adequately concretize the equal right to an autonomous private life unless it simultaneously strengthens the position of women in the political public sphere and thereby augments participation in forms of political communication that provide the sole arenas in which citizens can clarify the relevant aspects that define equal status.[108]

The Habermasian public sphere is idealistic in that it possesses a greater importance on the "rational-critical" character of it and the subsequent emancipatory potential. This simultaneously underestimated the influence of lesser elements in the society. The discourses generated by the bourgeois public are seen as hegemonic in that they relate it to interests of some vested social groups. The same logic is applied to the exclusion of women discourses from the mainstream male-dominated public realm. According to Ku, "Habermas's interpretation underlies an overly rationalistic conception of public culture within a republican model that builds upon the Enlightenment ideal of rationalism."[109] Without discarding the emancipatory power of rationality it should be understood how the social complexity coming out of the public forms of intersubjectivity is often placed out of rational normativity. "Various cultural forms-such as art, music, dance and painting-derive their emancipatory potential from their ability to rise above the seemingly disembodied realm of reason." [110]

For Habermas public interest and public life were conceptually universal and monolithic with only one version of it. And this made the supposition that public sphere of the modern world as necessarily the bourgeois public sphere. This again failed to admit the fact that the contemporary society is equipped with multiple public spheres based on differing interests that coexist and compete with each other. In the words of Susen,

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[107] Allen, Amy (2012), "The Public Sphere: Ideology and/or Ideal?"*Political Theory,* 40(6*),* p.824
[108] Habermas, Jurgen (1998) *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg. Cambridge, MIT Press, p.426

[109] Ku, Agnes S. (2000) "Revisiting the Notion of 'Public' in Habermas's Theory - Toward a Theory of Politics of Public Credibility", *Sociological Theory* 18 (2), p.221
[110]Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p.54

> *Modern public spheres are differentiated and stratified realms of interaction and, as such, they are inhabited by various social groups, some of which occupy subordinate positions in society: members of the working classes, political minorities, ethnic minorities, religious minorities and sexual minorities- to mention just a few of these groups. Social groups that are excluded from sharing the monopoly of symbolic violence in a given society have an interest in creating alternative public spheres that are materially sustained by counter-hegemonic practices and ideologically legitimated by counter-hegemonic discourses.[111]*

Nancy Fraser has explained what the alternative public sphere is referred to as. According to her it can be characterized as, "subaltern counterpublics in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretation of their identities, interests and needs."[112] The counterpublics give advantage to the minority groups as they find their own domain to discuss issues that are of interest to them. Thus the modern society provides enough room for varied discourses to splurge into the mainstream and assert their ideology and potential. The rise of more and more public spheres has challenged the existing dominant public spheres and their ideologies primarily through the formulation of counter ideologies. "Thus the hegemonies need to be continuously re-hegemonized to make sure that they are not dehegemonized and simultaneously counter-hegemonies are continuously scrutinized and de-hegemonized in order to avoid becoming hegemonized."[113]

The criticisms from various fronts of the academic world have made Habermas to work on his theory again and again and a lot of modifications have been made on the idea of public sphere. According to him the modern age guided by the rules of globalization needs a transnational public sphere and the role of the modern mass communication in regulating the domain is highly crucial. But at the same time Habermas is suspicious of the modern communication structures and thus referring to the Iraq war 0f 2013, "with respect to the global public sphere, Habermas worries that the emerging communicative structures of informal global public spheres cannot be efficacious so long as there are no

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[111] Ibid, p.55
[112] Fraser, Nancy (1992), *op.cit.* p.123
[113] Susen, Simon (2011), *op.cit.* p.55

constitutionally institutionalized mechanisms for translating the public will generated in such spheres into binding political power."[114] He further believes that,

> *The opinions and wills generated in such global public spheres could be efficacious if directed at a global institution - a dramatically reformed UN - that would be charged with the limited goals of preventing violence and protecting human rights and empowered with the political muscle to achieve those goals. To be democratically legitimate, such a global institution would have to be rooted in a global public sphere, but such a sphere need not be held together by thick forms of political identity or civic solidarity; rather, "shared moral outrage over gross violations of human rights provides a sufficient basis for solidarity among world citizens" and the achievement of such a thin form of global solidarity is not, in Habermas's view, an "insuperable hurdle.[115]*

But the normative legitimacy of such a global or transnational public domain is perplexing. Since the participants of the global public sphere might be belonging to various nation-states and thereby having various political statuses, the chances of the transnational public favouring those who are privileged are high. These privileges primarily include material capitals and social capitals like language which is the basis for communication. Since English is the approved lingua franca by the international standards, the adherence to one language poses threat to the critical function of the public sphere as it won't correspond to communications of all those who are affected and simultaneously form a public.[116] Fraser further detailed her ambiguities and questions how, even if the public sphere don't correspond to any citizenry, public opinion can be mobilized to be a political force.

> *In the light of massive global inequalities, we have to wonder whether the opinions and wills debated and formed in emerging transnational and global public spheres could possibly be legitimate, in the sense of inclusive of all affected and allowing for genuine parity of participation.[117]*

Even though the Habermasian idea of public sphere could be seen as one of the instance of the overarching hegemony of Eurocentrism in the field of social theory its primacy as

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[114] Allen, Amy (2012), *op.cit.* p. 825
[115] Ibid
[116]http://eipcp.net/transversal/0605/fraser/en/#_ftnref14
[117] Allen, Amy (2012), *op.cit.* p. 826

an entry into the discussions on the social constructions of the modern society is undeniable. Therefore irrespective of the nature of the society, Habermasian analysis is always an entry into understanding the dynamics of public sphere and its related attributes.

Muslims and the Public Sphere

The idea of public sphere and its relation to the Islamic world is itself a separate area of study. There have been various debates ranging from the possibility of a separate public sphere for Muslims to arguments supporting Muslims as part of the general public sphere. Since Islam and Muslims never figured in the schema of articulations put forward by Habermas, we could somewhat designate the realm of public sphere to the Islamic world of the modern society. Again the distribution of Muslims in the modern world is not uniform and they are part of Muslim nation states under the control of a complete Islamic rule like Iran, Saudi Arabia and so on as well as being part of a secular democratic republics like India. So what sort of approach needs to be applied in dealing with the Islamic public sphere is a matter of concern to start with.

It has been a matter of debate as to which realm religion should be placed: the public or the private? There is a majority who believes that religion is strictly an individual's personal choice and it should refrain from the public realm by any means and confine to the private domain. Simultaneous arguments are also very much popular which considers religion part and parcel of the public domain. According to Jose Casanova, there are primarily three situations in which "de-privatization of religion" occur and thereby religion enters the public sphere in order to raise normative issues. These three situations are when religion enters the public sphere in defence of traditional life-worlds against state and market penetration (like mobilisation against abortion or against banning the ritual killing of animals), in defence of traditional moral norms against the absolutist claims of states and markets to function according to their own intrinsic functionalist norms; and in defence of the principle of 'common good' against individualist modern

liberal theories that would reduce the common good to the aggregated sum of individualist rational choices. [118]

There are scholars like Nilufer Gole, who believes that due to the constant presence of Islam in the public sphere primarily through various debates on the religious issues as well its flourishing in the popular culture through films and books Islam has been successful in finding out a space of its own recently.[119]

> *Islam carves out a public space of its own as new Islamic language styles, corporeal rituals, and spatial practices emerge and blend into public life. On the one hand, public Islam testifies to a shift in the orientation of the Islamic movement from macropolitics toward micropractices, and on the other hand, it challenges the borders and the meanings of the secular public sphere.[120]*

It has been approved widely, primarily through Habermasian understandings, that public sphere is a realm of deliberation of rational individuals. The rationality is rooted in the basic premises of neutrality and equality of the individual participants. But scholars have found that along with deliberation, the public realm is "an arena of identity formation through performances of subjectivities and visual displays as well as through validation and authorization."[121] This identity formation along with the self-presentation has been problematic in understanding the "ideal" secular public sphere which is practically functioning on the inclusionary-exclusionary dichotomy. The exclusivity of the public sphere doesn't go hand in hand with the understanding of the secular public sphere vis-à-vis the religious identity formation.

One of the features of the bourgeois public sphere as explained by Habermas was the nature of discussions and debates that were part of it. The discussions should be carried out in such a way that they contain public interests and should be in everyone's benefit. But this was perceived to be the ideal and critiques often found private interests

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[118] Casanova, Jose (1994), *Public Religions in the Modern World*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p.211

[119] Gole, Nilufer (2002), "Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries", *Public Culture,* 14(1), p.173

[120] Ibid

[121] Ismail, Salwa (2008), "Muslim Public Self-Presentation: Interrogating the Liberal Public Sphere", *Political Science and Politics*, 41(1), pp. 25-29

becoming part of the public realm contradicting the specific normativity of the bourgeois public. Fraser, who opposed the Habermasian formulation of the bourgeois public, believed very much how the gender question was abandoned from the bourgeois public on the grounds of being a private matter.[122] She further elaborated by explaining how issues of private interests might become matter of public concern in the long run.

By constraining certain facts as just private would belittle its importance and religion should be seen as one of such social facts which was neglected in the Habermasian schema of development and expansion of public sphere in his early phase. But with a number of scholars coming to the fore to substantiate the relationship of religion with the public sphere, Habermas was forced to acknowledge it by admitting "that the process through which norms are produced, which reflect general interest and create an 'overlapping consensus' in society, can only be rooted in tradition, familiarity and culture, through which individuals internalize the procedures of consensus."[123] Thereby Habermas has also made the point that there was no inherent reason for constraining the idea of public sphere to an idealized bourgeois of Europe.

But according to Salvatore, the existing theories of modernity during the mid and later twentieth century presumed that religious identities, movements and practices had become considerably marginal to the modern societies. These assumptions have culminated in the stoppage of search for typical public spheres in 'traditional' societies in general and Muslim societies in particular.[124] Similarly there were also popular misconceptions in the European society in particular that Islam operated constraints on the conduct and thought of those committed to it as well as it was difficult to find a thread between the Muslim Empires (like the Ottoman Empire) and modern secular republic. These have led to presuppositions of not having a fully fledged functioning public sphere in the Muslim world at any point of time and space. But moving ahead of these presumptions, a systematic analysis of the Islamic societies has proved it otherwise with the existence of public spheres which are unique in themselves.

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[122] Fraser, Nancy (1992), *op.cit.* p.139
[123] Eickelman, Dale F.& Salvatore, Armando (2002), "The public sphere and Muslim identities" *European Journal of Sociology*, 43(1), p.96
[124] Salvatore, Armando (1997), *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity,* Ithaca Press, p.26

Eickelman & Anderson have made an interesting observation that the engagement of Muslims into mass higher education as well as the increasing accessibility of new mass media has resulted in contesting the religious as well as political authority. [125] These have helped in shaping the already existing public sphere rather than creating a new one. The mass communication explosion of the last century in turn have catalysed the access to public sphere and thus "the transparency that recent developments—including rapid communications by telephone, fax, internet, and a greater ease in travel—make possible obliges even the most authoritarian of regimes to justify their actions. It also increases the scope, intensity, and forms of involvement in a multiplicity of over lapping public spheres."[126] This has also intensified the transnational communication and widened the contribution to the public sphere of one's society.

Islam in the 'Public': The Role of Sufis and Other Efforts

If we analyse the Islamic societies of the last century, the role of Sufis in propagating the religion as well as contributing to the essence and growth of the religion is highly commendable. The informal ties between individuals are also potential enough to create a vibrant public sphere and in the case of Islamic societies this proves to be true. Eickelman & Salvatore takes the example of the Sufi tradition prevalent among the early Islamic societies of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to explain how informal organizational groups like them helps in understanding the historical shifts in public sphere.[127] The highly educated religious specialists along with Sufis, never confined to themselves, rather came down to the common people and interacted with them to help them understand the essence of religion. This was contradictory to the bourgeois character where they tried to make conglomerations with people belonging to similar intellectual capacity and thereby extending the public sphere which was exclusive to individuals of a certain social capacity.

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[125]Eickelman, Dale F.& Anderson, Jon W (2003) *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere,* Indiana University Press, Bloomington. p.17
[126] Eickelman, Dale F.& Salvatore, Armando, *op.cit.* p. 99
[127] Ibid, p.100

The Sufi order's uniqueness lies in the fact that they were capable of acting independently from the ruling authorities and interacting with the local people and becoming a part of them.[128] This was made possible by using the vernacular languages specific for each region. The Sufi orders of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at various parts of the world made religion easily accessible to the common by interpreting texts and practices beyond the narrow possibilities offered by the scripture and religious scholarship.[129] Thus the inherent characteristic of the Sufis of being mystics was withheld for the time being and discourses encouraging collective understandings and practices were highlighted. These, however, didn't take into consideration the status quo of the individuals based on occupation, wealth, family lineage, and region and a socially committed lot participating in the social interactions came about in those countries.

Sufism helped in shaping Islam as a social order as well as creating the idea of 'social Muslim'.[130] The revivalist enterprise embarked by them gave them a new sense of social as well as political role. Often these orders were in tension with the political authority and challenged the state and this gave way for having their own political definitions. The neo-Sufi movements often grew in response to European political and economic domination, but responded equal to local developments.[131]

> *Sufism asserted the right of individual believers to experiment with the 'truth' independent of the shari'a, or accepted practice and the conventions of legal scholarship. Sufi orders, often interconnected over large distances, were usually not directly political but offered a template for intervention in society, independent from both the state and from local affinities such as tribe, village or region.[132]*

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[128] Sufism as an Islamic order is popular among some of the African countries like Morocco, Sudan, Nigeria and Algeria and Asian countries like Iran, Iraq, India, Pakistan and in parts of some of the European countries mainly Turkey. Even though Sufism cannot be regarded as the major order in Islam with regard to its numeral strength, the capacity it had embellished in influencing the mass is profound and irreplaceable. This is also to accept the fact that in certain parts of the world, including India, Sufism was not the only Muslim order which was involved in engaging with the people with the mission for imparting wisdom, rather *Salafis* and scholars of other orders were also involved.

[129] Ibid, p. 101

[130] Ibid

[131] Ibid, p.102

[132] Ibid, p.103

Along with the popularity of Islam as a social ideology, there were also simultaneous developments in the matters of the popularity of the Sharia which was further catalysed by the printing technology. "It also encouraged making the Sharia a popular trope rather than just a jurist's notion, encompassing the explicit and implicit, taken-for-granted rules, habits and practices needed to live a good life as a Muslim."[133] And with the help of the print culture the daily political, social and economic lives of the people were incorporated with the Sharia making it accessible for the common man. Thus the earlier perception of religion as a space completely confined to one's personal (or so to say the 'private') domain and which has nothing to do with their social life got transformed and religion thus became engulfed in their day to day life. More importantly the fact that religion and its scriptures belonged to a particular category of educated elite who were exclusive and capable of having the authority over it was challenged by the Sufi order and thereby expanding the domain of publicity to all categories of people irrespective of their status.

A similar trend was seen in India during the late eighteenth and nineteenth century among the Muslims. Along with the Sufi tradition the Salafis also played a key role in what was known as the revivalist/reformist project. As we have said in the case of the activities of the Sufis in Africa and other Middle Eastern countries, the reformers of India were also primarily focussing their activities as a response to the European colonialism. This response to the domination was also accomplished with focus on the local development as well. These were all done by giving a religious foundation to their activities. There were situations in which the common people of the Muslim community in Kerala didn't have any access to the religious scriptures[134] and for them religious authority was the realm of a certain privileged class and interfering in their matters might lead to some sort of blasphemy. Thus religion, for the common man, was strictly part of the private

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[133] Ibid

[134] In Kerala before the Islamic revivalism of the late nineteenth century, Muslims received religious education mainly through oral methods. They were able to recite Quran, even though a lot of them couldn't read it. Along with that there were a lot of misconceptions with regard to having access to modern education and for that matter even learning the vernacular language was discouraged by the orthodox clergy. This often led to people getting no chance to understand the essence of the religion and to go beyond what has been taught to them by their ancestors and orthodox *ulema.*

realm[135] and a change in this was possible only after the reformist intervention. The result of this was double folded in that religion became a part of the public as well as the accessibility of the common man was made possible through the process.

At the same time the recent trend which got popularity in the last few decades is the 'religiously oriented reflection and mobilization' which helps for personal salvation and realization to go hand in hand with community welfare.[136] Strenuous efforts from individuals, associations and various movements have helped in reshaping Islam to fit in the modern nation building process through the support of education, modern mass communication and also easier physical access to different parts of the globe. A lot of popular religious and political movements like the Muslim Brotherhood and its different versions, the *Jamaat-e-Islami,* Hamas and like others have their impact on their respective public spheres with their political influence based on the principles of shared understanding of social action.

> *Morally and religiously inspired social action underlies the building of networks that provide assistance to the needy, basic health care and education—services that the state often cannot efficiently provide. Such social action can be informally organized, based on affinities of shared habits, expectations, practices and interests. It can also coalesce around formal institutions and associations. Such movements can also provide non-state forms of arbitration and justice, media representations, and formulate blueprints for the entire national polity.[137]*

The importance of such organizations and movements in keeping Islam in the public domain is highly appreciable. There are groups which are based on political aspirations as well as those which are promoting charity. There are groups which are well organized with intricate web of transactions while some groups lack such organizational stability but are strong enough to hold on to each other in terms of activism. Similar trend is very much visible in the Indian sub-continent as well. According to Eickelman & Salvatore,

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[135] There were instances of festivals and gatherings like *Nerccas* (the saint worship) were people come together in the public to commemorate the respective saints on behalf of whom the *Nerccas* are carried out. But how far these activities range in the realm of public is a matter of concern. As per the Habermasian analysis of a public sphere the critical-rationality is highly problematic here, as well as the idea of a common opinion for the common good of those involved are also less profound.

[136]Eickelman, Dale F. & Salvatore, Armando (2002), *op.cit.* p. 106

[137] Ibid, 103

one of the intelligent exploitation of the print media by such organizations is their publications commonly called as the 'Islamic books' which has the ability for mass appealing.[138] These books are popular due to its simplicity and also accessibility especially since they are inexpensive. They are often written in the local languages on issues of basic interests like how to lead an Islamic life with references from the original Arabic Islamic scriptures to prove their authenticity. With the changing mass media new interventions like audio and video cassettes, cds, television, radio, books and internet are used to the variety of audiences. A lot of agencies and associations have distributed the Quran and its translations to various languages to a number of countries and a number of poor and common people have been the beneficiaries.[139] Along with the intervention by mass media, conferences and seminars are being facilitated which appeal to both the common man as well as the intellectuals. The practice of such gatherings is very much present in India, and much more frequent in Kerala, the details of which could be discussed later.

Islamization v/s Modernization: How the Public Sphere Swing in Between

But a counter process of secularization is also very popular among the Muslim majority societies, especially those which were once the European colony. This is primarily due to the fact that the elites and Muslim intellectuals in those societies found secularization of the public sphere as an entry into the modern society.[140] The secular imperative was so critical that, "the project of modernization integrated secularization of the public sphere, taking the form of banishing signs of religion from the public domain, effecting state control over religion, and instituting secular reason. Further, the objects of change and reform identified in the project of modernization were shaped by the sensibilities articulated in Western accounts and critiques of local traditions and practices."[141] The vast array of debates surrounding the veil could be read in this light and unveiling was seen as the inevitable step to modernization which was a Western take on the idea of liberation. Thus along with organizations and movements which helped in popularizing

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[138] Ibid
[139]http://www.ummulhasanaat.co.za/king-fahd-holy-quran-printing-complex
[140] Ismail, Salwa (2008), *op.cit.* p. 26
[141] Ibid

Islam as a simple way of life, parallel activities from a different set of fellow citizens were promoting Islam as a backward ideology which dismantled the chances of the community to progress.

We know that the early Islamist politics were often confined to the limits of the Muslim majority countries and was often referred to as a matter of the internal interests thereby leaving any impact on the politics of the nation-states outside its boundaries.[142] But with the Islamist groups changing their focus to the European countries, the presence of radical Islam is very much part of the daily lives of the Westerners.

In fact discussions on the secular nature of public sphere could be understood at different levels pertaining to the nature of the society referred to. In an Islamic society like Iran and Turkey, making the public sphere secular would amount to banning individuals from exhibiting their religiosity through signs, symbols and self-presentation. The banning of veil in Turkey, Iran and Egypt could be seen as efforts targeted at creating a secular public sphere which is the benchmark of modern society. Contrary to this, in secular democratic countries the formation of a secular public sphere would be by allowing people of various religious denominations to practice their religion freely without state intervention which could be done by not having control over exhibition of one's religious symbols without any regulations.[143]

Public Sphere and Its Emergence in India

The discourse on Muslims and the public sphere in India cannot be carried out in isolation and the much wider domain of public sphere itself has to be analysed primarily to have a basic understanding of the term in the Indian situation. Scholars attribute the

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[142] Islam and its related appendages came to be related with the Western world; probably a tension bound relation, in the recent time with the worst incident of 9/11. The attacks which were carried out in the name of Islam have created a very negative impact on the lives of non-Muslim Europeans and hence the co-existence of Islam with the European culture has been problem bound. The major and minor incidents that followed in the decade later till the day has cost many lives and the repercussions of it are still being suffered by millions of people throughout the globe. Issues like Muslim women veiling in the public to the issues of Muslim refugees have become a routine internal issue for the European countries thereby giving Islam the face of an 'intolerant ideology.'

[143] Gole, Nilufer (2002), "Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries", *Public Culture,* 14(1), p.182

evolution of the public sphere in the Indian context by taking the colonial period as the period of reference. The colonial rule and the subsequent nationalist movement together contributed to the foundation of a societal structure based on the public/private distinctions. This is not to disregard the fact that a healthy public sphere existed before the colonial age with its own specificities and manifestations, rather the construction of a more solid distinction of the spaces into public and private domain was accomplished out of colonial interests. How far these distinctions have helped in perceiving the dynamics of a healthier evolution of the society into its present form through centuries is something which needs a thorough introspection. It would be quite interesting to comprehend how the public sphere as envisaged by the British colonial intellectuals in the territory of India is compatible with the Western model of Habermasian public sphere. Being a pluralistic society with diversities ranging from religion, language to culture, the idea of a public sphere and its accessibility in the Indian context needs a multilevel analysis. The existence of parallel public spheres, their existence in relation to the private spheres and how trans-national public spheres operates due to a rich Indian Diaspora, together forms a wide range of issues to start with.

A) The Emergence of the 'Modern' Public Sphere in India

The British colonial policies together with the independence struggle shaped the early stages of the formation of the 'modern' public sphere and the after effects of it still reflects in the evolution process of the public sphere in India. The idea of public sphere as a realm between the private individuals (who want to come in the public) and the state authority was very much the initial nature of the public sphere which came through the British interventions in the social structures of the Indian subcontinent. The mode of interaction of the British state with the Indian population was not a direct one with the state trying their best to avoid a direct relationship with the individuals.[144] According to Freitag, "the British state chose instead to rely on a 'representational mode of governance' that was based sociologically on discrete communities with particular

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[144] Ali, Amir (2001), "Evolution of Public Sphere in India", *Economic and Political Weekly,* 36(26), p.2420

individuals representing those interests."[145] And these privileged individuals were often the elites of their respective communities whose personal interests were translated to as the interests of the community and ultimately that of the constituency itself.

By comparing the Indian situation with that of the European countries like England and France, Freitag explains how the nature of public sphere differs in both the situations.[146] In the former situation, the state and the individuals shared a common tradition and history meanwhile in the latter case the state and individuals shared a diverse tradition and history thereby finding it difficult to arrive in common terms. Since the community and the state came from the same tradition, the transformation of the community to nation state was an easy task. And in the same way, "public participation in collective activities like ceremonies and protests created an important corollary to the nation state-the 'public sphere' in which individuals participated in the shaping of their states through the exercise of public opinion."[147] Thus according to Freitag, the two reasons which led to the shift of popular identification from the community to that of the nation state in European countries like France and England are as follows."The first was participation in collective rituals informed by an ideological framework that came to equate 'community' and 'nation'. Secondly, the creation of a public sphere in which citizens of the nation helped to shape it through the exercise of public opinion."[148]And along with it, "the shift in the organization of community around the local community to one in which individuals identified with the nation was accompanied by the creation of a public sphere, which was fully elaborated and institutionalized in the 19th century."[149]

But Freitag observes that this model of a nation state and subsequently the evolution of a public sphere, in spite of providing a practicable model to the third world countries, were not possible in the Indian context with the inevitable local influences.[150] Thus a direct translation of the European model was not possible in the British India and the result of it

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[145] Freitag, Sandria (1990), *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi
[146] Ibid, p.192
[147] Ali, Amir (2001), *op.cit.* p.2120
[148] Ibid, p.2121
[149] Ibid
[150] Freitag, Sandria (1990), *op.cit.* p. 192

was rather alarming. Since the inspiration drawn by the nationalist leaders in the process of community formation were from the essence of the communities formed in north India during that time, religion played a pivotal role in defining them. This has finally led to the emergence of a nascent form of communalism or religious identity based community formation in the Indian sub-continent.[151]This was often regarded as a parallel discourse to nationalism as well. And these developments lead to the formation of what Freitag called a 'public arena' instead of a public sphere.

> *Public arenas facilitated popular participation in ritual enactment of the polity. They provided an important impetus to integration in 19th century India. By serving as a conduit for the expression of symbolic statements of collective values, they performed a role very similar to that of public opinion in Europe expressed through the public sphere.[152]*

The issues of authority and legitimacy often prevented the remoulding of these public arenas to become the public spheres similar to the Western world.[153]And also the fact that these were religion based domains the idea of a collective ritual was very much reduced to a particular community and the chances for inclusivity was also very less. Thus public arenas cater the idea of a closed domain which in no way entertains any intrusion.

B) The Role of Nationalist Movement in the Creation of Public Sphere

The colonial interference in the formation of a public sphere in the Indian context was well supplemented by the nationalist discourse as a response to it. According to Tamir, the enthusiasm of the nationalist leaders could be concomitant to the fact that their right to national self determination could be simultaneously seen as their right to own one's own public sphere.[154]But this imagination of public sphere has drawn some parallels (rather unknowingly) from the Western public sphere, in so much that they privileged certain groups over the others in having access to it. Here the majority ideology was highlighted and was de facto the universal. The minorities, in terms of religion, region,

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[151] Ibid, p.196
[152] Ibid, p.192
[153]Freitag, Sandria (1996) "Contesting in Public: Colonial Legacies and Contemporary Communalism" in David Ludden (ed) *Making India Hindu*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.284
[154] Tamir, Yael (1993)*Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton University, Princeton NJ, p.70

caste, class and ethnicity were not encompassed to the cultural values and symbols of the mainstream project and they were left out. Thus, in spite of their earnest efforts to create a public domain of their own, the Indian public sphere to an extent reflected their Western counterpart in privileging certain group over others and thereby redefining the idea of nationalism. And if we see the nationalist movement from various angles so to say as both an anti- imperialist movement as well as a movement aimed at nationalist interests, Freitag is of the opinion that the former was not successful in providing base for the formation of a public sphere and the latter promoted a public domain which was based on community.[155]

This idea of the reduction of public sphere into a community-based public arena and further, promoting nationalist movement as based on respective communities reinforces the idea that Indian nationalism is a derivative discourse as suggested by Partha Chatterjee.[156] Various activities of Hindu communities during the late nineteenth century in the public arenas carried out in the name of nationalism were not by any means nationalism. But "it operated in the very same public spaces, utilising the same forms of publicity and venues of communication, and made very similar kinds of demands for protection of shared values and modes of behaviour as did the nationalist movement."[157] Similar wave of activities are very much prevalent in the present day Indian nation as well, as people belonging to a particular religious (but are often identified with a certain political ideology)community are arguing for the protection of the cow. This seems to be very interesting that even after so many decades of becoming a free nation from all sorts of external interferences, the functioning of the public sphere is very much reduced to public arenas and they are still defined by the credentials of particular religions. The very issue of cow dominating our discourse on nationalism, democracy, secularism and even individual freedom for that matter gives us an alarming indication that we have not moved ahead in pace with the other developed and developing nation states whose primary concerns are updated and are need of the hour. This is very much substantiated

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[155] Freitag, Sandria (1990), *op.cit.* p.230
[156] Ali, Amir (2001), *op.cit.* p.2421
[157] Freitag, Sandria (1990), *op.cit.* p.220. Here Freitag has given the example of the Cow Protection Movement to explain the public arena activity.

by Amir Ali when he says that the present distortions seen in the public sphere are in fact "a telling commentary" on the exact nature of the national movement.[158]

In the Habermasian analysis civil society was ultimately part of the private sphere and public sphere served as a link between the civil society and the state. But the Habermasian model of public sphere often fails to find its replica in the Indian sub-continent in that most of the scholars and academicians consider public sphere as part and parcel of the civil society and which is always in an antagonistic relationship with the state.[159]This again culminates in some of them using both the terms synonymously.[160] But this again cannot be criticized as a shortcoming of the discourse since a well developed public sphere with all its possibilities cannot exist in the post-colonial situations like in India due to the fact that the existence of a healthy, fully fledged civil society is necessarily the precondition for the evolution of a public sphere. And what it means by a civil society varies from nation to nation. According to Chandhoke, "the assertion of civil society is in the West is thus, based upon a shared collective memory of how absolutist states were limited and constrained by the activities of the self-conscious, rights-bearing individuals in association with others."[161] Thus the West has a history of assertion of civil society against the state and this shared history is recreated every time when the slogan of civil society is raised.

But in the post-colonial world the situation is entirely different. And according to Chandhoke,

> *It is not the remembrance of, but the creation of civil society as the sphere where democratic politics can be constructed. Civil society has become the leitmotif of movements struggling to free themselves from unresponsive and often tyrannical post-colonial elites. If the first wave of liberation took place along with*

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[158] Ali, Amir (2001), *op.cit.* p.2420

[159] Chandhoke, Neera (1998), "The Assertion of Civil Society against the State: The Case of the Post Colonial World" in Manoranjan Mohanty, Partha Nath Mukherji and Olle Tornquist (eds) *Peoples' Rights: Social Movements and the State in the'Third World*, Sage, New Delhi.

[160] NeeraChandhoke (1998) in her chapter on civil society and state has explained how the concept of civil society has embraced a wide range of components, both abstract and concrete, such as political, social, rights, law, representative institutions and finally a public sphere stating these as the mandatory preconditions for democracy. Thereby she has made it clear that public sphere is very much part of the civil society which cannot claim for a characteristic of its own.

[161]Chandhoke, Neera (1998), *op.cit.* p.30

decolonisation, the second wave comes up against those very elites who had taken over power after decolonisation.[162]

Thus it is a very clear fact that the distortions we see in the present civil society, and for that matter in the public sphere as well, dates back to the political bargaining that took place between the colonial elites and the native elites for political influence which was often carried out in the name of development. The post-colonial state could be located in a dual legacy of being situated between an elaborate system of control evolved from the colonial state and that of the freedom movement which challenged the definitions of political put forward by the colonial state.[163] But it turned out to be pathetic that the tug of war between these legacies was won over by the former one thereby diminishing the role of civil society in political spectrum. This ideology valorised the exercise of power of state which was supplemented by the post-colonial societies giving unlimited power to the state in every domain often in the name of development. Thus the possibility of 'a critical civil society' and consequently 'a responsible public sphere' was retarded.

Public and Private Spheres in the Indian Context

It is very interesting to know how the very idea of a public/private dichotomy in the Indian context was again a product of the colonial policies. The sphere of public was mostly untouched by the colonial enterprise. And the creation of this dichotomy, according to Ali, "was an outcome of the manner in which the colonial elite, in accordance with its 'representational mode of governance', choose to interact with native elites, the representatives of various communities."[164] He further explains how this dichotomy was a reflection of the division in the legal arena formulated by the colonial legislators and judges. Thus

> *British and Anglo-Indian law had a 'territorial' scope and ruled over the 'public' world of land relations, criminal law, laws of contract and of evidence. In sharp contradiction to this were Hindu and Muslim laws which were defined as 'personal' covering persons rather than areas, and dealing with more intimate areas of human existence- family relationships, family property and religious life.*

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[162] Ibid, p.30
[163] Ibid, p.31
[164] Ali, Amir (2001), *op.cit.* p.2421

This sharp distinction was further bolstered by the Queen's Proclamation of 1859, which promised absolute non-interference in religious matters.[165]

After the Revolt of 1857, the British were very cautious with their policies and the abstention from the private spheres of the religious groups could be related to their policy to get back the confidence of the elites of both the Hindu and Muslim communities. And according to Ali's analysis, this reluctance of the British could be again seen as a strategy to invoke certain responses from the elites of both the communities which would benefit the state in the long run. [166] So the elites responded and some of the responses were similar to both the communities since both were decidedly revivalist in nature and they supported and deeply engaged themselves in the national movement. This revivalist nature of the nationalist movement which was perpetuated through the major religious communities could be related to the present configuration of the public sphere in India and the incongruities and distortions associated with it. Ali has taken two examples, one reflecting each community to explain how the whole project of revivalist nationalism had an impact on the lives of people belonging to respective communities.

In the case of Muslims, the revivalist project was associated to the Deoband School[167] and it primarily focussed on the formation of an autonomous community with a separate private sphere free from any external interferences.[168] The safeguard of the private sphere became a primary duty of the Muslim men and any intrusions, whatsoever, were intolerable; be it the colonial state or any other authority. This tendency could be extended to the post-colonial scenario and Ali takes the example of the much hyped Shah Bano controversy to substantiate how the legacy of the Deoband school of thought was reiterated and how it legitimized a certain issue which happened in the Indian polity a

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[165] Ibid

[166] The policies of the British like the 'Divide and Rule' had a serious impact on the social lives of Indians as it was the strategy of the British to create hostility between the Hindus and Muslims.

[167] It is to be noted that the revivalist project among Muslims in India in general are discussed under the Deoband School of thought. But this applies only to the North Indian situation and the process of reform had a different school of thought in the South Indian context that was not necessarily associated with the Deoband tradition. And also that the agendas of both the discourses were different also adds to the point that Islamic revivalism in the late nineteenth century India was not a uniform one and had ideological and regional variations. So by mentioning Islamic revivalism and Deoband School, it has to be understood that it doesn't mean an all-India tendency rather a generalisation of the situation.

[168] Ibid

century later. According to him, "the furore that erupted over the Shah Bano ruling by the Supreme Court was a direct outcome of the Deoband School's creation of an autonomous private sphere in the latter half of the 19th century."[169] The events which followed after the filing of the case as well as the ruling by the Supreme Court resulted in huge uproar from the Muslim community, especially from the religious clerics. The intrusion into the matter of Muslim personal law, and subsequent indulgence in their private sphere was unacceptable by any means and the passage of the Bill on Muslim Women's Protection of Rights on Divorce was received with huge protest. The Muslim Personal Law Board was in no mood to accept the intervention in the personal law and due to unbearable pressure from the Muslim elites, the government had to revoke the Bill and thereby surrender to the political bargaining.

