

**SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WELLBEING AMONG
PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
CITY**

*Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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2019**



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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled "SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WELLBEING AMONG PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM CITY" is being submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of the degree of DOCTOR of PHILOSOPHY of Jawaharlal Nehru University. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this university or any other university and is my original work.



Caroline C. Netto

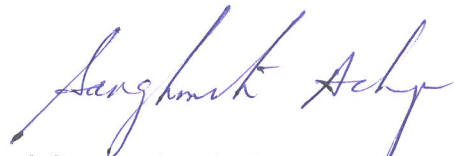
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


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Dedication

*To my mother whose life inspired me to develop this research topic;
The twenty women whose life experiences gave shape and form to this thesis;
To my husband, my father, my sister and my parents-in-law for giving me all the
support and encouragement to complete this endeavour.*

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Acknowledgement

It gives immense pleasure and joy at this phase of my academic journey when I accomplish a big dream of my life. We are at a very significant time in the history of our country and our university when we finally make this humble contribution to knowledge production. In the past few years, the changes in the political culture across the country had permeated to the academic spaces and social spaces we occupy. When we make this humble contribution through our academic engagement and efforts of the past few years, we reiterate that knowledge is power and writing is political. When I come to the end of almost a decade long association of my life with this JNU campus, we are deeply disturbed by the political environment and authoritarian suppression of academic freedom and democratic culture of the campus. But still, in the phase of this turmoil, the strength and support rendered by our dear teachers and mentors, the solidarity and togetherness we shared with our dear friends have helped us to sail through the stormy seas.

Lord Almighty, you are the lamp unto my feet. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Proverbs 9:10). Your blessings and graces and your counsel and guidance held me firm and walked through the times of darkness and happiness.

Rama ma'am, the faith you had in my work as a supervisor was a great source of encouragement for me. You always gave me the freedom to develop my own ideas and mentored me with utmost patience and understanding. You have a magical skill to capture our ideas when we struggle to put it into words and the moment you articulate and give 'vocabulary' to our thoughts were always a moment for us to find the motivation to work. Every academic discussion I have had with you boosted my confidence and gave me a new perspective and new direction to anchor my research. I extend my sincere gratitude to you for journeying with me all throughout these years with utmost patience and mentoring me with much affection and care.

With gratitude, I remember all other faculties of CSMCH for their generosity in giving valuable comments and suggestions during my progress presentations. I value

the comments and suggestions given by Ramila ma'am and Prachin sir' after reviewing my synopsis. Ritupriya ma'am's suggestions and critical questions during the work progress presentations. Sanghamitra ma'am's support as the chairperson during this troubling phase was commendable. I extend my gratitude to Rajib sir, Vikas Sir, Sunita ma'am and Guite ma'am for the support you all gave us during this academic journey.

I extend my gratitude to Dinesh sir in the documentation unit, Rawat sir, Jeevan ma'am and Satheesh ji in the CSMCH office who were extremely helpful in our tussle with the confusions and troubles created by the JNU administration.

My family was a constant support throughout my academic life. Even though staying miles away from my family, they have always been keen on knowing about me and my work progress. Mommy your life was an inspiration to develop my thoughts and ideas around this research topic. The one firm decision of yours helped me and paved the path for me, and I would proudly say that I owe you the lion's share of the credit of my achievement. Daddy the interest and concern you showed while I was proceeding for my fieldwork was a spark of encouragement. Cresline my little sister, you are my little bundle of joy. You were always there for me and were very understanding and incredibly supportive when I was in need. I am glad that you also chose my path in your academic life. Shinu, you joined me mid-way during my research. From that time till now, you were extremely understanding and accommodative of my aspirations and priorities. Your contribution to my research as a partner in intellectual discussions, meticulously editing my drafts with your excellent editing skills is immensely appreciated. You always provided the needed support, freedom and space to fly high to my dreams. I owe part of the credit of this achievement to you, my dear hubby. Papa and Mommy, your understanding, support and encouragement were a source of motivation and made my academic journey trouble-free. Eppi aunty you were always genuinely concerned about me, and my work and the warmth of your love and affection is much appreciated. I sincerely thank my extended family members, especially all who are in Delhi, for your love and affection.

Jisha chechi, even though you were not physically present, I could always feel your presence and love. There were many times your cheered me up through your laughter and humour when my soul was so weary. I would always appreciate your support in all means as a good friend, an elder sister, and I am indebted to your support

and contribution to my academic journey. The warmth of friendship and togetherness I enjoyed with you my dearest friend Nassif made my life in JNU quite memorable. I sincerely appreciate the discussions and the insights I gained from various academic and general discussions we had during our long walks on the campus and in your café 305. Delgith my little brother and friend, you have an excellent skill of touching the hearts of people, and I appreciate your support and prayers in the troublesome phases of this journey. Ramesh, I am deeply indebted to our 'chai pe charchas' in the school canteen. Your words of encouragement and the insights the academic discussions we had in shaping my research. My heartfelt thanks to you Reenu for providing significant help during my fieldwork and the open discussion we had on the socio-cultural context of Kerala.

I am deeply indebted to the support and contribution my friends Vini, SangLee, Kim, Jisha chechi, and Shinu gave me in doing meticulous editing of the drafts of my PhD thesis. I extend my sincere gratitude to Shehana, Subodh, Sushruta, Amutha and Ammu in the last-minute help and support you all rendered to give a final and finishing touch to the thesis.

Sarah, Soma and Nikita, my three roommates at different points of time, made my life and stay on the campus and in our room #007, Ganga hostel always memorable and pleasant. I extend my gratitude for making my life pleasant with the warmth of togetherness and friendship I share with all other friends in my batch, campus and in my hostel, especially Muhsin, Nabil, Jyoti, Amitabho, Rajashree, Ipsha, Manisha, Lepcha, Veena, Pooja, Shehana, Aparajita, Sunanina, Jushna, Farzana, Amutha and Nivi. I thank you all for your great support and encouragement. I remember my dear seniors and juniors in the centre with much love for all their support and encouragement.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Opus Dei community in Delhi thank you all for being so generous to provide me with your most comfortable library space to work especially during the peak time of Delhi summers and the peak of my stress and tensions. My Jesus Youth family in Delhi were a great time inspiration and emotional and spiritual support for me. I sincerely appreciate the fellowship I share with you all.

I am deeply indebted to all professional women who were so generous to participate in my research. From the bottom of my heart, I express sincere gratitude to

each one of you. Your willingness and openness to share your life experiences gave the structure and shape to this research work. Without your cooperation and support this research would have always remained a dream. All of you were very generous with your precious time in the midst of your busy work schedule. I appreciate the trust and faith you had in me to open up about your life.

My sincere gratitude to all the sisters and hostel friends in St. Anne's nursing home, Holy Cross convent, Pettah. You all took care of me like a family during my stay over there, especially Sr. Theres Martin and Sr. Vandana. The library staff at CDS were cooperative and helpful in my material collection of secondary sources.

I express my gratitude to the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) for providing a fellowship to accomplish my research.

I value all small and significant contributions given by numerous people all throughout these years. I express my sincere gratitude from the bottom of my heart to you all for all encouragement, support, guidance and suggestions, concern, love and care shown towards me. I am indebted to you all for helping me to accomplish this great endeavour.

Caroline

Chapter I - Introduction

“Feminichi” is a buzzword in Kerala in contemporary times. The etymological origin of the word ‘feminichi’ is from the English word ‘feminist’ and Malayalam word ‘achi’ meaning ‘wife’. Both the words ‘feminist’ and ‘achi’ in Kerala have a negative connotation. The context of the evolution of this word was the events that unravelled after the abduction and rape of a cine artist in Kochi in the year 2017 and the arrest of a popular film actor who was accused as the master brain behind the brutal violence. The women film artists and workers in the cinema industry came in support of the victim and the women formed Women Collective in Cinema (WCC) to challenge misogyny and patriarchal practices entrenched in the industry. This act of resistance was an open challenge to the patriarchal structures operating in the Kerala society through different institutions and social structures. But the undercurrents of misogyny in society led to the women in mainstream film and the feminist groups being openly attacked through cyberbullying and in public platforms. A new term “feminichi” was coined to describe women who have an opinion at variance from the traditional norm and question the patriarchal system in the society.

The way women who questioned and challenged were attacked in the public platforms of social media and in the public spaces exposes the gender paradoxes in Kerala. In the Malayalam pop culture, through the medium of films and novels, there was a constant attack on women who possess “masculine” dispositions and radical streak who challenges the unequal power relations and patriarchy in the society. This is an exercise of symbolic violence, in which the power relations are perceived as legitimate in the eyes of the beholder to reproduce domination in the immediate interaction between people and structure (Bourdieu 2000; Arun 2018). This is an act to symbolically delegitimise the dispositions of women who challenge the existing power structures.

It is in this context of symbolic delegitimization, *the Autobiography of a Sex Worker* by Nalini Jameela (2007) has to be contextualised and read. The work of Jameela exposes and questions the hypocrisy and double standards that exist in defining the Malayalee modernity. The role of caste and religious movements in the formation of Malayalee modernity has been hidden from the mainstream historical narratives;

their prominence is narrowed down using the umbrella term ‘cultural renaissance’. This itself shows the hypocrisies and inequality that underlies our sense of modernity and the flaws that exist in framing our developmental policies — gender and caste contest modernity’s claim of cultural elitism in other states.

Gender inequality is very much evident in Kerala society because a significant population exhibits a consciousness that is highly gender-biased in favour of men. Discrimination based on religion and caste is operated in a very subtle and covert manner so that an outsider is deceived by the high literacy rate and standards of living. “The cultural history of Kerala renaissance also becomes a story of betrayal and exclusion” (Sherin n.d., 2)¹, as several lower caste movements and uprisings have been tactically placed under the label of nationalism and freedom struggle.

Autobiographical writings are effective channels for history and women writers of Kerala have exploited this genre for addressing the gender question and the evolution of the self. Thus, on a broader context, the autobiographical writings of LalithambikaAntharjanam and Kamala Das address the crises related to caste, religion and gender in the so-called emancipated modern Kerala society.

However, we see these writers writing from a nostalgic point of view, even though they were fearless women voices in the Malayalam literary canon. But their voices have been raised more for the assertion of the self and for gender equality, as they enjoyed the privileges of the elite aristocracy to which they belonged. It is evident that traces of cultural elitism are present in the writings of Kamala Das and LalitambikaAntharjanam. Writings of Das and others who belonged to the elite have been made part of the nationalist femininity, whereas several other writers from the marginalized sections have been ignored. “Even when Kamala Das breaks traditions and laughs at conventional morality of modern Malayali, there are points of coherence with which Malayali modernity appropriates her into the fold of elite Nair aristocracy. The nostalgic memories of Nalapat and the resistance of the middle-class woman in Kamala Das’s narratives thus become part of the grand narrative of Malayali modernity” (Sherin n.d., 4)².

¹https://www.academia.edu/29516872/Counter_Histories_of_Kerala_s_Modernity_Reading_Not_so_Ideal_Women_s_Autobiographies

² ibid

Several writers from the minorities have been ignored by the mainstream narratives. Thus, their literary outputs become a part of the counter-narrative which exposes the flaws and agenda settings of the mainstream history. Nalini Jameela thus becomes prominent figures as they exposed the double standards that exist in the very operation of modern Kerala society. Nalini Jameela boldly spoke about the complex nature of sex work and challenged all pre-existing, structured notion of femininity and gender identity.