The second example Ali gives is that of the Hindu revivalism which was based on nationalism.[170] The nationalism as portrayed by leaders like Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in their writings persuaded the Hindus on the need of securing the private and public domain from the external influences. A new understanding of patriotism and nationalism was imparted through these writings which projected the private domain as a sacred one and how the earlier Muslim rule and the latter British rule should be seen as a threat to this sanctity of the private domain. This definition of nationalism could find resonance after a century in the reassertion of the Hindutva politics during the late twentieth century.[171] Ali makes an interesting observation when he says that, "the two controversies are further linked in the sense that both arose around the same time, that is in the mid- 1980's."[172] In fact the Shah Bano controversy was in a way to impart an unprecedented momentum to the emerging politics of Hindutva as the former was effectively used by the latter to reassure the idea that the Indian state was appeasing Muslims. So what has to be noted is that,

> *The difference between the two however lay in the fact that while the Muslim*
> *response to the Shah Bano judgement was to protect the Muslim private sphere*

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[169] Ibid, p.2422
[170] Ibid, p.2421
[171] The Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 and the subsequent communal tension which arose in India and the extension of it which is prevalent in today's India should be understood in this context
[172] Ibid, p.2422

from a perceived encroachment by the Supreme Court; the Hindutva movement was out to stamp the Indian public sphere with the symbols, cultural values and norms of Hindu nationalism. This attempt to redefine the public sphere is significant as the politics of Hindu nationalism was taken out of the private sphere of the Hindu family and Hindu conjugality where it had existed in the latter part of the 19th century.[173]

This sort of a response and resurgence of the Hindutva politics could be seen as a sign of intolerance towards diverse nature cultures getting prominence in the public sphere of India. This could again be assigned to the dissatisfaction of the votaries of Hindutva in the role played by various liberal streams of the nationalist movement in defining the public sphere in the post colonial scenario.[174]

Public/Private Dichotomy and the Women's Question

Partha Chatterjee in his article on colonialism, nationalism and the colonized women (1989) have explained the conditions of women preceding the British conquest and the subsequent discourses carried under the vigil of both the colonial and nationalist enterprises in order to bring a 'transformation' in the lives of women. According to him one of the important ideological justifications done by the British rule was the condemnation of the "degenerate and barbaric" social customs of the Indians often approved by the religious traditions. [175]So a self-assigned task of 'civilizing' the indigenous people was taken over by the colonial state and the primary targets of them were the women. This was primarily done by, "assuming a position of sympathy with the unfree and oppressed womanhood of India, the colonial mind was able to transform this figure of the Indian woman into a sign of the inherently oppressive and unfree nature of the entire cultural tradition of the country."[176]But as a response to the colonial project of 'civilizing'[177] the women, the Indian nationalist leaders took up the question of women

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[173] Ibid

[174] Ibid

[175] Chatterjee, Partha (1989), "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India", *American Ethnologist*, 16(4), p.622

[176] Ibid

[177] Scholars like Lata Mani and Partha Chatterjee do believe that the women's question in the agenda of the social reform by the national leaders was more of a political encounter between the colonial state and the 'Indian tradition'. And for them this supposed 'tradition' was a product of the colonialist discourse itself. "It was colonialist discourse by assuming the hegemony of the Brahmanical religious texts, the complete

and this was formulated around the separation of culture into two domains-namely the material and spiritual. The material realm was associated with the Western world whereas the spiritual realm was that of the colonized people.[178] So the nationalist appeal was to inculcate the material techniques of the Western world into the Indian culture but not compromising with the distinctive spiritual uniqueness of the Indian tradition thereby reforming and rationalizing the traditions of the Indians.

Partha Chatterjee and Tanika Sarkar have in their respective works shown how this material/spiritual dichotomy has influenced in the creation of various other analogies in the course of the nationalist project.[179] Thus the distinctions like outer/inner supplemented the material/spiritual dichotomy. This was further extended to the day-to-day experiences of the social space into *ghar* (home) and *bāhir* (world).[180] Thus,

> *The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represent's one's inner spiritual self, one's true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world-and woman is its representation. And so, one gets an identification of social roles by gender to correspond with the separation of the social space into ghar and bāhir.[181]*

A similar separation was done by Sarkar as well wherein the family was defined primarily by contrasting versions of subjection[182]- the "colonised Hindu male in the

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submission of all Hindus to the dictates of those texts and the necessary basis of practices such as widow burning in the sanctions of the texts defined the tradition that was to be criticized and reformed." (Chatterjee, 1989, p.623)

[178] The material culture included the Western monopolised areas like science, technology, economy and modern ways of statecraft which are all ultimately used in imparting their dominance over the non-European countries.

[179] Sarkar, Tanika (1993): "Rhetoric against Age of Consent: Resisting Colonial Reason and Death of a Child Wife", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(36), pp. 1869-1878

[180] Chatterjee, Partha (1989), *op.cit.* p.624

[181] Ibid

[182] Sarkar has made a very interesting observation regarding the shift in the thought process of the indigenous male in the early decades of the nineteenth century and later decades of it. This was primarily due to their decreasing faith in the progressive aspects of British rule and the subsequent diminishing faith in their self as well. The earlier reformers like Ram Mohan Roy were enchanted by the possibilities of the English education on the lives of the natives. But with the British taking more hold on the lives of the Indians, especially the Revolt of 1857 and its aftermath, led the native male to think about the burden of colonialism and this hammered out " a re-oriented self-critique as well as a heightened perception about the meaning of subjection." (Sarkar, Tanika (1993),p.1870). Thus the enthusiasm shown during the early

world outside and of the apparently subordinated Hindu wife at home. The forced surrender and real dispossession of the former was counter posed to the allegedly loving, willed surrender and ultimate self-fulfilment of the latter."[183] This division was further reinforced by the earlier mentioned legal divisions and interventions done by the colonial regime. Thus the "forced surrender" of the female folks to the men could be associated with the reiteration of the patriarchy and it is startling to understand how, in spite of a reformist trend seen in the society, the patriarchal forces were functioning with various attributes. The importance of household thus made the conjugal relationship the "centre of gravity" around which the family was defined, but this was not to say that women enjoyed freedom and had a voice of their own even in matters related to the conjugal relationship.

The postulation of the personal laws as completely a private affair, where the state had no intervention, was in a way more comfortable for the colonial regime. This was primarily due to the fact that the Hindu rules were comparatively stable and strict.[184] The joint family system of the Hindus gave supremacy to the interests of the collective rather than the individual and this was seen by the British as a "system of relatively unquestioned patriarchal absolutism which promised a more comfortable state of affairs after the bitter struggles with Victorian feminism[185] at home.[186] But with the men lacking self-confidence and finding themselves weak a new sense of the need for a "pure space" where they could insert their claims for complete autonomy came into the general thought.[187] This could again be seen as a thought coming out of their fear of

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nineteenth century regarding reforming the society by sticking into the tradition slowly gave way to nationalism being the prime agenda. Since the natives were deprived of power of any sort, their only domain of autonomy shrank to the household. Along with this, the crisis in the agricultural scenario fuelled by the landlord-tenant friction over issues of tenancy, rent and revenue made the lives of landed gentry miserable and thereby the household became "doubly precious and important as the only zone where autonomy and self rule could be preserved." (Sarkar, Tanika (1993), *op.cit.* p.1870).

[183] Ibid

[184] Ibid, p.1871

[185] The later decades of the nineteenth century in England saw considerable interest by women fighting for their rights in various aspects of their daily life marriage, divorce, property rights etc. Since they were to certain extent successful in their endeavours, this development was seen by some sections of the English men as sceptical and unhealthy. A similar pattern of thought was seen among the British regime in India as well with the majority opposing such a feminist development. So the Indian situation and the personal laws were seen as suppressing the agency of women and thereby inhibiting the chance of any activism.

[186] Sarkar, Tanika (1993), *op.cit.* p.1871

[187] Ibid

compromising their masculinity with the British hegemony and also a feeling of powerlessness in the primary domains of everyday life. And what was interesting (and to a certain extent obvious), was that "the specific and concrete embodiment of this purity seemed to lie more within the body of the Hindu women, rather than of the man."[188] Thus woman was bestowed with the tag of purity and sanctity and it was seen as the duty of the man to safeguard the purity of the feminity at any cost. A woman was the symbol of purity, loyalty and discipline who (of course not a free soul), rather was controlled by the religious scriptures and customs. But what was interesting, according to Sarkar, is the fact that " for the liberal reformers she used to be the archetypal victim figure, whereas for the nationalists she had become a repository of power[189], the Kali rampant, a figure of range and strength."[190] Thus the construction of Hindu womanhood was related to the emotions of love and pain.

The material/spiritual analogy was further extended to various other realms as well, particularly in relation with the innate characteristics defining the human beings and in that, the women. Thus this dichotomy corresponded to other analogies like animal/god-like qualities which were further extended to masculine/feminine virtues.[191] The feminist virtues formed the basis for resolving the women's question by the nationalist movement. The fear of women losing the inner spirituality, primarily through over expose to Westernization was always kept in check. As a part of this, home was regarded as the key site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility for protecting and fostering this quality.

These developments were unknowingly paving way for the establishment of a new form of patriarchy wherein the women were placed in the social order in which they differed both (and thereby according a cultural and spiritual superiority) from the educated

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[188] Ibid

[189] The power of women, according to Sarkar, lies in her capacity to bear the pain and discipline which are often conferred on her body primarily in the name of chastity which extends beyond the death of her husband "through an indissoluble, non-consensual infant form of marriage, through austere widowhood, and through a proved past capacity for self-immolation." (Sarkar, T (1993), p.1871) Various literary works by Bankim Chandra during those times had lines valorising women who committed Sati and for him it was part of 'national regeneration.'

[190] Ibid

[191] Chatterjee, Partha (1989), *op.cit.* p.626

Western women as well as form the native women who primarily belonged to the lower class and were devoid of any exposure to education.[192] It was also pathetic how women themselves internalized this patriarchy in the name of empowerment which denied them agency in matters of their interests as well. And it is also interesting to see, as in the case of appropriation of most forms of hegemony, how patriarchy combined "coercive authority with the subtle force of persuasion."[193] This finally led women to boast of their 'freedom' through the attainment of a superior national culture as opposed to the indigenous low class women.

Education was the important tool, as in the case with almost all the reformist enterprise throughout, to impart the desired changes in the lives of women. The establishment of schools by Indians itself, supported later by the literature and teaching materials in Bengali attracted more and more girls into formal education. The model of constructing a 'new woman' with the desired cultural qualities, who was introduced into the formal education, but strictly keeping distance from the English education, who experienced freedom which was self-defined and which centred around one's household, was in a way successful as a project of nationalist construction of reform. But what is not appreciated here primarily is the absence of involvement of women belonging to lower class/caste and Muslims in the reform project. It is a clear indication of how the whole endeavour was hegemonic and a closed one and one which never appreciated the emancipation of the fellow female folks. It points to the fact that how the idea of nationalism was formulated in a narrow sense which integrated the feelings and emotions of a given group of people who claimed themselves to be the safeguards of the nation from the external interventions. And it looks strange how the legacy of these ideologies are visible in the present day Indian society and how certain manifestations are still very much the way they were present centuries back.[194]

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[192] Ibid, p.627
[193] Ibid, p.630
[194] The Cow Protection Movements of the late nineteenth century and the politics behind it are very much present in today's political situations in India and they still contribute to the various discussions and debates in the public sphere. It is also interesting to look at how the same issues at different temporality are dealt by the propounders and how external elements like media and state (which certainly has undergone

The education gave women a certain cultural and spiritual superiority in various aspects. And according to Chatterjee, the three notions of superiority were,

> *Superiority over the Western woman for whom, it was believed, education meant only the acquisition of material skills to compete with men in the outside world and hence a loss of feminine (spiritual) virtues; superiority over the preceding generation of women in their own homes who had been denied the opportunity of freedom by an oppressive and degenerate social tradition; and superiority over women of the lower classes who were culturally incapable of appreciating the virtues of freedom.[195]*

And with the virtues they garnered from the education, the middle-class Hindu women were also entitled with a major task of compensating with the compromises men had to make in their process of engaging with the material world outside, especially in matters of food, dress, religious observances and social relations.[196] It might sound ridiculous how the dysfunction of certain physicality of one set of people are redeemed by the ascribed spiritual superiority of another set and thereby creating an 'ideal' equilibrium in the imagined society. And as Chatterjee puts, "the new patriarchy advocated by nationalism conferred upon women the honour of a new social responsibility, and by associating the task of female emancipation with the historical goal of sovereign nationhood, bound them to a new, and yet entirely legitimate, subordination."[197] Thus with the virtues of self-sacrifice, devotion, religiosity and benevolence women were adorned with title of goddess and mother and were ultimately equated to nation.

From what has been understood so far with regard to the social existence of women during the colonial period, one could sense that women (precisely those privileged to belong to certain class, region, religion and caste) enjoyed a certain level of 'freedom' which was strictly within the boundaries of the household with definitions set by the new patriarchy. The idea of 'freedom' was defined and manipulated in such a way by the nationalists so that it never gave women access to public sphere and in case they had to,

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tremendous changes with the state changing from the foreign rule to democratic state) plays the pivotal role in perpetuating and regulating them.

[195] Chatterjee, Partha (1989), *op.cit.* p. 628
[196] Ibid, p. 629
[197] Ibid

was strictly abiding to the virtues which would never make them in par or compete with the male folks. The nationalists were also successful in creating a layer of 'emancipated' women who found themselves superior to other women who failed to adopt and exist in the way they were. It is also interesting to see how the question of women and their reform got less projected after the late period of nineteenth century in the political debates carried out by the nationalists.[198] And in Chatterjee's words, "the nationalist discourse we have heard so far is a discourse about women, women do not speak here."[199]

Thus it is interesting to see how the complexities of caste, class and religion are interconnected (often unknowingly) in the creation of a public domain as well as its accessibility in the Indian context, which differs from its Western counterparts in the basic foundations and how it perpetrates in the present day with its various manifestations. It is a matter of concern how in the project of creation of a national culture in the process of creating a counter-culture against the British rule, communities which were subordinated were never marked and inculcated in the process. Even though works of Sarkar and Chatterjee dealt with the questions of women and their social status in India highlighting the Northern Indian scenario, we could see that the situations prevailing in the South were also similar in matters of women's accessibility to the public domain and their agency. Differing from the Western model of evolution of public sphere based on the impact of industrialization, the Indian situation was more of a result of the nationalist and reformist project. But the similarity lies in the fact that various forms of patriarchy has controlled women in both the situations making their access to public sphere always troublesome.

The Evolution of Public Sphere: Locating Kerala

The public/private dichotomy has to be conceptualized by taking into account the socio-political and historical bearings of each society during a given point of time. Thus if we analyse the emergence of a public sphere in the Kerala society we can see that, unlike the

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[198] Ibid, p.632
[199] Ibid

Western societies, it was not industrialization and political developments that lead for the emergence of a public sphere. The reformist enterprise from all the socio-religious communities invoked among the people the need for modern education and this lead to a good number of people into modern education. Thus the educated lot of Kerala (without neglecting the fact that this was a meagre lot, as not all the people, especially those belonging to the lower castes and class, had the privilege to be part of the modern education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century) constituted the early public sphere of Kerala where they discussed and debated about the existing social order, ideas and institutions critically.[200]   A different explanation has been given by some other scholars

> *Historically speaking, two parallel public spaces existed in Kerala—the civil society dominated by the elites at the macro level, and the public sphere under the influence of the radicals at the micro level. Actually, in the early twentieth century a large number of social activists mobilising common people through the library movement, progressive art, literature and theatre association and trade unions organised a radical public sphere. In the cultural life, it offered strong resistance to the conservative forces.[201]*

Devika has explained how by the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, a nascent 'public sphere' was unconsciously developed in the Kerala society, due to the increased popularity of modern education.[202] Thus a certain number of people who were privileged to have access to modern education, evolved a reading habit on their own. They got involved very much into extensive reading of magazines and newspapers, which was definitely not a practice until then. Thus public opinions were formed and these were very much visible in the activities of students as well as in the literary world and by bringing together these sites of public opinion According to her, "this new public sphere paved the way for a new form of hegemony based on gender which replaced the

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[200] Devika, J (2012). "Re-inscribing 'Womanliness': Gendered Spaces and Public Debates in Early Modern Keralam, India", in Charu Gupta (ed), *Gendering Colonial India: Reform, Print, Caste, and Communalism,* Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad.

[201] Biju, BL (2007), *"Public Sphere and Participatory Development. A Critical Space for the Left in Kerala"*, *Mainstream,* XLV(25), p. 16

[202] Devika, J (2002) *Imagining Women's Space in Early Modern Keralam,* CDS Working Paper No. 329, p. 7

existing social order based on caste."[203] The three broader domains of State, Civil society and family were dominant in the day to day interactions of the people. But what is interesting here is that these domains itself were gendered and it reflected very much in the public spheres. The male agents were involved in issues on politics and religion which were very much male dominated arenas whereas women confined to discussions on modern domestic sphere which were strictly devoid of any interaction with politics or religion. These were clear from the various women magazines published during those times to the various discussions they carried out in their gatherings. But for women, especially the Hindus, this itself was very liberating considering their earlier life where, irrespective of their caste, they were denied access to any form of education.

There have been various other claims as well in explaining the evolution of the public sphere in Kerala. Some scholars are of the opinion that the formation of public sphere in Kerala was not influenced by the factors of religion and caste, making it fall under the Habermasian framework.[204] This was again consolidated by the Left political influence in the state which often neglected the religious and caste elements. But some other scholars believe that this claim doesn't have validity as the communal and caste specificities had always a significant role in determining the way ahead of Kerala society. According to Punathil,

> *Public sphere of Kerala was never free from either the involvement of religion or the influence of caste, whether in the colonial period or later. There is a history of caste and religious assertions in the colonial period, inspired by Enlightenment modernity and this was one of the foundations of social development in Kerala. The colonial period was a significant phase when communities acquired a new role in the public sphere, though hardly in a neutral manner. In addition, region becomes an important additional factor in understanding the history of communities.[205]*

The history of Kerala has been in one way or the other, directly or indirectly determined by the caste and religious interplay which in turn have played a major role in the

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[203] Devika, J (2012). *op.cit.* p.138

[204] Nair, B.N. (2003) "Towards a Typological Phenomenology of Society and Religions in Kerala"*, Journal of Kerala Studies*, 4(11), p. 83

[205] Salah, Punathil (2013) "Kerala Muslims And Shifting Notions Of Religion In The Public Sphere", *South Asia Research,* 33(1), p.3

transformation of various communities, including Muslims in the socio-political sphere.[206] The Mappilas, the Muslims of Malabar region of Kerala, was a highly religious group who were continuously against the British policies and were a constant threat to them making the British tag them as fanatic. This made the British to force Mappilas to keep their religion to the private realm.[207] The nationalist discourse also tried to sideline the Mappilas.

The encounter of women with the public sphere also has to be analysed. A lot of studies have shown that the emergence of a public sphere and the simultaneous evolution of public opinions were confined to a certain class of women and more specifically, the Hindu women. If we consider the idea of quantity of participants as an important aspect of public sphere as explained by Habermas we can see that it completely fails in this context. The public sphere in the Kerala context was shaped heavily by the identities of the participants.[208] Since we have already dealt with similar situations in the national level during the various points of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, we could say that the trend could be easily related to the situation in Kerala as well. Thus it is with certainty that we could say that the above mentioned development was not inclusive. There has been no mention of any Muslim woman's presence in such public spaces and discussions.

This might be mainly because Muslims in Kerala were undergoing a process of revival whereby the propounders were involved in reforming the community in an attempt to bring back the textual religion into the Kerala Muslim culture. Even though Muslim women were never the direct participants of the revivalism nor they had any agency, they were the main subjects of the revivalist project.[209] In their attempt to revive the religion they discouraged Muslim women from involving in rituals and practices which gave them certain social roles as well as access to public sphere. And also they were discouraged from learning the religious lessons in vernacular language and those of them who taught girls in such languages were less promoted. This led to the disappearance of Muslim

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[206] Ibid, p.4
[207] Ibid, p.8
[208] Devika, J (2012). *op.cit.* p.138
[209] Hussain, Shamshad (2009) *Neunapakshathinum Lingapadavikkumidayil*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram

women from a lot of spaces outside the private domain, or so to say the public sphere/space. Thus the Islamic reformism could be seen as part of the reconstitution of patriarchy which aimed at improving the status of the community through individual liberation, but without considering the gender aspects.

Even though matriliny was prominent among Mappilas, women hardly had any say in their personal issues and marriage was never done on their choice. Thus marrying of young women to old Arab traders was a system followed among Mappilas, especially those living in the coastal regions. These marriages know as '*Muta*' denied women to exercise their freedom of choice in selecting their partners and had to compromise for money and often due to the pressure from their family. Like the Nair community, the occurrence of matriliny has diminished among Mappilas in general with some exceptions in the Northern Malabar region.

Islamic Reformism and Social Reform among the Muslims of Kerala

Islamic reformism among Muslims in Kerala is a major period in the history of Kerala Muslims and it requires a special mention in the study. Kerala have a long history to claim as Islam came to Kerala during the time of Prophet itself that is during the eighth century. Similar to the coming of religions like Christianity and Judaism, Islam also came to India at first in Kerala. The geographical location of Kerala helped the foreigners to have an easy access to the land. The Arabs who came to Kerala were traders primarily and they spread Islam which was accepted warmly by the natives. Unlike North India were Islam is said to have spread by sword, in Kerala it had a peaceful entry. Unlike in North India, the history of Islam in Kerala dates back to centuries.

Along with other people, Muslims also suffered during the colonial period. Since most of the Muslims were traders, the entry of British destroyed their supremacy in trade and they were put aside. So Muslims opposed the colonial state and were part of the struggle for freedom. The Malabar Rebellion of 1921 is a landmark in the history of Kerala in general and of Muslims in particular. The Muslims who fought for their rights were cruelly suppressed by the British. This incident changed the lives of Muslims in various aspects

including social, cultural and economic realms. Muslims were completely sidelined and shattered. Thus it was the need of the hour to rebuild the community to its older statute.

As I have said earlier, Muslims were not the indigenous people of Kerala. After the arrival of Arabs in Kerala, a lot of native people mainly belonging to the Hindu community accepted Islam inspired by its ideologies. The people who accepted Islam were majorly belonging to lower castes, who suffered very much due to the caste hierarchy. Islam provided them an easier life and so they were happy to be a part of it. But in spite of their acceptance of Islam, they were not ready to completely leave their rituals and practices and they kept it with them.[210] This lead to a kind of syncretism, in which there was a mixing of local cultural practices in the textual Islam. That is to say, a local version of Islam was developed which differed from the universal Islam mainly with regard to certain rituals.

Osella & Osella have discussed these issues in their study on the social reform among Kerala Muslims. According to them,

> *Kerala's Muslims (like Kerala Hindus and Christians) associate religious reformism with: a self-consciously 'modern' outlook; the promotion of education; rallying of support from the middle classes. There is a concomitant contemporary association of orthopraxy traditionalism with 'backward', superstitious and un-modern practices, troped as being located in rural and low-status locations.*[211]

The political and social developments in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century among the Muslims in Kerala lead to a kind of awakening among the Muslims, especially a group of learned people. As said by Osella, the period saw a similar trend of awakening among other religious groups also. This could be also associated to the religious revivalist trend which was happening throughout the Indian sub-continent during the same period.[212] Reformism was primarily seen as an attempt to drive away the social evils which was seen as traditional and difficult to digest in a modern society.

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[210] Ahmad,Imtiaz.&H.Reilfeld (2004) *Lived Islam in South Asia: Adaption, Accommodation and Conflict.* (Ed) Oxford University Press, Delhi
[211] Osella, Filippo& Osella, Caroline (2008), "Islamism and Social Reform in Kerala, South India", *Modern Asian Studies,* 42(2/3), p.
[212]Ibid

Often it had the consent of a larger section of the society, like Sati and child marriage. Rather than being part of a social practice, these were carried out in the name of religion. So it was regarded that certain kind of revival or reformism was required in order to achieve a better social condition.[213]

As far as Muslims of Kerala are considered, the reformist enterprise was a double folded one. The social conditions of the Muslims were pathetic primarily due to their hesitation towards education. Also there was need of a certain kind of religious revival due to the syncretism with the local cultural practices. According to Osella and Osella,

Kerala's Islamic reformism is simultaneously local—in that it emerges within a specific social, political and historical context—and also pan-Islamic or transnational—in that it embodies orientations which historically characterise the development of Islam across the world.[214]

Thus the Islamic reformism among Muslims of Kerala differ from the similar activities among the Muslims of other parts of India in that they had a certain level of universal appeal. Or it could be also defined that there were earnest efforts within the Muslim community to go back to a 'textual religion' or a 'universal religion' which was often seen as the pure form. Osella & Osella continues,

Kerala reformism must be understood as being simultaneously part of a global Islamic impulse towards purification and also as a deeply locally rooted and specific phenomenon, which produces itself on the ground through practice and through dialogue with significant others, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Indeed, public debate in Kerala between 'reformist' and 'traditionalist' Muslims produces shifts in practice and works continually to generate and redefine the focus of 'reform' and 'anti-reform'.[215]

Even though the roots of Islamic reformism could be seen as having a global nature, scholars have always pointed out to the importance of the relevance of a broader social

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[213]Osella&Osella, *op.cit*
[214] Osella & Osella (2007), *op.cit*
[215] Osella, Filippo & Osella, Caroline (2007), "Introduction: Islamic Reformism in South Asia", *Modern Asian Studies,* (42,2/3), p. 253

landscape in understanding the reformist project.[216] Thus the specific history of socio-economic transformations which took place in the Kerala society also comes to the discussion on the reform movement.

Muslim Women and Their Early Relation with the Public Sphere

It has been already said that Arabi-Malayalam was the language of Muslims during those time and women were also allowed to learn it primarily through the Madrasa classes and also *othupalli* classes. Nevertheless there were great women writers also who wrote songs and stories about the societal conditions of that time.[217] *Maappilappaattu,* which is a popular form of song culture among the Mappilas were also engaged by women song writers. These songs were so very much part of their social as well as personal lives.[218] These songs were sometimes printed and compiled and were known by the name of '*Sabeenaaedukal'.* These compilations were so influential in the lives of Muslim women that they were often accorded the same status of religious scriptures. Thus these songs were sung by Muslim women on a daily basis and were part of all important social gatherings. Occasions like ear-piercing ceremony, circumcision ceremony and those related to a girl's first bath on her attaining puberty were all solemnized by singing these songs. There were expert singers who were booked in advance for performing in such functions and these women enjoyed a special status in the society. They were very much part of the public domain and were updated with the happenings in the Muslim community. Some of them wrote songs instantly as per the demand of the situation and apparently there used to have competition between two groups. These singers thus became inevitable part of celebrations including marriages and parties and they had a dignified status in the society.[219] Women saints were also given a supreme status in the community along with their male counterparts and there were a lot of *Beevi* (the name given to female saints) in the Malabar region.[220] Men and women approached these

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[216]Green, N(2005). 'Mystical Missionaries in the Hyderabad State: Mu'in Allah Shah and his Sufi Reform Movement'. The Indian Economic and Social History Review. 42(2), p. 195

[217] Hussain, Shamshad (2009) *Neunapakshathinum Lingapadavikkumidayil*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, p. 13

[218] Ibid, p.16

[219] Hussain, Shamshad (2015), *Musleemum Streeyum Allaathaval,* Redcherry Books, Calicut, p. 32

[220] Ibid

women saints to find solace and solutions for various personal issues. A distinct feature of these *dargas* is their open nature which does allow people of all categories irrespective of their religious identities to visit and offer prayers.

But with the gaining momentum of reformist movement women were losing all these spaces which defined them earlier. Thus in the path of modernity the Muslim reformers attempted to reshape the community in general and Muslim women in particular.

Moving on to the present status of Muslim women in Kerala we can see that women in general in Kerala enjoy a far better life when compared to women of other states analysing the statistics. The indicators of development always show a positive trend. This is the case with women in general. But Muslim women as a whole, is a category which has not been looked into deeply by the scholars and researchers. Apart from a few studies which touched upon certain areas of their life, there has not been a detailed study on the Muslim women in India in general and this is far less when it comes to the situation in Kerala. A few studies conducted like the one by Sachar Committee and by Forum for Faith and Fraternity have looked into some statistical details of Muslim women in Kerala. Thus a few studies have recently addressed the social life of Muslim women by taking them as a unique category different from the categories of women and Muslims in general.

CHAPTER-3

Muslim Women of Kerala: An Overview of a Lived World

Kerala, the South-west Indian state is a small state with respect to the land area it covers but occupies a comparatively large population of more than thirty million. What comes to mind when one hears the name Kerala is innumerable and those things are unique and distinct to Kerala. The state is unique from the other states of India with respect to a lot of socio, economic, political and cultural indicators. Its first government which was elected in 1957 was the first communist government in the world which was elected through the ballot system. The Kerala model of development has been a much acclaimed development model not only in India but throughout the world. Even though the term refers to an overall socio-economic development, the project has been much successful in human development than economic development. This has been the unique feature of Kerala model wherein a high human development index was shown in spite of its poor economic performances for a long period.[221] There has been a progressive transformation in Kerala of the health and demographic conditions characteristic of less-developed societies, and the state is far ahead of the rest of India in respect to these conditions.

Along with these positive trends, Kerala stands unique with regard to women's issues with some of the positive trends and a fair number of negative ones as well. It is an established fact that the overall development of a population depends a lot on the development of the women folks of that population. The matrilineal system prevailed in some of the communities in Kerala has given women a certain kind of access to the ancestral property which was a kind of unique system found among the Kerala society.[222] Kerala has been unique from other states of India with regard to the positive sex ratio it has shown for the past few decades. The state, as we know, boasted of a cent percent literacy rate, a unique feat achieved compared to other states in India. There has been a

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[221] Mridul Eapen & Praveena Kodoth (2003) "Family Structure, Women's Education and Work: Re-Examining the High Status of Women in Kerala", in S. Mukhopadhyay and R. Sudarshan (eds.), *Tracking Gender Equity under Economic Reforms,* Kali for Women, New Delhi.

[222] The matrilineal system is not the unique feature of Kerala society as it is seen among some tribes of India and Khasis of Meghalaya. Again matriliny varies from society to society as there are different features and specifities for matriliny in different societies.

slight dip in the literacy rate as per the latest census due to various factors. But the literacy rate of women is still a remarkable figure with 93.9%.[223] Along with this, the state also performs well with regard to various health indicators. The infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rate is very low in Kerala compared to other states.[224] The levels of life expectancy are high for women and it is also comparatively high for men from other states of India. The development of women in Kerala owes its attributed success to the achievements in the areas of health and education where the contribution of women is particularly significant.[225]

But the recent studies have shown that this has been just a part of the pop and show under the celebrated Kerala Model and a deeper analysis into the realities of the day to day lives of the Kerala women have revealed a disturbing picture often not in par with the development indicators.[226] This chapter thus tries to critically look into this aspect of the paradox of development vis-à-vis women and how Muslim women in particular are placed in the whole schema. The various aspects of the daily lives of women would be taken into account which has a direct or indirect bearing on their access to public sphere. These aspects would be critically analysed to get an understanding of various other factors as well which determine the effective participation of women in public sphere.

Women and Their Social Life in Kerala

As I have mentioned in the introduction, the status of women in terms of the indicators of development in Kerala, compared to the women in other states is at a higher position in the graph, thanks to the important policies taken by various governments since the formation of the state in 1956. But this was never an easily achieved task as the process was something which was started some decades back itself. The high rate of literacy and education could be seen as results of a number of initiatives taken decades back by the missionaries and also various reformists among the various communities. But this is just one part of the story. Simultaneously, there have been a lot of criticisms from various

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[223]Census Data 2011
[224]NFHS Data-3
[225] Jeffrey and Basu (eds) *Girl's Schooling, Women's Autonomy and Fertility Change in South Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.
[226] Mridul Eapen & Praveena Kodoth (2003), *op.cit.*

scholars regarding this celebrated 'status' of Kerala women. Even though the women have achieved a lot in terms of the standard indicators of development, like the high literacy rate, high life expectancy, positive sex ratio, but the truth is that these facts necessarily don't convert into a higher status of women. Increasing rates of crime against women like sexual harassment, rape and dowry deaths questions the notion of higher status assigned to the Kerala women.[227] The rate of female foeticide is also increasing in Kerala which shows the similar trends of male child preference like other states in India.[228]

The oppression of women in the social life is not a modern trend as far as Kerala society is concerned. Even though matriliny was the predominant form of family set up, women were never enjoying a higher status with respect to the freedom they were supposed to enjoy. But to the outside world Kerala presented a brighter image with women enjoying a higher standard of life. A study conducted in 2006 by Gender Network Project has looked into the puzzle of Kerala women where high indicators of development resulted in a low standard of life.[229] As a part of the study detailed interviews with women from varied socioeconomic backgrounds under different contexts were carried out and those interviews revealed that contrary to popular belief, 'women do not enjoy the kind of 'freedom' that one would expect to go with high levels of human or gender development.'[230] The development indicators may show remarkable figures, but how these determines and shapes the lives of women is important as these vary from situation to situation.

> *A literate woman may decide, or indeed be persuaded to decide, to use this new instrument to internalize the message of women's subordination to men all through her life, simply by virtue of being born a woman. Adherence to the dictum from Hindu scriptural writings in Manusmriti, which ordains that a woman is subordinate to her father in childhood, her husband in adulthood and her son in her old age, is unlikely to be an empowering message as far as the issue of*

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[227]National Crime Record Bureau Data- Crime in India 2011- Crime Against Women.
[228]Ibid
[229]MIMAP Gender Network Project, Phase III
[230]Mukhopadhyay, Swapna (2006), "The Enigma of Kerala Women: Does High Literacy Necessarily Translate into High Status? MIMAP Gender Network Project, Phase III, Working Paper: GN(III)/ 2006/ WP5, p.6

women's status is concerned. Similarly, better longevity may simply translate into long years of lonely and debilitating widowhood. Participation in the labour market may bring in earnings for the woman, but not necessarily ensure her control over those earnings.[231]

A recent study conducted by ICRW shows that Kerala has the highest incidence of domestic violence among some of the major states in India.[232] The incidence of dowry deaths are also on a high mark as the practice of dowry is very much prevalent among all the religious groups of Kerala. According to Swapna Mukhopadhyay, the idea of domestic violence is very natural in an Indian situation as the perceived notion is that husband has a right to show power on his wife and women have in the course of time internalized it. Men always see themselves as superior to women and through the act of marriage they are getting complete control over the body and mind of the woman they are married to. Thus,

> *Domestic violence is different from other forms of violence against women, in that it is bred and nurtured on a one-to-one basis, within the four walls of the home, and perpetrated by individuals on who depends the very identity of the woman. The same logic of male identity is seen to be carried over to the arena outside the domestic sphere, and can, in many cases, explain instances of 'crimes against women' in 'normal' times and mass violence against women in troubled times like those of conflict and communal disturbance.*[233]

A number of reasons are attributed for this social situation of women in Kerala. Some of the studies have focussed on this particular aspect wherein even women who are educated tolerate domestic violence for years. And the question has always been why? According to Mukhopadhyay, there are two reasons for this. The first one is that an informed reading of the history of social reforms in the state from a feminist perspective suggests that "while all social reformers have emphasized the importance of female literacy, the proposed 'emancipation' of women has invariably been looked upon as an instrument that is to be used for the benefit of the family and society, not for the benefit of the

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[231] Ibid, p. 10

[232]International Centre for Research on Women Report on Domestic Violence in India, 2000

[233]Mukhopadhyay, Swapna (2006), *op.cit.* 11

woman as an individual in her own right."[234] The second one is related to an external factor, i.e., the various legal reforms of the state for the last few decades and "how the state has acted as an agency for facilitating the gradual erosion of poverty rights and increasing economic vulnerability of women in Kerala."[235]

Thus women in Kerala are not a self satisfied group and they do not enjoy all the freedom their education would have brought to them. Patriarchy has been the dominating ideology throughout and it manifests in various forms at various points of time and space in the history. A number of researches have scrutinized 'The Kerala Paradox' challenging the development theories and have looked beyond the indicators of development.[236] Several other studies have also pointed out that almost 15 percent of the total population of Kerala are left out of the 'Kerala Model' which included fishing people, female stonecutters, female domestic servants, certain female agricultural labourers, some sections of the tribal people and also migrants to name a few.[237] Along with that studies on the increased rate of suicides, high domestic violence rates[238], increased rate of depression and unemployment among women[239] and rising issues of women's property rights and dowry harassments[240] tells us how the development prospects are not exactly translated into a better social status of women. It is at the same time strange and disturbing to understand how educational attainments do not necessarily form a supporting platform for the empowerment of women.