Nalini Jameela had used a unique and unconventional mode of writing in her autobiography, *The Autobiography of a sex worker* as it deviates from the self-narratives which are treated as part of representative writings of Malayali modernity. Her work shows the double standards in the sexual morality of Keralites and also the bias with which the works of women writers from the marginalized society are received. Jameela's assertion of her individuality was through treating her work as her own story, more than that of a sex worker. This shows that these counter-narratives are also as important as the so-called mainstream narratives. Moreover, writers like Jameela throws light on the actual essence of Malayali modernity, with flaws and limitations. She is presented as the iconoclast who challenged the ideas of so-called modernity as well as the conventions of Malayalam literature.

This autobiography established her as a public figure who narrated the lived realities and oppression for the public space. The autobiography put forth a challenge to the Malayali conceptions of domesticated feminine identity, emphasising the ideals of 'disciplined, procreative and family-centred woman' constructed through the social and community reform movements in the twentieth century. Her writing became the voice from the margin challenging the stereotypes of 'prostitute'. Her story narrated her struggles to claim the dignity of work and selfhood and to defend her self-respect. When she was walking out of her second marriage in which she had a daughter, it was her keen sense of self-respect, which rebelled against the bestowal of second-class status.

In that process, she narrated the hypocrisy of Malayali society, and her narration weaves through the caste, religious and class dynamics operating in the Malayali community. She narrated her experience of dealing with men who have money, the upper-class men pretend to behave "respectably", but in reality, there would be no respectability in their behaviour. The people who often do moral policing pretend

to be “good” men but in they have a shady side where these same men approach the sex workers to satiate their gluttonous carvings.

Her sex work was a significant transgression of the normative ideals of domestic, feminine identity. Her actions of transgressions had its repercussions where she was disowned by her family even when they needed her money. In fact, entering sex work was for solely raising her children. The societal disapproval of her work, the stigma and dishonour attached to the sex work, social exclusion, atrocities in the hands of police and legal authorities at one phase. Her insecurities, including a threat to her very life, difficulties to find a place to stay, financial and sexual exploitation she faced were the many faces of oppression that she had to endure. Her writing becomes a powerful voice from the margins, challenging the conventional norms of femininity, the hypocrisies of Malayalee modernity, and the unequal power relations operating in the society.

The film *Ozhimuri*(2012) a ‘document of separation’ directed by Madhupal, is a story of a Nair woman (a community that followed a matrilineal kinship system) who approached the court for divorce from her husband Thanupillai at the age of 65. She is reclaiming the right of Nair women to divorce her husband after the matrilineal kinship system was legally abolished. She was a victim of a violent and abusive marriage. Her son Sarath Chandran says, “our fathers are the epitome of virtue outside. But the moment they step into the home, they are filled with every kind of cruelty. Only his wife and children would know that face of him... My mother is a simpleton. She suffered a lot”. When Meenakshi Pillai is asked why she needs a divorce at this age, she responds, “at least when I die, I will not be dying as his wife”. The characters of Thanupillai and Meenakshi Pillai portrays the way gender power relations operate in the domestic space and the different ways violence and abuse oppress women. All throughout her life, Meenakshi Pillai lived as an oppressed woman who had no freedom to exercise her agency and freedom. At the end of her suffering, at the age of 65, she approaches the court to give her freedom from her marriage, which was a privilege and freedom enjoyed by Nair women in the matrilineal system.

The social and cultural context of the film *Ozhimuri* and the contemporary trends of gendered violence in the Kerala society discussed in the beginning shows the changes and transformation in the gender power relations in the Kerala society. It is

from this vantage point that this study addresses the gender question in Kerala. Women's experiences of unequal power relations and its nuances constitute the lived reality of women. In this context, the experiences of power negatively impact women when their autonomy and freedom is constrained and denied through the operationalisation of power in the social structures. It is in this context that their phenomenological understanding of their "everydayness" and their interaction with the social structures their wellbeing emerges. Their wellbeing determines the capacity to engage with their everyday life.

Women from different social strata experience power relations in different ways. The plurality and diversity of their life experiences are determined by the social context in which they are embedded. The gender paradoxes of the 'Kerala model of development' has attained attention from social scientists from different disciplinary backgrounds in recent times. Gender capital, the autonomy and freedom, right to property ownership under the matrilineal kinship system, education and social awareness of women contributing to their good health, were significant in the attainment of social development in the context of Kerala (Arun 2018). Yet, the entrenched patriarchy and the way its disempowered women and suppressed their agency and autonomy through different social and cultural practices raise the gender question in Kerala. Why do the statistical data of high gender and social development and the qualitative lives of women present a contradictory picture? Are the unequal gender power relations experienced in the same intensity across women from different social strata of Kerala society? The paradoxes of the social development in Kerala point to the project of Kerala modernity as a failure. The renaissance and social reformation in Kerala during the colonial period undertook with the initiative of social reformers who were modern educated middle class, and the colonial rulers, give way to the formation of reformist patriarchy that gave shape to regressive modernity in Kerala.

The caste system in Kerala was very regressive in nature. When in India untouchability was practised widely, in Kerala it was unapproachability and unseeability that were practised. Thus, the caste system in Kerala has a significant role in the shaping modernity in Kerala (Pillai 2013). The social reformation aimed at eradicating the social evils, and the "purifications" and "pollution" rituals practised in the caste system in Kerala. The contributions of Christian missionaries in the education and health sector were significant. The social enlightenment and renaissance were triggered by the social

reformers who had access to Western education. Later on, the modernity in Kerala was configured to control the 'agency and sexuality of women in the domestic space' (Pillai 2013). The social reformation and the legislative measures that abolished the matrilineal kinship system, was a death blow to women's rights to property inheritance, freedom to choose their partner in marriage and divorce and that was a measure adopted to control 'the transgressive potential of women in matrilineal kinship system' (Pillai 2013, 104). In this historical and socio-cultural context, the question of construction of gender, caste and class identity is placed.

The research on gender power relations mainly addresses the experiences of women in the margins, the Dalit, Adivasi, working-class communities. But in a state where women have a high literacy rate (92.07) (2011 Census data) and access to higher education and possess a certain level of gender capital, their experiences of power and their level of empowerment attains special attention. The literature sources discuss the low female labour force participation rate and the unevenness in the number of women accessing higher education and the number of women in the labour force (Eapen and Kodoth 2003). It is in this context that the present work focused on the professional middle-class women and their experiences of power in both their domestic space, workplace and in the public spaces. The research addressed the gender question in Kerala, the class and caste identities of these women, the way they experience unequal power relations in these social structures, and how the experiences of everydayness construct their wellbeing.

The Bourdieusian framework is used to explore the operation of power in the macro and micro social structures where the professional women are embedded. Radical and multicultural feminist perspectives are used to address the gender question in Kerala. The social constructionist perspective is used to understand the social construction of the wellbeing and phenomenological understanding of the lived reality of professional women.

The wellbeing of an individual is relative to the objective reality of his/her life and their subjective perceptions of it. An individual's feeling and assessment of his/her 'quality of life' according to their own parameters evolves from their social context defines the perception of their wellbeing (Keyes 2006). It is a socio-economic, cultural, psychological and political construct. This study is an attempt to explore the contextual

meaning of wellbeing and its determinants among professional women in their socio-cultural context.

Women's role in private and public domain largely has been shaped by socio-cultural practices, gender norms, values and stereotypes of the society (Hapke 2013). Professional women have the privilege of access to social capital and are exposed to the public domain as well. They are perceived as independent and empowered individuals. Hence it is anticipated that their experience of patriarchy, gender power relations, class structures, freedom and oppression differ from working-class women in the organised and unorganised sectors. Gender power relations and class structures of the society influence both family and professional life of these women. The intersection of class and gender constructs the social context of professional women's experiences of social realities (Doyal 1990).

The wellbeing of a working woman is determined by socioeconomic, cultural, psychological and economic factors. In the domestic sphere, women have multiple responsibilities as a wife, mother and caregiver to the elderly. In their work, they have to prove themselves more competent and efficient to get equal and dignified treatment with men (Parikh and Sukhatme 2004). The burden of social expectations on women's multiple role performances creates pressure on them on their individual and social level (Chanana 2001). This multidimensional nature of women's work may lead to work-family conflict, in the absence of a proper support system in both their workplace and in the family. This would produce a negative effect on women's mental and physical wellbeing (Wang et al. 2008; Gani and Ara 2010).

The understanding of women's freedom and autonomy, the social barriers to exercise her agency and freedom in making choices, pressures on her to prioritise between her personal and professional demands, the experiences of systems of oppression, and the level of stress and challenges it creates, and their response to these challenges has a differential impact on their wellbeing (Haw 1982). The response to these stresses and challenges shapes the experiential reality of their life. Their subjective perception of wellbeing and assessment of their quality of life is conditioned by the objective reality of their life. Thus, the study was an attempt to look into the life experiences of professional women through their gender and class identities and its

implication on their wellbeing in the larger socio-developmental and cultural context of Kerala.

An Overview of Socioeconomic Context of Kerala

The achievements of gender development in the state have a history dates back to the colonial period. Kerala society has a history of the presence of matrilineal kinship system in different parts of the state from pre-colonial to the colonial period. Many caste and religious communities practised Matriliney which offered 'identity, security and a certain autonomy' to women with decision making powers on marriage and sexual relations (Saradmoni 1999). The system empowered women with property rights, authority and freedom to choose their life partners (Eapen and Kodoth 2002). Marriage was fluid and dissoluble, and women's 'maintenance and residence rights were attained on natal line (Saradmoni 1999).

Legislative measures were adopted in Travancore during the British time period to abolish the matrilineal system and impartibility of joint family property ownership. Thus, the matrilineal system in Kerala became the only kinship system abolished in the world through the legislative measures (Arunima 2003). These processes, in turn, impacted women's status and autonomy by giving a death blow to women's property rights, and decision-making power within their families of the matrilineal caste communities, mainly Nairs and Ezhavas of Hindu community and Mappila Muslims in Malabar region (Eapen and Kodoth 2002). Changes in the agrarian structure and relations of production were followed by the structural changes in property inheritance rights. This created stress in the economic conditions of the families. Women who were already the losers of property rights and decision-making powers were pushed to enter into the job market as a result of the economic crisis and stress in their families (Devika and Mukherjee 2007).

The nineteenth and early twentieth-century social transformations and reform movements, and legislative measures adopted during the colonial period restructured marriage and family and established a specific form of patriarchy, i.e. 'conjugal patriarchy' (Hapke 2013; Eapen and Kodoth 2002). This institutionalised husband's authority over wife and children and restructured gender identities towards conjugal home. Patrifocal family and patrilineage were strengthened through conjugal patriarchy (Hapke 2013).

Hapke (2013) argues the transformation from matriliney to patriarchy and institutionalisation of husband's authority over wife through conjugal patriarchal relations and undermining women's rights and autonomy deeply ingrained 'orthodoxy'. This orthodoxy intersects with the social, economic and political processes and gives rise to the visible 'paradoxes' of Kerala model development (Hapke 2013). The emergence of patriarchal norms and gender relations is an outcome of a convergence of the contemporary socio-economic and cultural factors with the historical development in the state (Hapke 2013).