The Present Status of Women in Kerala

The comparatively less gender gap in terms of basic capabilities in Kerala than in other parts of India has been widely acclaimed as indicative of the 'high status' for women in

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[234]Ibid, p. 12

[235]Ibid

[236]Mitra, Aparna& Singh, Pooja (2007), "Human Capital Attainment and Gender Empowerment: The Kerala Paradox", *Social Science Quarterly,* 88(5), pp. 1227-1242

[237]Franke, Richard W & Chasin, Barbara H (1996) "Female-Supported Households: A Continuing Agenda for Kerala Model?", *Economic and Political Weekly,* 31(10), p.625

[238]Mitra, Aparna &Singh, Pooja (2007), *op. cit*. 1228

[239] Suchitra, M (2004), http://panoslondon.panosnetwork.org/features/why-women-are-depressed-in-kerala/

[240]Kodoth, Praveen& Eapen, Mridul (2005) "Looking beyond Gender Parity: Gender Inequities of Some Dimensions of Well-Being in Kerala", *Economic and Political Weekly,* 40(30), pp. 3278-3286, p.3278

the state.[241] Recently however this conventional wisdom regarding development has come in for questioning. New questions are being raised about the conventional indicators of well-being such as education, health and employment-particularly about the ways in which they serve larger patriarchal interests. For instance, it is now being recognised that educational and health capabilities of women in Kerala have been harnessed within a familial ideological structure that has served to reinforce gender divisions rather than to expand freedoms for men and women.[242] This awareness is linked to efforts to go beyond conventional indicators of well-being to hitherto less examined sites such as mental health, crime against women, growing practice of dowry and declining women's property rights.

Kerala is often considered relatively free from the conventional restrictions against women's education, employment or property ownership. This achievement is associated with the early 20th century social reforms, which widened access to education across genders and matrilineal forms of family and sanctioned women's rights to inherit property. However, the contention that social and legal reforms were instrumental to sanctioning of a new form of marriage, grounded in modern patriarchal relations, has received little attention. An important part of this process towards patriarchal relations was the eradication of matriliny and the simultaneous strengthening of patriarchy among all social groups.[243] "Today patriarchy is reflected in a general form of social commitment to women's domesticity in the state, implicit in their poor visibility in the public sphere. The questions that come to mind in this context are: what have women in Kerala done with their impressive gains in education, health and demographic advantage? Where have these 'achievements' been directed? A decomposition of the GDI is very revealing: high scores on education and health in 15 states of India, in which Kerala ranked first, mask women's poor employment profile.[244] Kerala ranked only 10 or 15 according to different measures of income shares based on gender work participation

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[241]Ibid

[242] Ibid

[243]Ibid

[244] Kerala Development Report (2008), p. 405

rates and wage rates.[245] High rates of literacy and impressive levels of female education did not translate into rapid growth of paid employment for women or into upward occupational mobility. On the other hand, the state was witnessing downtrends in women's property rights, high levels of gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence, and rapid growth and spread of dowry related crimes even while levels of education continued to rise.[246]

Muslim Women of Kerala

Kerala, the southernmost state of India has a rich and varied culture. Various religious communities have been living here harmoniously for a long time through various processes of giving and taking. Hindus are the largest population in terms of religion. But a good percent of Muslims and Christians occupy the rest of the population chart. As I have mentioned earlier, women in general in Kerala enjoy a far better life when compared to women of other states if we analyse the statistics. The indicators of development always show a positive trend. This is the case with women in general. But like I have mentioned in the earlier chapters, Muslim women as a whole, is a category which has been not looked into deeply by the scholars and researchers. Apart from a few studies which touched upon certain areas of their life, there has not been a detailed study on the Muslim women in India in general and this is far less when it comes to the situation in Kerala. A few studies conducted like the one by Sachar Committee and by Forum for Faith and Fraternity[247] have looked into some statistical details of Muslim women in Kerala. Thus a few studies address the social life of Muslim women by taking them as a unique category different from the categories of women and Muslims in general.

Muslim women is considered as a backward category with respect to women belonging to other religious groups in Kerala taking into account the available statistical details on

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[245]Seeta, Prabhu et al (1996), Gender-Related Development Index for Indian States: Methodological Issues, *Economic and Political Weekly,* 31(43), pp. 72-79
[246] Kerala Development Report (2008), p.403
[247] Forum for Faith and Fraternity is a religio-cultural organisation based in Kochi with the aim of giving a modern interpretation to Islamic thoughts and ethics.

the socio-economic conditions of Muslim women. The literacy rate of Muslim women in Kerala is 85.5% which is high compared to Muslim women in general in India and but low when compared to women of other religious group in Kerala. The percentage of Muslim women who are employed is only a mere 5.9%. And this 5.9% majorly have women who are working in the unorganized sector and the class-3 category of employment.[248]

Education is another realm where Muslim women are still lagging behind the other groups. A detailed study on this area was conducted by the Sachar Committee, analysing the various socio, economic, political and cultural factors which determined the plight of Indian Muslim women's backwardness in education. The committee was also successful in correcting certain misunderstandings which existed among Indians in general with regard to Muslims and education and especially related to Muslim women. One of the important findings which broke the conventional belief that Muslim girls are never encouraged to get educated is that, if proper schools with security and other basic facilities are there, parents of Muslim girls are ready to sent their daughters to school.[249] Often the unavailability of hostels, absence of female teachers, insufficient scholarships or other financial aids is preventing Muslim parents from not educating their girls. So the findings of the committee give a clear message that it is not religion which has to be solely blamed but also the existing social conditions for the less entry of Muslim girls into education and further into higher studies.[250]

The political participation of Muslim women in Kerala is also not that better in spite of the efforts from the government to have 50% reservation for women in all the Local Self Government institutions. It also show how reservation in itself is not helpful at times as it doesn't take into consideration other categories like religion, caste and class within the category of women. But the formation of a women's organization by the Muslim League has resulted in Muslim women coming forward slowly to contest in elections. Even though there are a few Muslim women who adorn various positions in the Local Self

[248]Sachar Committee Report, 2006
[249]Hussain, Shamshad (2009) *Neunapakshathinum Lingapadavikkumidayil*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, p.9
[250]Ibid

Government institutions, only a few are seen at the top posts of government including members of Legislative assembly. The number of Muslim women in the civil services is also very few.

Thus Muslim women as a separate category lag far behind women of other groups in various socio, economic and political parameters. Even though there has been a positive trend shown recently with more Muslim girls entering into professional courses like medicine, engineering, journalism and communication, there are still areas where Muslim women are far behind women of other communities.

Reform Movement and Muslim Women in Kerala

The early period of the twentieth century saw a lot of social movements throughout India. It was also the peak period of independence struggle against the British rule. People from all religions were part of the struggle. Along with these, various other movements were happening in various parts of the country for various social, political, religious and economic causes. Similar wave was seen in Kerala also. The caste system which was the key feature of Indian society excluded certain castes of the Hindu religion from the mainstream society and was prohibited from being part of certain social opportunities. This included preventing the low castes from entering the temples, performing religious rituals etc. Women of these castes were prevented from covering their breasts and being visible in certain public spaces. There were individual protests against these stigmas but gradually the voices started to gain strength. Movements against these atrocities were carried under the leadership of social and community leaders throughout Kerala. These movements were never seen as religious movements alone as it had a great impact on the overall structure of the society. So they were often referred to as social movements.

Parallel to these movements, reformist and revivalist movements were simultaneously occurring among the Muslims of Kerala. The Islamic reformist movement had its roots based on the Egyptian model of reformism, especially the empowerment of women. This was mainly due to the fact that the Egyptian model was founded on the basis of Islamic scriptures. The important reformists of the modern period like Mohammed Abduh and

Rashid Rida took the emancipation of women as their main agenda. They declared that women are free like men to learn, to be part of the social progress and also to take part in religious activities.[251] They stood against the various atrocities against women which included polygamy and rituals which tortured women physically, mentally and sexually. One of his disciples Qasim Amin, an Egyptian jurist is often referred to as the pioneer in the women's liberation movement. He promoted the Western feminism in the Islamic societies. He stressed the importance of women empowerment in the reformist project.

As I have mentioned earlier, there were a lot of social movements taking place in Kerala in the early phase of twentieth century among various religious groups. Since Muslim women were a group very much isolated from the mainstream society, it was very difficult for the reformers to bring a drastic change suddenly. A gradual process was needed were women could be made aware of their position in the society. For that the social conditions in which the Muslim women are existing has to be changed. Along with this women should be well aware of what they are for the society.[252] So educating women was always at the top of reformist agenda. As a part of it a number of schools and colleges specially meant for Muslim girls were started at various parts of the state.

In a similar pattern reform movements were happening among the Muslims in North India also. The woman's question was inevitably an agenda in the Northern India as well. As Robinson puts it,

> *Under colonial rule, the responsibility for fashioning a Muslim society fell particularly heavily on women. As non Muslims dominated public space, women moved from their earlier position of being threats to the proper conduct of Muslim society to being the mistresses of private Islamic space, key transmitters of Islamic values and symbols of Muslim identity. It was for this reason that Ashraf Ali Thanwi wrote 'Bihishti Zewar' for women so that with the learning of a 'mawlwi', as he put it, they could play their parts in asserting tawhid and in fashioning an Islamic society. It was for this reason, too, that Mawdudi insisted that women should acquire the same level of Islamic knowledge as men, as well as examine their consciences in the same way. This said, their task was to be the*

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[251]Kinalur, Mujeebrahman (2010), *Muslim Navothanavum Aadhunikathayum,* Yuvatha Books, Calicut.
[252]Ibid

rulers of domestic space, sealed off from all those elements of kufr that polluted public space.[253]

Thus the basic agenda was to reshape women in order to fit the 'ideal' model as visualized by men. The leaders of the reformist project were all men and it was they who decided what reformism meant to Muslim women. They took initiatives which made women familiar to education which reformist leaders thought was very necessary for the development of their community and to be par with the people of other communities. The leaders were very clear about the sort of education women should be given which would not make them enough free to adopt the European culture. Thus they always kept a check on the activities of Muslim women and their education process. The situation was similar among Kerala Muslims as well. Muslim women were introduced to the formal education through the reformist enterprise but the primary objective of the female education was to reshape them as pious individual who are well disciple so that they could bring up their children in a better civilized manner. Thus Muslim women didn't have any agency in deciding what they wanted to be and were mere subjects of the male reformist enterprise. Even though there are not enough historical records to show how women copped up with such a situation wherein they had to follow certain new ways of life as were told to them by the reformists. Thus the reformists aimed for a society wherein Muslim women are educated and have a higher status in the society compared to women of other communities and who followed the religion in its pure form. It was out of question that women who got education should be empowered enough to question the patriarchal forces controlling them.

Women and the Changing Family Structure

Family has been the basic defining feature of an organized society in most of the countries.[254] Family has a role in an individual's life as it is the immediate and the first

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[253] Robinson, Francis (2008), Islamic Reform and Modernities in South Asia, *Modern Asian Studies,* 42(2/3), p. 269

[254]The evolution of family as a primary social institution and how property and state are interrelated in the process are the basic themes of the book '*The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State'* by Freidrich Engels. The historical materialist approach of the book gives us an overview of how the human society evolved in the course of time from savagery to civilize by looking into the aspects of means of subsistence, form of marriage/family and property relations. It has been understood that the family as we

social institution of which they are a part. Family assigns specific role to its members, controls the pattern of inheritance and decides the location of an individual after the marriage. The structure of the family varies with time and space. Scholars like Jeffrey attribute the indirect role of the familial structures and it's positioning of women as a major foreground for the developmental achievements of Kerala in the past few decades.[255] It is a fact that despite being a small state it is hard to see uniformity in the family structures and within a given time/space the variations in patterns could be seen across religion, caste and class. And it is also striking that studies have shown a recent trend that communities are gradually (and in certain cases quite abruptly) moving towards patriliny conceiving the trend as a positive shift believed to be making the family structure more rigid.[256]

The matrilineal family structure was a distinct feature of the Kerala society and scholars have varied opinions regarding the contributions of matriliny to the advancement of the society, particularly women, as the system gave women a skewed dominance in the structure. But scholars like Jeffrey are of the opinion that the advantages matriliny gave women in Kerala are so emancipating that "women could appear in public, speak to men and show initiative" which was never the case before and after the decline of matriliny.[257]

But it is also interesting to see how the responses during the fieldwork gave an impression that, women, irrespective of the community, region or any other socio-political specificity never celebrated the system of matriliny nor do they have any fond memories of the 'golden days' of matriliny as has been envisaged. Since Kozhikode has a rich and authentic relationship with matriliny[258]it was in a way surprising to digest the

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understand in the present context was a very later development with the private property and state coming in.

[255] Jeffrey, Robin (2004/2005), "Legacies of Matriliny: The Place of Women and the "Kerala Model"", *Pacific Affairs,* 77(4), p. 647-648

[256] Menon, Vineetha (2012) "Matriliny, Patriliny and the Postmodern Condition: Complexities of "Family" in Kerala, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies,* 43(1) p. 42

[257] Jeffrey, Robin (2004/2005), *op.cit.* p. 649

[258] Nearly 40 percent of the total population of the district are Muslims and the Muslims here have a legacy of matriliny tracing back to centuries. But it is also not to forget the fact that the Muslims of the Kozhikode city and its suburb primarily followed the matriliny and the rest of the Muslims not indulging in it. This often lead to Muslims of the city marrying within themselves as the women were not ready to move to the husband's place if they married outside their region. Similarly men belonging to that locality were not ready to bring their wives to their home but people outside the region never entertained men staying in their

fact that the women folks I had interviewed were never excited to my questions on matriliny which was clear from their aloof response. It was again a surprise that the Nair ladies (some of them three generations older) were not aware of the system and had only some vague memories of their parents or grandparents sharing their experience of matriliny. What made the whole picture more perplexing was the fact that Muslim respondents found it a matter of self-dignity and their response/expressions were a direct reaction of uneasiness/shame or pride depending on whether they subscribed to matriliny or not respectively.

Table 3.1: Type of Family

	NUCLEAR (%)	JOINT (%)
HINDU	72 (76.60)	22 (23.40)
MUSLIM	56 (64.37)	31 (35.63)
CHRISTIAN	13 (92.86)	1 (7.14)

(The chi-square statistic is 6.5547. The p-value is .037728. The result is significant at $p < .05$.)

Out of the total 94 Hindu respondents more than 76 per cent are part of the nuclear family system while 64.37 per cent Muslims out of the total 87 respondents belong to such families. (See Table 3.1) While 13 out of the 14 Christian respondents have a nuclear family, only one respondent is part of the joint family system. Along with the fact that patrilineal/ patrilocal families are becoming the societal norm subsequent popularity of nuclear families are also seen as an indicator of development by all the communities. This could not be regarded as a very recent phenomenon and the trend is visible throughout India wherein the number of extended families is decreasing and nuclear families flourishing. Scholars like Adams have related this shift to industrialization,

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wives' place. So due to this a kind of endogamy (even though there were no regulations or injunctions, but just for the convenience) prevailed among the Muslims of Kozhikode City (places like Kuttichira, Kundungal, Pallikkandi, Idiyangara). But again the trends are changing and with the nuclear family replacing the joint family people find it easy to move out of the existing practices. Along with them a huge population of Nairs also occupy the district who again are associated with matriliny in the earlier period. But

urbanization and educational expansion.[259] Whereas at the same time certain other scholars have challenged this model claiming that economic development is not necessarily related to the dynamics of family pattern and interestingly the number of extended families are increasing in the developing countries and the growth of the nuclear families is quite slower.[260] Out of the total 195 households 54 are joint families while almost three-fourth of the respondents is part of the nuclear family system.

Out of the total 22 joint family among Hindus none of them are matrilocal, while among the Muslims 3 of the total 31 respondents belonging to the joint family are matrilocal while the rest are patrilocal. There is no significant occurrence of matrilocality in general. (See Appendix-2 2.1)

But the nature of the family depending on whether it is joint or nuclear had an implication on the lives of women. Joint family system, in most cases, was not the preferred type but the economic constraints often came in the way of having to move out of the system to have a nuclear family. The primary aim in the lives of most of the people was to have a separate house of one's own.

A lot of recent studies have shown how with the gulf migration women have apparently taken the responsibilities of the household singlehandedly with some of them not even having basic educational qualifications.[261] These changes in the traditional gender roles of women have been conceived as positive at certain level, but the question here is what leads women to take such roles. The fact that the unavailability of their husband has made women to take up those roles itself contradicts the claim for positive changes in the lives of women. Most of them takes these responsibilities out of no choice making us to challenge the question of agency and freedom of choice. These roles takes a sudden shift once the husband is back in the scene and, my field work have shown that women are

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[259] Adams, B.N (2010), "Themes and threads of family theories: A brief history", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies,* 41, p.501

[260] Allendorf, Keera (2013), "Going Nuclear? Family Structure and Young Women's Health in India, 1992-2006, *Demography* (50)3, p. 854

[261] See the works of Zacharaiah, K.C.& Rajan, S. Irudaya (2007), "Migration, Remittances and Employment: Short-term Trends and Long-term Implications", Working Paper 395, CDS, Trivandrum.

completely kept away from indulging in those matters and it is the prerogative of husband to control them afterwards.

Matriliny and Its Impact on Muslim Women in Kerala

Matriliny has been a defining feature of the Kerala society. In India only a few communities follow matriliny like the Khasis of Meghalaya and the Nairs of Kerala. According to Robin Jeffrey, two points need to be given special attention with regard to matriliny. That is, matriliny is not common to the Kerala society as only a few groups practised it and the second is that the matriliny doesn't mean it was matriarchy as Kerala society has been and is still a strong patriarchal society.[262] Even though families were based on mothers' home and family traced through the female line, the authority and decision makers were men. Even though matriliny is very old, it is not a pre-historic system and according to Jeffrey, it developed around the eleventh century of Common Era. The popularity of the matrilineal system during that time was mainly because the rulers of the local provinces and also most of the social leaders followed the system of matriliny. Even though the system didn't give complete freedom to women, it helped women to appear in public and no restrictions were imposed on women in talking to men.[263] The most interesting feature of the matrilineal system was that women of the house were visited by men from other Nair families and Brahmin families to have a relationship with them.[264] It was up to the women to decide the duration of this relationship and whenever she felt enough with the existing relationship she had the freedom to terminate the relationship as there was no societal objection for changing partners. Unlike today men were ready to have relationship with the woman who was in relationship with many men as she had the control over her property. Matriliny allowed women to move without any constraints.

According to Jeffrey, the freedom of movement has resulted in Nair women going to schools and getting employed. Since the social leaders of Kerala mainly belonged to matrilineal systems, they also supported the need for women's education. Jeffrey says,

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[262]Jeffrey, Robin (2004/2005), *op.cit.* p. 653
[263]Ibid
[264] Ibid

Matriliny created conditions in which some high-status girls, in some parts of Kerala, learned to read and write, had more freedom of movement than most high-status women of their time elsewhere in India, and some of these women went to work in salaried jobs. Women from other castes and religions similarly did so, because if it were acceptable for Nairs, social leaders of old Kerala, then it was desirable for most others. Matriliny eased women into salaried work.[265]

Matriliny is also seen among certain sections of Muslim community. According to Kunhikrishnan matriliny was adopted by Muslims, mainly of North Kerala, from the Nairs primarily due to conversion.[266] Muslims of Malabar followed the matrilineal system of inheritance which is very much against the religious scriptures. The contradiction between the 'textual Islam' and 'local Islam' was very common during the early times of Islam in Kerala. The syncretism with the Kerala culture is very much visible, and some of them still persist today, in the day to day lives of the Mappilas. In spite of their accepting Islam, they were not ready to leave certain things like the dress codes, marriage practices and religious rituals.[267] Like the Hindu rulers of South Kerala who followed matriliny, the wealthy and powerful families of Malabar region also followed matriliny.

Matriliny made women to continue her membership in her family even after getting married. Simultaneously she didn't have membership in her husband's family. Unlike the matrilineal system of Hindu Nairs, the matrilineal system followed by the Mappila Muslims didn't permit women to take decisions regarding their relationships and they also didn't have any freedom of choice as far as selecting their partners were concerned. Thus polyandry was absent among Mappila Muslims.[268] The Arakkal Royal family, one of the prominent rulers of Northern Malabar strictly followed matriliny. The eldest female succeeded to the royal throne with the title 'Adi Raja Beebi'.[269] This method of succession was very much against the laws of Islam, but the royal family continued the system for centuries. They were also having cordial relationships with other Muslim

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[265] Jeffrey, Robin (2004/2005), *op.cit.* p.658
[266] Kunhikrishnan, U.V., (1995), Matriliny among the Mappilas of Malabar, Edited by Engineer, Asghar Ali., *Kerala Muslims: A Historical Perspective,* New Delhi, Ajanta Publications, p. 60-63
[267]Ibid
[268] Jeffrey, Robin (2004/2005), *op.cit.* p.660
[269]Kunhikrishnan, U.V., *op.cit.* p. 62

rulers and also Hindu rulers of neighbouring provinces. The prevalence of matriliny has also promoted cousin marriages among Mappilas.[270] This is mainly because the family property would be retained within the family itself if cousins marry each other thereby preventing the wealth from going into the hands of strangers. One of the advantages of the matrilineal system was that domestic violence was less heard as women were living in their own houses and their husbands were just visitors who came only during nights. The system is still very popular in parts of Malabar even though they are not following all the features. The matrilocal marriage, which is a feature of the matrilineal system, is still followed in certain parts of the Northern Malabar. And also cousin marriage is practiced today in some of the families.

Table 3.2: Matriliny System Followed

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	5 (5.32)	89 (94.68)
MUSLIM	7 (8.05)	80 (91.95)
CHRISTIAN	0 (0.00)	14 (100.00)

Since Kerala, and especially Malabar region shares the Arabian Coast, it has a long history of contacts with the rest of the world. As per history, Vasco de Gama, who was the first European to come to India, crossed the Arabian Sea and anchored in Calicut in 1498. From then onwards it paved the way for other Europeans like the French, Dutch and British who came as mere traders and finally established their control over the whole country. Even though Europeans came only by the end of the fifteenth century, Kerala had a much longer and older relationship with Arabs. As I have mentioned earlier, according to some historians Arabs have reached Kerala during the time of Prophet Mohammed itself, i.e. in the last decades of 8th century AD.[271] Unlike the other foreigners, they married the women of Kerala rather than trying to establish their power on the native people. Thus they spread Islam by having more and more children. Records

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[270]Ibid

[271]Engineer, Asghar Ali(1995), *Kerala Muslims: A Historical Perspective,* New Delhi*,* Ajanta Publications, p. 4

show that they married Hindu women of both higher castes and lower castes and converted them to Muslims. They got all the support from the rulers also.

Initially a lot of them settled with their Malayalee wives and did business in Kerala, later after staying for certain period in Kerala with their family they went back to their native countries either for the purpose of business or due to some other obligations. Those who went to their natives returned to Kerala sometimes and some others didn't. Thus the lives of their wives and family in Kerala became unstable. This type of marriage was often known as *Muta* or a temporary marriage which was seen by some Muslims as part of their religion.[272] But this type of marriage became popular in the coastal regions and often financially backward families gave their daughters in marriage to such Arabs often due to helplessness as they were given enough money and other needs as reward. This also forced women to stay at their own homes as they were never taken to their husbands' countries. *Muta* marriage is not prominent in the Muslim society today like the matrilineal system as most people are aware of the lack of authentic religious scriptures to support the same.[273]

From the field study out of the 195 respondents only 12 respondents responded that matriliny is followed or was followed at any point in the past. (See Table 3.2) This included 7 Muslim respondents and 5 Hindu respondents. Christian respondents have said that there was no case of matriliny neither followed in their lives nor had they any experience of their parents sharing about it.

Women and Changing Pattern of Dressing

The changing dress pattern of women in Kerala has been often regarded as an indicator of the changing socio-economic pattern of Kerala. The dressing pattern was never homogenous within the state with the religion playing a major decider on the code of dress women adhere to, thereby marking out the religious identities of individuals, precisely women. Again, within a religion, regional variations were highly visible

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[272] Koya, S. M. (2004), "Survival of a social institution: Matriliny among the Mappilas." In K. N. Ganesh (Ed.), *Culture and modernity: Historical explorations*, Calicut University Press, Calicut, Kerala
[273] Ibid

without ignoring the influence of other factors like the popular fashion trend, climatic adaptations, financial bearings etc. Since clothing, particularly of women, is not a fact restricted to and performed by women themselves as a form of covering their nakedness, it has a larger socio-cultural relevance beyond that. The fact that women's dressing is often associated with their sexuality and thereby the dignity of the society, it is interesting as well as perplexing to see how the patriarchal specificities define and control women's attire and thereby neglecting their agency in choosing what to wear.[274]

But going by what women belonging primarily to the three important religious groups have been wearing for the last many decades there are phases of overlapping of costumes between the groups as well as distinctness specific to each group and the recent trends being embraced by all the groups which is not essentially traditional but often with certain religious specifications.[275] The traditional dress of the Hindu women is the *Kasavu Mundu* (it is the cotton wrap round piece of cloth with a golden or sometimes coloured border worn over an underskirt or any other piece of cloth) and *Neriyathu*(it is the piece of cloth usually of the same size of the *Mundu*, which is draped over the *Mundu* and covering the front part above waist) along with blouse.

The traditional outfit of Muslim women especially in the Malabar region has been *Kaachi* (a wrap round usually white in colour with dark borders), *Kuppayam* (a shirt like or sometimes blouse like jacket which is often tight) and *Thattam* (the cloth used to cover the head). *Mathavu* and C*hurul,* which is like *Kaachi* and *Kuppayam* in its pattern and way of adorning, is worn by Muslim bride is often made of silk with all the glitter.[276] The traditional dress of Christian women is the *Chatta* and *Mundu. Chatta* is the jacket and

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[274] History has by and large shown us how women's clothing was always a visible and most direct indicator of the culture and sense of modesty prevailed in that society at any given point in time and location. What seemed to be modest for one community might not be the same for the other. And with the increasing hierarchisation of the societies across the globe, women's costumes (and sometimes absence of costumes) were a direct marker of the various categories women fall ranging from class, caste, religion, region and other specificities. This is not to completely deny the fact that men's dress was also specific to each society but what makes them less important is that they had the freedom to choose what they wanted to wear irrespective of the modesty factor whereas women's attire was regulated by the men women were associated with. Considering some of the responses by Indian men on the increasing rate of rapes in India as undoubtedly due to 'provocative' dressing of women gives us an understanding as to how far men are obsessed with the idea of linking sexuality with what a women wear.

[275] Osella, Caroline& Osella, Filippo (2007), "Muslim Style in South India", *Fashion Theory,* 11(2/3), p.3

[276] Ibid, p.5

Mundu is the wrap round. Even though these are considered as the standardized or the popular traditional attires of different religious groups, it is not by any means to neglect the fact that there has been variations to these standardized versions with certain exceptions in each communities and certain groups or families within each religious groups who often did not follow the existing standardized/ normal dress code.[277]

Assigning a dress pattern as the traditional/cultural outfit of a community has been a trend with the increasing globalization as people are getting closer to people of other cultures. The fact that the popular culture has always been celebrated as "the culture" in the public sphere has knowingly or unknowingly placed the Hindu culture as the de facto culture of India. This has been the same with the Kerala situation as well. As Osella & Osella puts it out,

> *The degree to which things long heralded as "Indian" in fact turn out to be structured by the needs and values of dominant high-caste Hindu communities (in the Kerala case, the Nayars). Kerala's famous cassava dressu is a prime example. Whenever one speaks of "Kerala dress," when state institutions such as banks hold "national dress days," when there is a cultural program, tourist brochure or indeed anything purporting to showcase Kerala's regional specificity, women will be shown wearing short, tight red sari blouses under the cream and gold-bordered handloom sari (the cassava), which is instantly recognizable throughout India as coming from Kerala.[278]*

Recently among Muslims the increasing rate of wearing Purdah has been observed. Purdah is the long gown worn by the Muslim women with a head scarf, not necessarily covering the face, but with some women coving it as well. Scholars attribute two primary reasons for the increasing proximity of Muslim women with Purdah. "A heightened sense of what is right and moral, prompted by social reform movements such as KNM[279]; and a

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[277] The ladies of the *Thangal*lineage(they are believed to be the descendants of Prophet Muhammed and trace their origin to Yemen. Even though they inhabit in regions of Kozhikode, Malappuram and Kannur, they don't qualify as Mappilas and are often regarded as above the Mappilas as a category in terms of social status) wore differently from the Mappila women. Their dress *Olli* was similar to the purdah worn today and they often covered their face while going out. Similarly, the Anglo-Indian Christians never wore the *Chatta* and *Mundu* rather the frock and other Western dress. The lower caste Hindu women were even prohibited from following the dress pattern of the higher caste ladies and were even denied the right to cover their breasts.

[278]Osella, Caroline& Osella, Filippo (2007, *op.cit.* p.5

[279]*Kerala NadvathulMujahideen (KNM)* is a reformist Muslim organization.

growing sense of marginalization and insecurity as a minority community"[280] But my experience in the field gave me a different perspective on the increased affinity for more 'conservative' dresses like Purdah. The interesting fact is that none of the respondents were concerned about the sense of marginalization or the fears of being a haunted minority in the present Indian situation, which again calls for a deeper understanding of the sense of political engagement Muslim women have in the present day, which would be done in a later chapter. The association of Purdah in the everyday life, as Osella and Osella has put forward fails in this situation again as maximum number of respondents have taken Purdah as a dress out of convenience and comfort.

Since other forms of clothing like *salwar kameez* (referred to as churidar popularly among Kerala, irrespective of its specifications), saree and blouse (obviously the ones which does not expose the waist nor the midrib and are stitched loosely covering the whole arm) with headscarf serve the purpose of modestly covering the whole body as per the Islamic ideals, there has been no standardization and thereby compulsion on Purdah. But simultaneously there have been attempts from Muslim organizations like Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen, *Jamaath*-e-*Islami* Hind and various other Sunni organizations and their women's organizations to project Purdah as the ultimate dress of modesty and piety.[281]

The association of Purdah with Gulf is something which has been established through various research, but the role of religious organisations, particularly the ladies' wings of these organizations, have played a crucial role in the propagation of this form of clothing as the 'ultimate' and the most religiously appropriate form of dressing of women. Along with the increasing popularity of these organizations and their ideals among Muslims, especially in the Malabar region, a number of educational institutions primarily promoting Arabic higher education, mainly under these organizations have adopted Purdah and hijab as their uniform/standard dress. It is also a fact that the adoption of such dress code was initially gradual but by the last decade there has been a tremendous change as the rate in which Muslim women has accepted this dress code has been quite

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[280]Osella, Caroline & Osella, Filippo (2007), *op.cit.* p.9
[281] Basheer, MP (2003) https://www.sabrang.com/cc/archive/2003/jan03/investi.html

high. This could be attributed to the fact that the changing trends in Purdah have been successful in negotiating the claims for modesty as well as keeping in pace with the style/fashion quotient thereby appealing to women of all ages. According to Abdelhalim, the reasons for the fascination for Purdah could be attributed to the following

> *The first is the growing consumerism as a result of Gulf migration and the aspirational values linked to a desire to copy the affluent Gulf lifestyles. The second is the disruption of older social and individual values that happened due to Islamic reformist movements, migration and elevated standard of living. Third, the influence of media in promoting pardha through editorial pieces or through advertisements is easily discernible. Finally, the increasing crime rate and violence against women (Malappuram district being the highest15) led women to easily adopt a dress that is perceived by everyone as a safety-inducer.[282]*

During the field work questions regarding the dressing pattern of the respondents were asked by considering what they wore while going outside casually, for marriages and other parties, for religious functions/temples/churches/mosques, which would be discussed in detail in the later chapter. Question was also asked as to who determined their dressing style and were they in support of updating with the changing fashion trends. A good number of the respondents believe it is the 'inappropriate' dress pattern that is creating trouble to women, especially the young ones and this could be attributed to the increasing number of sexual and physical abuses happening to women. There have been a considerate number of responses from women of all religious groups against the use of leggings and the less use of dupatta by the young girls. These two attitudes were seen as not keeping the modesty element intact.

Empowerment, Agency and Access to Public Sphere: Are They All the Same?

Whenever issues pertaining to women are discussed relying on the socio-political attributes, empowerment is the process used to determine the extent of advancement and the social status of women in a given society. There has been a direct relationship between well-being and empowerment given that the earlier studies have followed the

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[282] Abdelhalim, Julten (2013), *op.cit.* p.253

assumption that development, well being and empowerment are directly proportional to each other.[283] Various studies done by Amartya Sen have suggested that,

> *Well-being is a combination of doing and being and individual assessment of both the functioning achieved and the set of opportunities available is important in evaluating well-being and therefore, assigns paramount importance to freedom to choose between alternative functionings*.[284]

My experience in the field has given an impression that taking into consideration literacy/ the level of education of an individual should not necessarily be related proportionally to the aspects of agency and personal well-being. Even though the popular notion that having agency on one's lives should necessarily come up with a high rate of well-being doesn't always hold true and such a conclusion have always been problematic. As Amartya Sen puts it,

> *Some types of agency roles e.g., those related to fulfilling obligations, can quite possibly have a negative impact on the person's well-being. Even when the impact is positive, the importance of agency aspect has to be distinguished from the importance of the impact of agency on well-being*.[285]

This applies true to situations in the case of women from choosing what to wear to whom to vote and even in the educational choices they make and this was proved to be true from the field work experience. Haseena, 23, is a resident of Nadapuram. She is married recently and she has completed a degree in Pharmacy. She said she was not interested in the course initially and preferred engineering. But her parents have forced her to opt Pharmacy course itself since the job opportunities of pharmacy courses are comparatively high in Gulf countries and if she marries a boy who is already settled in Gulf then she can work there along with her husband.

So how is empowerment defined? "Options, choice, control, power, ability to make decisions control over one's own life and over resources, ability to affect one's own well-

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[283]Mishra, Nripendra Kishore& Tripathi, Tulika (2011) "Conceptualising Women's Agency, Autonomy and Empowerment", *Economic and Political Weekly,* 46(11), p.58
[284]Ibid
[285] Sen, Amartya (1985), "Well-being, Agency and Freedom', The Dewey Lectures,1984,*Journal of Philosophy,*82(4) p. 187

being and make strategic life choices are some defining terms in women's empowerment."[286] In this case we can see that by taking into account the well-being indicators Haseena has a good score, since she is educated and most probably getting employed in a Gulf country. But the role of Haseena in deciding what she should learn was not in her control and was manipulated by her family members. Thus it is shown that empowerment in its true sense to happen in the women's lives requires "the transformation of institutions supporting the patriarchal structures" starting from the households.[287]

This asserts the fact that well-being is not an independent state rather it is understood in relation to various other factors, agency being the most important aspect. Accordingly,

> *Any practical attempt at enhancing the well-being of women cannot but draw on the agency of women themselves in bringing about such a change. So, the well-being aspect and the agency aspect of women's movements inevitably have a substantial intersection. Moreover, women's agency is exercised in such a way that it leads to empowerment only in a particular context or state of women's autonomy.[288]*

Thus we can see how empowerment cannot be necessarily used to define the status of a woman and her well-being since the factors attached to their autonomy and agency necessarily defines and determines the extent of empowerment and well-being and subsequently their access to public sphere.

The table below (Table 3.3) gives an analysis of how decisions on matters of familial importance are being carried out in the various sections of families in Kerala. This data is based on the study conducted by Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad.

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[286] Mishra, Nripendra Kishore& Tripathi, Tulika (2011), *op.cit. p.*59
[287] Ibid
[288] Mishra, Nripendra Kishore& Tripathi, Tulika (2011), *op.cit.* p.58

Table 3.3: Decision Making Authority in Familial Matters (in %)

Category	Children's Education			House Construction			Household Expenditure		
	Men	Women	Joint	Men	Women	Joint	Men	Women	Joint
Total	20.5	6.5	73.1	23.1	4.2	72.6	28.7	6.9	64.4
Economic Category									
I	22.5	9.3	68.2	24.7	5.7	69.6	31.2	7.4	61.4
II	21.3	7.0	71.8	23.3	4.9	71.9	29.1	7.0	63.8
III	20.9	5.7	73.4	23.6	3.7	72.7	28.8	7.2	64.0
IV	14.4	4.2	81.4	18.7	2.3	78.8	24.4	4.6	70.8
Religious Category									
Hindu	20.4	6.2	73.4	22.0	4.8	73.1	27.0	7.4	65.5
Muslim	25.7	8.7	65.5	29.3	4.5	66.1	36.6	7.2	56.2
Christian	14.6	4.6	80.7	19.2	2.1	78.8	24.5	5.2	70.4
Caste-wise									
Backward	20.9	6.3	72.8	22.6	4.4	73.0	28.1	6.6	65.3
Forward	18.3	6.2	75.5	20.2	4.5	75.1	24.9	8.3	66.6
SC	23.4	5.1	71.5	21.5	5.6	72.9	25.9	8.4	65.6
ST	27.8	9.3	63.0	30.2	7.5	62.3	40.7	9.3	50.0

Source: Kerala Padhanam (2008), p.124

The above study shows that women comparatively have a low say in the matters related to the household. But it is also significant that the number of households in which the opinion of both the husband and wife are counted is the highest in all the categories with a certain variations. But what is a matter of concern here is that the number of husbands taking decisions on their own is highest among Muslims, along with the Scheduled Castes. This is very much in the same pattern as my field work result where a comparatively higher authority level was seen among the Muslim men.