More extensive modernisation process was accelerated through these legislative measures and reform movements, and it paved the way for economic, political, cultural, administrative, and institutional transformations. New forms of caste and national identity, gender relations, inheritance rights, newer definitions to private and public domains were the by-products of these transformations (Hapke 2013). The transformations in the social structures restructured gender relations across class and caste societies as well (Lindberg 2005). Socio-economic conditions of the households in the mid-twentieth century had a pivotal role in shaping gender relations and construction of domestic and public spaces (Devika 2002; Devika and Mukherjee 2007).

The economic changes initiated with the oil boom in Gulf countries in the 1970s attracted many semi-skilled and unskilled labourers from Kerala (Osella and Osella 2000; Dickey 2012). The demand for semi-skilled and unskilled labourers in the Gulf countries resulted in male out-migration in large numbers. This had multiple impacts on the socio-economic structures of the state. Gulf remittance had improved the 'quality of life' of people and led to the evolution of a new 'middle class' and 'consumerism' (Hapke 2013; Osella and Osella 2000). With the better income of households, female labourers were withdrawn from the labour market resulting in a steep decline of female labour participation in the state. Domestic identity of women became the ideal which accelerated the process of 'housewifization' (Hapke 2013). In the lower caste and working-class families also the notion of men as breadwinners and the role of women as dependent housewives emerged as the ideal. But the economic contribution of women in poor income households was inevitable for their survival. These gender norms and cultural values undermined the economic contribution of these women as 'supplementary wages' to their family income (Lindberg 2005). These patriarchal

values and norms, in turn, constructed the public spaces of women in a domesticated way with ‘womanly activities’ where their employment was legitimised as supplementary and supporting to their family’s survival (Devika and Mukherjee 2007). But the modern educational system was shaped with an aim to edify modern domesticated governable individual. Various socio-economic, political-legal factors thrust women’s education and employment to domesticate them than in quest of their autonomy (Devika and Mukherjee 2007).

The welfare measures and policies giving importance to universal education and health care during the first communist government contributed to the high literacy rate and standard of living in Kerala. But in the later phase, the decline in investments in industries and other economic activities and disproportionate expansion in employment opportunity to the educated employment seekers created a socio-cultural crisis with gendered outcomes (Hapke 2013). In this phase, the new Economic Policy of 1991 following the economic crisis of the 1990s initiated liberalisation and globalisation of market for ‘global’ goods and services paved the way for new patterns of investment, employment and wealth in the state. The market system re-established new dimensions to gender- men as ‘working subject’ and women as ‘domestic women’ (Devika and Mukherjee 2007).

There was a new awakening of class identity in the context of cultural globalisation (Derne 2005) which had an intrinsic connection to gender relations. The transformations in consumption and gender relations drive class identity in India (Derne 2005). This created two sets of middle class (i) a “transnational elite group” who has economic capital to access global consumption and social capital to access transnational employment opportunities and (ii) “locally oriented middle class” who do not have access to economic resources to access new available goods and access the global employment opportunities (Derne 2005). Hapke (2013) argues Kerala as an essentially middle-class state with a high unemployment rate and access to global employment opportunities to a few numbers.

The cultural process of class identity formation, changes in economic structures and gender relations with the migration to Gulf countries and the evolution of a ‘transnational elite group’ resulted in demand for exorbitant dowries. It defined the practice of dowry as a status symbol for the bride’s family and means to capital accumulation to the groom’s family in the context of consumer culture (Kodoth 2008). During the colonial period, the dowry system was more pertinent among Namboothiri

Brahmins and Syrian Christians practising patriarchal kinship systems. The changes from matrilineal society to patriarchal nuclear families, migration and evolution of new class societies and consumerism rooted with the shift in the economy had a pivotal role in the growth and universalisation of dowry practices among different religious and caste communities in Kerala. The ideology of 'domesticity' and decline in workforce participation increase the practice of dowry (Rajaraman 1983; Sen 1989 cited in Lindberg 2014).

Dowry is paid as a status symbol and upward social mobility for the bride's family and drastically increased with the outmigration (Lindberg 2014; Eapen and Kodoth 2002). Though women's higher education than the groom can be used in lieu of dowry, many women end up like housewives in Kerala and do not make use of their qualifications (Lindberg 2014). Lindberg (2014) views dowry as a practice beyond women's oppression with its nature of becoming an 'obligatory pay' to the groom. It is paid as an 'advance compensation' to maintaining a bride, 'marriage fee' for the privilege of getting married, to ensure economic security and proper treatment of bride in her in-laws' family (Dalmia and Praveena 2005; Srinivasan cited in Lindberg 2014). Dowry system reflects the more massive gender power structure in which women are in an inferior status in the society and are forced to negotiate with the existing inequality (Lindberg 2014).

Rajan and Sreerupa (2007) critically analyse the gender-equitable outcome of Kerala's social development trajectory through secondary literature and demystifying gender parity associated with them. Sex ratio, marriageable age, female life expectancy, control over fertility, mass female literacy and educational attainments are various conventional indicators used to analyse gender parity. Sex ratio is the unique characteristic of Kerala 'model of development'. Kerala is the only state in India where female population outnumbers male population. Sex differential mortality, sex-selective migration, the sex ratio at birth and sex differentials in the enumeration are various factors influence enumeration at the time of Census. Based on the survey data conducted on migration in Kerala (Zachariah and Rajan 2004) Rajan and Sreerupa (2007) argues that there is an underlying methodological error in the calculation of sex ratio as Census does not adjust for the male-dominated migration in Kerala. The female-male sex ratio difference can be partly explained through gender-biased out-migration of men in working age (Rajan and Sreerupa 2007) and biological advantage of female survival.

Another notable feature is the female dominant sex ratio is declining with the juvenile sex ratio. According to the 2001 Census, the child sex ratio was 960 and 2011 it was 964 (Census 2011). This trend indicates a growing danger of disadvantage of female survival. IMR in urban areas was estimated 8 for male children and 12 for female children (Registrar General 2005 cited in Rajan and Sreerupa 2007), which indicates postnatal gender discrimination. The decline in fertility rate to an irreplaceable level and strong preference for small family norms had enhanced strong son preference in the state. Kerala's position is 12th in the son preference index of the country (Patel 2002). Migration and remittance of their income and modernisation had improved quality of life and better access to health care facilities in the state. Privatisation of medical facilities had an improvement in medical diagnostic facilities and better accessibility, which in turn had increased the risk of sex-selective abortions. Higher education and access to knowledge and information give these women to choose a male child through sex-selective abortions (Patel 2002; Eapen and Kodoth 2001).

The decline in fertility rate indicates an increase in the proportion of women with a single child or childless women (Patel 2002). Rajan et al. (1996) study show that the number of couples opt for sterilisation with one male child and last child being male is higher than couples opt sterilisation with the last child being female (cited in Patel 2002). Increase in female child mortality, postnatal discrimination, sex-selective abortion or prenatal discrimination, couple opting for sterilisation after single male child can be attributed as factors contributing to declining in juvenile sex ratio (Rajan and Sreerupa 2007; Patel 2002). The decline in child sex ratio and elderly sex ratio ranging to near parity debunks gender equality when analysed in the broader context of favourable sex ratio in the state (Hapke 2013).

The average age at marriage in Kerala is higher compared to the national average. The increase in the mean age of marriage is a result of not only the improvement in the level of education of women but also the increase in the average marriageable age of man that triggers the increase in the mean age of marriage of women (Krishnan 1976 cited in Rajan and Sreerupa 2007).

Fertility transition in Kerala is unique in the country with a significant decline in the fertility rate from 1950 to 1990s. Crude birth rate (CBR) in 1951-61 was 43.9 declined to 16.9 per population in 2001 (Rajan and Sreerupa 2007). High overall and female literacy, high mean age at marriage, successful implementation of Maternal and Child Health programmes, effective administration and penetration of family planning

programme to the grass root level can be attributed as factors facilitated fertility decline in the state.

The decline in fertility ensures better health for women by preventing them from the dangers of repeated childbirth and rearing, ensures them to participate in economically productive activities and thus it enhances their status (Derez` and Sen 1995 cited in Rajan and Sreerupa 2007). But in contradiction, the decline in fertility rate has not resulted in improving female labour force participation in Kerala. Kerala ranks 32 out of 35 among states and union territories in female workforce participation (2001 Census) in contrast to women seeking employment outnumber men. Gender discrimination and shift in economic activities from primary to non-primary are described as the causes for the decline in female workforce participation (Hapke 2013). The decline in the agricultural economy (Kumar 1994) along with the cultural process of “housewifization” along with the ‘deliberate’ withdrawal of women from ‘low – status unskilled and semi-skilled’ labour contributes to lower employment participation (Hapke 2013).

Family Planning programmes were instrumental in bringing down fertility rates in Kerala, but like every other state gender imbalance in the adoption of the family was high in Kerala as well. 48.2% of women were sterilized against 2.5% of men (IIPS 2000 cited in Hapke 2013). The centrality was given to social and familial welfare through modernization of childbirth, and it had medicalised female bodies to be used as an instrument to serve the well-being of patrifocal families. This had narrowed focus on the health of women only to their maternal health needs. The family planning programme failed to address women’s life choices over contraception. In a society with a high level of female education could not contest the gender norms in the utilization of contraceptives and fertility control (Devika And Mukherjee 2007, Rajan and Sreerupa 2007).

Rajan and Sreerupa (2007) also explore that Kerala leads among the states in reported crimes against women. Though relatively high reporting of crimes exists in the state, it cannot be justified when the high literacy rate and high level of female education are taken into account. Increased rate of reported crimes against women in the state is at rising with Kerala ranked second in reported domestic violence in 2006 and Thiruvananthapuram ranked first among five cities in the prevalence of domestic violence (Aleyamma 2007 cited in Hapke 2013). Hapke (2013) raises questions on the causes of domestic violence in Kerala. The high rate of unemployment, changing

gender relations and, individual and social aspirations exert pressure on men. Failure in living up to societal expectation and norms eventually culminate in violent behaviour. Incidence of domestic violence indicates deeply entrenched patriarchal ideologies and male domination. The economic and cultural transformations create social tension in society, and it gets manifested in the form of violence and reassertion of traditional values (Hapke 2013).

Higher incidence of mental illness and mental stress among Kerala population in comparison to national and state average had been reported (Eapen 2002; Mukhopadyay, Basu&Rajan 2007). Mukhopadhyay et al. (2007) identified crimes and violence against women as the most significant indicator of women's powerlessness. The perceived absence of fall-back options outside marriage and internalization of patriarchal norms are two reasons that force women to tolerate and sustain violence in their everyday lives.

Studies had brought out the relation between the increasing rate of violence and mental distress among women in Kerala as a severe concern. Violence against women in overt and muted form increases stress and anxiety, and it impacts on their mental and physical well-being. The social and cultural changes in society result in the occurrence of psychopathology and other forms of internal sufferings. Halliburton (1998) argues a high rate of suicide in the state likely to relate to the socio-cultural changes which are difficult to ascertain in the Kerala context. He probes into the disintegration of the joint family system and increased rate of suicide within the nuclear families. He also brings in some possible explanations by establishing a causal relation between suicide and high literacy rate in Kerala. The existence of a gap between education and job availabilities in the state increases the stress level of the population.