According to Kabeer, agency has both positive as well as negative connotations. In its positive sense it refers to "people's ability to make and act on their own life choices, even in the face of others' opposition."[289] While the negative agency would be defined as "the capacity of some actors to override the agency of others through, for example, the exercise of authority or the use of violence and other forms of coercion".[290]Agency thus is power in a sense. It is the power over the choices one make or the power to make choices in others lives as well. Thus agency, in relation to empowerment challenges the existing power relations.

To understand the extent of autonomy, empowerment and the extent to which women have internalized the inequality that has been persistent in the society certain questions were asked which were closer to their daily lives and which would be discussed in detail in the coming chapter. The questions primarily directed to their identity as a "woman" and how they have placed themselves in the society, vis-a-vis, men.

Education and Muslim Women

Muslims in India comprises one of the prominent and influential minorities in the country. They have a significant role in influencing the socio, economic and political determinants of development of the nation as well. But various studies conducted by various governments at various points in history as shown that the educational attainments of Muslims are not in par with the majority as well as other minority communities.[291] In spite of a number of policies and initiatives by the government, the community has not caught up with the momentum of the society in the matters of development. Given that the governments are eager and regular in formulating committees and making them come out with solutions, it is often heard that the rigor in setting up a committee is never duplicated in the proper implementation of it making the same issues perpetuate (sometimes at a worse level)over and over again. It might not be

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[289] Kabeer, Naila (2005),"Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A critical Analysis of the third Millenium Development Goal", *Gender and Development,* 13(1), p. 14
[290] Ibid
[291] According to the Census 2011, the literacy rate of Muslims in India is

an exaggeration to put forth the fact that educational achievement of a group determines the overall progress attained by that group over a period of time.

Even though the focus of the present study is Kerala Muslim women, what has to be considered is the fact that in a larger context this category is a part of the much bigger population of Indian Muslims, whose religion, culture and tradition are shared by Kerala Muslims too. Constituting 14.23%[292] of the total population of the country, the Indian Muslims form the largest religious minority in the country. They have been also identified as educationally backward at the national level along with some other socio-religious groups.[293] The Programme of Action framed under the National Policy on Education, 1986 has stressed that "special efforts need to be taken to bring these educationally backward minorities on par with the rest of the society and to make them participate fully in the national development activities."[294] There seems to be a general consensus that the root cause of Muslim backwardness lies in the lack of education and the tendency which causes it.[295] With such a prominent community who has an impact on the past, present and future of the country, they remaining backward would simultaneously affect the national development as a whole.

History has shown us that the persistent backwardness of Muslims in the realm of education has a long history of evolution in itself. Scholars have critically analysed this trend and have pointed out to a better state of affairs with regard to Muslim education during the 12th century to 18th century, including the Mughal period.[296] During the British period, the conventional education was replaced by the western system. But the Muslim community, having a bitter relation with the British for political and administrative reasons, shunned modern education more than their compatriots. When Persian was replaced by the English language, there was a further setback. Only Sir Syed Ahmed

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[292] Census of India, 2011

[293] Prof. Mohammed U., (2007), *Educational Empowerment of Kerala Muslims: A Socio-Historical Perspective,* Calicut, Other Books, p. 16

[294] Mohammed Ali, K.T., (1990), *The Development of Education Among the Mappilas of Malabar 1800 to 1965,* New Delhi, Nunes Publishers, p.20

[295] Mohammed U., (2007), *Educational Empowerment of Kerala Muslims: A Socio-Historical Perspective,* Calicut, Other Books, p. 16

[296] Logan,William. *Malabar Manual. Vol.1.* Madras: Madras Government Press, 1887.

Khan could repair this damage to some extent and lead the community in the direction of modern education.

After Independence and the bitter experiences of partition days, the Muslim community suffered from a sense of frustration and deprivation, the effects of which remained with them for a long time afterwards. In spite of various affirmative measures taken by the government to improve their condition on the recommendations of different commissions their backwardness still continues, socially and educationally.

It would be quite a unique attempt to analyse how education was absorbed into the lives of Muslim women in Kerala during the last century through various agencies and how the impact of education in turn have shaped their day to day engagements and apprehensions. The paradox of Muslim women being invisible from the employment and career world after being equipped with professional degrees and other higher education qualifications has been a perplexing phenomenon and it would be seriously looked into. This would be done by looking into and comparing the case of other socio-religious groups in order to understand the severity of the situation. The myth of modern education as 'the education' and obtaining certificates as the only stamp of recognising wisdom would be illogical since parallel and alternative sources of knowledge has had an important role in shaping the immediate past of the Muslim women of Kerala. Apparently, it is a general assumption that the attainment of higher education is directly proportional to a higher access to public sphere. To the end that, the whole process through which one gets educated (be it a formal one or a traditional one or for that matter by any other means), in itself guarantees a certain degree of understanding the public sphere and intentionally or unintentionally being a part of it. But this association with the public sphere gets terminated, in most cases, along with the dissociation of individuals from the learning process.

Muslim Women and Their Encounter with Education

Tracing the history of Muslim education in Kerala through the ages, one can see that what education meant was different to different people. To the early Muslims it was just

religious education centred on mosques and houses of leaned people who were also well versed in Quran and Hadith. To begin with, there were no schools or colleges in the early days. Imparting of knowledge as well as all similar activities revolved around mosques from where learned men-missionaries and religious teachers alike- conveyed knowledge to the common people and engaged with them. With the changing times, the education for boys and girls were of two types namely, classes conducted inside the mosques and those conducted outside. The classes held outside were meant for primary education while those inside were for higher education.[297]

Dars: These are advanced classes held inside the mosques under the supervision of a *Musliar*.[298] Girls were never admitted in such institutions since the primary objective behind the installation of such centres were to bring out trained men who would be eligible to perform as well as guide the religious rituals. Since women are never associated nor assigned such performative roles in the religious scriptures, they were not seen as necessary recipients of such education.[299]

Othupalli: Othupalli is a sort of primary school for religious and Arabic education for Muslim boys and girls. There were separate *Othupalli*s for girls and they were run by women teachers.[300] These teachers were addressed as *Mollachi* in respect. The *Othupalli* run by women were often set adjacent to the *Mollachi*'s house and the girls who went to such learning centres were primarily engaged in learning to recite Quran.[301] Along with Quran, various songs and stories related to Islamic history and Islamic way of living were also taught at these centres. There was no residential system associated with these centres and the few hours of learning process were the only learning opportunity to most of the students associated with these centres, particularly girls. Girls, who couldn't attend

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[297] Mohammed Ali, K.T., (1990), *op.cit.* p.37

[298] He is the one who teaches Quran and its associated teachings.

[299] Even though the basic argument for not entertaining girls in *Dars* is attributed to their lack of role in religious rituals, the underlying patriarchal forces were also crucial in deciding the nature and extent of religious knowledge women had to acquire.

[300] Sadath, Anwar KT. (2014), "Education and Socio-Economic Status of Muslims in Kerala", PhD Dissertation, New Delhi: Jamia Hamdard, p.74

[301] Hussain, Shamsad (2009), *op.cit.* p.14-15

school, found this the only opportunity to learn. One *Mollachi* had taught more than hundred girls per day in two schedules which shows the popularity of these centres.[302]

The Madrasa System: The *Othupalli* and the *Dars* system had a lot of defects and they were reluctant to progressive ideas and modern education. So it was the need of the hour to revise the curriculum in order to have updated and modern syllabus. Thus a new system of education which was more systematic was introduced, the Madrasas. Girls were also enrolled in the Madrasa along with the boys. Since after independence religious education was not allowed in the schools Madrasa system got a boost in the state. Various Muslim religious organizations started number of Madrasas throughout Kerala.

Muslim women before the reform movements had been part of the religious education system and learnt the Arabi-Malayalam language[303] which was popular among the Muslims in Kerala. They were not allowed to learn the vernacular language and access to school was also denied. The emergence of a reading class and simultaneously a public sphere among certain privileged upper class/caste groups has been studied by some scholars by the end of the nineteenth century.[304] There has been no mention of any Muslim individuals or groups in such novel domains primarily due to their hesitation to get acquainted to modern education. While there has been mention of some special slots like *Streesamajams* for educated women to share their thoughts during those times, nowhere has it been noticed the presence of any Muslim woman being part of such gatherings.[305]

The same reason which prevented Muslim men from being part of such elite public arenas could be accorded to the absence of Muslim women also in such domains. But what has to be looked upon here is whether Muslim women were part of any other 'publics' apart from the modern educated public sphere. Studies conducted by scholars like Shamshad Hussain have shown that, despite having no access to modern education

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[302] Ibid
[303] Ibid
[304] "Imagining Women's Space in Early Modern Keralam", *Working Paper No. 329*, Trivandrum: CDS, p. 4
[305] Ibid

Muslim women enjoyed their own status in the Muslim publics.[306] Some Muslim women were teachers who taught Quran to girls like those in *Othupallis* as mentioned above, and also discussed and shared with them issues which were either woman oriented or Islamic in nature. They taught Quran mainly from home or other centres which admitted only girls. This attracted more girls to attend such religious classes and teachers who taught them had a high status in the society. But there has been no mention anywhere as to whether these sessions dealt with issues outside their community.

It has been already said that Arabi-Malayalam was the language of Muslims during those time and women also learnt it. Women went to *Othupallis* to get religious education which often was the only source of education for women. Nevertheless there were great women writers also who wrote songs and stories about the societal conditions of that time. They were very much part of the public domain and were updated with the happenings in the Muslim community. Even though there were not too many schools, Muslim girls were reluctant to go to the available schools. The Islamic reform movement had a crucial role in promoting modern education among the Muslim women of Kerala.

Contemporary Trends in Education of Women in Kerala: An Analysis

The educational attainment of the respondents from the field work for the present study is shown in the Table 3.4. They are divided basically into three educational categories. The first category is for respondents who are above graduation (G), the second category contains respondents who are above class 10 up to graduation (UG) and the third category belongs to respondents who have either gone to school and not above class 10 including those who are not schooled.

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[306] Hussain, Shamshad (2015), *op.cit.* p. 17

Table 3.4: Education Level of the Respondents belonging to Various Religious Groups

	GRADUATE- G (%)	UNDER GRADUATE-UG (%)	SCHOOLING-S (%)
HINDU	8 (8.51)	39 (41.49)	47 (50.00)
MUSLIM	2 (2.30)	28 (32.18)	57 (65.52)
CHRISTIAN	2 (14.29)	9 (64.29)	3 (21.43)

(Chi-square statistic is 12.994. The p-value is .011305. The result is significant at p < .05.)

Out of the total 94 Hindu respondents 8 of them are above graduates (G), while 39 of them belong to the UG category. The maximum number of Hindu respondents belongs to the third category with 3 of them not attending school at any point in their lives. Two each from Muslim and Christian fall under the G category while 28 and 9 of them belong to UG category respectively. 57 Muslims belong to the third category with two of them not attending the school at any point in their lives. All the Christian respondents are schooled. The table also shows that Muslim respondents above school education are the least among all the three religious groups similar to the pattern seen throughout Kerala.

The better status enjoyed by the Kerala women with regard to The Kerala Model of Development for decades have been challenged in the recent times. It has been proved that the scintillating numbers of development has not necessarily transformed into a pleasing number with respect to the day to day lives of Malayalee women. Patriarchy had its own share of interference in the lives of the women from period unknown and with its myriad forms it still is powerful enough to define and delude women's self and agency. So in the present scenario rather than boasting off the sparkling numbers in technical indicators like the literacy rate and claiming for an almost no gender disparity would be neglecting the lived experiences and the practical underpinnings of education. So going beyond the literacy level and focusing on rather larger implications of education, the primary focus of the study is to see how education is translated to agency in matters of self.

The education of women was emphasised to enhance their inherent capacities to discharge their 'natural role' as wives and mothers.[307] The purpose of educating a woman was to develop in her certain virtues such as unassertiveness, humility, chastity, affection towards dependents, capability for household management, interest in childcare, knowledge of essentials of health, reluctance towards unnecessary expenditure and also to limit women's social interactions through 'chatting' and 'gossiping'[308]. On the one hand, a woman's earning capacity did not negate the virtues of the 'ideal woman'. On the other hand, it enhanced her value as a 'domestic manager'[309]. Occupations such as teaching and nursing (consonant with womanly qualities such as a gentle disposition, lack of shame in performing domestic chores, caring for children, willingness to listen and display affection) were considered ideal traits in women. However, the social reforms in different communities as envisaged by different reformers set new limits through a gendered definition of roles forged within an overarching patriarchal framework.

The high female literacy level in Kerala has been much acclaimed. However what gets unnoticed is "(a) the lower (than all-India) proportion of 'graduate and above' category, among both men and women in Kerala and (b) the gender differentiated pattern of higher education as it has evolved over time."[310] Even though gender disparity is comparatively low till the higher secondary level (in certain level even reversed at the pre-university as well as non-technical diploma levels), and presently women are far ahead of men in graduate and post-graduate domain of education in the arts and science courses. But they lag far behind men in professional/technical realm of education, with an exception in nursing in which men are few and in teaching where the ratio is in support of women.[311] The Economic Review of 2004 has made an interesting observation where they have found that two-thirds of the students enrolled in graduate courses and almost three-fourths enrolled in post- graduate courses are girls. [312] Women formed less than one-third of the students enrolled in engineering colleges (in 1997). Similarly in the lower technical

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[307] Scaria, Suma. (2014), *op.cit.* p. 429
[308] Devika, J. (2007). *En-gendering individuals: The language of re-forming in early twentieth century Keralam,* Orient Longmanp, New Delhi, p.172
[309] Ibid
[310] Kerala Development Report (2008), p.405
[311] Ibid
[312] Economic Review (2004), p.329

educational institutions which are job-oriented, the intake of girls is below 10 per cent in technical schools, between 13 and 23 per cent in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Industrial Training Centres (ITCs) and between 30 and 40 per cent in polytechnics during the 1990s. Clearly women have limited entry into 'masculine' specialisations but dominate in professions identified as 'feminine'. This orientation of women's education, in particular the overwhelming crowding of women in general arts and science courses at the graduate and post-graduate levels, is found largely a reflection of the hope of white collar employment.[313]

Table 3.5 gives a gender wise comparison of the level of educational attainment of people above the age of 18. The number of illiterates among females is still higher when compared to men even though the disparity is not loud. It is also perplexing a fact that the number of females having primary and higher secondary education are more than males.

Table 3.5: Level of Educational Attainment of the Population above the Age of 18 (in %)

Educational Level	Female	Male
Illiterate	6.7	2.4
Literate	2.8	1.7
Primary	29.9	27.8
Secondary	34.9	39.9
Higher Secondary	11.4	10.5
Technical (Diploma)	2.3	5.1
Graduation	9.1	8.9
Post Graduation	2.1	1.7
Professional	1.0	1.9

Source: Keralapadhanam, p.117

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[313] Kerala Development Report (2008), p.395-6

Respondents were asked the reason behind choosing the particular course for higher studies and whether they chose the course out of their personal choice. Out of the 46 Hindu respondents who went for higher studies 44 responded that they chose the course on their own, while 30 Muslim respondents who went for higher education 27 decided on their own. (See Appendix 2 2.2) And out of the 11 Christian respondents 10 took the course without anyone's interference. Out of the 6 respondents who didn't choose on their own, all were guided by their parents.

Questions were also asked on the reason for choosing the course. Most of the respondents belonging to all the religious categories chose the course out of better job aspiration while an equal number chose the higher studies options without any particular reason. (See Appendix-2 2.3) While less than 20 per cent of the respondents claimed that they chose the course for further studies. But there was no response as to selection of a particular course might give better marriage prospects.

But an interesting analysis could be drawn from the two set of data on the choices of higher education. While almost all the respondents have claimed that the choice of their higher studies was completely personal, a considerable number of respondents are not sure why they have opted for the course. This contradiction calls for a deeper understanding of the underlying implications in the choices women make in higher studies.

The fact that around 50 per cent of the respondents who have gone for higher studies, prefer either to continue their education or to get a decent job makes us feel that the presence of women dominate both these realms in general. But the existing data have shown us that women are lower in research areas as well as in the employment scene. Even though from the data it is clear that parental pressure is not at all significant in the case of choosing a higher studies course, the fact can't be completely denied. It was understood from the interaction with certain respondents that parental pressures are there, often displayed indirectly and they convince their children often without pressures by highlighting the merits of certain courses as well as demerits of certain others thereby creating an impression in the minds of their children about the better prospects for certain

courses in the job market as well as marriage market. Often the children compromises to these situations and thus their choices are often manipulated.

The role of parents in the educational prospects of an individual is undeniable, often directly and in certain occasions, indirectly. It is a fact that the patriarchal deliberations, often in the name of tradition as well as the existing societal division of gender roles have a considerable impact on the thought process of selection of an educational stream by the parents. For example, engineering courses are having a high preference in the higher education stream. But the selection of branch is done often under the above criterion with courses like mechanical engineering, aeronautical engineering, electrical and such similar course, which are seen as suitable for boys, being often neglected by girls and for that matter their parents not preferring such courses. But branches like computer engineering, electronics and communication are preferred very much by the girls like boys since they are seen comfortable for the girls in terms of their lesser strenuous syllabus as well as a higher comfortable employment opportunities.

Gender and the Preferences in the Choice of School

India in general is known for its preference for male child over female child and despite its efforts to be a developed country the female foeticide rate is alarmingly increasing which often questions the educational ethos of educated Indians. Even though the female foeticide rate is less in Kerala, male-preference is very much prevalent in among all socio-religious categories. Since boys are seen as profitable since they earn for the family later and girls as a financial burden since they have to be given dowry, having a boy is given a certain preference. But certain studies show that these outdated ideologies have got gradual changes in the course of time. With the changing economic situations and people getting more financial stability girl child and boy child are given a similar treatment in matters of choice of higher education.[314]

During my study almost 95% of the respondents said that there were no discrimination shown by their parents in their schooling and often they and their brothers were sent to

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[314] Keralapadhanam (2008), p.122

the same school. The idea was to understand whether discrimination was done on the basis of the quality of education for boys and girls. Questions were asked particularly regarding the nature of the schools to which they were sent as well as their brother/s, in case they have one. Much discrimination was not seen till upper primary schooling. There was a slight disparity when it comes to secondary level and it is a different story altogether when it comes to higher studies. The table below (Table: 3.6) shows the expectation about the first child in different socio-economic categories.

Table 3.6: Expectation about the First Child in Different Socio-economic Categories (in %)

Category	Male					Female				
	Professional	White Collar	Other	Marriage	No Idea	Professional	White Collar	Other	Marriage	No Idea
Hindu	21.7	15.5	29.4	1.6	31.8	19.2	11.5	18.6	17.4	33.3
Muslim	20.5	13.1	33.6	1.7	31.2	12.2	8.6	12.0	37.8	29.4
Christian	33.6	10.3	30.4	0.8	24.9	29.3	11.0	14.8	12.4	32.5
Total	23.9	13.8	30.7	1.5	30.1	19.3	10.7	16.3	21.5	32.3

Source: Keralapadhanam (2008), p.122

The table shows that nearly 38% of Muslim parents expect marriage of their daughters above their employment whereas only 1.7% of them expect the same out of their son. The disappearance of educated girls, especially Muslim girls, after their colleges, should be attributed to this primacy being given to the familial life. This subsequently leads to lesser visibility in the public domain as well, as most of them get involved in the family and desserts themselves from the outside world. In my study almost 86% of the married respondents really wanted to pursue higher studies or do a job, but were not able to do the same as they didn't get any support from the husband or his family. 45% of the respondents continued their studies after marriage with the help of their husband and family.

Education of women in India is often associated with domesticity[315] and highly influenced by patriarchy.[316] The prioritization of boys' education over girls' has been a feature of the Indian society historically with a number of factors including social, economic and cultural determining it.[317] Kerala has been an exception in this regard with a maximum number of Mean Years of Schooling for both males (5.65) and females (5.85) among the Indian states and females being placed above as the only state.[318] The percentage of the population in Kerala who completed at least primary education was 97 against the national average of 67.2 and this again place Kerala on the top of the chart.[319] In spite of these data, to understand whether gender preferences were made by parents in providing better education facilities to children, questions were asked to see whether the respondents and their brothers (if any) were send to the same school.

Out of the 195 respondents only 10 respondents have their brothers send to a different school from theirs. (See Appendix-2 2.6) Out of the 10 respondents 7 are Hindu, 2 Muslims and one Christian. 8 out of the 10 respondents said the change in school was as per convenience[320] and only 2 have claimed that different schools were chosen by their parents with a prospect for better education for their brothers' over theirs. The fact that these two respondents had their brothers' send to a different school for better education has to be understood by analysing the fact that these two respondents had only primary education and their brothers completed high school.

The gender differentiated pattern of higher education which has been seen as a non-conventional indicator determining the preferences women have in higher education, often restraining the agency of women in choosing higher education, was seen throughout

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[315] Kodoth, Praveen& Eapen, Mridul(2005), "Looking beyond Gender Parity: Gender Inequities of Some Dimensions of Well-Being in Kerala". *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(30), p.3280

[316] Chanana, Karuna (2000) "Treading the Hallowed Halls: Women in Higher Education in India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(12) p.1013

[317] White, Gregory& Ruther, Matt& Kahn, John (2016) *Educational Inequality in India: An Analysis of Gender Differences in Reading and Mathematics*. Working Paper no. 2106-2, IHDSp.3

[318] Sachar Commission Report, p. 290-291. The Mean Years of Schooling of children aged 7-16 years was used for the study.

[319] Ibid, p. 295

[320] In some cases respondents were send to girls' only school thereby automatically making their brothers to get enrolled in a different school. Here what has to be highlighted is that the change in school often happens after the completion of upper primary level since most of the schools till upper primary level are co-ed.

the interaction with respondents. The respondents who have went for higher education including professional and non-professional degree courses have opted mostly for medical related courses (BAMS, MLT and BPT) and arts subjects which are often seen as 'suitable' for women. A graduation or a post graduation degree in arts subject would allow the person to enrol for a BEd (Bachelor in Education) and could easily settle down with a teaching job.[321]

Women and Religious Education

Religious education is an important area of study in Kerala for Muslims and Christians. Kerala Muslims have a long history of religious education, which has been discussed in detail in the earlier part of this chapter, along with the Christians. It is believed that "a large proportion of Muslim children study in Madrasa, mostly to get acquainted with the religious discourse and ensure the continuation of Islamic culture and social life."[322] The same is true in the case of Christians as well. Hindus do not have a systematic religious learning system in Kerala and often the religious rituals and practices are learnt from parents or within the household.

Out of the 195 respondents 101 respondents have been part of any form of religious education. What has to be highlighted here is that none of the Hindu respondents got any formal religious education whereas all the Muslim and Christian respondents were introduced to formal religious education.[323] (Table 3.7) It is also interesting to see how

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[321] Kodoth& Eapen(2005), *op.cit.* p.3280

[322] Sachar Commission Report, p.76

[323] This data, especially on the Muslim participation in religious education is remarkable since the Sachar Commission Report have reported a decreasing trend among Muslims to enrol their children in the Madrasa and give more emphasis on modern education. The study has shown that only 6.3% of the total Muslim children between the ages of 7-16 attend any type of Madrasa in India. By comparing this data with the data from my field we can understand how the system of religious education among Muslims in Kerala and particularly in the Kozhikode district is inevitable part of their daily life. What has to be noted also is the fact that there is a misconception prevalent among popular imagination that majority of the Muslim children attend the Madrasa which comes from the failure to distinguish between Madrasas and Maktabs. Maktabs are schools in the neighbourhood, which are often attached to the mosques and provide religious education to those children who attend other normal schools to get 'mainstream' education. So Maktabs are part-time religious education institutions and act complementary to the formal educational system. The Madrasa system in Kerala comprises majorly the Maktabs and as per the Sachar Commission Report more than 60000 Muslim students in Kerala are enrolled in various Maktabs across the state along with the mainstream schools whereas around 17000 students are enrolled in full-time Madrasas. So in the case of

there was no gender discrimination in terms of sending the children to religious schools and how the two Muslim respondents who were not enrolled in school were enrolled in Madrasas.[324] It is also significant to understand how some of the Muslim respondents above the age of 45 who have not completed the secondary education have attended more number of years in Madrasas than in schools. The same is the case with Christian respondents. All the respondents below the ages of 50 completed 10 years of religious education and have a certificate of their completion of course from their respective churches belonging to various factions.

Table 3.7: Religious Education of the Respondents

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	0 (0.00)	94 (100.00)
MUSLIM	87 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
CHRISTIAN	14 (100.00)	0 (0.00)

The fact that only 8 out of the 87 respondents who are Muslims have completed 10 years of Madrasa education makes us to realise that Muslims are not ardent or particular about the amount of religious education one has to obtain. Out of the 25 Muslim respondents above 45 years of age, 23 of them have a mainstream education of 10 years or less than class 10. But most of their number of years of learning in the religious school as well as mainstream school is equal or almost equal (with a difference of one or two years). But out of the 13 respondents who are between the age group of 18-25, all of them have at least completed class 12 or are qualified above that. But the number of years of Madrasa education for them is below class 7. Most of the respondents consider the purpose of going to Madrasa to learn to recite Quran and to get an essential idea of how to perform the basic Islamic obligations.[325] And along with that a lot of unaided schools under

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Kerala what is meant by Madrasa is primarily Maktab and Dars and Arabic colleges are often not counted as Madrasas as is the case in North India.

[324] One of the respondents who is physically challenged took her classes from home as her father was a Madrasa teacher.

[325] Most of the Madrasas in Kerala have two slots of class sessions. The morning slot is between 6.30 am and 8.30 am and the second slot is between 4.30 pm till the evening *Namaaz.* Most of the students drop their Madrasa education after primary school because it becomes difficult for them to balance both the

Muslim managements have started religious curriculum along with the modern syllabus attracting parents to put their children in such schools since they don't have to take the trouble of managing both the Madrasa and school schedules.[326] Some of the respondents who are educated in a Madrasa have chosen such schools for their children only on the criterion that such schools have religious classes included in the syllabus.

Since the certificate of Madrasa educational qualification doesn't have a major purpose in the lives of Muslims in general after the Madrasa years, unlike Christians, the Madrasa education is just a part of enhancing and shaping their religious selves and is not given much importance above that.[327] It also shows the kind and extent of mutual relationship both Christians and Muslims have with their respective religion, as a congregation and the influence of them on the lives of those who are associated with them. But it is also equally interesting to find out that there hasn't been any gender specifications in supporting and providing religious education neither by the family nor by the associated religious institutions as well as there is no gender discrimination shown in the compulsivity in enrolling students to such religious schools.

Employment Pattern among Women in Kerala

Women in Kerala have scored poorly in terms of participation in paid employment, both in relation to women at the all-India level and in relation to men at the state level. Women's work participation rates (WPRs) in terms of usual principal and subsidiary status in Kerala used to be among the lowest in India. Currently while over a quarter of the female population is recorded as economically active at the all-India level, the corresponding proportion is about 23 per cent in the state. The difference is primarily due to lower rural female WPRs in Kerala; the urban situation in the state seems relatively favourable. About one-fifth of women in urban Kerala are employed compared to less

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system of education and some of them have their tuition class schedules colliding with the Madrasa schedule.

[326] Saittu, Abid K. (2015) "Contextualising the Veiling Practice: A Study of Muslim Women in North Kerala", PhD Theses submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

[327] The case is different in North India where a lot of Muslims, irrespective of gender, depend only on Madrasa for their education.

than 14 per cent at the all-India level.[328] And unlike at the all-India level, which has witnessed a decline in female WPRs in both urban and rural areas in the 1990s, there has been greater stability in Kerala.[329]

Majority of the respondents are unemployed from all the religious categories. While 7 out of the total 14 Christian respondents are employed only 17.02 per cent of Hindus and 6.90 per cent of the Muslims are employed (See Table 3.8). While 11 Muslim respondents do not like to get employed 14 respondents are interested to get employed but are constrained from getting a job.

Table 3.8: Employment status of the various religious groups

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	16 (17.02)	78 (82.98)
MUSLIM	6 (6.90)	81 (93.10)
CHRISTIAN	7 (50.00)	7 (50.00)

(Chi-square statistic is 18.3599. The p-value is .000103. The result is significant at $p < .05$.)

Women in Kerala enjoy higher wage rates for casual employment in both rural and urban areas than in other parts of the country; their annual earnings may also be higher. Bolstered by increasing male WPRs, as we see later, and higher household earnings, it is entirely likely that women are withdrawing into full-time domesticity for significant parts of the year. This could reflect an 'informed' choice, an option reflecting greater leisure or time to attend to household/family concerns. Such a choice entails considerable risk of vulnerability by reducing women's direct access to earned incomes and increasing the extent of their dependence on husbands or others.[330]

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[328] Kerala Development Report (2008), p. 406
[329] Ibid
[330] Ibid

A recent study has compared the Work Participation Rate of women in the age group of 15-64 in some of the developed countries of the world and Kerala.[331] The stark difference in percentage of WPR between these countries and that of Kerala is disturbing in that the Kerala Model of Development has been often equated with the development attainments of these countries. In spite of having similar rates in various indicators like literacy and health indicators, the work participation is very much disappointing for the women in Kerala. What makes the data again disturbing is the fact that the WPR for women in Kerala is the lowest among the Indian states as per the 2001 census.[332] While the national average WPR is 25.6 per cent as per 2001, Kerala has a low per cent of 15.4 which is lowest in the chart with Uttar Pradesh, which has performed pathetically in all development indicators, standing above Kerala with 16.5 per cent.

Various reasons like retarded growth of the agricultural sector and industrial sector as well as decreasing popularity of the traditional produces has been attributed to the less contribution of women in the work force by the experts.[333] But from my field experience the reasons goes beyond these traditional beliefs as certain other factors have been very crucial in determining the relation between women and their participation in the work force. 57 per cent of the respondents were employed before/after marriage, but had to sacrifice them for the sake of their family. A very small percent left it out of personal choice, but the majority had to do it due to the pressure from husband/relatives. Since familial life is always prioritized above career, women had to choose the former.

Again, the inconvenience of women to have access to their place of job due to relocation after marriage has also contributed in women leaving their job behind. It is a very common trend in the recent times in Kerala that a good number of professional educated girls are not getting employed and remain jobless just because of family pressures. Nevertheless, it is an acknowledged fact that there is a proportional shortage in the number of job opportunities to the number of professionals in Kerala. When men go out to places outside Kerala for having better career opportunities, women hardly dislocate

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[331] Keralapadhanam (2008), p.116
[332] Keralapadhanam (2008), p.115
[333] Ibid

themselves for better job prospectus. Now taking the case of Muslim women in particular the figures are disastrous. The figure is reduced to a minute 7.1 percent and is the lowest for any socio-economic and regional category in Kerala. When it comes to a regional analysis, it has been again shown that the Northern part has the least participation rate, again pointing to the fact that Muslims lag behind other socio-religious categories. The traditional and outdated ideology of shame associated with women earning for the family is still very much there among the Kerala society in general and Muslim community in particular. Equally is the role of gulf migration in determining the choice between career and family for Muslim women. The gulf migration is still a huge decider on the lives of Muslim families in Kerala to the extent that each and every member of a family, whose male head is away, has all the important decisions of their lives depending on it.

Since the idea of stability is always associated with marriage as per the standards of Muslim community in Kerala, education doesn't necessarily translate into a better career, rather a better marriage. So it is not surprising that the highest per cent of housewives in Kerala are the Muslim wives. It is not that they are illiterate or lack enough degrees. But circumstances often prevent them from having a life out of the walls of their houses. This confinement of Muslim women has eventually led to their invisibility in the various realms of public sphere.

Another major concern regarding the employment status of the women is the nature of job they are into. Studies have shown that work participation rate of women in high-income jobs are less whereas their participation in low-income jobs is high. [334] Among the high-income jobs the only one in which women surpasses the men with their participation is the school teacher profession. Nearly 67 per cent of the school teachers in Kerala are females. They have a decent participation rates in professions like college/higher secondary teaching.[335] Around 31 per cent of the advocates and government office staff are also women. At the same time there are no female military officers and less than 2 per cent police officers in the state. Female representation is again

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[334] Keralapadhanam (2008), p.118
[335] Ibid

low among university teachers, industrialists, engineers, technical experts etc.[336] At the same time the low-wage jobs like Anganvaadi/nursery teachers and assistants are completely dominated by women. It has been an accepted truth that due to the fact that only women are into certain jobs have made these jobs literally entitled as low-waged.

Apart from these biases towards wage and job, another major disparity in the field of employment with regard to wage is the differential wage for same job between men and women. The discrepancy is predominantly more vocal in unorganized sector as well as private firms. The disparity is not only limited to unskilled or casual labour, but also seen very clearly in fields like teaching, supervising, engineering, and medical and so on.[337] The strange theory that goes with this discrimination is that when a man earns he is earning for the family, whereas when a woman earns she is earning for herself as her husband would take care of rest of the family's financial requirements. This gender bias in the employment market is one reason for women not getting employed since they find it unworthy to being less paid for the same job as men with the same qualifications and efforts. Again the availability of less jobs in the government sector also have pulled back women from entering the job market.

The Political 'Being': Muslim Women and Their Activism

Effective political participation is an indicator of true democracy. The higher the participation of people, the democracy gets healthier. It is observed that the participation of women in politics is limited and is lower as compared to men. Women are universally considered a weaker sex as much politically as they are biologically, socially and economically. "Muslim women are a disadvantaged section of the society, and victims of oppression in two ways: one, as women; two, as member of a minority community that is both educationally and economically backward and religiously orthodox. It may be stated that the Muslim women are not 'undifferentiated masses' and that there are variations among them on the basis of socio-economic status, urban/rural residence and regional background." Yet there are some features, which are shared by all Muslim women and

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[336] Ibid
[337] Ibid, p.119

which affect their lives alike, i.e., their being women, being Muslims and being members of a backward minority community.

The association of Indian women with politics goes back to the pre-independence days, when they participated in the various phases of the freedom struggle as volunteers, leaders and commanders and suffered like men. Such participation could be made possible due to the spade work done by the social and religious reformers in the field of women's education, emancipation and uplift. These reforms paved the way for an Indian Women's Movement, which in the due course of time formed an alliance with the Indian National Movement. Women's participation increased manifold as the National Movement acquired a mass character under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

However, unlike the Hindu women who participated in the movement, the participation among the Muslim women was confined to an elite class. The reason for the limited participation could be attributed to both traditional factors like custom of purdah and segregation among the Muslims as well as to the Muslim separatist politics which dominated the Indian political scene from 1920 to 1947.[338] Besides, the Muslim League did not encompass masses and as such the Muslim women were denied the opportunity to participate in the National Movement.

The prominent Muslim women who shared the feminist platform provided by the Indian Women's Movement to promote the cause of Indian women in general and Muslim women in particular were: Begum of Bhopal, Begum Shah Nawaz Khan, Lady Mirza Ismael, Begum Habibullah, Begum Rahmatullah, Princess Durreshavar of Hyderabad, Mrs. Hamid Ali, Mrs. Tayabji, Mrs. Haroon and Masooma Begum. However, the Muslim women's cause, championed by the above mentioned ladies, suffered with the country's partition, the migration of Muslim women leaders, the passage of Hindu Code Bill (1956) and the community's minority status in the independent India.[339]

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[338]Shukla, S& Shukla, S (1996) "Political participation of Muslim women", *The Indian Journal of Political Science* , 57(1/4) (1996), p.4
[339] Khanna, Manukha (2009), "political Participation of Women in India", *The Indian Journal of Political Science,* 70(1), p.59

The political participation of Muslim women before independence has not been much marked in the history of Kerala primarily as a mass mobilized one. There were some regional and personal efforts like those of Haleema Beevi, Thankamma, and Ayesha Mayan which were unique but couldn't have a larger impact.[340] But their efforts need to be acknowledged as an entry point for understanding the activism of Muslim women in Kerala.

Muslim Women's Movement in Kerala

Muslim women's movement in Kerala could be seen as a part of the Muslim women's movement at national level. But as we have discussed in the second chapter about the Muslim women's movement in India, in Kerala we could not see any remarkable activities by Muslim women not only for empowering women, but also social activism in general. There were Muslim women activists before independence and there were also some organized activities like the All India Muslim Women's Conference at the national level. But Muslim women in Kerala, due to the particular socio-cultural settings were not part of these activities till a few decades back. As was common in all the societies, some individual efforts like that of Haleema Beevi, Ayesha Mayan, Thankamma Malik took some steps in that direction and even conducted a conference with this aim.[341] But they were not able to turn their efforts to a movement due to less support within the community or from the family. But by 80's and 90's there were considerable growth in the number of organizations for Muslim women in Kerala. Unlike other states in India, these organizations were mainly started for women of various sects or divisions within Muslim community. This is to say that women empowerment was not the primarily objective of these organizations and they were often functioning as the ladies wings of respective male organizations with no specific objectives and ideologies of their own. But there are a few organizations also which are to function for the well being of Muslim women. These are mainly focussed only on the northern Kerala, Malabar, where the

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[340] Hussain, Shamshad (2009) *Neunapakshathinum Lingapadhavikkumidayil,* The State Institute of Languages, Kerala. Thiruvananthapuram.
[341] Kinalur, Mujeebrahman (2010), *op. cit.* p 32

Muslim population is high.[342] Along with these there are also women's organizations for Muslim political parties.

NISA, an organization completely meant for the well being of Muslim women, both in public space and domestic space was formed in 1997. The organization is based at Calicut. The organization has been very active in dealing with some of the issues of Muslim women like dowry harassments and domestic violence. The organization has continuously questioned the authority of men to divorce whenever they want without any specific reasons and marrying any number of women they wish with the motive of getting more dowry and other assets. The organization has been successful in preventing a *Muta* (temporary) marriage in Calicut in 2002 and taking necessary legal actions against those who were indulged in it.[343] They have always raised their voice for women's rights in general and Muslim women's rights in particular. As is obvious the organization has been often criticized by the orthodox Muslim leaders who found their activities often against the moral ethics of Islam and their activities against the spirit of Islam.

Another active organization of Muslim women is Muslim Girls and Women's Movement, popularly known as MGM, which was founded officially in the year 1987. The organization is purely based on Islam and works for Muslim women to help them understand their rights and duties as per the Islamic tenets. Before 1987, it was functional in some colleges in Malabar, without any organizational set up and was often functioning as the girls' wing of Muslim Students Movement (MSM) which has been an active students' organization in Kerala. Even though it was based on religion, it gave Muslim women new openings to education as they supported women's education. Lot of activities including seminars, conferences and other awareness classes were conducted for Muslim women. The orthodox class was strongly against such a development as they never supported women's education- both religious and material. Also women were not allowed into mosques in Kerala as domestic spaces were assigned for women and their religious activities also were never related to mosques. The progressive religious organizations like MGM supported the entry of women into mosque for regular prayers

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[342]Hussain, Shamshad (2009), *op.cit.*p. 34
[343]Ibid

and also the special prayer on Friday. Thus women started entering into mosques in large number, especially in Malabar region. But the trend is now seen in Southern Kerala also. This is still opposed by a large section of Muslims, even educated ones who still feel women are meant for households. The organization is strictly against the non-religious activities seen among the Muslims of Kerala like dowry, child marriage, lavish marriage ceremonies, unnecessary religious rituals etc. Various campaigns have been carried to prevent the excessive addiction of Muslim women for gold and also their involvement in rituals and practices which are not part of the true religion but carried out in its name. The organization has now a separate wing for the girls and they are very active in the college campuses throughout the state. The organization is also publishing a monthly for women, *Pudava* which deal with the day to day issues of women. It also has updates on the latest developments among Muslim women throughout the world. It also promotes Muslim women to express their views on issues pertaining to Muslim women.[344]

Another organization, which is also an organization with religious affiliation, is the Girls' Islamic Organization (GIO) which was founded in the year 1984. This is a sister organization of the *Jamaat-e-Islami* Hind. Similar to the formation of MGM, GIO also didn't have a formal structure initially, but there was a lot of activities from girls who were part of the various colleges started by the *Jamaat-e-Islami* at various parts of Kerala. And later they decided to have an organization of their own and move away from the shades of the men's organization. Very much like MGM, GIO also supports women entering mosque and are very strong believers of gender equality. Similar to the ideologies of their parent organization, GIO also involves themselves in the political issues and promoter the members to contest in the assembly elections. They believe that unlike other organizations there should not be any division between the religious realm and public realm.[345] Religion should be seen as a part of the day to day life and not as something which is kept apart from the normal life. Thus they promote active participation of men and women in politics. Unlike other Muslim women's organizations, their activities are very visible as often they are not confined to the closed group of

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[344] Ibid, p 50
[345] Ibid, p 52

Muslim women. They also have a monthly which is popular among the Muslims of Kerala.

The political parties like The Muslim League of India and National Democratic Front have their own women's organizations. These organizations are primarily formed because of the particular situation which came out after the enactment of women's reservation Act, which decided to have certain number of seats reserved for women for the positions in the Local Self Government institutions. But these are not autonomous organizations and are not permitted to have decisions taken on their own. They are often inactive and become active only during the time of elections.

Along with these organizations which are meant for only Muslim women, even though none of them publicly claim that, there are a lot of other women's organizations in Kerala which are formed for the well- being of women of all categories. Muslim women are also part of such organizations in large as religion never becomes a determining factor in getting help from these organizations. Organizations like Anweshi and Snehita work for the women who are mainly victims of domestic violence. Since Kerala is one of the leading states in India with respect to dowry in marriages and consequently harassment in the name of more dowry, there are a lot of cases everyday filed by women against their husbands and in –laws and these organizations support such women by providing them with legal support.

Similarly political organizations like Communist party of India and Congress party have their own ladies organizations and there are a number of Muslim women in these organizations and have also contested in elections. Some of the regional political organizations also have their own organizations for women in which also Muslim women are present.

Political Participation of Women after Independence

The making of the Indian Constitution brought the women legal equality. Constitutional provisions and legislative securities subsequently led the women to leave the relative calm of private life and enter both elective and appointive public offices in unprecedented

numbers. India has the distinction of having had a lady Prime Minister for almost fifteen years and several women Chief Ministers and Governors at the state level.[346] The celebration of the Year of Empowerment of Women, the reservation of 33% seats for women in the Panchayats (local government) and a proposal for a similar reservation in the Parliament all raised hopes for the betterment of women. However, this was only an illusion which camouflaged reality.

In general, the involvement of women in politics has been low key. They form part of the syndrome of exclusion from political power.[347] Traditionally they have been volunteers in civic and social community effects, in electoral politics as political wives, party loyalists and voters. In political decision-making their status has been subordinate to that of men. Only a small section of women belonging to or supported by affluent and influential families have managed to enter the political mainstream.[348] With respect to this Anuradha Bhoite has commented on the wide chasm between 'dejure' and 'defacto' perspectives.[349] The fundamental right of equality (enshrined in articles 14 to 1 8) and equal right to vote to men and women-bring women at par with men in the legal or 'dejure' sense. They cast their vote and take part in agitation political activities but lag behind in enjoying positions of power and decision making. Thus, in the "defacto" sense they are far below their male counterparts.

In the post-independence democratic India, Muslim women's participation in politics may be viewed at two levels, the first one being acquisition and exercise of power and the second being awareness and assertion of political rights. Muslim women have refrained from, active political participation i.e., membership of political parties, election campaigning, contesting elections and holding high public political offices. Although electoral participation of Muslim women has increased since independence, their participation in legislatures and government is very limited. There have been just twenty Muslim women legislators in the Indian Parliament so far (seven members of Lok Sabha

[346] Narain, Yogendra, Sahu, S.N &Lakshmi, L (2007) "Political Empowerment of Women", in Lalneihzovi (ed.) *Women's Development in India - Problems and Prospects*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, p.71
[347] Singh, V B (1984), *Profiles of Political Elites in India*, Ritu Publications, New Delhi, p.75-76
[348] Madhavi Lakshmi Kondreddy. "Construction of Gender -Depnvation of Women From Politics in maia", in Kiran Saxena (ed.) *Women and Politics* ,Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 33
[349] Anuradha Bhoite(1988) Women and Democracy in India, Kerala Sociologist, 16, pp.62-66

and thirteen members of Rajya Sabha). Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state and having a sizeable population of Muslims, has sent till now, two Muslim women to the Lok Sabha and three to the Rajya Sabha.

In actuality politics is the functioning of the whole arrangement of institutions and forces which are involved in moulding the lives of people by way of decision-making .policies and effective control over the apparatus of the states in getting the same implemented. Politics includes an array of activities. The conventional political activities include voting, campaigning in elections, convincing other persons to vote in a particular manner, attending public meetings .distributing party literature joining a party, contributing money to a party, contesting elections and holding public or party office. In the present times, the term political participation has been broadened to include all those political acts through which people directly affect the political decision-making process. It includes such activities as strikes, demonstrations, sit-ins, mass movements, marches, presentation of memoranda as well as violent acts designed to change the political system, or the unconventional political activities. Thus political participation is a complex phenomenon, a dependent variable that depends upon many factors such as the psychological, socio-economic and political, which orient the individual towards or away from political participation.[350]

Factors Affecting the Political Participation of Women in India

The psychological variable refers to the degree to which citizens are interested in and concerned about politics and public affairs. The women in India have generally an apathetic attitude towards politics. They are less likely to take interest in politics, to discuss politics, to attend public meetings and to influence decisions. Unfortunately, in India, politics has been associated with unhealthy competition, display of physical strength, greed struggle for the exercise of authority. In this perspective, women have been socialized to believe that politics is a male domain. They generally prefer not to associate themselves in the field. Indian culture assigns the women the responsibility of primarily parenting and nurturing. They accordingly, develop a psychological make-up

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[350] Khanna, Manukha (2009), *op.cit* p.57

and choose the role of 'care-giver1 and prefer to confine themselves to the private sphere i.e. home. This private and public dichotomy has resulted in women being marginalized in all spheres of activity that can be social, economic and more specifically political. Work outside the home has to be done by the women in addition to the household chores for which she has been socialised to believe that she alone is responsible. This results in excessively long working hours and acts as a disincentive for women to take on time-consuming political work.

Socio-economic variables, including age, education, occupation, income, religion, race, family background, residence etc., greatly condition political participation. All these factors may condition participation differently in different political and cultural contexts, and their effect on participation may not be stable. At the social level, the traditional outlook of the society and certain practical hurdles come in the way of women's participation. A society, in which the birth of a girl child is not welcomed and preference is for sons, the woman is a victim of sexist discrimination and subjected to inequality and disabilities. She is deemed a second class citizen and her proper place is considered to be within the four walls of her home. On the other hand, factors like poverty, household work, child bearing and childrearing make heavy demand on her time, energy and attention. Besides, patriarchal family norms, low level of informal and formal education, weak socialization process during childhood, home bound life and weak exposure to the outside world, adversely affect women's participation.

In general, persons with higher education and higher socio- economic status have easier access to politics than the uneducated and the persons of lower status .Further, dominant ethnic and religious groups, people with political family background, settled residents and urban dwellers tend to do better in the political sphere.[351]

But when it comes to Muslim women and their political participation in particular, the picture gets further blurred. Along with the above psychological, social and economic discrepancies, the inappropriate appropriations of religion have also contributed in women having access to any sort of political life. The partition and its aftermath have left

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[351] Lane, R (1959), p.94

the political being of Indian Muslims in question with their identity being required to assert every now and then. A sense of insecurity, frustration and uncertainty prevailed among their psyche pulling down them from the mainstream and in a way allowing them to be pulled out from the larger picture. This again takes to a higher level with their engagement in the political realm.

In a secular country like India the position of Muslim women is thus influenced by both Islamic injunctions and Hindu traditions.[352] The conservative and restrictive elements of both the religions have tended to dominate the lives of Muslim women and the liberal elements of these religions were never kind to women. In the absence of any Muslim leader of nation-wide following or any national political party of the Muslims, the leadership of the community rests in the hands of Mullahs who oppose any reforms in the Muslim Personal Law, to maintain their hold over the masses. They have accepted change in the Shariat pertaining to criminal code but do not accept any change in Personal Law which adversely affects the women. The whole question of change in the Muslim Personal Law has become identity related and the desire, for a distinct identity has been particularly unfavourable to the women.

The representation of women in remarkable political positions at national level has been very low when compared to men throughout decades. The fact that women constitutes almost half of the total population of the country and fails to be part of the political process is a matter of concern. The political responsibility of women shrinking to mere adult franchise and keeping away from the larger process could be due to variety of reasons as we have mentioned earlier. But the fact that women themselves like to keep away from the complex realm of politics and simultaneously politicians like to put women aside of the limelight is something which has been working hand in hand for a long time. And these factors have been very crucial in determining the destiny of women in politics.

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[352] Ibid

If we look at the table 3.9 we get to know the worst performance of Muslim women and it has to be understood from the fact that they are not proportionally given chance to contest in the elections in accordance with their proportion of population.

The statistics below show Muslim women are not backward but marginalised in politics. The reality is that most of the parties do not push them towards power. Even those who are demanding reservation within the reservation system do feel hesitant towards their candidature. Parties live on Muslim vote, die for Muslim vote, but shy away from making them visible in their party.

Table 3.9: Number of Women Contested/Elected and Number of Muslim Women Contested/Elected in Various Lok Sabha Elections

Lok Sabha	Total No. of Women Contested	Muslim Women Contested	Number of Women Elected	Number of Muslim Women Elected
Sixth	70	11	19	3
Seventh	143	9	28	2
Eighth	162	7	42	3
Ninth	198	11	29	Nil
Tenth	314	14	44	1
Eleventh	599	37	40	2
Twelfth	274	15	43	Nil
Thirteenth	284	26	49	1
Fourteenth	355	21	50	2

Source: Lok Sabha Website, www.parliamentofindia.nic.in

This is evident from data which show that since independence not more than three candidates were fielded by any party at one time. That also happened in few occasions. Though Congress and Bharatiya Janta Party are the largest national parties their Muslim woman affiliation is negligible. It is also interesting to see that out of the total Muslim

women contested during the various elections more than half of them have contested without any political party support as independent candidates.[353]

Women and Political Participation in Kerala

Levels of representation of Kerala women in the Lok Sabha have been consistently dismal. In the fifteen Lok Sabhas between 1957 to 2014 there were never more than two woman and on various occasions there were no women at all (Table 3.10). In 1991 for the first time Kerala had two women in parliament.

Table 3.10: Number of Women Representatives in Parliament and State Legislative Assembly from Kerala

YEAR	PARLIAMENT	YEAR	KERALA ASSEMBLY
1957	0	1957	6
1962	0	1960	7
1967	1	1965	3
1971	1	1967	1
1977	0	1970	2
1980	1	1977	1
1984	0	1980	5
1989	1	1982	4
1991	2	1987	8
1996	0	1991	8
1999	1	1996	13
2004	2	2001	8
2009	0	2006	7
2014	1	2011	6
		2016	8

Source: www.ceokerala.gov.in

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[353] http://www.indiatomorrow.net/eng/muslim-women-in-indian-politics

The number never increased beyond that. In spite of being the major minority with a population of more than twenty five percent, there has been no Muslim woman MPs from Kerala. This compares poorly with several states that trail behind Kerala on indicators education or health. Nor is the picture substantially different in the state assembly. The number of women representatives peaked in 1999 with 13 members. The average proportion of women in the assembly since 1957 in Kerala has been considerably low. [354]

The absence of women in the political scenario and apparently from the public sphere has raised various questions primarily concerning the Kerala Model of Development. As said above there are a lot of factors affecting the political participation of women in general. But at the same time there are certain factors which are very unique to the case of women in Kerala and particular to the Muslim women of Kerala. And due to these limitations affirmative action and state initiatives like social development programs, reservation of seats for women in local bodies, peoples plan campaign, etc., become relevant. Nonetheless, neither political parties nor social activists have seriously taken up the issue of 'women's invisibility' in politics; even the academicians have paid it scant attention.

An analysis of party leadership in Kerala reveals that women's representation here is truly marginal. Women have never headed any of the major political parties in Kerala. Most of the political parties have a ladies wing and women are generally assigned positions in that committee. But these wings are often ineffective and they have little influence on the major decisions or policies of their parent parties. Because of this there have been continuous pressures from various angles asking women to be included in the executive committees of various political parties like Congress, CPI (M) and BJP.[355] And due to this women have found a little place of their own in the state committees of these parties. Thus in higher level political bodies, where there is no formal reservation, the representation of women is abysmally low.

There has been a very few Muslim women who are part of these organizations and some of them have been part of the state committees as well. But more interestingly the Indian

[354] Kerala Development Report (2008), p. 419
[355] Siddique, PA (2005), p. 285-86

Union Muslim League (IUML), a political party that has a considerable mass base among Muslims, particularly in Malabar, did not have even a single woman in its State committee. The Islamic Ulama organizations like Samastha Kerala Jam-iyyathul Ulama has openly opposed the participation of Muslim women in public life.[356] It is interesting that of the 62 women MLAs elected so far to the Kerala Assembly, sixty-six per cent were from the majority Hindu community (who form 55 per cent of the population) and 27.5 per cent were Christians (who constitute 18. 38 per cent of Kerala's population), but only four women, that is 6.4 per cent were elected from the Muslim community, the second largest religious community in Kerala with a population share of 26.56 per cent.[357]

Many factors may be cited to explain the marginal participation of women in politics. These include the strong hold of patriarchy; the male dominated party leadership, caste and religious taboos, restricted social and physical mobility, the economic dependence of women, and the lack of adequate political socialization. This is particularly true in the case of Muslims; of the 164 MLAs that the IUML has sent to the Assembly not even one is a woman; this is attributable to the male dominated party structure coupled with the substantial influence of the religious leadership on the party's decisions and policies.[358] According to the Sunni reading of the Quran, women are not allowed to participate in public activities along with men. Since Sunni faction is the largest Muslim faction in Kerala this necessarily transforms into lesser participation of women in politics.

Local Self Government and Women in Kerala

From the inception of statehood till 1990, only three elections have been held to the Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) in Kerala. Till 1990 the participation of women was very limited in local self government. The Kerala District Administration Act, 1979, carried a provision for the nomination of two women with full voting rights in the District Council, but barred them from assuming the posts of president or vice-president.[359] In the

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[356] Ibid, p.287
[357] Ibid
[358] Ibid
[359] Ibid, p.288

1988 election to the Panchayats there was a twenty per cent seat reservation for women; consequently, 202 women were elected to the Panchayats. Various steps were taken by the different governments at various points of time to improve the participation of women in the local self governance.

Table 3.11: Members of different Local Government Institutions (LGI) of Kerala in the Local Self Government Elections 2015

LGI Type	Number of LGIs	Number of Members		
		Male	**Female**	**Total**
District Panchayat	14	155	174	329
Block Panchayat	152	947	1118	2065
Municipality	87	1453	1612	3065
Corporation	6	157	185	342
Grama Panchayat	941	7230	8714	15944
	1200	9942	11803	21745

Source: http://www.lsgkerala.gov.in/election/electionDetails

From the above table we could understand that the performance of women has been highly appreciable with women performing well than men. This is primarily due to the government decision of reservation which demands fifty percent compulsory reservation for women in all LSIs. Even though women have performed well after this new reservation policy there have been various criticisms against this new step.

The important argument was that those seats reserved exclusively for women were not filled by eligible candidates rather were filled with women who were mere puppets of powerful politicians who could carry their whims and fancies by keeping the female representative in the forefront.

Conclusion

By analysing the matters related to the basic issues of women's lives the chapter have tried to see how women in general fair in these matters by primarily focussing on the elements of autonomy and agency. The attempt was basically to see how women define themselves as individuals and being part of larger entities like family and society simultaneously. In spite of having the advantage of better education and health facilities women are still not completely having the control over their lives. The decision on what to wear, how to wear and where to wear are still determined by men more prominently among Muslim women. The reformist intervention is mentioned to do a comparative analysis of how lives of women and their roles differed before and after the movement. The idea was to show how in spite of less formal education women had certain autonomy over their lives.

The status of the women needs to be viewed in the context of their access to knowledge, economic resources with political power as well as their personal autonomy in the process of decision making. We have seen that women in general in Kerala face gender disparities primarily associated with the patriarchal social structures and similar is the case with the Muslim women. Even though the reform movement followed by the independence of the nation gave Muslim women of Kerala more access into modern education, the fact of the matter that Muslim women are still denied access to public sphere is a matter of concern. Be it better employment opportunities, higher studies or agency in decision making in matters related to them or the family women are still given a secondary status. Since education has been considered as the key to empowerment and access to public sphere, the fact contradicts here in the case of Muslim women.

The chapter has also briefly looked into the history and development of political participation among Muslim women in Kerala. The experience from the field has given an impression that women are still lagging behind in matters of political participation, awareness and even consciousness and Muslim women have not set a domain of their own in the political realm.

CHAPTER-4

Muslim Women and Public Sphere: The Present Study

The present study is an attempt to understand the dynamics of access to public sphere and the participation of Muslim women in it by taking into account their educational as well as political aspects. Since indicators related to education and political participation is used by the mainstream theories on development to understand the extent of public sphere participation of women, the same has been employed here as well. The study was carried at Kozhikode district of Kerala. The sample size has been 202 and out of it 195 respondents were interviewed for the purpose of the study.

The respondents were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule and the interview schedule had questions which tried to get information on the respondent's basic specificities as well as their attitudes, opinions and knowledge on various socio-political issues and attributes which would help us to analyse their extent of agency, autonomy and empowerment and thereby the extent of public sphere participation. The basic information like the type of family, the educational qualification, employment status are already discussed in chapter three which has helped in setting the framework for analysing the major indicators of public sphere participation.

For the same, the data is divided majorly into four themes which have a direct co-relation with the public sphere participation of women. They are the traditional practices and gender roles, individuality and decision making, opinions on socio-political issues and women and aspects of public sphere participation. Under each theme various sub themes are introduced to get a detail picture of the situation. Thus under the first theme type of clothing and doing household chores are used to analyse the traditional practices and gender roles of women and its relation to their public sphere participation.

In the second theme, sub themes like choice of marriage partner, choice of clothing, travelling alone during night and choosing candidate in elections are used in measuring the agency and autonomy of women in making choices in their lives. Autonomy has been

variously defined as "the ability to obtain information and to use it as the basis for making decisions about one's private concerns and those of one's intimates".[360]

> *We define autonomy here as the control women have over their own lives—the extent to which they have an equal voice with their husbands in matters affecting themselves and their families, control over material and other resources, access to knowledge and information, the authority to make independent decisions, freedom from constraints on physical mobility, and the ability to forge equitable power relationships within families.*[361]

Since autonomy and agency in the daily lives is an important indicator of women's participation in the public sphere the theme on individuality is very crucial.

The third theme is based on the respondents' attitudes and opinions on various socio-political issues. Under this theme various sub themes like opinion on the involvement of women in politics, opinion on dowry, reservation for women, Uniform Civil Code and feminism are included. This gives an understanding of the socio-political awareness of respondents as well as their positioning on these issues vis-à-vis the women's angle.

Political participation of women can be measured in three different dimensions: their participation as a voter, their participation as an elected representative and their participation in the actual decision.[362] Women, very much like every other place in India, has been excluded from the politics in Kerala as well,[363] be it their direct participation in the political process or be it their indirect engagement including their political consciousness/ or awareness of what is happening around them. Since political awareness or a political sense is closely associated with their indulgence in the public sphere, the fourth theme have questions on women and aspects of public sphere participation and here sub themes like membership of respondents in political parties and various other organizations and casting vote are asked.

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[360] Dyson, Tim& Moore, Mick (1983), "On kinship structure, female autonomy and demographic behavior in India", *Population and Development Review*, 9(1), p. 45

[361]Jejeebhoy, SJ&Sathar, Zeba A (2001), "Women's Autonomy in India and Pakistan: The Influence of Religion and Region", *Population and Development Review*, 27(4): 688

[362] Shanker, Richa (2014) Measurement of Women's Political Participation at the Local Level: India Experience. *United Nations Statistics Division*.1-8

[363] Jeffrey, Robin (1992): Politics, Women and Well-being: How Kerala became 'a Model', Macmillan, London.p.xviii

Various data on the above themes and sub themes are analysed across various religious groups to have a comparative understanding of the situation. The same themes are again analysed by categorizing the respondents into various educational categories since education has been used as an indicator for measuring the public sphere participation. Since the major purpose of the study is to have an understanding of public sphere and Muslim women, the data analysis have given special attention to analyse the situation of Muslim women in detail.

4.1 Traditional Practices and Gender Roles

One of the indicators to explain women's higher access to public sphere is their breaking of the traditional practices and moving ahead. The private spaces which are considered as the domain of women have been conditioned by the patriarchal rationale. The traditional beliefs and practices are always justified and perpetuated by the patriarchal structures whereby women are always at the receiving end. The burden of preserving as well as passing on of the traditional beliefs and practices are always contingent upon the women making them the 'carriers of the culture'. Like we have discussed in an earlier chapter, the reform movements and the introduction of modern education among women across many parts in India, including Kerala by the male reformers was to mould the women and 'civilize' them in order to make them perform better in the domestic domain. The material/spiritual analogy drawn by Chatterjee for the public/ private domain could be extended to the modernity/traditional dichotomy thereby making women part of the traditional domain whereas men as part of the modernity.

So a healthy access to public sphere is only possible if women are not confined to the traditional specificities rather are given a chance to transgress the conventional structures and institutions and move out of them. The women's situation in Kerala has shown that in spite of showing positive trends on the conventional indicators of development like literacy rate and certain health indicators but has fared very low in terms of the non-conventional indicators of development like absence of domestic violence and control

over one's income.[364] One of the important markers of the traditional practices is the clothing of the women.

4.1(i) Dress

Respondents were asked question on the type of dress they worn during various occasions. Women's dressing pattern is a matter of serious contention in the Kerala society since they are the primary carriers of the visible markers of every community. Even though choice of what to wear is extremely exclusive to one's personal domain, the external constraints on it often comes from the immediate community one is associated with it, be it the family, religion or caste. It is also interesting to understand that women's access to public sphere as an entry from the private domain is primarily marked out by what they have worn. While some women see certain kinds of dress as subjugating and constraining their freedom, some women consider certain dress as the gateway to the life of their choice

Respondents were asked the type of dress worn while normally going out. It is normally expected that the more educated one is the less traditional would they be. If we look at the pattern of clothing of women belonging to various religious groups, from Table 4.1(i) a, we can see that Hindu women mostly prefer saree over other dresses whereas Muslim women mostly adorn Purdah (the long gown along with the headscarf and not necessarily always covering the face, unlike the North Indian Purdah which is basically covering of the face) whereas Christians also opt for saree. Since saree and Purdah are conceived to be traditional outfits we can say that respondents are largely adhered to the traditional ways of living and thinking.

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[364] Mukhopadhyay, Swapna (2006), *op.cit.* 11

Table 4.1(i) a: Religious Groups and Types of Dress

	SAREE (%)	CHURIDAR (%)	PURDAH (%)	OTHERS (%)
HINDU	65 (69.15)	28 (29.79)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.06)
MUSLIM	11 (12.64)	33 (37.93)	43 (49.43)	0 (0.00)
CHRISTIAN	9 (64.29)	5 (35.71)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)

At the same time as we mentioned above higher education attainment are associated with lesser traditional ways of life. So the respondents were categorized as per their educational attainment. (See Table 4.1(i) b) it is very interesting to note that with the increasing educational level of the respondents they are tend to move out of the traditional ways of dressing with around 66 per cent of the respondents opting for Churidar (the *salwar qameez* of North India is popularly known as Churidar in Kerala). The number of respondents wearing saree is less in the undergraduate as well as above graduate category and the same is the case with Purdah. The more educated one is the less following of the traditional ways of clothing.

Table 4.1(i) b: Different Education Level and Types of Dress

	SAREE (%)	CHURIDAR (%)	PURDAH (%)	OTHERS (%)
G	4 (33.33)	8 (66.67)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
UG	23 (30.26)	45 (59.21)	7 (9.21)	1 (1.32)
S	58 (54.21)	13 (12.15)	36 (33.64)	0 (0.00)

The situation of Muslim women has been specifically looked into. (See Table 4.1(i) c) It could be seen that education definitely has an impact on the choices of clothing they make with decreasing affinity towards Purdah with an increase in the educational level. Churidar is preferred by most Muslim women who are educated over the traditional dress pattern which definitely gives an impression that education has a direct bearing on the traditional ways of life with higher education giving an opportunity to move ahead of the traditional ways. But all the respondents who were in favour of Purdah due to its

convenience/comfort factor were much contended with the fact that wearing a Purdah is always in par with the Islamic ideals and with the addition of the fashion factor to it lately they are able to keep the pious as well as fashion quotients always in check.[365] Saba Mahmood in her much-acknowledged work on the mosque movement in Egypt have related the donning of veil by the women involved in that movement as not related to "civilizational choice", much like what Osella & Osella has argued in the symbolic significance of Islamic markers/expressions, rather as a command from the God.[366]

Table 4.1(i) c: Muslim Women with Different Education Level and Types of Dress

	SAREE (%)	CHURIDAR (%)	PURDAH (%)	OTHERS (%)
MG	1 (50.00)	1 (50.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	1 (3.57)	20 (71.53)	7 (25.00)	0 (0.00)
MS	9 (15.79)	12 (21.05)	36 (63.16)	0 (0.00)

So from the various data above it could be understood that education definitely has a role in the choices individuals make and it also helps in moving ahead of the traditional ways of life and definitely helping women to have a better access to public sphere.

4.1 (ii) Household Chores (Gender Role)

Very much like the traditional practices and conservatism is the traditional gender role men and women perform in each society. The gender roles are defined and determined primarily by the patriarchal structures in most of the societies with women having the role primarily within the domestic domain. The responsibility of doing the household chores and bringing up the children are traditionally the roles given to women whereas men are the breadwinners. We have seen in the earlier chapters how education was conceived by the community reformers as a tool to reshape women so that they are able to efficiently carry out their gender roles rather than reshape their individuality. The glorifying of women as the queen of the domestic domain has not benefitted women

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[365] Abdelhalim, Julten (2013), "Paradoxes of *Pardha* and agency among Muslim women in Kerala", *Urban People,* 15(2), 237-256.
[366] Mahmood, Saba (2005), Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject p. 215

much rather have confined her to the private spheres compromising their desires and intentions to go out in the public sphere as an individual like men and live the way they would like to live.

History have shown us how education has not had a much impact on the conventional pattern of gender roles at the private domain and the responsibility of maintaining the household still lies very much as a female prerogative. So respondents were asked questions on who does household chores at their households. It is believed that with increasing educational level women are tend to share the household responsibilities along with men (See Table 4.1(ii) a). If we consider the various religious groups and who does household chores in their respective households we can see that in almost all the categories women are doing the household chores on their own. Almost above ninety percent of the Hindu and Muslim respondents take the responsibility of the household chores on their own while among Christians a fair number of men share the household chores with the female members of their house.

Table 4.1(ii) a: Religious Groups and Household Chores

	WOMAN (%)	MEN (%)	BOTH GENDERS (%)
HINDU	89 (94.68)	0 (0.00)	5 (5.32)
MUSLIM	79 (90.80)	0 (0.00)	8 (9.20)
CHRISTIAN	8 (57.14)	0 (0.00)	6 (42.86)

(Chi-square statistic is 19.5781. The p-value is .000056. The result is significant at p < .05.)

Since education is supposed to have an impact on the sharing of the household chores respondents are classified as per their educational attainment levels. (See Table 4.1(ii) b) It can be seen that with the increasing educational level women are doing household chores less alone while majority of them share it with the male members of their family. This again is less than fifty per cent is a disturbing fact but still there has been a positive trend in terms of the involvement of men along with women in the household chores with

increasing educational level. Only five respondents who belonged to the last category have their men helping them in dealing with the household responsibilities.

Table 4.1 (ii) b: Different Education Level and Household Chores

	WOMAN (%)	MEN (%)	BOTH GENDERS (%)
G	7 (58.33)	0 (0.00)	5 (41.67)
UG	67 (88.16)	0 (0.00)	9 (11.84)
S	102 (95.33)	0 (0.00)	5 (4.67)

(The chi-square statistic is 17.4147. The p-value is .000165. The result is significant at p < .05.)

The same could be analysed among Muslim women with different educational attainment. But here the trend has been not positive with the only two respondents belonging to the first category doing the household chores on their own without the male co-operation. But among the MUG category and the MS category it could be seen that those belonging to the earlier one has a better support from the men in sharing the household chores while the number is way too low for the latter.

Table 4.1(ii) c: Muslim Women with Different Education Level and Household Chores

	WOMAN (%)	MEN (%)	BOTH GENDERS (%)
MG	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	22 (78.57)	0 (0.00)	6 (21.43)
MS	55 (96.49)	0 (0.00)	2 (3.51)

So it could be generally concluded that, as per the field data, women with higher educational attainment are more likely to get help from their male members in sharing the responsibility of the household chores and definitely education has a bearing on the understanding of the gender roles as well as performing them.

It was equally interesting to know to what extent the traditional gender roles are conceived by women as internalizing patriarchal norms have been very much present in the Indian society in general. The most recent National Family Health Survey (NHFS-4) showed that 69 per cent of the housewives from Kerala sampled in the survey approve of domestic violence against them.[367] It is also interesting to observe the reasons of justification given by women for approving the violence. It ranged from not properly looking after the family and children, disrespecting their in-laws, bad or careless cooking and refusing to have sex.[368] It could be seen that all of the reasons are related to the expected traditional gender roles of women and disturbing them are seen as deserving punishment by women themselves. So respondents were asked about their opinion on who should do the household chores ideally.

It is interesting to observe that most women belonging to all the religious categories are of the opinion that household chores should be shared between men and women. (See Table 4.1(ii) d) It is also interesting to see that the number of Muslim women who thinks that household duties are completely the responsibility of the women are more in number compare to women of other religious categories.

Table 4.1(ii) d: Religious Groups and who should Do the Household Chores

	BOTH MEN AND WOMEN (%)	WOMENALONE (%)	NO OPINION (%)
HINDU	76 (80.85)	14 (14.89)	4 (4.26)
MUSLIM	68 (78.16)	17 (19.54)	2 (2.30)
CHRISTIAN	12 (85.71)	2 (14.29)	0 (0.00)

Since education is supposed to bring in a change in the thought process of women it is expected that with increasing educational level women should be able to transgress the conventional beliefs of gender roles and believe that household responsibilities should be shared between both the genders. From the table below (Table 4.1(ii) e) we can make out

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[367] NHFS Data-4 (http:// googleweblight.com/i?u=http://rchiips.org/NHFS)
[368] Ibid

that education has a direct bearing on the thought process of women with all the respondents belonging to first category that household chores should be shared between men and women. Even though the numbers decrease with the decreasing educational level it is still visible that women in general prefers the household chore to be shared. Out of the 33 respondents from across the age and religious groups who said chores need not be shared, majority responded that since men go outside for work it would be a double burden on them to share the work at home as well. It is also interesting that women who said chores should be shared were all excited to hear the question and it was not their sense of agency or the sense of division of labour which prompted them to reply yes, rather they said it would be a great relief especially during the early mornings when they have to deal all the household chores along with sending their children to school.

Table 4.1(ii) e: Different Educational Level and Who should Do the Household Chores

	BOTH MEN AND WOMEN (%)	WOMEN ALONE(%)	NO OPINION (%)
G	12(100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
UG	65 (85.53)	8 (10.53)	3 (3.95)
S	79 (73.83)	25 (23.36)	3 (2.80)

The response of Muslim women on who should do the household chores can be analysed. From Table 4.1(ii) f it can be concluded that all Muslim women belonging to the first category are of the opinion that household chores should be shared between both men and women and the percent goes on decreasing with the decreasing educational level. This shows that education has a positive effect on the conventional beliefs of women on the household responsibilities.