Mohamed et al. (2002) conducted a study on the mental health of people in Kerala with a sample size of 1000 household in Kerala with 1308 males and 1477 females belonging to the age group between 15-59 and 60-69. The study report brings out a result which shows a statistically significant gender disparity in wellbeing with men having better mental wellbeing than women across regions and with the increase in age. The study brings in economic inequalities as poor people have poor mental wellbeing. Marital status is another variable where marriage negatively impact mental wellbeing of both men and women in Kerala. When a higher level of education implies better mental wellbeing, there is a significant gender difference between literates and primary and secondary school educated ones, while gender difference is not significant

among illiterates and degree holders. A significant level of gender disparity in mental wellbeing was found among upper caste communities such as Nairs and Syrian Christians compared to Muslims, SC/ST, Ezhavas. Households of emigrants have better wellbeing, whereas households of emigrant returnees have a decline in wellbeing (Mohamed et al. 2002).

Various factors that cause stress among men and women in Kerala are financial insecurities, worries and insecurities about future, poor health and burden of work. Violence and aggression against women add additional stress for them, and relatively women undergo more stress than men in Kerala. Out of the sample, 86 per cent women are stressed because of their confinement to gender roles of domestic work. Managing household work and work outside home and caring of children and elderly add burden for women (Mohamed et al. 2002). 'Kerala model development' shows a paradox between statistical data and qualitative data on the development in the state. Increase in gender disparity and mental illness among women are clearly visible in the empirical studies conducted in the past two decades. Though gender disparities of mental wellbeing were clearly mapped, and regional disparities and religious differences were addressed, disparities of mental wellbeing across class categories are mostly invisible in these studies. The studies tried to explore the trends and patterns but have been poorly inquisitive of the causes and factors of these patterns and trends.

The paradoxical picture of Kerala's development states that development does not entirely ensure empowerment and wellbeing. In Kerala, the socio-cultural system is a complex mixture where a high literacy rate and high rate of women enrolment in higher education co-exists with strong patriarchal system and growing conservatism. The educational system, the market economy, familial structures are driven by cultural norms, patriarchal values and gender ideology. These gendered systems produce public-life oriented men and domestic life-oriented women. The achievements in the conventional indicators of development were not transformative in nature to liberate women by ensuring more autonomy and freedom (Kodoth&Eapen 2005; Devika & Mukherjee 2007; Hapke 2013).

Gender Power Relations and Violence in Kerala

In the domains of family, there is differentiated access to and control over material and social resources where gender relations are structured. Patrifocal families give

importance to the preference of the men in the family (Mukhopadhyay and Seymour 1994: 3). Male oriented structures constitute a socio-cultural context that affects the lives of women.

Gender relations in the family are characterised by both cooperation and conflict, and the hierarchy is maintained and changed through bargaining between men and women depended on the differential access to and control over resources (Sen 1990). The association of men with 'productive' work 'outside' the domain of the family and women's 'reproductive' work 'inside' the family keeps the gender disparity alive within the household (Kodoth and Eapen 2003). Bargaining power of the member is determined by multiple factors, the strength of fall-back option outside the household, if the cooperation within the household is ceased and the degree of the legitimacy of their claim (Kodoth and Eapen 2003). Dowry deaths and domestic violence rise along with the increase in the level of education. Work was not empowering women to have control over their earnings or make 'self-interested' decisions (Kodoth and Eapen 2003). Women's inability to make decisions against societal values indicate this trend. Women's behaviour and making choices within the households are deeply influenced by the entrenched social rules, norms and values (Kabeer 1999). 'Autonomy' and 'empowerment' elucidates the power relations in the household. Differential access to and control over the resources are a constraint for women to make choices and decisions and exercise their agency in their life (Kodoth and Eapen 2003).

In the matrilineal kinship system, there was greater sexual choice. Women could walk out of a *sambandham* as they received permanent and uncontested subsistence ensured protection in their natal home, and their fall-back option was stronger. The oppressive edge of widowhood was absent and free to remarry. Greater mobility and exposure to women ensured access to education through the locally available forms of literacy. Birth of girl children were welcomed and security to girl children. The familial kinship identities established through lineage and inheritance gave continuity and security to their rights and were considered important part of their families (Kodoth and Eapen 2003).

Changes in gender relations began with the changes in the organisation of marriage and property rights. With gulf outmigration in the 1970s, new trends of consumer practices started, and new identities shaped around it restructured the

changing gender relations. The caste status and income level acted as constraints from participating in consumerism, which is perceived as empowering and relatively egalitarian act in the cultural context of Kerala. Hence inequality was built into the politics of consumption as well (Kodoth and Eapen 2003, 241). The practice of 'enforced' consumption was practised as a process against exclusion. Specific kind of consumption such as jewellery, consumer products as part of huge dowries became a norm and its objectified women. Marriage became a stage for public display of the family's status, wealth and style. Marriage, as a social imperative and education of women, are aimed to get better prospective husbands.

Freedom is key to the conceptualisations of capabilities and development in Amartya Sen's writings. Capabilities for him is the 'freedom to choose what one values' and development 'expands the real freedom people enjoy' by 'removing major sources of unfreedom' (Sen 1999). Agarwal and Panda (2007) Domestic violence is placed in the conceptual framework of capabilities and freedom and thus placing it in the development debate. Sen's (1993, 1999, 2006b) conceptual contributions of 'capabilities and functioning, agency goals and instrumental freedom' is used as the conceptual tools to understand how domestic violence affects human wellbeing and development (Agarwal and Panda 2007). Sen (1993) defines capabilities as the combination of functionings a person can achieve, and the choice one makes out of the set of functionings. It is otherwise can be put as the freedom to achieve something and the actual achievement of it or the distinction between opportunity and outcome.

Agarwal and Panda (2007) argue marital violence undermines women's capabilities and functioning in a range of ways. Domestic violence can undermine women's economic freedom as her capability to earn a living or procure property could get affected by the physical and mental trauma linked to the violence. This can affect her performance in the job market, disrupting her regular work, her productivity and her chances of upward mobility (Agarwal and Panda 2007, 361). It also undermines her social opportunities and her ability to build social relationships and access to social capital. Her sense of self gets damaged, it generates a fear in her to share her experience with others, and she withdrew from social contacts. Notions of self-respect and pressures to maintain family's 'respectable' status and dignity women stop women from revealing of the domestic violence to others (Agarwal and Panda 2007). Because of this marital violence remained in the realm of personal/private and disconnected

from the political/public realms of the society which undermines a woman's political freedom, constraining her ability to perform as an active citizen or seek her citizenship entitlements (Agarwal and Panda 2007, 362). Marital violence is most 'pernicious' because it happens in the family, space which is central to one's development and deprives women's basic capabilities and functioning in fundamental ways (Agarwal and Panda 2007).

Sen's conceptualisations of wellbeing freedom/wellbeing achievement and agency freedom/agency achievement have been utilised to understand how capabilities and functionings of a woman undergoing violence are affected. Spousal violence undermining the ability to develop or gain 'employable skills' negatively affect wellbeing freedom. When her ability to have a regular job, promoted in the job is undermined, it affects their wellbeing achievement. When it undermines the goal setting for personal as well as social advancement through damaging self-confidence, it undermines a woman's agency- freedom. When women's capacity to realize the goals already set is undermined affects her agency achievement and also reduces wellbeing achievement.

The after-effects of spousal violence carry on their physical health where violence during pregnancy can result in miscarriage, low-birth-weight infants, foetal and maternal death. Domestic violence affects emotional and behavioural problem in children, and such children are more likely to accept spousal violence than contesting it and men are likely to continue wife battering when they get married (Agarwal and Panda 2007).

Sen's (1999) five instrumental freedoms needed for development: protective security, economic facilities, social opportunities, political freedoms, and transparency guarantees are compromised in marital violence. The notion of home as a space of protection and security is violated in the domestic space where marital violence takes place. A woman's access to opportunities to develop skills in order to seek employment, regularity in their job, access to the property and assert the rights in familial property undermines her economic freedoms, and thus restrict her access to the economic facility that causes a negative contribution to household income and country's income. It also undermines her capacity to access social opportunities for good health and participation in social life, that negatively affects the social and economic development of the

country. Fear of domestic violence may restrict their political freedom, and political participation could give an uneven development of the country and society as women's interest and voices are not counted adequately. The culture of silencing about violence mainly in society and in the media platforms exposes the failure of transparency guarantees (Agarwal and Panda 2007).

The effects of relative capabilities or functionings of the husband and wife gives more of a nuanced understanding of *perverse effects* where the higher the education or better employment status of the woman could be perceived as 'superiority' of his wife and this feeling could irk the husband and unleash violence against his wife in specific cultural settings. This effects on the well-being outcomes of the woman by undermining her self-confidence and cause poor health or restricting her earning capabilities (Agarwal and Panda 2007, 364–65).

Access to ownership of landed property enhances women's livelihood options, sense of empowerment, strengthens fallback option and bargaining power in the domestic space (Agarwal and Panda 2007; Agarwal 1997). Thus her property ownership reduces risk to domestic violence by strengthening her 'economic security, reducing tolerance to violence and providing potential escape route' (Agarwal and Panda 2007, 366). "We note that where the woman has a higher employment status than her husband, the incidence of physical violence is twice that where she has the same or lower employment status" (Agarwal and Panda 2007, 372).

Violence against women in Kerala is 'pervasive, frequent and takes multiple forms, both physical and psychological violence (Agarwal and Panda 2007, 369). In a survey conducted in Thiruvananthapuram among 502 ever-married women (302 rural and 200 urban) among the age group of 15-49, 36% reported physical violence and 65% reported psychological violence after marriage, while the reported cases are considered as underestimated statistics. Experiences of violence during pregnancy were reported when 61% reported experiencing a combination of four forms of physical violence, i.e. being slapped, kicked, hit and beaten (Agarwal and Panda 2007). The primary reasons that triggered violence were perception of poor fulfilment or non-fulfilment of gender roles in a gender division of labour system, dissatisfaction with the way wife took care of children, attended home, cooked food ranging to women's interaction with outside world, the suspicion of women being unfaithful and dissatisfaction with the dowry (Agarwal and Panda 2007). The status of women's property ownership, access to social

capital such as supporting network, the nature and stability of husband's employment, both women and man's childhood exposure to domestic violence are significant factors in association with women's risk of long term psychological abuse (Agarwal and Panda 2007).

Bourdieuian Conceptual Framework to Understand Power Relations

Bourdieu conceptualises one's occupation as the primary organising principle for the individual's position in the social structure followed by their gender, ethnic identities, age and geographical locations. Her occupation is primarily determined by one's place of origin and life trajectory, determined by their parental occupation. Thus, for him, the social structure is primarily defined by the occupation and the access to capital associated with that occupational status. Bourdieu's work on capital is criticised as an androcentric work, where he treats capital as gender-neutral and identifies gender as only the secondary principle of social stratification that shapes capital in the 'reconversion process' (McCall 1992, 842). Bourdieu's conceptual framework of capital failed to understand the complicated relationship between gender, capital and dispositions. He considers gender as 'secondary' based on both its significance in the male-dominated stratification as well as its 'hidden' form in the social order. Thus, McCall (1992) interprets gender as primary even when it is 'elusive' in nature, which appears as 'natural and universal'. Thus she identifies gender as a form of capital (Huppertz 2009, 47). In his explanations of the social organisation of society, even though he recognises the disintegration of kinship as central form society's social order, his explanations of gender and family were overshadowed by his interpretation of the primary institutions of modernity and failed to address family as an emerging modern institution. He attributes feminine dispositions to women only and masculine dispositions to men only and at the same time overlooks the uncontested symbolic violence on women as imbued to their gender status. He treats gender division as natural and universal, which is one of the relations of domination that organises social life. This is portrayed as a gap in his theory of social class structure, where it failed to address the how women internalise the binaries of public/private, male/female, culture/nature and the contradictions inherent in the binaries which form the crucial dimension of their experiences (McCall 1992, 852).