Table 4.1(ii) f: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Who should Do the Household Chores

	BOTH MEN AND WOMEN(%)	WOMEN ALONE (%)	NO OPINION (%)
MG	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	23 (82.14)	5 (17.86)	0 (0.00)
MS	43 (75.44)	12 (21.05)	1 (3.51)

Thus comparing the above two categories of doing the household chores we can see that there is a huge difference between the expectation as well as reality. And this again changes with the educational level of the respondents with higher educational attainment leading to a less conventional approach to gender roles both in the thought process as well as reality.

4.2 Decision Making and Individuality

One of the important measures of women's better access to public sphere is their agency in decision making in matters related to their individuality. Like we have explained in the earlier chapters the freedom to choose and decide on matters of life has a positive impact on the empowerment of women and a better indication of empowerment would definitely relate to a greater access to public sphere. According to Sen, well-being of an individual is directly related to the autonomy in decision making of that individual in his/her individual matters.[369] Similarly women's empowerment is defined in terms of the processes that nurture ability by which women make strategic life choices.[370] It has been the practice in most of the patriarchal societies to completely dominate women's decision making authority even in their personal matters and going beyond that was never accepted by the society. Very much like the traditional gender roles, women have internalized the less or no agency of them in decision making and have been conditioned to abide to the existing form of society.

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[369] Sen, Amartya (1985), *op.cit.* p. 187
[370] Kabeer, Naila (1999), *op.cit. p.435*

To analyse the autonomy and agency in decision making as well as determining the individuality, respondents were asked questions like the autonomy in choosing the marriage partner, autonomy in choosing the clothing, whether they chose to travel alone during night and the autonomy in choosing the candidate in elections. The purpose of these questions were to see to the extent in which women are able to exercise their autonomy in these matters and whether education and religion have a role in determining these matters.

4.2 (i) Choice of Marriage Partner

Since choosing one's marriage partner is an important choice woman makes in their lives, respondents were asked about who decided the selection of their marriage partner. Traditionally it has been the prerogative of the male members in the family across region and religion in India to choose the marriage partner for the female members of the family. In spite of marriage in India being mostly endogamous within caste and religion, women were not allowed to choose their prospective life partner on their own even within these strong categorical boundaries. Thus choosing the life partner has been an important indicator of the extent of autonomy women have and the question was asked to see the impact of religion as well as education on these choices. The respondents who are married were asked whether they had a say in choosing their life partners and those respondents who are not married were asked whether they would have a say in choosing their marriage partners.

Out of the total 94 Hindu respondents 57 have responded that it was their parents who decided/would decide their marriage partners while 24 of them said it was/would be a mutual decision. (See Table 4.2(i) a) A similar trend is seen among Christians as well with majority of them being decided by the parents. But among the Muslims it can be seen that only 5 respondents had/will have the autonomy in choosing their life partner while majority don't have a say in this matter. But if we look at the number of respondents who had/will have a say in their marriage decision along with their parents belonging to the mutual category as well as the respondents who had/will have the

autonomy in deciding the marriage partners we can see that Hindus and Christians are ahead of Muslims.

Table 4.2(i) a: Religious Groups and Choice of Marriage Partner

	SELF (%)	PARENTS (%)	MUTUAL (%)	OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS (%)
HINDU	12 (12.90)	57 (61.29)	24 (25.81)	0 (0.00)
MUSLIM	5 (5.75)	64 (73.56)	18 (20.69)	0 (0.00)
CHRISTIAN	2 (14.29)	9 (64.29)	3 (21.43)	0 (0.00)

The respondents are categorised according to their educational level to see whether there is any relationship between educational attainment and autonomy in decision making. It is a general assumption that with increase in educational attainment the agency in deciding one's personal matters would naturally come along. From the table below (See Table 4.2(i) b) it can be seen that combining the two categories of self and mutual (where women also have a space to place their opinion), women belonging to the first educational category comprises almost 75 percent of the respondents while 42 percent of the respondents belonging to UG category have an agency in deciding their partner. From the last category only around 12 percent have the autonomy to choose their marriage partner which clearly shows that education has an impact on the decision making authority of women on their individual choices.

Table 4.2(i) b: Different Educational Level and Choice of Marriage Partner

	SELF (%)	PARENTS (%)	MUTUAL (%)	OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS (%)
G	4 (33.33)	3 (25.00)	5 (41.67)	0 (0.00)
UG	10 (13.16)	34 (44.74)	32 (42.11)	0 (0.00)
S	5 (4.72)	93 (87.74)	8 (7.55)	0 (0.00)

(Chi-square statistic is 50.7099. The p-value is < 0.00001. The result is significant at p < .05.)

The trend of increasing education giving women autonomy to decision making could be seen among Muslim women with different educational attainment as well. Out of the total respondents in the first category all of them had a say in choosing their life partners and around half of the respondents belonging to the second category have had the agency in choosing their life partners while only 12 per cent had the chance to suggest their opinions in choosing the marriage partner.

Table 4.2(i) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Choice of Marriage Partner

	SELF (%)	PARENTS (%)	MUTUAL (%)	OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS (%)
MG	1 (50.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (50.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	2 (7.14)	14 (50.00)	12 (42.86)	0 (0.00)
MS	2 (3.51)	50 (87.72)	5 (8.77)	0 (0.00)

Thus it can be seen that in the case of women in general and Muslim women in particular education has a positive effect on their agency in decision making in matters of choosing their marriage partner. It can also be understood that religion does not have a greater implication on the decision making authority and better educational attainment can

change the extent of women's autonomy in these matters irrespective of the religious affiliation.

4.2 (ii) Choice of Clothing

Choosing what to wear is completely a personal choice but studies from history has shown that women's clothing was always a visible and most direct indicator of the culture and sense of modesty prevailed in that society at any given point in time and location. So it is very obvious that the type and pattern of dress worn by women was also determined by the patriarchal modality and the reform movements have always made a point to introduce and familiarise 'the modest' form of clothing of women which was often done without taking into consideration the aspirations of women. Certain ways of adorning clothes are associated with the sexuality of women and it has been understood that the patriarchal structures have defined what is modest to each society and deviating from it has been not well received. Thus the agency in choosing what to wear is definitely a positive sign of better public sphere participation of women since, as said above earlier, it is the most immediate and visible marker of an individual's presence in public sphere.

Respondents were asked about the type of dress worn (which is discussed above) as well as who decided the choice of clothing. As said above, autonomy in choosing what to wear is certainly a marker of breaking the traditional practices and by asking who decided what to wear the attempt was to see whether women are still abiding to the traditional notions of clothing being monitored by their male family members or whether they have a role in determining what to wear. The impact of education is also analysed in whether better educational attainments have necessarily translated into a better autonomy in choosing what to wear. The religious implications are also looked into.

Out of the total Hindu respondents around 86 percent of the respondents have the freedom in choosing what to wear and only around 14 percent are controlled by others. (See Table 4.2(ii) a) More than 90 percent of the Christian respondents are free to choose what to wear. But the percentage is lowest among the Muslims with around 30 percent of the respondents being controlled by their husband, parents or children. Thus it can be

understood that out of the total respondents Muslim women are having less agency in choosing what to wear compared to women belonging to other groups.

Table 4.2(ii) a: Religious Groups and Choice of Clothing

	SELF (%)	PARENTS (%)	HUSBAND (%)	CHILDREN (%)
HINDU	81 (86.17)	2 (2.13)	10 (10.64)	1 (1.06)
MUSLIM	61 (70.11)	2 (2.30)	22 (25.29)	2 (2.30)
CHRISTIAN	13 (92.86)	0 (0.00)	1 (7.14)	0 (0.00)

The decision making authority of women in choosing the dress to wear is also analysed by taking them into various educational category. (See Table 4.2(ii) b) It can be analysed that higher the educational level greater are the chances of women having agency in deciding what to wear. All the respondents belonging to the first educational level are free to choose what to wear whereas more than 20 percent of the respondents belonging to the last educational category does not have a voice in deciding their clothing. But an increase in agency can be seen while moving from down to above in the table which substantiate the fact that higher education is directly proportional to higher agency in choosing what to wear.

Table 4.2(ii) b: Different Education Level and Choice of Clothing

	SELF (%)	PARENTS (%)	HUSBAND (%)	CHILDREN (%)
G	12 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
UG	60 (78.95)	4 (5.26)	12 (15.79)	0 (0.00)
S	83 (77.57)	0 (0.00)	21 (19.63)	3 (2.80)

The similar trend can be seen among Muslim women belonging to different educational attainment. With the increasing levels of education it can be understood that Muslim women are having better levels of agency in choosing what to wear. All the respondents belonging to the first category have the freedom to choose what to wear while around 78 percent of the respondents belonging to the second category chose their dress on their

own while only around 65 percent of the Muslim respondents belonging to the last category had the agency in choosing what to wear. This again consolidates the fact that with increasing educational attainment women can necessarily have a positive change in the level of agency in matters of decision making irrespective of the religious constraints.

Table 4.2(ii) c: Muslim Women with Different Education Level and Choice of Clothing

	SELF (%)	PARENTS (%)	HUSBAND (%)	CHILDREN (%)
MG	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	22 (78.57)	2 (7.14)	4 (14.29)	0 (0.00)
MS	37 (64.91)	0 (0.00)	18 (31.58)	0 (3.51)

4.2 (iii) Travel with or without Male Family Member

Mobility of women is an indicator of women empowerment. Freedom of mobility is one of the many freedoms regarded essential for making a free choice. "The autonomy of a woman is severely impaired if she is not allowed free movement."[371] The fear that women are not safe outside the domestic space has been perpetuated by both men and women alike. Women themselves often find it not feasible to travel alone given the increasing rates of crimes against women outside the private domains. The more a society is patriarchal higher are the chances of restricting women to the private domains and not allowing them to go outside the domestic spaces alone even during the day time. Studies have also shown the impact of religion and region on women's mobility.[372]

Respondents were asked about whether they prefer to travel alone or with a male family member during night. It was quite interesting to understand the fact that respondents were very much sensitive to this question and those who said no were very sure and quick about the answer. The sense of safety as well as the notion that going alone during night, even in an emergency, might not be seen as a healthy move was seen from almost all the

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[371] Mishra, Nripendra Kishore& Tripathi, Tulika (2011), *op.cit.* p.61
[372] Jejeebhoy, Shireen J. & A.S, Zeba. (2001), *op.cit.*

respondents. Those respondents who travel alone during night were either students who were studying in institutions far from their home or women who are employed at far of places. They also said that they travel alone because they don't have any other choice making us to come to the conclusion that these choices comes out of 'no choices.'

Out of the total 195 respondents only 23 respondents travel alone during night whereas the rest of them always depend on a male member for travelling during night. (See Table 4.2(iii) a) The percentage is comparatively high for Christian respondents while comparatively less for the Muslim respondents. As said above most of these respondents who travel alone are students or those employed.

Table 4.2(iii) a: Religious Groups and Travel with or without Male Family Member

	ALONE (%)	MALE MEMBER (%)
HINDU	11 (11.70)	83 (88.30)
MUSLIM	8 (9.20)	79 (90.80)
CHRISTIAN	4 (28.57)	10 (71.43)

The response of whether one travel alone or with a male family member can be analysed by dividing the responses under different educational categories to see whether education has an impact on the attitude of women in travelling alone without a male family member. (See Table 4.2(iii) b) From the data it can be understood that there has been not much change in the attitude of women with increasing educational attainment even though a slight variation is noticeable. Still the majority of the respondents opt to travel with a male member during night and more than 90 percent of the respondents belonging to the last educational category travels with a male member. So it is a very paradoxical situation and there might be various other reasons irrespective of the religious or educational aspects that inhibit women from choosing to travel alone, especially during night. The increasing sexual as well as physical violence directed against women in the state could be one of the reason preventing women from travelling alone.

Table 4.2(iii) b: Different Education Level and Travel with or without Male Family Member

	ALONE (%)	MALE MEMBER (%)
G	3 (25.00)	9 (75.00)
UG	10 (13.16)	66 (86.84)
S	10 (9.35)	97 (90.65)

If we look at the situation of Muslim women we cannot find a pattern. (See Table 4.2 (iii) c) While none of the respondents who are in the first educational category does travel alone a few respondents in the second and third educational categories travel alone. Since a definite pattern cannot be derived from the data below it can be concluded that education doesn't have a larger implication on the option of choosing whether to travel alone or with a male companion.

Table 4.2(iii) c: Muslim Women with Different Education Level and Travel with or without Male Family Member

	ALONE (%)	MALE MEMBER (%)
MG	0 (0.00)	2 (100.00)
MUG	3 (10.71)	25 (89.29)
MS	5 (8.77)	52 (91.23)

4.2 (iv) Choosing Candidates in Election

Women's autonomy in choosing whom to vote is an important measure of their extent of autonomy in decision making. The percentage of polling for women (78%) was higher than men (75%) in Kerala during the 2016 Legislative Assembly Elections.[373] It shows that women are turning in larger numbers for the polling and the percentage of vote casted by women have a major role in choosing the government. So it is equally important to choose the right candidate as it directly influence the development prospects

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[373] https://scroll.in/article/812963/in-kerala-more-are-contesting-elections-but-fewer-are-winning

of the nation. The autonomy in choosing the candidate also gives an indication of the political consciousness and awareness of the political developments each individual have. So it is crucial to understand whether women choose these candidates out of their personal interests or with the help of others including the male members of the family.

The respondents were asked how they chose the candidates for voting. Even though the rate of casting votes was extremely high for all the religious groups it was equally important to critically analyse their autonomy in deciding whom to vote. To assess the level of autonomy in voting as well as to understand the extent of decision made by women, respondents were asked whether casting vote was their personal choice or anyone advised them to do so.

Out of the total Muslim respondents who had casted voted nearly 75 percent voted out of their personal choice while the rate is higher for Hindus with more than 95 percent and Christians showing a hundred percent agency. (See Table 4.2(iv) a) Maximum number of respondents who took help from the other members came from the Muslims with almost one-fourth of the respondents taking support from mainly from the male members of the family. So a religious wise classification on the pattern of choosing whom to vote gives us an impression that Muslim women are comparatively lacking agency in choosing the right candidate during elections. But it is also interesting to understand from the response that only husbands and fathers are involved in decision on women's choice of voting and unlike the North Indian situation were religious leaders, political party workers and community leaders[374] have a say in the women's choice of candidate.[375]

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[374] Hasan, Z& Menon, R (2004), *Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim women in India,* OUP, New Delhi, p.209
[375] This is not to neglect the fact that the men who get involved in the women's choices might be in turn influenced by the religious, political and community leaders and they make choices out of their interests in these leaders.

Table 4.2(iv) a: Religious Groups and Choosing Candidates in Election

	SELF (%)	MALE MEMBER (%)	MUTUAL (%)	OTHERS (%)
HINDU	86 (95.56)	3 (3.33)	0 (0.00)	1 (1.11)
MUSLIM	62 (74.70)	21 (25.30)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
CHRISTIAN	14 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)

The educational wise classification of women across different religions is done to see whether education has a role in determining the agency of women in choosing who to vote for in elections. From the table below (See Table 4.2(iv) b) we can see that women belonging to the first educational category have completely chose on their own the candidates for the elections and with decreasing educational qualification the number of women choosing the candidates on their own have decreased. Out of the total 25 respondents who have sought help from others 22 of them falls under the third educational category giving us a clear indication of the relationship between the educational attainment as well as the agency in choosing whom to vote.

Table 4.2(iv) b: Different Educational Level and Choosing Candidates in Election

	SELF (%)	MALE MEMBER (%)	MUTUAL (%)	OTHERS (%)
G	12 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
UG	68 (95.77)	3 (4.23)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
S	82 (78.85)	21 (20.19)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.96)

The pattern of relationship between the educational attainments of Muslim women and their agency in choosing the candidate during the election could be analysed from the table below. (See Table 4.2 (iv) c) From the table it is evident that with higher educational attainment the extent of agency in choosing the candidate is higher among women. Out of the total 21 respondents who took help from others in choosing the candidates, 20 of them belong to the last educational category making it obvious that higher the educational level higher is the agency in decision making.

Table 4.2(iv) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Choosing Candidates in Election

	SELF (%)	MALE MEMBER (%)	MUTUAL (%)	OTHERS (%)
MG	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	25 (96.15)	1 (3.85)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
MS	35 (63.64)	20 (36.36)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)

4.3 Opinions on Socio-Political Issues

The third category which helps us to understand the relationship between women and the public sphere is their opinion on the various socio-political issues. Since these issues are discussed and debated in the public sphere on a day to day basis the opinion of women on these issues, irrespective of the fact that they are not directly involved in it, gives us an impression of how aware and involved they are in these issues which certainly have a direct bearing on their lives. A constant updating with the information on these issues gives a better understanding of the public sphere and this in turn helps in a having a better access to public sphere. It is also interesting to recall the fact that public sphere has been conceived initially as a domain of public deliberations and opinions. To have an opinion on various socio-political issues is thus a major measurement of public sphere participation.

Respondents were thus asked questions to know their opinion on some of the issues related to women and certain other socio-political matters. The purpose of these questions was to know the extent of their understanding on various relevant issues as well as their opinion on these issues. Since some of these issues have a direct bearing on their lives it was interesting to know their take on these issues and how informed are women on these matters. The questions like the Uniform Civil Code, political participation of women, about the reservation for women in the Local Self Government bodies and their significance in women empowerment, feminism and its relevance and also the new forms

of protest against the socio-political injustices and inequalities like 'The Kiss of Love' which has been popular in Kerala during the recent times were asked.

4.3 (i) Involvement in Political activities as a Means to Get Rights

The direct participation of women in the political participation has been regarded as one of the best indicator of women's access to public sphere. As we have discussed in the earlier chapter, the participation of women in the political process in India has been extremely low. In spite of the reservation policies women still lag behind men in their representation in the policy making bodies. The political participation of women is often confined to their casting vote in the elections. So it is important to understand the attitude of women in the direct political participation process. Out of the total 195 respondents two of the Hindu respondents have contested in the elections for the Panchayaths and one of the President is of the Panchayath.

Respondents were asked their opinion on women entering politics and whether that would be a means to achieve their basic rights. The purpose of the question was to understand whether the respondents feel that women representation in politics is less and a better involvement of women in mainstream politics might help them in empowering the women as a whole.

While majority of the Hindu respondents responded that, women should be active in politics and it would act as a means to achieve their rights, majority of the Muslim respondents have said that women need not have to be active in politics. Majority of the Christian respondents are of the opinion that women should be active in politics to achieve their rights. The data thus clearly explains that Muslim women do not support the active political participation of women.

Table 4.3 (i) a: Religious Groups and Politics as Means to Get Rights

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
HINDU	57 (60.64)	31 (32.98)	6 (6.38)
MUSLIM	32 (36.78)	51 (58.62)	4 (4.60)
CHRISTIAN	8 (57.14)	6 (42.86)	0 (0.00)

The data of respondents belonging to different educational category is done to have an understanding of whether higher educational attainments are having an impact on their opinion on women's political participation. From the table below (See Table 4.3 (i) b) we can see that there is no consistent pattern in the educational level and opinion on women's political participation. But considering the two upper educational categories we can see that the percentage of the respondents belonging to these categories has an opinion that involvement of women in political activities would be a means to achieve rights compared to the women belonging to the lowest category who doesn't support the participation of women in the political domain. This also explains the fact that in spite of having a number of women candidates during the various elections, the number of women winning the elections is very few.[376] The fact that most of the women do not support women entering politics gives an indication that women prefer male candidates over female candidates resulting in the decreasing number of women in the various elected bodies in spite of having a fair representation in contesting elections.

Table 4.3 (i) b: Different Educational Level and Politics as Means to Get Rights

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
G	7 (58.33)	5 (41.67)	0 (0.00)
UG	46 (60.53)	29 (38.16)	1 (1.32)
S	44 (41.12)	54 (50.47)	9 (8.41)

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[376] https://scroll.in/article/812963/in-kerala-more-are-contesting-elections-but-fewer-are-winning

Analysing the response of Muslim respondents belonging to various educational categories we can see that there is no specific pattern in the opinion of women on the involvement of women in politics as a means to achieve their rights. (See Table 4.3 (i) c) While there is equal percentage of positive and negative response from women belonging to the first two categories on whether women should enter politics or not, majority of the respondents belonging to the last category believe that women should not enter politics. Here also a significant impact of education is not visible on the attitudes of women very much like the general trend.

Table 4.3(i) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Politics as Means to Get Rights

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
MG	1 (50.00)	1 (50.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	15 (53.57)	13 (46.43)	0 (0.00)
MS	16 (28.07)	37 (64.91)	4 (7.02)

Along with saying yes or no most of the respondents have also said that ultimately it is the personal choice and a forceful participation must not benefit them or other women. It is also interesting to note that some of the Muslim respondents who did not support women's political participation said that the religious teachers have told that it is not good for women to participate in politics as the primary concern of women should be to involve in the household matters and look after their family.

4.3 (ii) Public Presence/ Visibility and Atrocities against Women

Respondents were asked about the atrocities on women and whether the comparatively higher visibility as well as mobility of women in the present day than the earlier days contributes to the increasing rates of atrocities against them. Much like dowry, the purpose was to see how women themselves are often seen as affirming to the patriarchal structures and often pulls back other women from liberating. Since religion also has a serious role in regulating the mobility of women, the attempt was to see whether there is

any religious specificities attached to it and what the impact education has on the thought process of women in general.

A total of 29 respondents out of the total 87 Muslim respondents has the opinion that women's higher presence is a reason for the increasing number of atrocities against them. (See Table 4.3 (ii) a) More than 75% of the Hindu and Christian respondents feel that there is no relation between the visibility of women in the public spaces and atrocities against them. It also needs attention that out of the 29 Muslim respondents 11 respondents have further explained that the 'improper and vulgar' dressing styles along with the 'excessive use' of mobile is the primary reason that puts women's lives in 'danger'. They feel that even if women want to go outside, being modestly dressed might change the attitudes of men towards them.

Table 4.3(ii) a: Religious Groups and Public Presence/ Visibility and Atrocities against Women

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
HINDU	13 (13.83)	78 (82.98)	3 (3.19)
MUSLIM	29 (33.33)	49 (56.32)	9 (10.34)
CHRISTIAN	3 (21.43)	11 (78.57)	0 (0.00)

If we take into consideration the response of the respondents by dividing them into various educational categories, we can see that all women belonging to the highest educational category are of the opinion that it is not the presence of women in the public spaces the reason for atrocities against them. (See Table 4.3 (ii) b) The trend decreases with decreasing educational level. So education plays a role in shaping the attitudes of women on issues related to their mobility as well as visibility in the public spaces.

Table 4.3(ii) b: Different Educational Level and Public Presence/ Visibility and Atrocities against Women

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
G	0 (0.00)	12 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
UG	19 (25.00)	54 (71.05)	3 (3.95)
S	26 (24.30)	72 (67.29)	9 (8.41)

A similar pattern can be seen among Muslim women belonging to various educational levels. While all the respondents in the first category believes that women's presence is no way a reason to justify the increasing atrocities against them the percentage decreases with decreasing educational attainment which justifies the fact that education has an impact on the way women perceive the social realities especially those are having an impact on their lives.

Table 4.3(ii) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Public Presence/ Visibility and Atrocities against Women

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
MG	0 (0.00)	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	9 (32.14)	17 (60.71)	2 (7.14)
MS	20 (35.09)	30 (52.63)	7 (12.28)

While replying women are not safe generally, 34 Hindu respondents pointed out to the increasing number of rape instances in the state[377] and how women are not safe within the domestic spaces while 3 respondents pointed out to the restrictions of travelling alone during night. 14 Muslim respondents also pointed out to the alarming increase in the rape instances in Kerala and found it to be a major issue faced by women.

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[377] One of the most horrible instances of rape and brutal murder in Kerala happened in 2016 where a law student was raped and killed in her house which had a huge impact on the psyche of Kerala people.

4.3 (iii) Dowry

The son-preference in India has been primarily seen as a result of the increasing dowry trends as well as increasing dowry related crimes in India. It is also alarming that the both dowry trends and dowry related crimes are at an increasing rate in Kerala. The increasing dowry related crimes have often put the Kerala Model of development at stake. Since dowry related crimes are not expected out of a developed society a lot of earlier studies discarded such areas. But lately a number of studies have come up which have challenged the empowerment credentials of Kerala in general and Kerala women in particular. Dowry is a way of subjugation of women and it is a fact that it is not men who are always responsible for the dowry related crimes, but women as well.[378] So an empowered society is necessarily expected to be against such a system of oppression without any compromise. It is also expected that higher the educational achievements less would be the support to dowry. Since women are at the receiving end of dowry related crimes it is again assumed that women are staunchly against such a traditional practice which often challenges the dignity of women.

Respondents were asked their opinion on dowry. Majority of the Christian respondents supported while Muslims least supported the practice. (See Table 4.3 (iii) a) Nearly twenty five percent of the Hindu respondents supported dowry. It was an interesting as well as disturbing fact that almost 42 per cent of the Hindu respondents belonging to the age 18-30 supported dowry claiming that it often gives a sense of security to women at their husband's home. The respondents belonging to this age group are all secondary educated or above. Muslim women, belonging to the same age category, have majorly opposed the dowry system. It is also interesting to see that the aged women have a rather strong opposition to the dowry system (with the exception of Christians) which might be attributed to their social and cultural environment of upbringing.

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[378] Palriwala, Rajni (2006), "Reaffirming the anti-dowry struggle" in Srimati Basu (ed)*Dowry and Inheritance: Issues in Contemporary Feminism,* Zed Books, London, p.34

Table 4.3(iii) a: Religious Groups and Dowry

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
HINDU	23 (24.47)	68 (72.34)	3 (3.19)
MUSLIM	12 (13.79)	74 (85.06)	1 (1.15)
CHRISTIAN	9 (64.29)	5 (35.71)	0 (0.00)

It is surprising and to an extent shocking to see that there is a negative co-relation between the attitude towards dowry and the educational attainment of the respondents. (See Table 4.3 (iii) b) Contrary to the belief that higher educational achievements would decrease the support given to dowry, women respondents belonging to higher educational levels are in support of the dowry system whereas the percentage of women belonging to the lower level of the educational category have shown a comparatively lesser affinity towards the dowry system.

Table 4.3 (iii) b: Different Educational Level and Dowry

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
G	3 (25.00)	9 (75.00)	0 (0.00)
UG	21 (27.63)	55 (72.37)	0 (0.00)
S	20 (18.69)	83 (77.57)	4 (3.74)

But among the Muslim women there is a positive co-relation between the educational levels and their attitude towards dowry. While all the respondents of the first category didn't support the dowry system, around twenty percent belonging to the second category have supported the dowry and the percentage increases moving down the table to the last category which has a percentage of around fifteen.

Table 4.3 (iii) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Dowry

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
MG	0 (0.00)	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	3 (10.71)	25 (89.29)	0 (0.00)
MS	9 (15.79)	47 (82.46)	1 (1.75)

It is obvious from the above data that education generally does not have the expected impact on shaping the attitude of women towards dowry and in spite of being subjected to violence due to issues pertaining to dowry educated women belonging to the younger age groups believe that dowry is a security for women and it need not have to be removed from the society.

4.3 (iv) Reservation

Reservation for women in the elected legislative bodies has been one of the important affirmative action done by various governments during the last few decades. Since the representation of women has been less in all the policy making bodies there has been various suggestions on improving the presence of women in these bodies. In 2009 the government came up with 50% reservation proposal for women in local bodies and some of the states including Kerala have adopted that. Some have seen this as a remarkable move while certain others feel that this is not going to benefit women since a lot of women act as rubber stamps with their husband or other men dealing with the issues and taking the decisions.

Since the field study was done during the Panchayat election period in Kerala in 2015, it was assumed that women are aware of the reservation and thus respondents were asked whether they were aware of the 50% reservation women has in the Local Self Government bodies. Even though the benefits of the reservation are not much available it was interesting to see how the respondents reacted to questions on it. Respondents were asked two question regarding reservation. The first question is whether they are aware of

the reservation and the second one is that, if they are aware, what their opinion on whether reservation has helped in empowering women or not.

Out of the total respondents, percentage of respondents who have heard about 50% reservation is high among the Christian respondents with around 85% of them knowing about it. (See Table 4.3(iv) a) The least is among the Muslim respondents with around 36% having heard about it. Hindu respondents are placed in between with around 55% respondents having heard about it. The data gives a clear indication that Muslim women are far behind other religious categories in knowing about the 50% reservation women have in the local governing bodies.

Table 4.3(iv) a: Religious Groups and heard 50 % Reservation

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	52 (55.32)	42 (44.68)
MUSLIM	32 (36.78)	55 (63.22)
CHRISTIAN	12 (85.71)	2 (14.29)

The educational attainment and its relation to women being aware about the reservation is seen in the table below. (See Table 4.3 (iv) b) It is obvious from the table below that with the increasing educational level women are aware of the 50% reservation women have. While only one out of the total twelve respondents in the first educational category is unaware of the reservation sixty nine respondents of the last educational category are unaware of the reservation policies. Thus education shows a positive relation to the awareness of women on reservation.

Table 4.3(iv) b: Different Educational Level and 50 % Reservation

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	11 (91.67)	1 (8.33)
UG	47 (61.84)	29 (38.16)
S	38 (35.51)	69 (64.49)

The influence of education on the awareness level of Muslim respondents is also very much visible from the table given below.(See Table 4.3 (iv) c) The maximum number of respondents who are unaware of the reservation falls in the last category among Muslims giving a clear idea of the relation between education and awareness.

Table 4.3(iv) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and 50 % Reservation

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	14 (50.00)	14 (50.00)
MS	16 (28.07)	41 (71.93)

Respondents who said they are aware of the reservation were asked whether the 50% reservation helps in the empowerment of women. (See Table 4.3 (iv) d) While out of the Hindu respondents who said they are aware of the reservation around 71% are of the opinion that reservation helps in the empowerment of women. 50% of Muslim and Christian respondents who have heard about reservation said that reservation has a positive effect on the empowerment prospects of women. It is also important that some of the respondents who knew about reservation do not have an opinion on whether it has an impact on the empowerment of women.

Table 4.3(iv) d: Religious Groups and whether 50 % Reservation Helps in the Empowerment of Women

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
HINDU	37 (71.15)	10 (19.23)	5 (9.62)
MUSLIM	16 (50.00)	7 (21.88)	9 (28.13)
CHRISTIAN	6 (50.00)	4 (33.33)	2 (16.67)

The educational attainment level and women's opinion on the impact of reservation on women and their empowerment can be seen from the table below. (See Table 4.3(iv) e) It

is expected that a higher educational level would help the respondents to give a more logical and rational response compared to those from the lower educational levels. It is seen that with higher educational attainment women are of the opinion that reservation has a positive impact on the empowerment of women. It is also interesting that with decreasing educational level the percentage of respondents with no opinion also increase.

Table 4.3(iv) e: Different Educational Level and whether 50 % Reservation Helps in the Empowerment of Women

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
G	10 (83.33)	1 (8.33)	1 (8.33)
UG	28 (60.87)	10 (21.74)	8 (17.39)
S	21 (55.26)	10 (26.32)	7 (18.42)

A similar pattern is seen among the Muslim respondents with different educational level. With increasing educational level the respondents find a positive relationship between reservation and women's empowerment.

Table 4.3(iv) f: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and whether 50 % Reservation Helps in the Empowerment of Women

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
MG	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	7 (50.00)	2 (14.29)	5 (35.71)
MS	7 (43.75)	5 (31.25)	4 (25.00)

It has been observed that the number of respondents who are not aware of the reservation is higher compared to those respondents who are aware of it. The percentage of Muslim respondents who are aware of the reservation is comparatively less in relation to other religious categories. While education has a positive effect on being aware of the reservation, it simultaneously has a similar impact on women's opinion on whether reservation has a positive effect on their

empowerment. The similar trend is seen among Muslim women with different educational attainment.

4.3 (v) Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

The Uniform Civil Code and discussions and debates surrounding it has been on the popular domain in the recent times. With the triple talaq debates being associated with the Uniform Civil Code it was interesting to see the response of women on that. The respondents were asked about whether they have heard about the Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

Out of the total 195 respondents only 31 have heard about UCC. (See Table 4.3 (v) a) Out of the total respondents Christians have the maximum percentage of respondents who have heard about UCC while the percentage is lowest among the Muslims with around less than 7 percent aware of it. Around 20 percent of the Hindu respondents are aware of it.

Table 4.3(v) a: Religious Groups and UCC

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	19 (20.21)	75 (79.79)
MUSLIM	6 (6.90)	81 (93.10)
CHRISTIAN	6 (42.86)	8 (57.14)

It is expected that with increasing educational level women are expected to have a greater awareness about UCC. From the table below it is evident that the educational attainment has a positive impact on the awareness level of women about UCC. (See Table 4.3 (v) b) Around 83 percent of the respondents belonging to the first educational level are aware of the UCC while only less than two percent are aware of the UCC at the last educational category. This gives a clear impression of the level of education and its impact on the awareness level.

Table 4.3(v) b: Different Educational Level and UCC

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	10 (83.33)	2 (16.67)
UG	19 (25.00)	57 (75.00)
S	2 (1.87)	105 (98.13)

Looking at the educational level of Muslim women and their awareness about UCC we can see a positive trend with women in higher educational level having more awareness compared to the women in the lower educational categories.

Table 4.3 (v) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and UCC

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	3 (10.71)	25 (89.29)
MS	1 (1.75)	56 (98.25)

Thus we have understood that education has a positive effect on women's awareness level about Uniform Civil Code and Muslim women in general are least aware of it. But with higher educational attainment their awareness also increases.

4.3 (vi) Feminism

Feminism has been an ideology which got popular in the Western society. It has been popular in the academic discussions in India and has got popularity in the popular culture of India as well. Feminism has been challenging patriarchy and its associated manifestations making it very difficult to exist and flourish in the Indian situation. Since feminism as an ideology has transcended the academic domains and become popular primarily through the movies and literature, it has been a much discussed topic in the Kerala society lately. Since the term is associated primarily with women and it has

relevance in the debates in public sphere it was interesting to know the response of the respondents to the question on feminism.

Respondents were asked two questions related to feminism. The first one is whether they have heard about feminism and the second one is if they have heard about it whether it has any relevance in the present society. Out of the total 195 respondents only 60 of them have heard about feminism. (See Table 4.3 (iv) a) Around 40 percent of the Hindus have heard about feminism while 50 percent of the Christians have heard about it. But among the Muslim respondents approximately only 18 percent have heard about it. This shows that Muslims are the least informed religious category among the three.

Table 4.3 (vi) a: Religious Groups and Feminism

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	37 (39.36)	57 (60.64)
MUSLIM	16 (18.39)	71 (81.61)
CHRISTIAN	7 (50.00)	7 (50.00)

The relationship between education and awareness about feminism has been analysed. (See Table 4.3 (vi) b) It is evident from the table that with increasing educational level the number of respondents who are aware of feminism has increased. The change could be understood by comparing the percentage of respondents belonging to the first category and the percentage of respondents belonging to the last category. While 91.67 percent are aware of feminism in the first category only 9.35 percent are aware in the last category.

Table 4.3(vi) b: Different Educational Level and Feminism

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	11 (91.67)	1 (8.33)
UG	39 (51.32)	37 (48.68)
S	10 (9.35)	97 (90.65)

The relationship between education and awareness about feminism has been analysed for Muslim women as well. (See Table 4.3(vi) c) It is evident from the table, similar to the above case that with increasing educational level the number of respondents who are aware of feminism has increased. The change could be understood by comparing the percentage of respondents belonging to the first category and the percentage of respondents belonging to the last category. While 100 percent are aware of feminism in the first category only 7.02 percent are aware in the last category.

Table 4.3(vi) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Feminism

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	10 (35.71)	18 (64.29)
MS	4 (7.02)	53 (92.98)

Respondents who were aware of feminism were asked whether feminism has any relevance in the present social situation. Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that feminism does not have any relevance in the present social situation. It is also significant that a lot of respondents do not have an opinion on the relevance of feminism. Thus it is understood that irrespective of the religious specification feminism has not been approved by majority of the women.

Table 4.3(vi) d: Religious Groups and Relevance of Feminism

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
HINDU	15 (40.54)	17 (45.95)	5 (13.51)
MUSLIM	2 (12.50)	7 (43.75)	7 (43.75)
CHRISTIAN	2 (28.57)	3 (42.86)	2 (28.57)

The relationship between education and opinion on relevance of feminism has been analysed. (See Table 4.3 (vi) e) There has been no pattern seen in the educational level and the opinion on whether feminism has relevance. While 40 percent of the respondents

in last category have said feminism as relevance only 26.32 percent in the second category have said the same. So we cannot draw any conclusion from the relationship between education and opinion on relevance of feminism from the table below.

Table 4.3(vi) e: Different Educational Level and Relevance of Feminism

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
G	5 (41.67)	4 (33.33)	3 (25.00)
UG	10 (26.32)	19 (50.00)	9 (23.68)
S	4 (40.00)	4 (40.00)	2 (20.00)

The relationship between education and opinion on relevance of feminism has been analysed for Muslim women as well. (See Table 4.3 (vi) f) It is evident from the table, similar to the above case that, there has been no pattern seen in the educational level and the opinion on whether feminism has relevance. While only two out of the sixteen Muslim respondents have responded that feminism has relevance most of the respondents do not find any relevance for feminism or do not have any opinion on that. This trend is similar to the trend shown by Muslims in general against other religious categories on the opinion on whether feminism has relevance or not.

Table 4.3(vi) f: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Relevance of Feminism

	YES (%)	NO (%)	NO OPINION (%)
MG	1 (50.00)	1 (50.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	1 (10.00)	4 (40.00)	5 (50.00)
MS	0 (0.00)	2 (50.00)	2 (50.00)

Thus it can be concluded that women in general are not much aware of feminism and those who are aware also do not find much relevance to feminism in the present social situation. Muslim women in general are the least aware respondents among all the

religious categories and they hardly find any relevance for feminism in the present social situation.

4.4 Women and Aspects of Public Sphere Participation

"Women's participation in elections and political activities is an important means by which women gain status and autonomy."[379] But their presence in politics based on the political party system and political leadership is constrained. Various restrictions have been coming associated with women in having an active political life which includes the political obstacles which is primarily due to the prevalence of a "masculine model" of political life and governmental bodies, socio-economic obstacles primarily due to poverty and less education and ideological and psychological hindrance coming out of their positioning in the society and family associated with various roles they have to play.[380] But despite these issues, there are ways in which women can express their political stand without indulging too much into it.

So the final indicators used to analyse women and their access to public sphere is the direct participation of women in various aspects of public sphere. This section primarily deals with membership of women in various organizations like political parties, Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Resident Welfare Organizations (RWA) and professional organizations. Since membership in any organization is often seen as a major marker of women having a greater presence in the public domain these questions were asked. Along with that questions were asked on participation in political rallies/gatherings which again is an important marker of women's direct participation in the public domain. Further questions were asked on casting vote in the elections. The respondents' online activism and reading newspaper were also asked to get a closer image of the political consciousness of each respondent.

4.4 (i) Membership of Political Party

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[379] Hasan, Z& Menon, R (2004), *Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim women in India,* OUP, New Delhi, p.206
[380] Thanikodi, A& Sugirtha, M (2007) Status of women in Politics, *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 68(3), 589-606

The first question was regarding their basic and direct association with the politics, to know whether respondents are members of any political party or do not. The question was not received well with some of the respondents who asked whether it is necessary to answer the question and are they going to be in any trouble for answering that. Some of the respondents mentioned the name of the party they are member of while some of the respondents said that they can't disclose the party's name.

Out of the total 94 Hindu respondents 27.66 per cent (26 numbers) responded that they have a membership in a political party with 4 respondents naming the party. (See Table 4.4 (i) a) While 6 respondents said they have an allegiance to certain political party, majority of the respondents do not have any political party association. Whereas only 7 (8.05%) Muslim respondents had a membership in any party and only 9 (10.34%) had allegiance to any political party. Whereas only one Christian respondent was a member of the political party and 5 had a political allegiance and 8 of them were dissociated with any political party.

Table 4.4(i) a: Religious Groups and Membership of Political Party

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	26 (27.66)	68 (72.34)
MUSLIM	7 (8.05)	80 (91.95)
CHRISTIAN	1 (7.14)	13 (92.86)

An analysis has been done by taking into consideration the educational attainment of women belonging to different religious categories and their membership in political parties. (See Table 4.4 (i) b) it is clear from the data that with increasing educational attainment the percentage of women having membership in political party is high compared to the other educational categories.

Table 4.4(i) b: Different Educational Level and Membership of Political Party

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	4 (33.33)	8 (66.67)
UG	14 (18.42)	62 (81.58)
S	16 (14.95)	91 (85.05)

Muslim women have been classified according to the level of their achievements in education and an analysis was done to see whether there is a relation between the educational attainment and membership in political party. (See Table 4.4 (i) c) It is obvious from the table that with increasing level of education the percentage of women getting political membership increase while a low level of educational attainment means a low number of membership in the political party.

Table4.4(i) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Membership of Political Party

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	1 (50.00)	1 (50.00)
MUG	3 (10.71)	25 (89.29)
MS	3 (5.26)	54 (94.74)

The interesting observation made from the response was that out of the total 34 respondents from all categories who said they had a party membership most of them said that they were asked to take the membership either by their father, brother or husband[381] who are active members of different political parties. Only four members (3 from Hindus and one from Muslims) had a membership out of their interests. If the measurement of women's empowerment in terms of their association with the political party would be counted on the basis of their official membership with the respective party, then the

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[381] It is also interesting to see respondents' whose family members belonged to a particular political party are all members of the same party as their family members are and often there are restrictions from them on associating with other parties

above mentioned number of respondents would be regarded as 'politically empowered'. But since their opinions or choices are not counted in having a membership, the empowerment argument becomes problematic.

4.5 (ii) Membership of Civil Society Organization (CSO)

The respondents were asked about their membership in various civil society organizations. (See Table 4.4 (ii) a) Out of the total 195 respondents only fifteen are having membership in any Civil Society Organizations. While Christians have the maximum number of respondents having membership in CSO, Muslims have the least with 5.75 percent of respondents with membership. Hindus have 8.51 percent membership in any CSO.

Table 4.4(ii) a: Religious Groups and Membership of CSO

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	8 (8.51)	86 (91.49)
MUSLIM	5 (5.75)	82 (94.25)
CHRISTIAN	2 (14.29)	12 (85.71)

The level of education and membership in CSO has been analysed for the respondents belonging to all the religious groups. (See Table 4.4 (ii) b) It is understood that level of education has a slight positive effect on the membership of women in CSOs. By analysing the first and last categories it is obvious that a higher educational level has a better level of membership in CSOs.

Table 4.4(ii) b: Different Educational Level and Membership of CSO

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	3 (25.00)	9 (75.00)
UG	7 (9.21)	69 (90.79)
S	5 (4.67)	102 (95.33)

Muslim women with different educational level and their membership in CSOs have been analysed. (See Table 4.4 (ii) c) It has shown a similar trend much like the above analysis where a higher educational attainment is directly proportional to the membership in CSOs. But what has to be noted here is that only a very few Muslim respondents are having membership in any CSOs.

Table 4.4(ii)c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Membership of CSO

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	1 (50.00)	1 (50.00)
MUG	2 (7.14)	26 (92.86)
MS	2 (3.51)	55 (96.49)

Thus we can see that generally only few women are having membership in CSOs. Even though education has an implication on women having membership in CSOs, the impact is very gradual and insignificant. Among the religious groups Muslim women are having the least number of memberships in any CSOs and education is having a slight significance on the membership number.

4.4 (iii) Membership of Resident Welfare Association (RWA)

The respondents were asked about their membership in the Resident Welfare Associations (RWA). Out of the total 195 respondents only twenty two are having membership in any RWAs. While Christians have the maximum number of respondents having membership in RWA, Muslims have the least with 8.05 percent of respondents with membership. Hindus have 8.05 percent membership in RWA.

Table 4.4(iii) a: Religious Groups and Membership of RWA

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	11 (11.70)	83 (88.30)
MUSLIM	7 (8.05)	80 (91.95)
CHRISTIAN	4 (28.57)	10 (71.43)

The level of education and membership in RWA has been analysed for the respondents belonging to all the religious groups. (See Table 4.4 (iii) b) It is understood that level of education has a positive effect on the membership of women in RWAs. By analysing the first and last categories it is obvious that a higher educational level has a better level of membership in RWAs.

Table 4.4 (iii) b: Different Educational Level and Membership of RWA

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	4 (33.33)	8 (66.67)
UG	13 (17.11)	63 (82.89)
S	5 (4.67)	102 (95.33)

Muslim women with different educational level and their membership in RWAs have been analysed. (See Table 4.4 (iii) c) It has shown a similar trend much like the above analysis where a higher educational attainment is directly proportional to the membership in RWAs. But what has to be noted here is that only a very few Muslim respondents are having membership in any RWAs.

Table 4.4(iii) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Membership of RWA

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	1 (50.00)	1 (50.00)
MUG	4 (14.29)	24 (85.71)
MS	2 (3.51)	55 (96.49)

Thus we can see that generally only few women are having membership in RWAs. Even though education has an implication on women having membership in RWAs, the impact is very gradual and insignificant. Among the religious groups Muslim women are having the least number of memberships in any RWAs and education is having a slight significance on the membership number.

4.4 (iv) Membership of Professional Organization

The respondents were asked about their membership in any professional organizations. Out of the total 195 respondents only twenty are having membership in any professional organizations. While Christians have the maximum number of respondents having membership in professional organizations, Muslims have the least with 5.75 percent of respondents with membership. Hindus have 10.64 percent membership in any professional organization.

Table 4.4 (iv) a: Religious Groups and Membership of Professional Organization

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	10 (10.64)	84 (89.36)
MUSLIM	5 (5.75)	82 (94.25)
CHRISTIAN	5 (35.71)	9 (64.29)

The level of education and membership in professional organizations has been analysed for the respondents belonging to all the religious groups. (See Table 4.4 (iv) b) It is

understood that level of education has a high positive effect on the membership of women in professional organizations. By analysing the first and last categories it is obvious that a higher educational level has a better level of membership in professional organizations.

Table 4.4 (iv) b: Different Educational Level and Membership of Professional Organization

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	7 (58.33)	5 (41.67)
UG	12 (15.79)	64 (84.21)
S	1 (0.93)	106 (99.07)

Muslim women with different educational level and their membership in professional organizations have been analysed. (See Table 4.4 (iv) c) It has shown a similar trend much like the above analysis where a higher educational attainment is directly proportional to the membership in CSOs. But what has to be noted here is that only a very few Muslim respondents are having membership in any professional organizations.

Table 4.4(iv) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Membership of Professional Organization

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	1 (50.00)	1 (50.00)
MUG	4 (14.29)	24 (85.71)
MS	0 (0.00)	57 (100.00)

Thus we can see that generally only few women are having membership in professional organizations. Even though education has an implication on women having membership in professional organizations, the impact is very gradual and insignificant. Among the religious groups Muslim women are having the least number of memberships in any

professional organizations and education is having a slight significance on the membership number.

4.4 (v) Participation in Public Rallies

Participation in public rallies and gatherings are a direct indicator of an individual's participation in public sphere. Respondents were asked whether they participated in public rallies and gatherings. Out of the total 195 respondents only fifteen have participated in any public rally. The percentage is highest among the Hindus (11.70%) followed by Christians (7.14%) and Muslims (3.45) being the least participated group.

Table 4.4 (v) a: Religious Groups and Participation in Public Rallies

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	11 (11.70)	83 (88.30)
MUSLIM	3 (3.45)	84 (96.55)
CHRISTIAN	1 (7.14)	13 (92.86)

The educational attainment and its relation to women's participation in the public rallies have been analysed. (See Table 4.4 (v) b) It is understood that higher educational attainments have resulted in women participating in more in public rallies compared to the less educated respondents.

Table 4.4 (v) b: Different Educational Level and Participation in Public Rallies

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	2 (16.67)	10 (83.33)
UG	5 (6.58)	71 (93.42)
S	8 (7.48)	99 (92.52)

Muslim women belonging to various educational groups and their participation in public rallies have been analysed. (See Table 4.4 (v) c) From the table it is clear that there is no positive relationship between the educational attainments and participation of Muslim

women in public rallies. Even though only three respondents out of the total 87 respondents have participated in rallies two of them belong to the lowest educational category.

Table 4.4 (v) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Participation in Public Rallies

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	0 (0.00)	2 (100.00)
MUG	1 (3.57)	27 (96.43)
MS	2 (3.51)	55 (96.49)

It has been understood from the above tables that women in general have not participated much in the public rallies which itself shows that women are having less public sphere participation in terms of their attending the public rallies. The general assumption is that with increasing educational level the participation in the public rallies must increase and the data from the study has shown a similar trend among women in general but the reverse case is seen among Muslim women with different educational attainment.

4.4 (vi) Casting Vote in Election

Even though women are represented low in political process in India, they are often seen in high numbers as voters. Hasan has studied about the high levels of polling trends seen among women throughout India and has made this remark that "If voting in elections is an indication of participation, then the participation level of our respondents is high by world standards."[382] Since the least level of political participation is the suffrage, respondents were asked whether they casted their votes in the elections. In spite of their

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[382] Hasan, Z& Menon, R (2004), *Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim women in India,* OUP, New Delhi, p.207

hesitation to react to the question on political membership respondents were comfortable with this question and had responded comfortably.[383]

Out of the 94 Hindu respondents 90 casts their votes almost regularly and only 4 of them have not voted so far. (See Table 4.4 (vi) a) Out of the 4, three respondents are 18 years old and are waiting for their first opportunity to cast vote. They all said they are very excited about their first encounter as a direct participant of the democratic process.

Out of the 87 Muslim respondents 83 have almost regularly cast their votes while 4 have kept not been part of the process.[384] It is also remarkable that all the Christian respondents have exercised their adult franchise.[385] It is also remarkable that women across all the age groups participated in the process.

Table 4.4 (vi) a: Religious Groups and Casting Vote in Election

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	90 (95.74)	4 (4.26)
MUSLIM	83 (95.40)	4 (4.60)
CHRISTIAN	14 (100.00)	0 (0.00)

Since higher educational attainment is associated with a higher rate of participation in the voting process, respondents are divided into different educational category to analyse the relationship between the level of education and the participation rate in the voting. (See Table 4.4 (vi) b) It is clear from the data that higher education has definitely translated into a greater participation in the political process and women belonging to the first educational category have all participated in the voting than women of other educational categories. It has to be noted that since those respondents who have not voted so far since they have completed 18 years recently are also counted along with the second educational

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[383] Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon has also observed a similar pattern in their study on Muslim women in North India and had analysed that the "significance of this becomes apparent when we compare it with the high proportion of non-responses for many other important questions in the survey."(Ibid)

[384] Like the Hindu respondents, out of the 4 Muslims who haven't voted 3 are below 20 years of age and are waiting for their first chance to caste vote.

[385] Since there was no respondent belonging to the age group of less than 20, all the respondents have voted in the elections.

category making the second educational category the lowest among the number of respondents who have voted.

Table 4.4 (vi) b: Different Educational Level and Casting Vote in Election

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	12 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
UG	71 (93.42)	5 (6.58)
S	104 (97.20)	3 (2.80)

Muslim respondents are divided into different educational category to analyse the relationship between the level of education and the participation rate in the voting. (See Table 4.4 (vi) c) It is clear from the data that higher education has definitely translated into a greater participation in the political process and Muslim women belonging to the first educational category have all participated in the voting than women of other educational categories. It has to be noted that since those respondents who have not voted so far since they have completed 18 years recently are also counted under the second educational category making the second educational category the lowest among categories with the number of respondents who have voted.

Table 4.4 (vi) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Casting Vote in Election

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	26 (92.86)	2 (7.14)
MS	55 (96.49)	2 (3.51)

From the above tables it has been understood that women in general have participated in the voting process in large numbers irrespective of the religious affiliation and higher education has an impact on the voting trends. Muslim women belonging to all

educational categories have fared well in the voting process with a higher educational attainment most definitely enhancing women to exercise their votes.

4.4 (vii) Online Activism

Online activism has been the latest mode of expressing one's views and opinions in the public sphere. Even though the physical presence of individuals is discarded in the cyber world, the ideas and thoughts are spread across the world through internet. The online activism, in fact, has a far reach compared to other methods of activism. With these implications respondents were asked whether they involved in online activism or not.

Only thirteen respondents out of the total 195 respondents are involved in the online activism. (See Table 4.4 (vii) a) Out of the various religious groups Hindus (8.51) are comparatively having a higher rate of online activism compared to Christians (7.14) and Muslims (4.60). All the religious groups are having a very low participation in online activism.

Table 4.4 (vii) a: Religious Groups and Online Activism

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	8 (8.51)	86 (91.49)
MUSLIM	4 (4.60)	83 (95.40)
CHRISTIAN	1 (7.14)	13 (92.86)

The relationship between the educational level and online activism of women belonging to different religious categories is given below. (See Table 4.4 (vii) b) From the table it can be seen that education has a direct relationship with the rate of online activism among women. 41.67 % of the respondents belonging to the first educational category are involved in online activism whereas only less than ten percent of the respondents are involved in online activism in the second and third category.

Table 4.4 (vii) b: Different Educational Level and Online Activism

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	5 (41.67)	7 (58.33)
UG	6 (7.89)	70 (92.11)
S	2 (1.87)	105 (98.13)

The relationship between the educational level and online activism of Muslim women is given below. (See Table 4.4 (vii) c) From the table it can be seen that education has a direct relationship with the rate of online activism among women. 50 % of the respondents belonging to the first educational category are involved in online activism whereas only less than ten percent of the respondents are involved in online activism in the second and third category.

Table 4.4 (vii) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Online Activism

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	1 (50.00)	1 (50.00)
MUG	2 (7.14)	26 (92.86)
MS	1 (1.75)	56 (98.25)

From the above tables it has been understood that women in general have less participation in online activism irrespective of the religious affiliation and higher education has a positive impact on the level of participation in it. Muslim women belonging to all educational categories have fared less in the online activism with a higher educational attainment most definitely enhancing women to have a higher level participation in online activism.

4.4 (viii) Reading Newspaper

Respondents were asked whether they read newspaper regularly. Since reading newspaper gives an understanding of the daily happenings around the world as well as updates on the trends and popular discussions in the public domain. Reading newspaper is the cheapest and quick method of knowing the world outside and it gives men and women an entry into the dynamics of public sphere. So it was very important to understand whether respondents read newspaper almost regularly.

Out of the total respondents majority do have the habit of reading news paper almost regularly. (See Table 4.4 (viii) a) Hindus (77.66%) and Christians (71.43%) have more than seventy percent of the respondents reading the newspaper while among Muslims only 64.37% reads news paper almost regularly.

Table 4.4 (viii) a: Religious Groups and Reading Newspaper

	YES (%)	NO (%)
HINDU	73 (77.66)	21 (22.34)
MUSLIM	56 (64.37)	31 (35.63)
CHRISTIAN	10 (71.43)	4 (28.57)

It is an expected fact that with increasing rate of education the number of respondents reading newspaper should increase. From the table below (See Table 4.4 (viii) b) it is undoubtedly visible that education has a direct relationship with the rate of respondents reading the newspaper. Out of the total respondents belonging to the first category all of them read newspaper while only around 62 percent belonging to the last category read newspaper almost on a regular basis.

Table 4.4 (viii) b: Different Educational Level and Reading Newspaper

	YES (%)	NO (%)
G	12 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
UG	61 (80.26)	15 (19.74)
S	66 (61.68)	41 (38.32)

As said above, it is an expected fact that with increasing rate of education the number of respondents reading newspaper should increase. Muslim women are categorised into various groups as per their educational attainment and their habit of reading newspaper are analysed. From the table below (See Table 4.4 (viii) c) it is undoubtedly visible that education has a direct relationship with the rate of respondents reading the newspaper. Out of the total respondents belonging to the first category all of them read newspaper while only around 56 percent belonging to the last category read newspaper almost on a regular basis.

Table 4.4 (viii) c: Muslim Women with Different Educational Level and Reading Newspaper

	YES (%)	NO (%)
MG	2 (100.00)	0 (0.00)
MUG	22 (78.57)	6 (21.43)
MS	32 (56.14)	25 (43.86)

From the tables above we can see that a good number of respondents are having the habit of reading newspaper almost on a daily basis and education has a direct bearing on the rate of respondents reading newspaper. Muslim women in general lag behind women belonging to other religious groups but with the increasing educational attainment it can be seen that the number of Muslim women reading the newspaper has increased.

Conclusion

From the various data on various issues addressed above what is broadly understood is that the level of autonomy and agency of women is low compared to the expected levels of empowerment they have achieved in terms of the standard indicators. The fact that in spite of having better educational achievements a number of women belonging to the new generation feels dowry as a source of security above their educational achievements. With a low gender disparity in educational attainment which has been unique to the Kerala society, women still prefers the household chores to be shared not on the basis of their notion of shared and equal responsibilities of both husband and wife on matters of household rather as a matter of easing their job.

With the comparatively low gender disparity and a positive sex ratio, women still feels extremely dangerous to travel alone during night even for their emergency matters and depends on a male to accompany them. The same applies to the increased anxiety of women as being in danger due to their gender identity. The increasing rate of violence and the apparent concern of women often challenge their other achievements.

Some of the opinions and attitudes of women are conditioned by their educational attainment like their opinion on reservation and women's presence and visibility causing atrocities against them whereas certain other opinions on issues like dowry and feminism doesn't show any co-relation to the educational attainment. The same has been true in the case of women's membership in various organizations. But in matters like casting vote and reading newspaper women are showing a positive trend and this again has less to do with the educational attainment even though higher educational levels are certainly giving a positive trend.

Muslim women have lagged behind other women in a lot of matters especially with regard to decision making and individuality. It has shown that education is having a positive impact on the attitudes and opinions on Muslim women, but the change has been very gradual. The traditional values are comparatively still intact among the Muslims

which often prohibits women in taking their own decisions and thereby a lesser participation in the public sphere.

CHAPTER-5

Discussion and Conclusion

Muslim woman as a social and political category is an important area of concern in the recent times globally as well as locally. In spite of the fact that the entity called 'Muslim woman' carries in itself the tag of being a Muslim and a woman simultaneously, it has been focussing predominantly on the former identity and thereby subsiding the latter one. The complexities attached to the existence of being a human primarily and a woman secondly are nullified so much so that the prerogatives of these natural identities are diminished thereby projecting the less natural religious identity as her immediate identity. This works fine if identifying a human being to his/her religion, and for that matter caste /ethnicity or race, would bring the best out of him or make their lives better in this world. But from the experiences it has been understood that these tags have often burdened the lives of women throughout the history irrespective of regional and temporal specificities.

The present study is an attempt to place the Muslim women in the larger discourse of public sphere by analysing broadly their status in the everyday life and specifically the extent of their educational attainments and their political advances. Since the attempt was to position Muslim women vis-à-vis the women belonging to other categories, the study has tried to dwell into the lives of women belonging to the two major religious groups of Hindus and Christians. Since Kerala has been a celebrated entity in the domain of development and a model to the whole world, it was equally exciting to see how the women, comprising half of this land, were incorporated into the development project. The study was above all an attempt to analyse how Muslim woman of Kerala locate herself in the complexities of being an 'empowered Malayalee' and a 'disadvantaged Indian Muslim" at the same time and how at various times the two identities overlap.

The public sphere was tried to be seen as more of a domain outside the domestic space rather than as a space of public deliberations. The complex nature of the public sphere as explained by Habermas and others has often knowingly or unknowingly failed to find space for women. The patriarchal forces of domination have always limited the lives of

women and the experience of Muslim women is no less. It is also perplexing to find that the question of autonomy, agency and empowerment of women are all measured and defined in terms of the significance of men and their intervention in the matters of women. Men have a say in almost all the matters related to women starting from what to wear to whom to get married.

The first chapter primarily focussed on giving a theoretical understanding of the research by deeply analysing and discussing the key words and concepts. The idea of 'public sphere' is not universal with scholars defining it according to the context. Since Jürgen Habermas has pioneered the discussions on public sphere and gave it a new meaning in the academia, his understanding of the public sphere was an important text to deal with. Effort was put to explain the dichotomy of public/private spheres by briefly explaining its historical significance, its evolution and the significance of the Habermasian public sphere. Based on the principles of universal inclusion and strict equality amongst the members, Habermas defined the bourgeois public sphere as a realm where critical, rational and intellectual discourses were carried out beyond the private domain as well as outside the control of the state.

Even though Habermas gives an entry into the domain of public sphere various works on the shortcomings of his approach have recently gain much more academic interest than his work. Since my study is basically following a feminist approach I have mostly looked into the aspect of feminist critique of Habermas. Scholars like Nancy Fraser, Simon Susen, Amy Allen, and Craig Calhoun have criticized Habermas for his 'bourgeois' approach to public sphere for not being inclusive. The idea of 'emancipatory potential' attached with the public sphere was challenged by many including the feminists who credited Habermasian idea as promoting patriarchy indirectly.

The public sphere as envisaged by Habermas was not the 'ideal' one in practice thus often challenging its inclusivity. A monolithic public sphere often failed to inculcate the subordinate groups into its domain and subsequently failing to find a space for the deliberations of these groups. Thus women, people of colour, proletarians, and homosexuals couldn't make themselves to be a part of the larger public sphere forcing

them to have a public sphere of their own which is known as the 'subaltern counterpublics' in Fraser's terms. The innate 'masculinity' attached to the public sphere has been a major drawback to the Habermasian understanding of the bourgeois public sphere.

Simultaneous reactions were also heard from outside the Western world and the study has looked into how public sphere as a domain was conceived by the Muslim world. Since public sphere has no existence without the interaction with the state (in spite of not being a part of it) it was interesting to analyse how discourses on public sphere functions in countries under Islamic rule and how Muslims dealt with the discourse in non-Islamic states. Debates ranging from whether there should be a separate public sphere, like the subaltern counterpublic by Fraser, for Muslims or should they co-exist with the existing public sphere to whether religion should be a part of the public sphere or private sphere have been looked into. Eickelman, Salvatore, Anderson and Gole have majorly looked into these issues. Further themes like Islamization, modernization and Sufism have been looked into to understand the various factors that have affected the evolution of public sphere in the context of Muslims throughout the world.

From what has been understood so far with regard to the social existence of women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, one could sense that women (precisely, those privileged to belong to certain class, region, religion and caste) enjoyed a certain level of 'freedom' which was strictly within the boundaries of the household with definitions set by the 'new patriarchy'. The idea of 'freedom' was defined and manipulated in such a way by the nationalists and reformers so that it never gave women access to public sphere and in case they had to, was strictly abiding to the virtues which would never make them in par or compete with the male folks. The nationalists and reformers were also successful in creating a layer of 'emancipated' women who found themselves superior to other women who failed to adopt and exist in the way they were. It is also interesting to see how the question of women and their reform got less projected after the late period of nineteenth century in the political debates carried out by the

nationalists. And in Partha Chatterjee's words, "the nationalist discourse we have heard so far is a discourse about women, women do not speak here."[386]

Differing from the Western model of evolution of public sphere based on the impact of industrialization, the idea of public sphere in the Indian context was an entirely different discourse with the prerequisites for the emergence of a public sphere unique to the Indian situations alone. The British colonial policies and Indian independence struggle had a huge impact on shaping the modern day Indian public sphere. It was also interesting to see how equal due was given to the realm of private sphere in India compared to that of the Western world where private sphere was never discussed with as much fervour as was the public sphere. When private sphere in the Western world was the realm of individual choices and was completely alienated from the public domain, the private sphere in the Indian context was shaped according to the changes happening in the public domain. But what was common is that the participants in the public sphere were definitely the masters' of their private domains. Since women were clearly not the masters' in the private domain, the domain which was based on the patriarchal formulations, their access to public sphere was completely restrained. Like the bourgeois public sphere, the Indian public sphere was also exclusive with women, low caste people, low class as well as certain religious groups including Muslims failing to have access to these domains.

It was again a different story analysing the evolution of public sphere in Kerala and locating the Muslim women. Scholars like Robin Jeffrey, Devika have dealt with these issues in general. But positioning Muslim women in the public sphere discourses on Kerala was a difficult task. Taking into consideration the various engagements on public sphere which I have discussed from the beginning I have taken into account all those aspects which are outside their domestic space (private space) as part of their public sphere. These aspects are not limited to physical spaces outside their home but also extend to their abstract realms including their imagination and thought process. But it was also interesting to understand in the wake of field study how the dynamics of public sphere reflects pretty much in the day today lives of people, especially women in their domestic space.

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[386] Chatterjee, Partha (1989), *op.cit.* p.625

The third chapter tried to analyse the lives of women in Kerala in general and Muslim women in particular. I have given a brief understanding of how Islam spread in Kerala and the early social lives of Muslims, particularly women. The present socio-economic status of women was briefly looked into by critically analysing it as a part of the Kerala Model of development. Various studies have shown how the celebrated model of development unique to Kerala have been inclusive to women in terms of the conventional indicators of development and how deeper analysis using the non-conventional indicators gives a different picture, indeed, often the exact opposite. Empowerment, agency and autonomy are the three key words which are inevitable in analysing the status of women.

I have further discussed the institution of matriliny in Kerala and how this had an impact on the lives of women in general and Muslim women in particular. The changing family structure in Kerala was analysed and how it has affected the lives of women. The chapter further dealt with the aspects of education and its relation to access to public sphere focussing primarily on Muslim women. A brief history of how the educational advancement was made by Muslims has been discussed in the chapter to give an understanding of the various stages of Muslim encounter with education. The present scenario of Muslim education in India is also discussed. The chapter finally deals with political participation of women at the national level as well as state level. The political participation of Muslim women has been also looked into. Some of the data on educational qualification of the respondents, religious education of the respondents and employment status has been analysed based on field work as well as from secondary sources to have an understanding of women in general and Muslim women in particular.

"Family interests and family-mediated negotiation of education" has been regarded as crucial factors in shaping and linking the three elements of gender, employment and education.[387] Despite the high interference of family in the educational accomplishments of Kerala women, they have shown a steep increase in their attainments over the years thereby going ahead of their counterparts from other Indian states. The average level of educational attainment to the course preferences for higher studies has changed in the

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[387] Mukhopadyay, Carol. & S Seymour. (1994), *Women, Education and Family Structure in India*, (Ed), Boulder: West view Pressp. 10

course of time with the present generation having their own unique choices. Since higher educational achievements have been an unchallenged conventional indicator of development what matters here is how to associate these achievements with choices.[388] This is very crucial in determining the empowerment trajectory of women.

It was perplexing to understand the fact that having access to better education is definitely an exposure to the public sphere but which necessarily might not result in/translate into the active participation/contribution into the public sphere by women in general and Muslim women in particular. It was also pathetic to understand the fact that better education is no way a guarantee for a better domestic life as cases of domestic violence including dowry harassment is very much prevalent among the families in Kerala and the education has in no way been any advantage to these women.

Even though women in general are not in par with men in a lot of non-conventional development indicators like the level of achievement in higher studies, employment opportunities in the formal sector, mental health etc. they are often not counted in the development narratives and thereby giving a colourful picture of Kerala women to the outside world. This is very clear when Mukhopadhyay says that, "The Kerala case clearly demonstrates that if one has to choose one indicator for this elusive factor, it has to be in terms of the human dignity accorded to women by the society she lives in, and not in terms of some instrumental indicator like literacy which may, for a variety of reasons, fail to perform its transformative task of empowering the individual."

The much debated Sachar Committee Report has given Muslims of Kerala very good numbers in terms of development compared to their counterparts in other states. Muslim women is considered as a backward category with respect to women belonging to other religious groups taking into account the available statistical details on the socio-economic conditions of Muslim women. The literacy rate of Muslim women in Kerala is 85.5% which is high compared to Muslim women in general in India but low when compared to women of other religious group in Kerala. The percentage of Muslim women who are

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[388] Scaria, Suma. (2014), "A Dictated Space? Women and Their Well-being in a Kerala Village", *Indian Journal of Gender Studies,* 1(3), p.425

employed is only a mere 5.9%. And this 5.9% majorly have women who are working in the unorganized sector and the class-3 category of employment.[389]

From the field work data the most visible and radical change is seen among the Muslim respondents where with decreasing age the number of women getting higher levels of education got increased. Within a period of twenty years the minimum qualification of secondary education has changed from less than forty per cent to a hundred percent while the growth of Hindus and Christians has also bettered but with a gradual pace. There has been not a single case of non-schooling within any community for the last 30 years which definitely stands out and justifies the 'Kerala Model'.[390] The various reports on educational status of Muslims, including the Sachar Committee, have pointed out some grave concerns on the educational attainment including the least enrolment rates in all levels of school education combined with high drop-out rates which simultaneously having a toll on the higher educational accomplishments of the entire community.[391] The data from our research have completely rejected this observation as Muslim women have excelled and have placed themselves along with the other religious groups in terms of attainment of primary and secondary education.

The question of autonomy and agency in deciding what to learn, when to learn and how to learn has a direct bearing on women's access to public sphere. Even though certain studies have lately failed to draw a positive relation between women's education and autonomy[392] what I have tried to analyse here is whether religion have an impact on the autonomy of women and how education in turn pull aside the religious constraints and to what extent they are interrelated. Since gender parity in educational attainments has been

[389] Ibid, p.90

[390] As per the Sachar Commission Report 25 per cent of the Muslim children belonging to the age group of 6-14 have either not attended the school or are drop outs. (Sachar Commission Report)

[391] Basant, Rakesh (2007) " Social, Economic and Educational Conditions of Indian Muslims", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42 (10), 828-832

[392] Visaria, Leela (1996): 'Regional Variations in Female Autonomy and Fertility and Contraception in India' in Jeffrey and Basu (eds) Girl's Schooling,Women's Autonomy and Fertility Change in SouthAsia, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

a feature of the Kerala society, the effort was to see whether higher educational attainments translates into a better level of autonomy.

The political participation of women is also not commendable in spite of having a better educational status. When studies show that educated politicians are best for the society and its progress, despite better education and reservation policies, women find it reluctant to enter politics. It is also interesting to understand that women themselves have often tried to keep away from the public spaces lately due to the increasing rates of crime against them. While most of the women are disturbed by the alarming increase in the rates of rape women confines themselves to the domestic spaces. Education is never seen as a tool to empower and to fight the existing inequalities and atrocities in the society. The large number of respondents which said choosing a course was without any particular purpose points out to a serious anomaly existing in the Kerala society. The existing socio-economic condition of Kerala is conducive to women for better educational opportunities without much financial burden. So it is easy to be a part of the already existing fabric without much effort. But the aimless attitude is not making women able to convert what they achieve into a future asset.

The fourth chapter have tried to analyse the data from the field work in detail. The analysis was to see the relationship between religion, educational attainment and women's participation in the public sphere. And for the same, the data is divided majorly into four themes which have a direct co-relation with the public sphere participation of women. They are the traditional practices and gender roles, individuality and decision making, opinions on socio-political issues and women and aspects of public sphere participation. Under each theme various sub themes are introduced to get a detail picture of the situation. Various data on the above themes and sub themes are analysed across various religious groups to have a comparative understanding of the situation. The same themes are again analysed by categorizing the respondents into various educational categories since education has been used as an indicator for measuring the public sphere participation. Since the major purpose of the study is to have an understanding of public sphere and Muslim women, the data analysis have given special attention to analyse the situation of Muslim women in detail.

From the various data on various issues addressed under various themes and sub themes it has been broadly understood that the level of autonomy and agency of women is low compared to the expected levels of empowerment they have achieved in terms of the standard indicators like higher educational level. The fact that in spite of having better educational achievements a number of women belonging to the new generation feels dowry as a source of security above their educational achievements. It has been also observed that the household chores are still considered as the domain of women only and a very few of the respondents have their household chores shared between them and the male members. With a low gender disparity in educational attainment which has been unique to the Kerala society, it is interesting to find that women still prefers the household chores to be shared not on the basis of their notion of shared and equal responsibilities of both husband and wife on matters of household rather as a matter of easing their jobs.

With the comparatively low gender disparity and a positive sex ratio, women still feels extremely dangerous to travel alone during night even for their emergency matters and depends on a male family member to accompany them. The same applies to the increased anxiety of women as being in danger due to their gender identity. The increasing rate of violence and the apparent concern of women often challenge their other achievements.