Gender is perceived as an asymmetrical category. McCall (1992) argues there is an ambiguity runs through the operation of the capital where it challenges to alter the

definition of capital in relation to gender. A woman working in a profession perceived as a masculine profession like engineering may possess a gendered disposition which is masculine than feminine, which accounts as a symbolic capital for her to perform well in her career. But at the same time, her responsibilities as a mother and wife would remind her of her feminine dispositions which in turn reduce her as a mother, work part-time to care for the children or supplementary contributor to the household income and to the economy in general. Thus,

the multiplicity of gendered dispositions in the form of capital contributes to the construction of position: gendered dispositions are multiple and not, of course, attached only to the sexed biological body in the form of embodied gender dispositions shaping individuals' social trajectories. Yet, on the other hand, the dichotomous action of gender acts to constrain and subordinate the meaning of women's activity, whatever the content of the so-called capital (McCall 1992, 846).

There is an 'imposition of the dichotomous gender classificatory schemes' in relation to the 'multiplicity of gendered dispositions' that structures the 'public' and 'unconscious' aspects of the habitus (McCall 1992, 847).

Women internalise the hegemonic patriarchal representations of the body as 'common sense'. They internalise and mediate between two domains; 'the masculine/public world of paid work and the feminine/personal world of human reproduction, thus encountering patriarchal relations in both' (McCall 1992, 848). When women accommodate their domestic role and associate their personal life more with the domestic domains, they are placed in a lesser position in the 'dual ordering of social life' whereas men are identified with the public domains of social life (Yeatman 1986 cited in McCall 1992). Women, especially professional women, make their spectrum of choices, consciously and unconsciously while balancing her gender dispositions, needed as capitals for performing her professional role as well as her domestic roles. In this process, professional women are always mediating the 'opposing cultural demands' and 'internalising the cultural contradictions of gender' (Fee 1986 cited in McCall 1992). In this process, women acquire a 'self-consciousness' by venturing into a field of male domination through taking the gendered dispositions that do not fit into a position. "The ontological complicity between habitus and field breaks down: fit no longer explains the relationship between positions and disposition" (McCall 1992, 850). Women gains a clear consciousness of gender in a male dominated social order.

But women carry the traits of femaleness with the perceived female biological body and the transgressors of the boundaries and working in gender inappropriate settings are victimised by the ‘classifying schemes of others’ as an indication of warning to her ‘non-complicity of her disposition with her environment’ (McCall 1992, 850). Consciousness is the “particular configuration of subjectivity or subjective limits, produced at the intersection of meaning with experience” (Lauretis 1986, 8 cited in McCall 1992, 850).

The politics of identity, an emerging phenomenon in the 1990s, was primarily based on the perceptions of identity-based on the subjective experience of structures. In that ground, Skeggs (1997) discusses how working-class identities are formed, questioning whether ‘identification or dis-identification with the categories are central to the subjectivities. The representations that identify working-class women’s identity is through what they do not constitute, and the distance from because the politics of their class identity is the experience of their structures of feeling.

The middle-class identity was consolidated through the process of framing people with observable and measurable class and race characteristics as civilised and advanced and the rest who does not fall into this categorisation as inferior to them. This was carried on through the process of deploying ‘sexuality’ as a display of measurable characteristics that distanced from and to civilised and respectable behaviour. This process generated the imagination of middle-class as respectable and the working-class as non-respectable categories(Skeggs 1997). Characterising working-class women as licentious, degenerate, bad mothers unable to give care to their children were legitimized through discursive constructions to maintain the cultural superiority of middle-class women. Thus, working-class women were forced to continually identify themselves and negotiate with the social constructions of their identity by others as ‘pathological sexualised’ bodies(Skeggs 1997).

Working-class women construct their subjective identities through their experiences of ‘felt and experienced’ value judgments and classification others make of them, and their knowledge of these classificatory categories(Skeggs 1997). Their positioning based on other recognitions in the structure is central to their subjectivities (Skeggs 1997). Class categories are born out of the imaginary classification of people in the strata, which was an outcome of the political desire to consolidate power through differentiating with others. Thus, this became historically a construction of ‘reality’

based on the 'discourses of difference' in representations of categories (Skeggs 1997). Thus, she argues the experience constitute their subjectivities through the constant process of interpretation of these experiences through the discursive framework of value judgments. "Ontology is the ground of epistemology, that what I determine what and how I know" (Skeggs 1997, 137).

The interaction between the structures of male domination and the women subjectivities is the central problem of feminist theory. Using Bourdieu's interpretation of structures in practical action has been adapted by feminist as a conceptual tool to understand the role of gender in the social relations of the modern capitalist society.

Bourdieu's conceptualising of capital is used as a conceptual framework to understand the gendered practices of distinction, female agency, masculine domination and relationship between gender and class, through exploring the *feminine* and *female* capitals operated within the field of paid caring work (Huppatz 2009). Even when Bourdieu acknowledges gender and class as 'inseparable', he overlooked at the relationship between gender and class and to recognize gender as a form of capital. Bourdieu treats women as 'repositories' of capital and interprets them as capital bearing objects for men, rather than capital bearing subjects with their own strategies of capital accumulation (Lovell 2000 cited in Huppatz 2009). Which later on he, contradicts himself in his work *Distinction* (Bourdieu 2000) where he interprets women as capital accumulating subjects and use it for their own advantage.

Feminist theorists argue that femininity is culturally learned and especially stereotypical femininity has the potential to operate as cultural capital. It is the social position of class, gender, sexuality, region, age and race that ensure the cultural internalisation of femininity in different ways (Skeggs 1997, 10).

Huppatz (2009) approach femininity and femaleness as cultural resources used by women of different class background by examining the perceptions of women of the advantages of owning feminine dispositions, in other words, their experience of feminine self, the parameters of their female advantage and the gains they made through working with and working for similar another female. Femininity is a 'female condition', wherein

female capital is the gender advantage that is derived from being perceived to have a female (but not necessarily feminine) body; whereas feminine capital is the gender advantage that is derived

from a disposition or skill set learned via socialization, or from simply being hailed as feminine (this occurs when one's body is recognized as feminine)(Huppatz 2009, 50).

A feminine advantage operates within the caregiving work as aligned with the female body and an integral part of femininity aligned to the female body, and it is disassociated with masculinity. Thus, female capital is 'legitimated' in the field of caregiving work, which in turn operates as a 'symbolic capital' which can be converted to 'economic capital' which procures job security and economic gains (Huppatz 2009). Since femininity is an internalisation of skills and aptitudes through discursive practices and embodied, 'feminine capital is a cultural capital' (Huppatz 2009, 53). The internalisation of feminine disposition gives the 'knowledge' that helps them to develop confidence in their dispositions and utilize their 'femininity' as an asset. This helps them to understand the nature and demands of the caregiving work and place them within the limits of femininity to get job opportunities in the field. But this internalisation and naturalisation of feminine dispositions 'reinstates the doxic order' where the feminised capital are undervalued and underpaid as it is perceived as 'innate feminine capacity' rather than 'acquired skills and capacities' (Huppatz 2009, 55). Femininity is incorporated into the woman's selfhood, thus to become 'feminine self' opposite to the 'masculine self' (Huppatz 2009, 55). The experience of 'sisterhood' among the women who rendered paid care service and people who employed them and received their services was attributed to their 'femaleness', the gender identity of woman, rather than to their femininity. This 'femaleness' was capital for them as they were hired for employment because of this female capital (Huppatz 2009). Women *capitalise* their femininity and femaleness within the paid caregiving work to procure job security and economic gains (Huppatz 2009, 61).

There are set parameters to this 'female privilege.' There are limits to feminine and female capital once one moves out of the feminised fields. In the masculine dominated field when women pursue 'powerful and well-paid position the gender power relations and 'doxic order de-legitimize feminine and female capitals' to put them down and thus 'nullify their strategic usefulness' in the struggle for money and power (Huppatz 2009, 59). Women's gendered capital operates within limits (McCall 1992) as it has 'limited use-value' and gives 'restricted access to potential forms of power' because femininity is a cultural 'resource' and can use 'in tactical ways rather than strategic ways' (Skeggs 1997, 8-10), and it does not have the institutional support

and trade value as masculinity has (Skeggs 1997; Huppertz 2009). There is a 'diminution of symbolic capital entailed by being a woman' (Bourdieu 2001, 93). Women have a 'double bind' in accessing power. Women behaving like men risking their attributes of 'femininity' and challenges men's natural right to power and position; they would be labelled as 'incapable' and 'unfit' for the job position if they express their feminine quality and behave like a woman (Bourdieu 2001, 67-68). When women move out of the feminine field to pursue power and position 'the symbolic value of her capital is not assured' and gives restricted access to potential forms of power (Huppertz 2009, 60).

Conceptual Understanding of Wellbeing

The societal expectation of an 'ideal woman' portrayed through gender stereotyping is as the one who skilfully balances between her domestic and professional roles. The imbalance between multiple roles of a working woman, who ought to be a domestic-life oriented woman, produces stress and role conflicts in their life. In this context the professional women's 'perception' and 'assessment' of 'quality of life' in their contextual setting (Shin and Johnson's (1978) becomes relevant, with their experiences of role conflict, role extension and status dissonance in their personal life (Chanana 2001). Work-family conflict causes 'stress' among professional women when there is a disintegration of family structures to extend social support and face domestic violence. Their prolonged experiences of violence, role conflict and status dissonance affect their mental and physical wellbeing (Haw 1982). Their quality of life declines with increases in stress that may cause cardiovascular disease and other chronic ailments (Gani and Ara 2010). In a gendered and patriarchal society, the societal demands, class aspirations and the ability of these women to respond to these demands and aspirations determine the level of stress they undergo. In their social context, their necessity to work, attitude and perception towards work, familial responsibilities, lifestyles and job conditions impacts on the physical and psychological wellbeing of working women (Doyal 1990). The kinds of discrimination they face in their workplaces and in society are conditioned by gender ideologies and cultural values. When we look beyond the 'conventional indicators' of development such as literacy to 'non-conventional' indicators to understand development qualitatively, the increase in crimes and violence against women, increase in gender disparities, increase rate of mental illness among women, higher female unemployment and underemployment, questions the whole concept of gender development and wellbeing in Kerala.

The question of what is wellbeing broadly defines as “the state of being healthy, happy and prosperous” (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009, 2). In different disciplinary understanding, wellbeing is defined differently. Wellbeing is equated with quality of life (Ferry 2005; Nussbaum and Sen 2003), life satisfaction (Bornstein et al. 2003, Diener and Suh 2000), Sociologist and economists define wellbeing as “living in a good environment”. Psychologist and health care professionals “to cope with the problems of life”. “A typical catch-all term without precise meaning” (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009). “Well-being is a positive state of affairs, brought about by the simultaneous satisfaction of personal, relational, and collective needs of individuals and communities” (Prilleltensky 2005).