Some of the opinions and attitudes of women are conditioned by their educational attainment like their opinion on reservation and women's presence and visibility causing atrocities against them whereas certain other opinions on issues like dowry and feminism doesn't show any co-relation to the educational attainment. The same has been true in the case of women's membership in various organizations. But in matters like casting vote and reading newspaper women are showing a positive trend and this again has less to do with the educational attainment even though higher educational levels are certainly giving a positive trend.

Muslim women have lagged behind other women in a lot of matters especially with regard to decision making and individuality. The awareness level of various socio-political issues as well as opinion on them is comparatively low for Muslim women with

level becoming very low in matters like the Uniform Civil Code and feminism. The public sphere participation of Muslim women is very less compared to other religious groups if we analyse the data on their membership in various organizations as well as their online and offline activism. Even though they participate in huge numbers in voting their participation in other political process are less. It has shown that education is having a positive impact on the attitudes and opinions on Muslim women, but the change has been very gradual. The traditional values are comparatively still intact among the Muslims which often prohibits women in taking their own decisions and thereby a lesser participation in the public sphere.

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Part-1 Information On The Respondent And Her Background

Section-1:- Basic Information

1) Name of Polling booth:

2) Ward No./ House No.:

3) Address:

4) Name of the respondent:

5) Age:

6) Gender:

7) Religious Affiliation:

8) Marital Status:

9) If married,

a) Name of your spouse:

b) His educational qualification:

c) His occupation:

10) Type of family: (Joint/Nuclear)

11) Total number of family members:

12) Matriliny system followed: (Yes/No)

Section-2:- Details Of The Educational Background And Employment

13) Educational Qualification:

14) Did you get religious Education?: (Yes/No)

15) What type of school did you attend? (Govt./Aided/Unaided/CBSE/ ICSE/NIOS/Others)

16) Do you have a brother?

17) If yes, did they go to the same school? (Yes/No)

18) If no, why?

a) Better educational facilities

b) Convenience

c) Others

19) Which type of college did you attend? (Govt./Private/Aided/Others)

20) Why did you choose this course for higher studies?

a) For further studies

b) For a better job

c) For a better marriage prospects

d) No particular reasons

e) Others

21) Are you/ were you part of any extra-curricular activities in college?

a) Cultural activities: (Yes/No)

b) Political activities: (Yes/No)

c) Sports: (Yes/No)

d) NSS/NCC: (Yes/No)

e) Others: (Specify)

22) Are you employed/or into any occupation? (Yes/No)

23) If yes,: (Government/Self-employed/Private/others)

24) Are there any restrictions in getting employed because of being a woman?

Section-3:-Dressing

25) What type of dress do you wear normally while going out?
    (Saree/Churidar/Purdah/Jeans/Others)

26) What type of dress do you wear for formal occasions? (Eg. Wedding, party)
    (Saree/Churidar/Purdah/Jeans/Others)

27) What type of dress do you wear for religious functions?
    (Saree/Churidar/Purdah/Jeans/Others)

28) Do you decide your clothing on your own? (Yes/No)

29) If no, who decides?

a) Parents

b) Husband

c) Others

30) Do you think that it is ok to update with the fashion trends? (Yes/No)

Section-4:-Decision Making

31) Did you decide own your own the course for higher studies? (Yes/No)

32) If no, then who decides?

a) your parents

b) your siblings (specify brother/s if there have)

c) other family members and relatives

d) any religious leaders or organizations

e) Others

33) Did you decide own your own the institution of your higher education?

    (Yes/No)

34) If no, then who decides?

a) Your parents

b) Your siblings (specify brother/s if they have)

c) Other family members and relatives

d) Any religious leaders or organizations

e) Others

35) Who (would) decide on when to get married?

a) self

b) your parents

c) your siblings (specify brother/s if there are)

d) other family members and relatives

e) Others (specify)

36) Who (would) decide whom to get married?

a) self

b) your parents

c) your siblings (specify brother/s if there are)

d) other family members and relatives

e) Others (specify)

Section-5:-Discrimination against Women and Their Gender Roles

37) Do you go out for your personal matters alone?(Yes/No)

38) Do you travel alone or with a male family member during night? (Alone/with male member)

39) Do you support dowry? (Yes/No)

40) Does women face any issues of 'being a woman'? (Yes/No)

41) Do you think women's higher presence and visibility in the public domain is a reason for the atrocities against them?(Yes/No)

42) Who does household chores in your family?

a) You and other women in the household

b) Men in the family

c) Both you and your husband

43) Do you think household chores should be shared between men and women?(Yes/No)

44) Do you think bringing up children should be shared by both mother and father?(Yes/No)

45) Do you have a say in the monthly budget and expenditure of the family?(Yes/No)

Part-2 Aspects Of Public Sphere Participation

Section-6:-Membership of Organization and Social Activism

46) Are you member of

a) Any political party? (Yes/No)

b) Civil Society Organization? (Yes/No)

c) Resident Welfare Association? (Yes/No)

d) Professional Organization? (Yes/No)

47) Do you participate in

a) Political rallies/gatherings? (Yes/No)

b) Public meetings? (Yes/No)

48) Do you engage in online activism? (Yes/No)

49) If yes, do you post regularly on social media? (Yes/No)

50) Do you read newspaper regularly? (Yes/No)

51) Do you follow the political developments? (Yes/No)

52) Do you have your item published in media? (Yes/No)

53) If yes,

a) Newspaper

b) Magazines/Journals

c) Online (Specify)

Section-7:-Political Participation

54) Have you contested in any elections? (Yes/No)

55) If yes, specify

56) Do you cast vote?

57) Who decides whom to vote?

a) Self (Yes/No)

b) Others (specify)

c) Mutual decision (Yes/No)

Section-8:-Socio-Political Awareness And Opinions

58) Which country do we live in?

59) When did India get freedom?

60) What is the capital of India?

61) Can u name a freedom fighter?
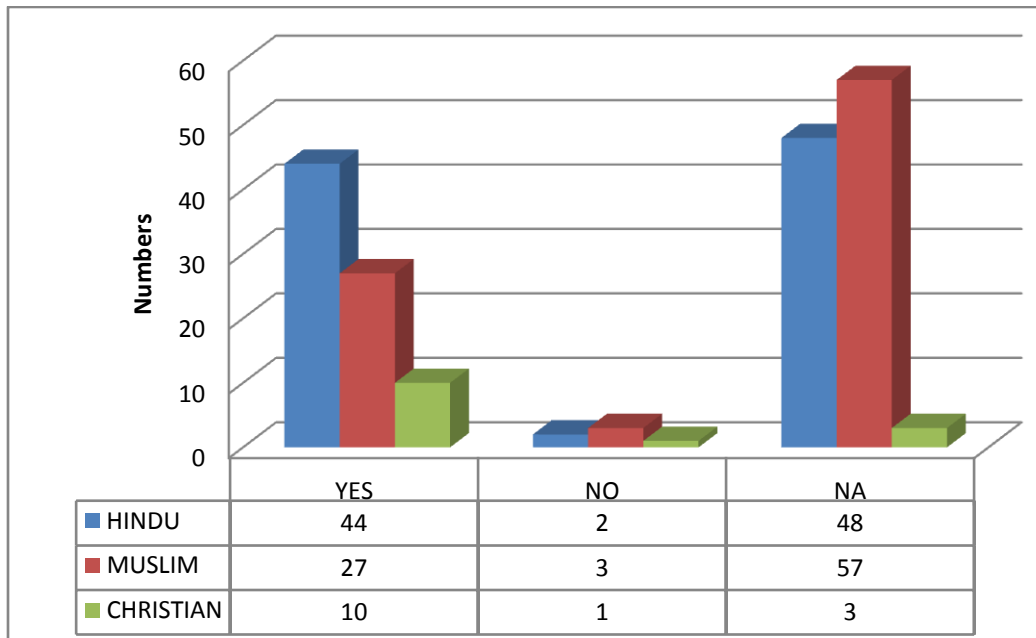
62) Have you heard of Mahatma Gandhi? (Yes/No)

63) Do you know any freedom fighter from Kerala?

64) Do you know the majority religious community in India? (Yes/No)

65) Have you heard of the Uniform Civil Code? (Yes/No)

66) Do you think women should be active in politics to achieve their rights? (Yes/No)

67) Do you know about the Fundamental rights and duties of an Indian citizen? (Yes/No)

68) Do you know about 50% reservation for women in Local Self Government bodies? (Yes/No)

69) If yes, do you think it helps in the empowerment of women? (Yes/No)

70) Have you heard of 'Feminism'? (Yes/No)

71) If yes, does it have relevance in the present social situation? (Yes/No)

72) Do you support the new forms of protest like "The Kiss of Love"? (Yes/No)

Appendix 2.1: Type of Joint Family

	HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN
■ MATRILOCAL	0	3	0
■ PATRILOCAL	22	28	1
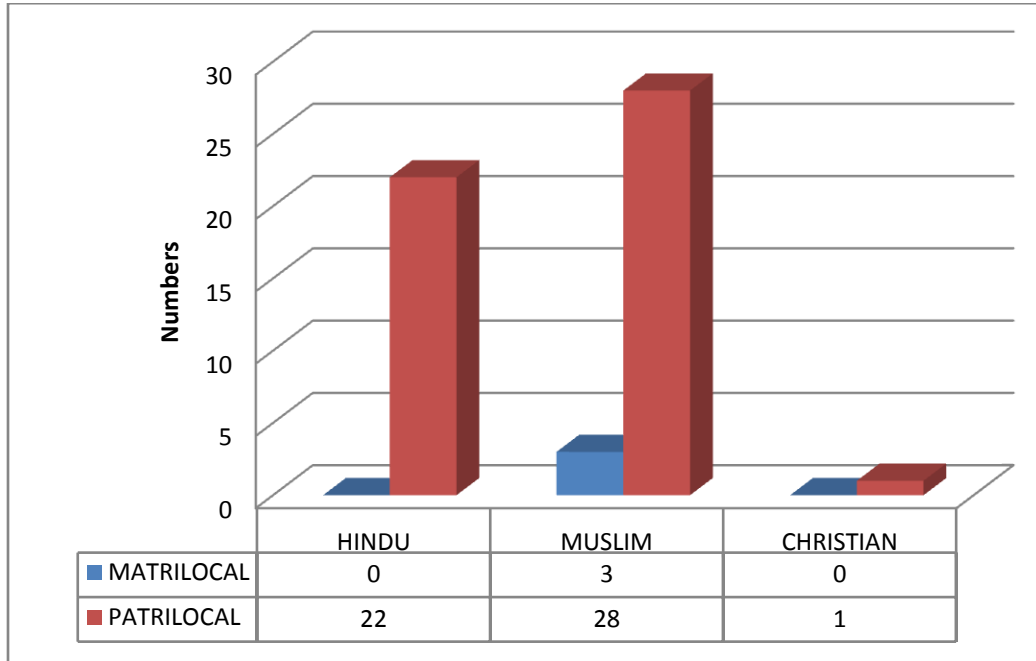
Appendix 2.2: Did You Choose on Your Own the Higher Studies Course

	YES	NO	NA
■ HINDU	44	2	48
■ MUSLIM	27	3	57
■ CHRISTIAN	10	1	3

Appendix 2.3: Factors Influencing the Choice of Higher Studies

	FOR FURTHER STUDIES	FOR JOB	MARRIAGE PROSPECTS	NO PARTICULAR REASON
Hindu	18.18	40.91	0.00	40.91
Muslim	10.71	32.14	0	57.14
Christian	9.09	54.55	0	36.36
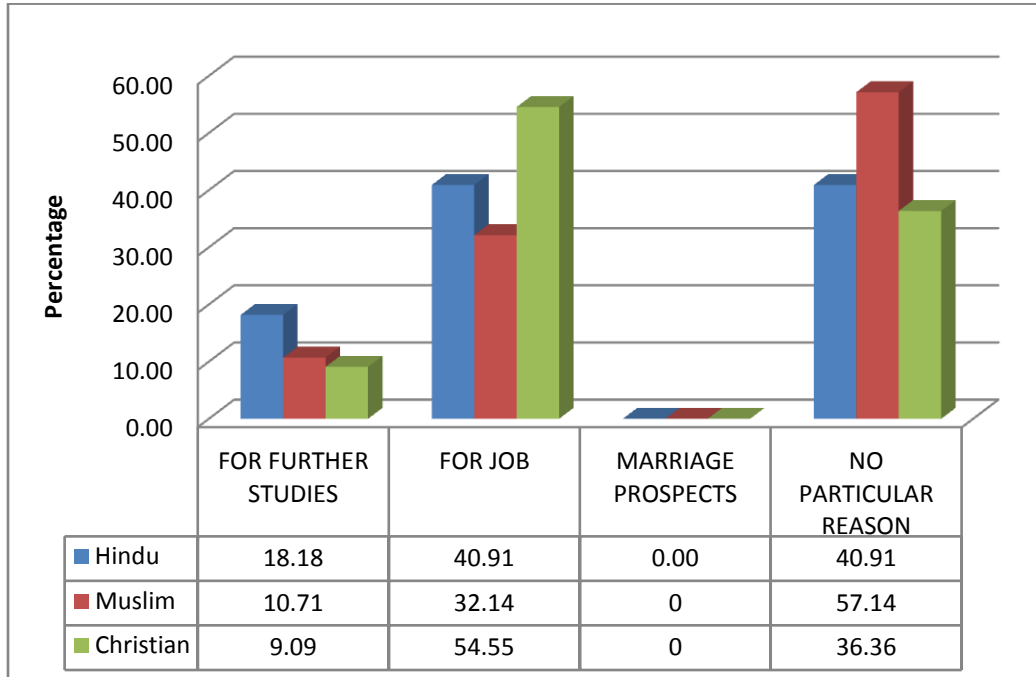
Appendix 2.4: Employment Status

	HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN
■ EMPLOYED	17.02	6.9	50.00
■ UN EMPLOYED	50.00	57.47	42.86
■ WAS EMPLOYED	17.02	6.9	7.14
■ NOT INTERESTED	2.13	12.64	0.00
■ INERESTED	13.83	16.09	0.00
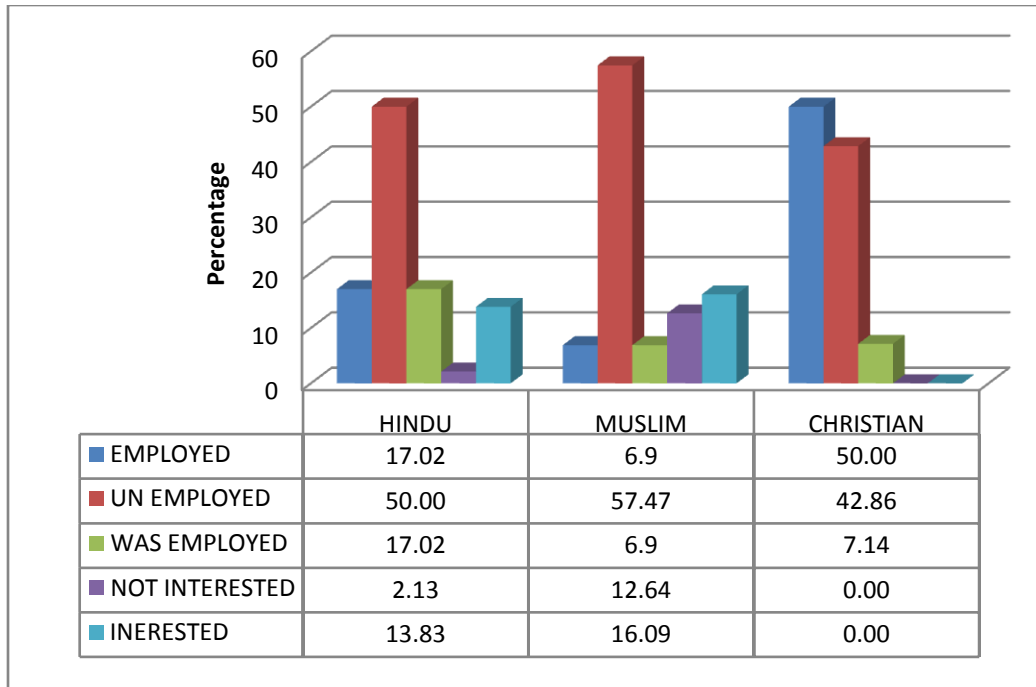
Appendix 2.5: Type of School Attended

	HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN
■ GOVT.	74.19	90.91	35.71
■ AIDED	10.75	6.82	21.43
■ UNAIDED	11.83	0	42.86
■ NO SCHOOLING	3.23	2.27	0
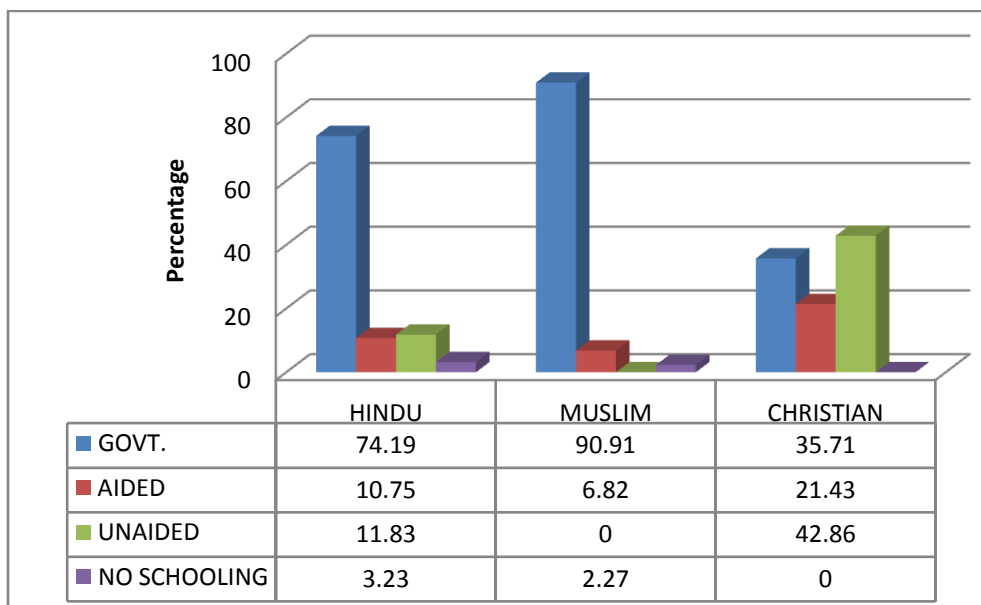
Appendix 2.6: School of Brother

	HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN
SAME SCHOOL	89.23	96.49	92.31
DIFFERENT SCHOOL	10.77	3.51	7.69
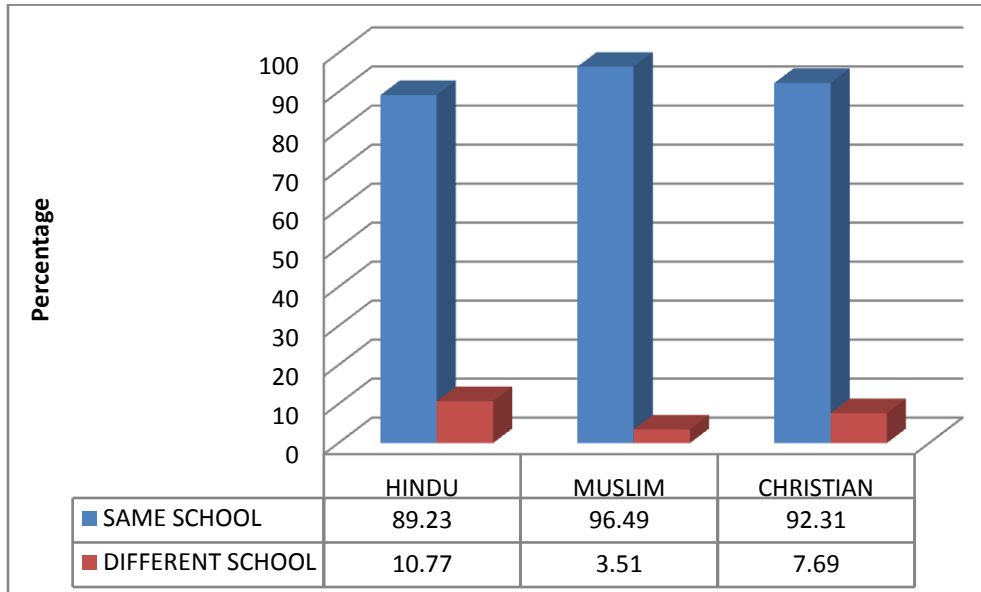
Appendix 2.7: Dress Pattern in Religious Occasions

	SAREE	CHURIDAR	JEANS/TOP	PURDAH
HINDU	76	24	0	0
MUSLIM	2.7	6.76	0	90.54
CHRISTIAN	72.22	27.78	0	0
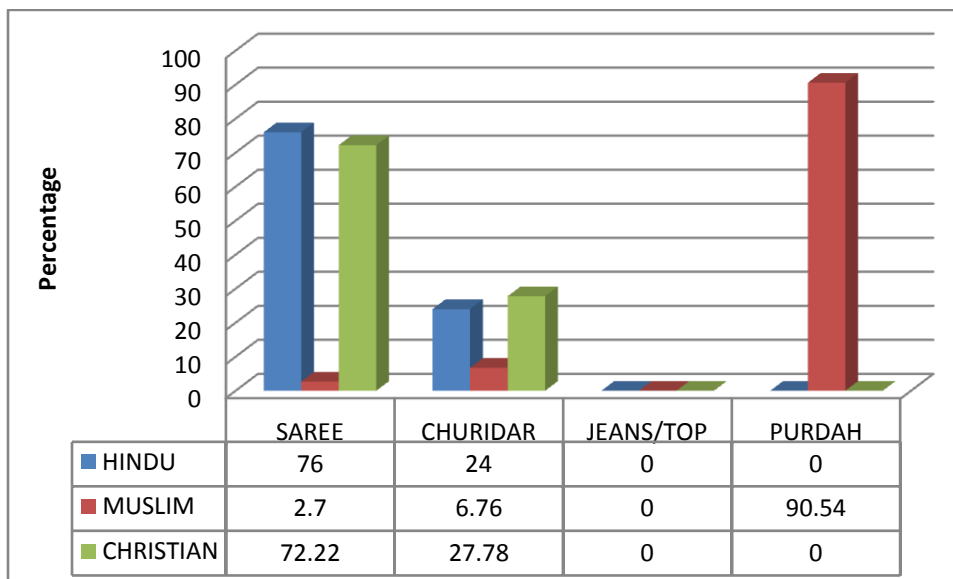
Appendix 2.8: Opinion on Updating with Fashion

	HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN
YES	67.74	44.32	50
NO	26.88	55.68	42.86
NO OPINION	5.38	0	7.14
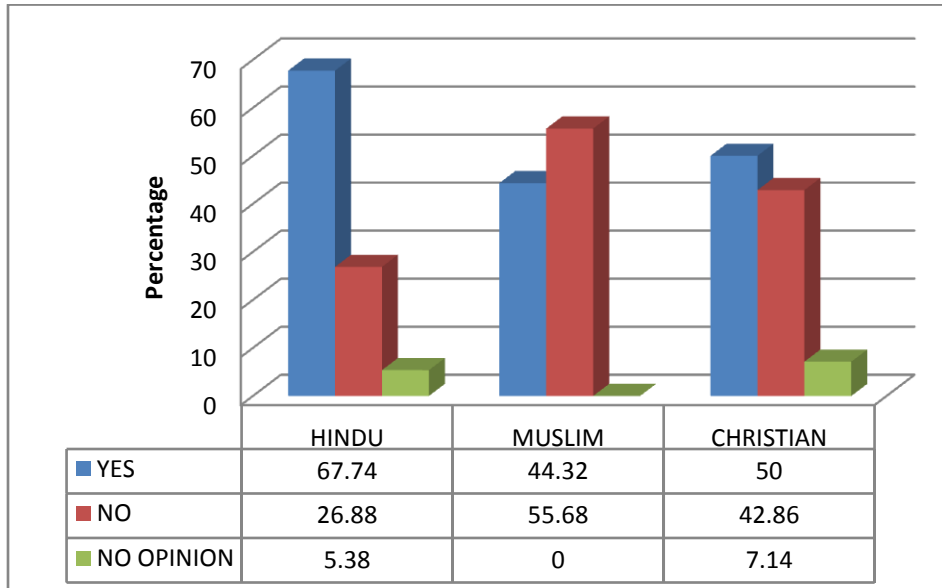
Appendix 2.9: Name of the Country

	HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN
INDIA	93.62	90.80	100.00
OTHER	0.00	4.60	0.00
NO IDEA	6.38	4.60	0.00
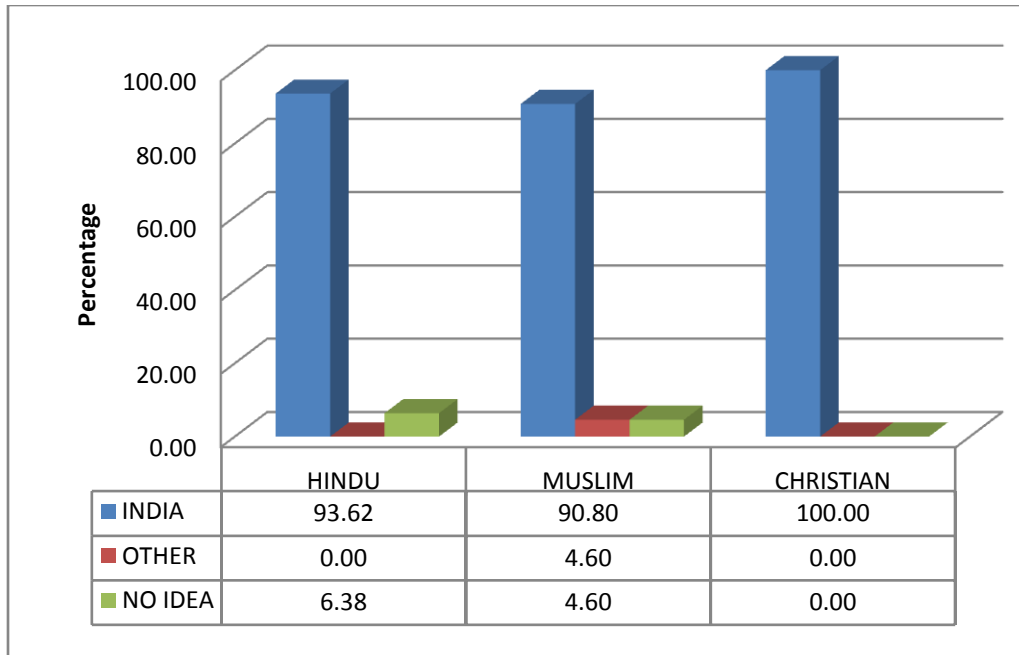
Appendix 2.10: Capital of India

	HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN
DELHI	58.51	33.33	50.00
OTHER	3.19	5.75	0.00
NO IDEA	38.30	60.92	50.00
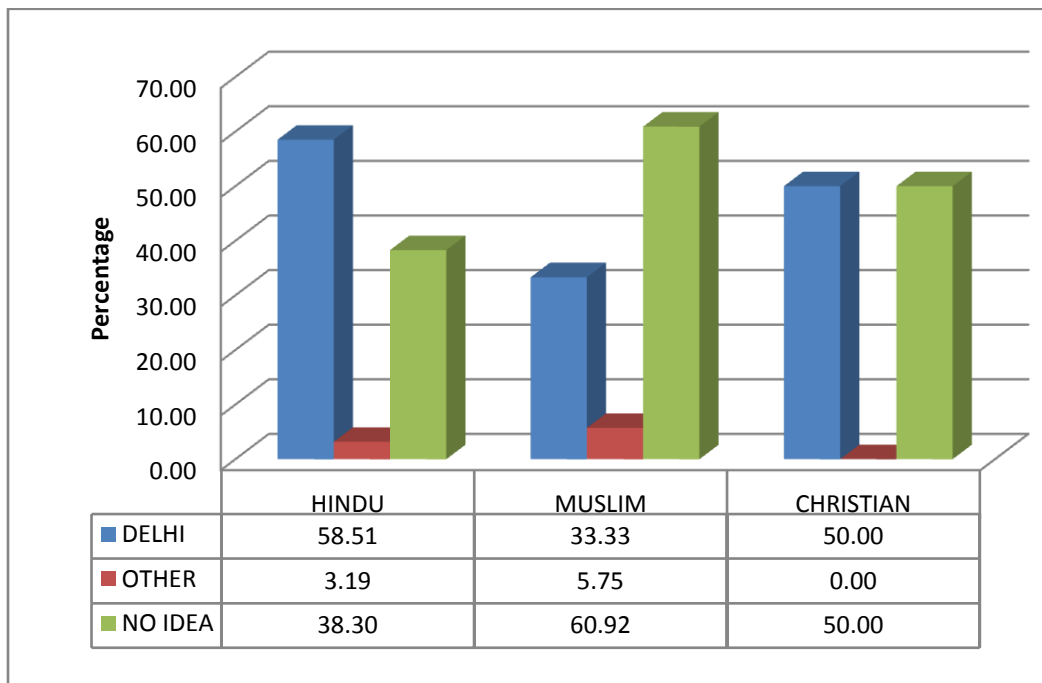
Appendix 2.11: Year in which India got Freedom

	HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN
■ 1947	67.02	50.57	78.57
■ WRONG DATE	3.19	2.30	7.14
■ NO IDEA	29.79	47.13	14.29
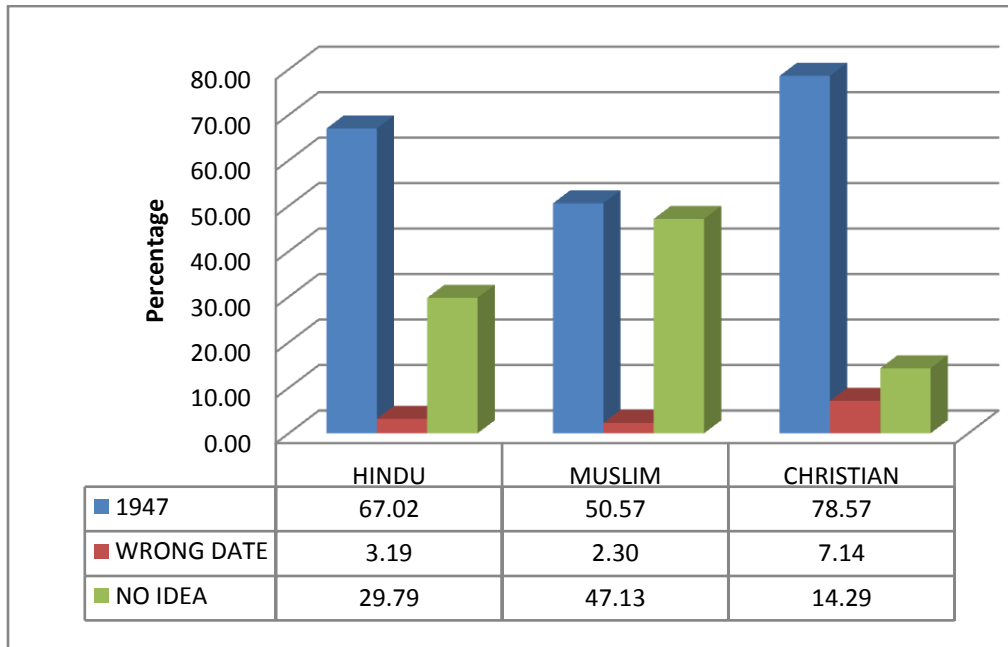
Appendix 2.12: Heard about Gandhi

	YES	NO
■ HINDU	100.00	0.00
■ MUSLIM	100.00	0.00
■ CHRISTIAN	100.00	0.00
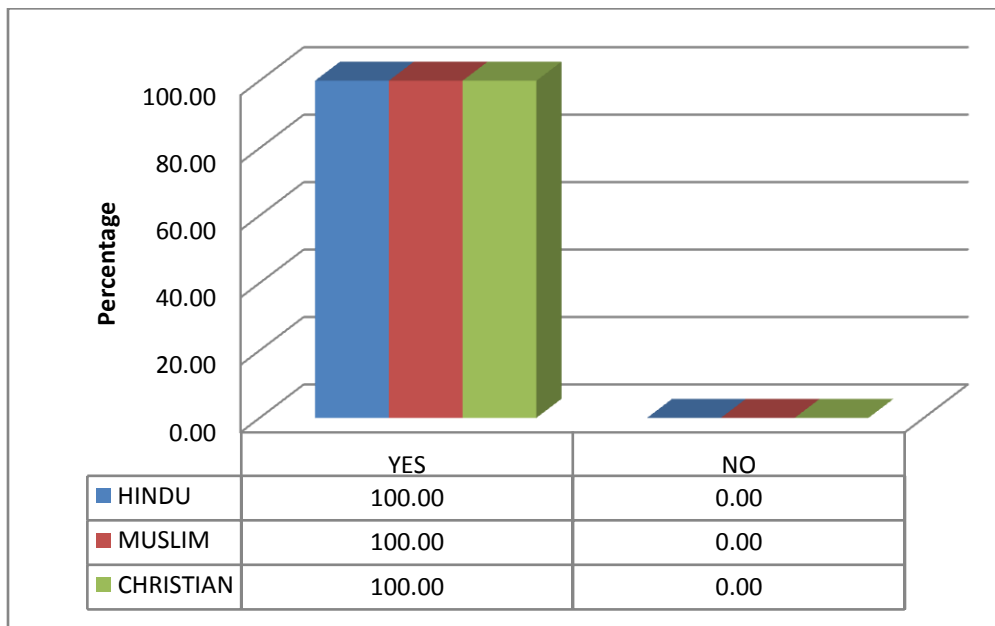
Appendix 2.13: Following the Political Developments

	HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN
■ YES	31.91	20.69	28.57
■ NO	59.57	75.86	71.43
■ SOME TIMES	8.52	3.45	0
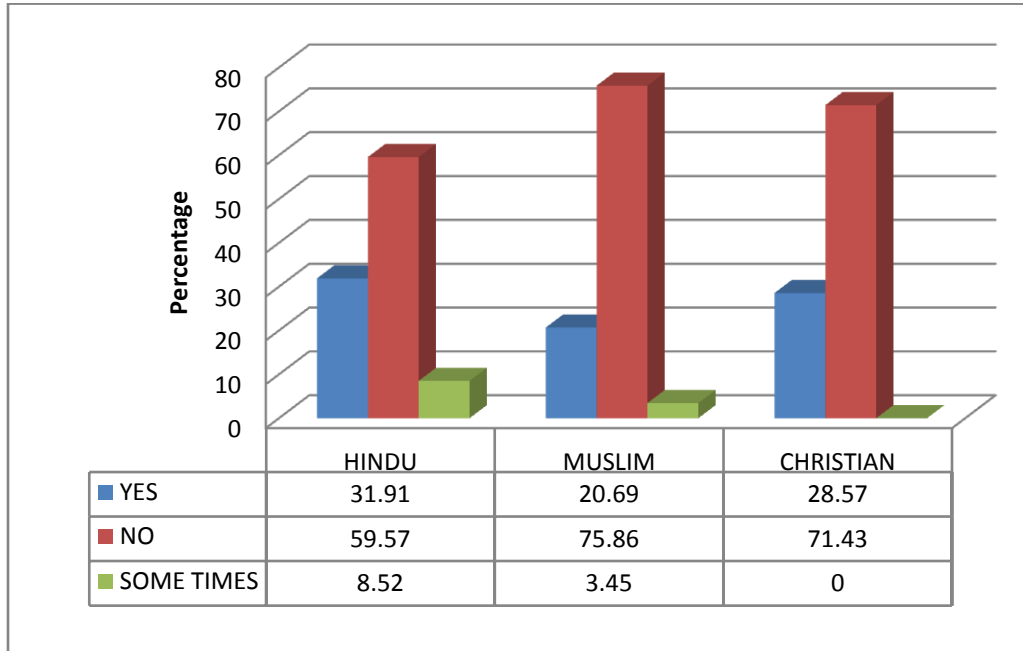
Appendix 2.14: How do you Identify Yourselves?

	HINDU	MUSLIM	CHRISTIAN
INDIAN	57.45	11.49	7.14
RELIGION	7.45	41.38	42.86
BOTH	10.64	39.08	50
NO OPINION	24.46	8.05	0