“Well-being incorporates a variety of objective factors such as being healthy, being safe (from crime or violence), being financially secure, having access to resources, including education, culture, roads, and transport. Well-being also, however, incorporates more subjective factors such as being happy, ...feeling connected to one’s community and having the capacity to cope with adverse life events” (Ogilvie 2002 cited in Mathews and Izquierdo 2009, 4-5). Well-being is experienced by individuals—its essential locus lies within individual subjectivity—but it may be considered and compared interpersonally and interculturally since all individuals live within distinct worlds of others, and all societies live in a common world at large (Mathews and Izquierdo 2009, 5).

Diener et al. (1997) conceptualise wellbeing as the balance of good and bad events of life and the state of having satisfaction of life. The collectivist notions of ‘good life’ and the social comparisons socially construct the subjective wellbeing. Social construction theory deals with how we make sense of things (2008, 47). The individual actors construct the ‘mental representations of reality’ based on the collective notions, thus emphasizing on human thinking rather than on the ‘affective experiences and innate drives’ (Berger and Luckman 1966).

The concept of wellbeing has gained prominence across the world during the neoliberal period. Promotion of wellbeing of individuals became the core focus of social and development policies during this period. In this context, the researches attempted to define wellbeing and develop various measuring tools to measure wellbeing (White 2009). The question of defining well-being is highly challenging and debated and it has been much discussed in philosophical conceptualisations and

research approaches (Smith and Reid 2017). Wellbeing has been attempted to define from various methodological, theoretical and disciplinary approaches.

Evolution of Wellbeing Research

There is a growing trend of increasing research on wellbeing from diverse contexts (White 2009). The post-World War II period and later, the emergence of positive psychology in 1960 in America contributed mostly to the interest of wellbeing research. The post-World War II period witnessed a wide range of researches from various disciplines such as Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology, intended to promote human welfare, started researching on the individual perceptions, views and meaning concerning about their lives (Keyes 2006). In this context in 1950s subjective wellbeing emerged as a scientific field of inquiry and researchers started developing indicators to measure the quality of life to monitor social change and social policy (Keyes 2006). The human potential movement targeting psychological growth and health in the 1960s in America was significant in the evolution of positive psychology. This period was a time of relative affluence. But the economic advantage found the material security and luxury were insufficient to secure happiness (Ryan and Deci 2001). This culture of surplus (Ryan and Deci 2001), the erosion of social and relational aspects of human life with the development of capitalist and globalized modernity (White 2017) spurred the increase in research on wellbeing. The current wellbeing researches are dominated by economic and psychological approaches, addressed in a highly individualistic and self-centric entitlement rooted in the 'ideology of self-improvement' to form a 'disciplinary regime of self' (White 2017; Smith and Reid 2017).

Paradigms and Perspectives of Wellbeing

The two distinct, yet overlapping dominant paradigms and perspectives for the empirical understanding of wellbeing are based on philosophies of 'eudaimonism' and 'hedonism' (Ryan and Deci 2001). These traditions, however, established distinct views on human nature and the constituent elements of a good society (Ryan and Deci 2001). The methodological and theoretical advancement of these philosophies raises sophisticated questions on the relationship between wellbeing and the developmental and social processes, as well as culture to wellbeing from an evolutionary psychological perspective (Ryan and Deci 2001).

Hedonic approach equates wellbeing to pure hedonic happiness and defines wellbeing in terms of pleasure attainment and avoidance of pain emphasizing on the emotional dimensions of an individual. The eudaimonic approach that focuses on meaning and self-realisation defined wellbeing in terms of the degree to which the person is fully functioning emphasizing on life satisfaction of the individual (Ryan and Deci 2001; Smith and Reid 2017; Dodge et al. 2012).

Hedonic philosophy of happiness and pleasure-seeking dates back to the Greek philosopher Aristippus of 4th century BC. He proposed that the goal of human life is to experience the totality of one's hedonic moments through maximizing pleasure and happiness (Ryan and Deci 2001b). Bentham argues a good society is built upon the individual's attempts to maximize pleasure and self-interest. The focus varied from pleasures of mind to pleasures of the body (Ryan and Deci 2001b).

According to Hedonic paradigm, wellbeing consists of subjective happiness and makes a value judgement of good or bad elements of life through the experiences of pleasure Vs displeasure (Ryan and Deci 2001b). Hedonic Psychology focuses on what makes life pleasant and unpleasant. For them, happiness attainment is not only out of physical fulfilment but also of attainment of goals or valued outcomes. The researches based on hedonic wellbeing aims at happiness maximization (Ryan and Deci 2001). Hedonic well-being focused on the emotional dimensions of the individual, perception of interest in life, satisfaction and happiness with life, the balance of pleasant and unpleasant affect (Smith and Reid 2017; Diener and Suh 1997), which are the components of Subjective Well-Being (SWB), a dominant formulation of hedonic wellbeing researchers. They define affect as pleasant and unpleasant moods, and emotions and life satisfaction, as a cognitive sense of satisfaction with life (Dodge et al. 2012). This SWB assessment was triggered by a pleasure/pain continuum evaluation of human experience within hedonic psychology (Ryan and Deci 2001b). Even though the validity of SWB and equating its measures to the operational definition of hedonism and wellbeing been widely critiqued, it emerged as the primary index of wellbeing in current researches (Ryan and Deci 2001b).

The proponents of hedonic wellbeing argued for a bottom-up empirical approach to understand the elementary facts, which falls into an 'expectancy-value' approach (Ryan and Deci 2001). Thus "wellbeing is a function of expecting to attain

(and ultimately attaining) the outcome one values, whatever those might be” (Ryan and Deci 2001b, 145). The enhancement of goals to attain wellbeing are individual and culture-specific, and this understanding has relativistic and postmodern theoretical influences (Ryan and Deci 2001).

Development of positive psychology in 1998 equated subjective wellbeing with good mental health and personal strength, rather than focusing on mental illness and dysfunction (White 2017; White and Blackmore 2016). Keyes (2006) says that the third generation of research on mental health and human development contributed to the understanding of subjective well-being. Mental health is viewed as a syndrome of wellbeing symptoms, a balance of symptoms of hedonia and eudemonia (Keyes 2009). Mental health and development focuses on the presence of subjective well-being and not on the mere absence of illness as an indicator of development (Keyes 2006). Mental health is the outcome of complete wellbeing (subjective and psychological) and the absence of common mental disorders.

Researches on subjective well-being throw light to quality of life and human development, which are central to policy decision makings (Keyes 2006). Thus well-being evolves from individual’s assessment of the quality of life according to their chosen criteria, their perceptions of current situations and aspirations (Shin and Johnson 1978; Emerson 1985; Felcy and Perry 1995; Keyes 2006; Dodge et al. 2012).

Seligman (2011) the progenitor of positive psychology identifies wellbeing as navigating from authentic happiness to flourishing. He associates authentic happiness to positive emotion, engagement and meaning wherein flourishing it also includes relationships and accomplishment as elements of well-being (White 2017). The ‘diagnosis of flourishing’ was developed to measure social, emotional and psychological well-being (Keyes 2009).

Positive psychology contributed largely to wellbeing research. It has mostly been developed in the individualistic societies which consider happiness as the cultural ideal and negative emotions as evidence of failure and requiring treatment (Smith and Reid 2017). Here Subjective Well-Being focus on the individual self as independent and autonomous entity and downplay the interpersonal dimensions of self and reality (Smith and Reid 2017). This individualistic and neoliberal conceptions of wellbeing entitle the individual as responsible for their wellbeing and displace the role of

community in their welfare. This replaces the ‘homo economicus’, the self-interested individual of the late capitalist market to ‘homo-felix’, the self-interested pleasure-maximizer (Smith and Reid 2017).

A large number of researches on wellbeing has been one-sided focusing on ‘science of happiness’, which quantifies happiness as a measurable unit with the aid of pre-existing measuring scales (Smith and Reid 2017). It’s been widely criticized the grounds of being inadequate to address the current social realities, and it reconstitutes nineteenth-century English utilitarianism where the government tries to maximize happiness. The diversity of human lifeways gets concealed when the science of happiness attempts to quantify the philosophical and political concepts of wellbeing (Ahmed 2007; White 2010; Kahneman and Krueger 2006).

Subjective wellbeing’s core focus is towards utility and assessment of pleasure, happiness and satisfaction rather than on its substantive content. When it tries to assess how happy people are, it does not address how that happiness is defined or what are the basis of that happiness. It assesses what makes one ‘feel good’ but on the contrary critiques argues not just the subjective perception of ‘feel good’, but wellbeing should address what ‘is good’ in an intrinsic way. It says that things that makes one ‘feel good’ may not be good for the individual at the same time (White and Blackmore 2016). The happiness of SWB is critiqued as it is argued it lack substantive content. Instead, it is merely ‘a marker of subjective success in life’. High satisfaction of life can be an indicator or lower aspirations rather than of positive fulfilment associated with happiness for another category of people. The robustness of the data can be highly influenced by the context such as the mood of the person or finding an immediate ‘feel good trigger’ (White and Blackmore 2016).

Aristotle critiqued hedonic happiness as a vulgar ideal that makes humans slavish followers of desires. For him, true happiness was ‘doing what is worth doing’ (Ryan and Deci 2001). On this ground, Fromm (1981) made a distinction between ‘subjectively felt needs and objectively valid needs’, wherein the former is harmful to human growth and the latter falls in line with the requirement of human nature (cited in Ryan and Deci 2001b). Eudaimonic tradition refers to wellbeing as distinct from happiness and assumes all desires and values an individual value may not yield wellbeing (Ryan and Deci 2001). Eudaimonia refers to as positive functioning, which

involves the process of enabling self-fulfilment, meaning and purpose. It focuses on an individual's evaluation of psychological well-being. It appears to produce a more stable and enduring sense of wellbeing (Dodge et al. 2012; Smith and Reid 2017). In their conception, subjective happiness cannot be equated with wellbeing (Ryan and Deci 2001).

Eudaimonic conception of wellbeing is an individual's ability to live with the true self. This condition occurs when people's lives are in congruence with deeply held values, and they are holistically or fully engaged (Ryan and Deci 2001). Ryff defines wellbeing as "the striving for perfection that represents the realization of one's true potential" (Ryff 1995, 100). Ryff and Keyes (1995) distinguished between Psychological Well-Being (PSW) and Subjective Well-Being (SWB) and presented a multidimensional approach to the measurement of PSW with six distinct aspects of human actualization. "The six dimensions encompass a breadth of well-being: Positive evaluation of oneself and one's past life, a sense of continued growth and development as a person, the belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful, the possession of quality relations with others, the capacity to manage effectively one's life and surrounding world, and a sense of self-determination" (cited in Keyes 2006, 5). Autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationship with others, purpose in life, the realization of potential and self-acceptance are the six constitutive factors in Ryff's conceptualization of psychological well-being (Ryff 1989).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci 2001) is another perspective which based its theoretical foundations in eudaimonia i.e. self-realization as a central definitional aspect of wellbeing. It focuses on the functioning and fulfilment and life well lived. It entails the distinction between the fulfilment of right and wrong desires (White 2016). SDT proposes 'autonomy, competence and relatedness as the three essential psychological needs, essential for psychological growth, integrity and wellbeing (Ryan and Deci 2001; White and Blackmore 2016). The former are the principal factors that foster wellbeing. Need fulfilment is the fundamental aim of life, which precisely describes the meaning and purposes underlying human actions.

"Contextual and cultural as well as developmental factors continually influence modes of expression, the means of satisfaction, and the ambient support for these needs, and it is because of their effects on need satisfaction that they, in turn, influence growth, integrity,

and well-being at both between-person and within-person level of analysis” (Ryan and Deci 2001b, 147)

Wellbeing is understood as fully functioning than only attaining desires. SDT argues a satisfaction of basic psychological needs fosters SWB as well as eudaimonic wellbeing. Wellness cannot be defined as mere absence of psychopathology, instead it is an array of positive aspects of functioning promoted through the attainment of strong attachment relationships, acquisition of age-appropriate cognitive, interpersonal and coping skills and exposure to an environment that empower the person (Cowen (1991) cited in Ryan and Deci 2001b).

Approaches to Wellbeing

The plethora of researches on wellbeing has been critiqued widely on the grounds of its individualistic and self-centric nature, tried to quantify it in measurable terms. These theoretical and methodological approaches are inadequate to understand and interpret the very subtle characteristics of the social and cultural aspects of individuals in which individuals are embedded. Thus, the recent researches emphasize on the multidimensional and multifactorial concepts of wellbeing.

White (2017) discusses three approaches to wellbeing, (i) comprehensive approach (ii) subjective wellbeing (SWB) (iii) personal wellbeing. The comprehensive approach gives primacy to ‘quality of life’ factors with importance to income and economic growth. Subjective wellbeing, as discussed above, measures individual satisfaction and happiness to assess policies and political projects. Personal wellbeing targets individuals to initiate actions to promote their own health and happiness.

Comprehensive wellbeing approach is widely used in public policies. It has both subjective and objective indicators and it is used in substantive and evaluative ways (White and Blackmore 2016). It has three key elements which are the ‘breadth’, the promotion of measuring tools to measure societal progress, ‘relevance’ of statistics to reflect what matters to people in real-life situations, and the inclusion of subjective elements along with objective elements (White and Blackmore 2016).

Amartya Sen’s (1993) ‘capability approach’ contributed significantly to the understanding of comprehensive wellbeing. This approach has placed wellbeing on the global economics and international development agenda (White and Blackmore 2016).

Capability approach focuses on human ends and sees human progress, ultimately as “the progress of human freedom and capability to lead the kind of lives that people have reason to value” (Dreze and Sen 2013). Sen rejected measurement of standards of living and argued to focus on the scope of the individual to have valued functioning, their agency and freedom (White 2017). Capabilities are potentials, various combinations of functioning (being and doing), which may or may not be practised. It is the set of functioning which reflects an individual’s freedom to lead one type of life or other, to choose from possible livings (Alkire 2005). Sen identifies ‘agency and freedom’ as the prerequisite and constituent of wellbeing (White and Blackmore 2016). Beyond capabilities, it has to be discerned through public reasoning of what people value and have reason to value (White 2017). People may have reasons for valuing certain aspects of life at the cost of their own personal wellbeing (White and Blackmore 2016).

Personal wellbeing focuses on the alterations and changes in individual human behaviour, emphasizing that individual as responsible for their own wellbeing (White and Blackmore 2016; White 2017). Happiness has the central place in the understanding of personal wellbeing in which both subjective and substantive elements overlap (White and Blackmore 2016).

The promotion of ‘wellbeing’ as an ultimate goal of social, health and developmental policies had pushed the conceptualisation of wellbeing from external measures to people’s perception and experiences of life. Wellbeing is a combination of discourses on human need, human development, life satisfaction and quality of life, economics and psychology of subjective wellbeing. The subjective aspects of how people ‘feel about’ their health and economic conditions is significant in understanding their perception of wellbeing (White 2006).

Wellbeing from Different Disciplinary Understanding

Wellbeing has been widely approached from different disciplines such as Psychology, Economics and Sociology. Another context where researches on wellbeing are implied in the development policies and practices. In this context, wellbeing is looked upon as a ‘holistic outlook’ integrating the mind, body and soul overcoming the modernist divisive and self-centric understanding of a person. It recognizes the multiplicity and integrity of people’s lives. It has an inclusive aspiration and eliminates the ‘othering’

and ‘stigma’ attached to the targeted communities. It is centred on people’s own priorities and perspectives, their perceptions and experiences of life (White 2010). People’s understanding of wellbeing varies according to different social context.

Dimensions of Wellbeing

White (2010) defines wellbeing at an intuitive level. From an intuitive level, ‘doing well’ and ‘feeling good’ are the two general expressions of wellbeing. ‘Doing well’ is the indication of the material dimension of the standard of living that reflects economic prosperity. ‘Feeling good’ is the subjective dimension of levels of satisfaction and personal perception of their welfare.

In the developing countries context, wellbeing is about living a ‘good life’ which has a collective dimension to their subjective perception. It is a reflection of individual preferences along with the grounded moral values and shared a normative understanding of the world (White 2010).

White (2010) defines wellbeing as a process which is shaped through the dynamic interaction between three dimensions, i.e., (i) material (ii) subjective or human (iii) relational or social. The material dimension of wellbeing is concerned about practical welfare and standard of living. The subjective or human dimension is concerns of capabilities, attitudes to life and personal relationships. The relational or social dimension is concerned about social relations and access to public goods.

The association of health and moral sense of being at ease with one’s own space is indicated in ‘feeling well’. This is associated with the relational aspect of an individual’s relationship with others, the foundational aspects of one’s assessment of their quality of life (White 2010). The understanding of wellbeing is context-specific with cultural connotations to it. It is the expression of the relational dimension, i.e., the individual’s relation to social and intimate personal aspects. The cultural and social aspects are associated with an individual’s material dimension (White 2010).

Relational wellbeing evolves with a notion that it is socially and culturally constructed at a particular space and time (Atkinson et al. 2012). The relational understanding of wellbeing elucidates the fundamental interaction of the dimension of subjectivity and relationality. Wellbeing framed as an effect, resulted in the relationship happening between a complex set of people, place and things and the way resources is mobilized through these interactions (Atkinson 2013). Relationships construct the individuality and personhood of people through relatedness to others. Thus, wellbeing

belongs to and emerges through the relationship with others (Christopher 1999 cited in White 2016). The social structure and power relations play a pivotal role in the construction of wellbeing through relatedness (White 2010). Subjective wellbeing brings in the notion of constitution of individuals as ‘subject’. In this understanding of the individual, it considers the duality of the subject, the passive mode of ‘subjection,’ i.e., ‘being subject to’ and active mode of ‘subjectivity,’ i.e., ‘being subject of’. Thus wellbeing is not understood as a state that people do or do not experience, but like subjectivity, it is a *process* realized through the *work* that people put into making meaning of their lives (White 2010, 165). Thus wellbeing assessment should be grounded in the relationship between the individual and the collective (White 2010).

Time provides an integral animation to wellbeing as a whole. The idea of own wellbeing varies with the dynamic interaction between these dimensions of wellbeing throughout the life cycle, in different ways in which time is managed, and space is organized because past life experiences and future expectations have a bearing on people’s conception of the present (White 2010).

The eudaimonic ‘true self’ and the measures of subjective wellbeing treat wellbeing as a subjective or individual state, as an individual’s cognitive and affective evaluation of their own life. The major limitation of these approaches is that they isolate the ‘subject’ to a certain degree from their spatial context (Smith and Reid 2017). The performative impact of place, age, activity and contextual events on psychological conditions are underestimated in this individualistic understanding of wellbeing (Smith and Reid 2017). The geographical perspective of wellbeing looks at the subject from a relational approach, as their subjectivity is embedded in the spatial context and it is relationally constituted (Smith and Reid 2017).

Smith and Reid (2017) suggest ‘intra-active’ wellbeing beyond the subjective and objective research on wellbeing, as the latter has limitations in understanding the situated, contextual and relative dimensions of wellbeing. The objective aspects focus on economic growth, basic needs level, life expectancy and capability lists, whereas subjective wellbeing focuses the self-reports on life satisfaction and life domain assessment. ‘Intra-active’ wellbeing engages naturalistically with relational and reciprocal production of human and non-human (Smith and Reid 2017).

Smith and Reid (2017) draw framework from the post-humanist framework of Barad (2007) of agential realism wherein the material and discursive aspects to admit

the complexity and fullness of the world in a constant process of becoming. Barad (2007) proposes the metaphysics of intra-action implies on bodies and space as products of the interconnecting process. In intra-active wellbeing, the humans are treated as bio-cultural creatures and therefore contingent and inseparable from the context. It considers wellbeing is catalyzed in and of place. This approach allows more tentatively causal explorations of lived experience concealed behind context and social determinants and places less blame for unhappiness on individuals (Smith and Reid 2017). Reworked objectivity sensitive to the performative unfolding of wellbeing and ill-being in particular time and space has to be developed. The space of wellbeing has to be explored in their socio-material depth, specificity and liveliness than by post hoc rationalization (Smith and Reid 2017).

They say wellbeing as emergent as environment wherein they pitch in the relational dimension of wellbeing. This understanding of wellbeing contributes more to the knowledge of embodiment, the performance of wellbeing and experience of being itself (Smith and Reid 2017).

Wellbeing is emergent, the outcome of accommodation and interaction that happens in and over time through the dynamic interplay of personal, societal and environmental structures and processes, interacting at a range of scales in ways that are both reinforcing and in tension (White 2017, 133).

Relational, processual and often non-representational approaches to wellbeing are drawn together under the post-human intra-action approach of wellbeing (Smith and Reid 2017). Wellbeing is largely produced by and produces space and context through the intra-active network of performances of persons in a particular culture. It debunks the ethnocentric static definition of wellbeing and it increases the sensitivity to differences and divergence (Smith and Reid 2017).

Wellbeing is something that ‘happens’ both interactively and internally (White and Blackmore 2016). Wellbeing is produced through social and cultural practice (White and Blackmore 2016). Space and place constitute a substantive dimension of wellbeing (White and Blackmore 2016). Wellbeing includes both objective and subjective elements; the former being the standard of living, access to institutional services such as education and health care whereas the latter is the experiences of satisfaction of life (White and Blackmore 2016).

Construction of Wellbeing

Wellbeing, as defined by White (2017), arise from a shared enterprise of living in a community. Wellbeing is constructed through the relationship between the individual and the collective, the self and the other (White 2017). The three sites of wellbeing are (i) personal level wherein wellbeing is thought, felt and experienced (ii) relational level wherein the individual has quality relationships (iii) collective level is the community living where the individual enjoy endowments and experience deprivation (Prilleltensky 2005). The mutually constitutive interactions between the material, organic and emotional dynamics of spaces produce wellbeing. In this conception, the social structures and relational selves have a prominent role in constructing wellbeing (White 2017).

Growth and development of capitalist societies and the globalized world changed the constructions of the individual self as time progressed. The expansion of capital markets needed individuals to be freed from the ties of geography and customs for the global economy to exploit them with their capital (White 2017). Privatisation uprooted individuals from their ancestral tie's relationship to land for 'free labour', the pre-requisite to industrial expansion. The social functions of institutions such as kinship, religion and ethnic ties have been replaced by state and market. In the process of capitalist expansion, the 'self' is experienced in relation to the system which runs on increased surveillance with standardisation of experiences, then to their social ties (White 2017). In the process of making disciplinary 'regimes of self,' the state and market forces disciplines and impose individuals to make certain kind of choice, endorse certain kind of behaviour and self (White 2017).

Society and culture determine the access to the resources to attain 'good life' people understood and aspire for. Values and ideals shape people's understanding of wellbeing and what is 'good life for them.' This differs from context to context (White 2006). The context-specific understanding of wellbeing throws light to the element of the culture of the community. The construction of wellbeing from the 'lens' of culture, analyses people as agents of culture, and wellbeing as the material and symbolic construction of culture (White 2006).

The cultural construction of wellbeing thus appears as a contested *process*, and an always unstable and composite *outcome* constituted through the work of human subjects

operating at the interstices of social structure, institutional culture and political economy (White 2006, 2).

Culture is understood as a cognitive component with ideas, values and beliefs in the 'cultural construction of wellbeing' (White 2006). People see the world through a cultural lens. In the lived reality of people, they make meaning of their lives going beyond subjective to subjectivity. Drawing from Obeyesekere's (1990) 'work of culture', White (2006) develop the framework for 'cultural construction of wellbeing'. First, it sees people as agents of culture, users of cultural resources and through their actions, they reproduce and transform these resources. Second, the construction of wellbeing is both symbolic and material. Third, the agency and forms of cultural construction are shaped by the specific institutional setting. Social and cultural structures of class and patriarchy determine and condition the construction of wellbeing (cited in White 2006).

Wellbeing in Different Cultural Context

The internalized values, cultures and norms shape our aspirations and expectations. Thus, it is culture and context-specific. Certain cultures value modesty and temperance and some other cultures value positivity and self-affirmation in the expression of self. Thus, this may lead to normalize the oppression and inequality or value and accept struggle and ability to contradict different life situations (White 2016).

The aboriginals of New South Wales in Australia prefer to call or refer to their wellness and being well as being part of a community and being there for each other, they consider being able to participate in larger societal roles and community activities and being able or healthy enough to do that as being 'well' or well being (Heil 1999). New people need to earn the trust of the older members of the community and then contribute in similar ways to be considered being part of the community. Relationships were not taken for granted and daily or timely contact is mentioned as being well. And most of the characteristics of the old system of living where possessions were shared still exist. Most of the interactions understood the importance of daily contact and also keeping up with appearances and also trying to maintain a healthy level of interactions to be considered being well and healthy.

The important measures of wellbeing according to the inhabitants were daily interactions and also participation in things that involved the community and if

someone failed to do so the word spread that he was unable to do so and was forced to seek intervention from community members and also it meant that the community had to involve in taking care of an individual or family that had fallen off the wellbeing spectrum. (this was applicable even for day to day rations).

Jankowiak (2005) emphasizes the universal importance of a sense of individual control over one's life. Wellbeing and the concept of wellbeing is related or intrinsically linked to good health and emotional stability which would lead to more fulfilment in life and greater satisfaction with life. Self-actualization would be the aim of life and life's actions and based on one's choices it is more or less dependent on one's life choices. The author looked at two different eras of the Chinese cultural model for life satisfaction or well-being: work unit (*danwei*) socialism (1981–83) and market reform (1987, 2000–02). The author traced the history of wellbeing through history and wanted to look at the evolution of meanings and the connotation of wellbeing (Jankowiak 2005).

Chinese philosophical traditions valued reflection, contemplation, independence, responsibility, and achievement. The Confucianists thought that well-being could be achieved through a strict adherence to institutionalized codes of conduct that link role performance to a person's place in the social structure (Jankowiak 2005, 151).

The next era was that of communist rule, and mostly it was an enthusiastic rule and era of progress until the cultural revolution of (1966-76) there emerged cracks in blind belief and obedience of citizens. The economic boom of the '90s meant that people started to move towards cities to live and work and also tried to prosper. This meant people wanted a change in their circumstances and wanted to change their position in the social ladder. Struggle, diligence, and self-mastery continue to be valued most Chinese deem essential for the creation of a satisfying life.

While the choice is essential to well-being, the greater choice does not necessarily mean greater well-being. Rather, well-being is a combination of aspirations and the presence of opportunities to achieve them. Its existence, combined with economic growth, provides people with the material and spiritual sense that life is getting better. Throughout the 1980s, urban China was organized around compliance and not an individual choice (Jankowiak 2005, 163).

Hollan (1980) conducted his fieldwork in the early 1980's and he studies an agricultural village, most of his observations were based on watching the back breaking work that he agricultural workers did in terraced rice fields. Says that a society can be

termed as a sick society when the people are disinterested in making any effort to make progress and continue to live in poor and unhealthy conditions and remain discontent, it makes the society a sick one. The author added Social alienation also as part of the markers that would describe a sick society. Most people across all age cohorts in society are miserable, we can infer that the society, at least at that moment, is indeed a “sick society” (Hollan 1980).

Well-being is a matter of how well one’s mind/body is felt to fit within one’s physical and social world and is never static but instead is in a dynamic flux. Hollan (1980) illustrates this through his intimate portrait of a typical day in the life of the Toraja man who lives a life that is contrasted between the security of home and family and the tension of being outside, especially his interactions with his gardens and rice fields, where he is susceptible to the magic of enemies and forces of nature.

We cannot assess how routines and practices affect the wellness or lack of wellness for people without also assessing how they are encountered and experienced by specific individuals over time. People do not encounter the world as blank slates; rather, their experience of the world unfolds epigenetically. What they have experienced in the past affects how they experience Selfscapes of Well-Being in a Rural Indonesian Village things in the present and future, for good or ill, for wellness or unwellness (Hollan 1980, 224).

What kinds of early life experiences are most likely to promote or undermine well-being at later stages of life; how variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, and religious belief and practice intersect to promote or undermine well-being; and how states of wellness and unwellness can be related to one another. Almost all societies, for example, use shame, anxiety, fear, and other unpleasant emotional states to motivate the performance of socially valued roles and behaviours (Spiro 1965).

A person internalizes his experiences and tends to cross them his/her daily and increasing interactions on in society to make up new definitions of wellbeing that are suited to his daily and everyday life and also mesh well his societal life based on the rules that he has grown up adhering to.

While both external forces and those that are internal to the individual have an objective influence on individual actions to attain well-being, there is variation in which forces are culturally elaborated. This gives rise to two frameworks, socio-centric and ego-centric. In a socio-centric milieu human experience well-being when guided by others and may feel threatened when forced to rely on their individual selves to control

a situation. A study of middle-class, upper-caste Hindu men from India revealed that with socio-centric orientation to well-being, these men found their ‘true selves’ in meeting social and institutional experiences. The socio-centric orientation, in Indian men, was rooted in a family structure characterized by joint-household living and an economic structure that limits economic independence.

This socio-centric orientation of Indian man influenced his idea of love in a family and with their wife. Love, for these men, followed from duty towards others in the family and subordination to social fears of one’s elder; rather than specialness of the beloved. It was also considered that love was for all in the family and not for specific individuals. The love for their wife was always subordinate to the ‘fear of society’ which was described by the respondents as a good moral emotion that prompted correct behaviours. Love for an individual that separate one from a valued social group was considered to be a dangerous emotion. There was a tendency among Indian men to de-emphasize individual volition. Fear of society, especially the elders, was one of the pivotal considerations before making decisions. The actions taken by an individual are justified by traditions and honour; it should be appropriate for any member of their social group rather than motivated by individual inclination. The focus of being guided by others extends to occupation. The feeling of well-being among Indian men is threatened when they have to work on their own, a similar feeling also emerges when their own desire makes them act against social pressures.

The primary factor making group guidance fundamental to these men’s notion of well-being is shared experiences in life-structuring institutions, like family and economy. The sociocentric orientation of the Indian men made them rely more on their families because it made economic sense and also the lack of opportunities for independence, pushed them to rely on parental support.

A deeply rooted, widespread cultural orientation originating from the doctrines of Hinduism shapes Hindu Indian males to find well-being, in following social guidance while de-emphasizing individual striving. Men’s focus on family support as critical to their well-being is also a reflection of the economic structures within which they live (Derné 2009, 136).

There exists a difference between the attitudes of men and women because of their different situations and realities of married life, and women tend to migrate or change homes and thereby face a different set of realities after marriage. While men focus on maintaining joint family harmony, Raheja and Gold (1994, 20) emphasize that women’s oral culture recognizes “the desirability of disrupting patrilineal unity in

favour of a focus on conjugality.” Given their different location within the joint family institution, young wives may find well-being not in maintaining a broader family, but rather in separating from it, observing these Indian women highlights how much external structural realities influence people’s internal sense of wellbeing and their different strategies for well-being (Derné 2009).

People tend to experience wellbeing because a fit develops between their cultural and psychological orientation and the social structures with which they live, this means they have well-adjusted themselves to the society (Derné 2009). Transformation in economic structure post-1990 (Post liberalization) has affected the socio-centric orientation as the increasing opportunities for those who possess skills that are marketable in the global economy. New media have become widely available, expanding family possibilities and creating new desires for consumption that cannot be met through existing economic structures, or new desires for love that cannot be met through family arrangements based on arranged marriages and joint-family living (Derné 2009). This new found change in definitions of desire and love was noticed after the advent of new media. On the other hand, new media did not create new, unfulfilled desires that threaten well-being. Instead, given structural realities, men simply rejected the messages they saw on the screen as fantasies. But these economic changes have added new notions of wellbeing like consumerism (Derné 2009).

The sense of well-being might be threatened when there are disruptions between the, cultural understandings and structural arrangements that exist in society. Some people, like the youth, embrace new cultural media and experience a loss of well-being when they can’t fulfil their new desires (Derné 2009). Contrary to these, for the Indian men, new cultural celebrations of consumerism do not threaten their well-being because changing structural arrangements allow them to consume more global products. New cultural celebrations of love and independence tend to be rejected because continuing economic and family structures actively support existing cultural notions that focus on group guidance (Derné 2009).

Derné (2009) list out the implications for understanding wellbeing:

1. Self and emotion, the basis of well-being is culturally constructed and varies from place to place. The men in 1980s found well-being more in being guided by nurturing groups like their family than in taking the initiative to pursue individual goals.

2. Indian men's grounding of well-being in group guidance (mostly parental guidance) highlights that a felt sense of well-being depends on the well-being of others. There is a religious explanation of the socio-centric imagination of well-being, religious conceptions originating in India recognize that well-being only comes with the health of both self and environment. Buddhism's focus on the interconnections of all things suggests that one can only experience well-being if one's actions do not harm others.
3. The basis of well-being tends to be rooted in structural arrangements and cultural understandings. Group support seemed to promote well-being because the economy could provide only tenuous security, while joint-family living was a typical arrangement that supported individuals. Living with these social arrangements, Indian men found well-being in situations in which others provided for their needs (Derne 2009).
4. well-being is threatened when social changes disrupt the fit between cultural understandings, structural arrangements, and psychological wants that are the basis of well-being. This was triggered by the economic restructuring during the 1990s. Dissatisfaction could arise in a society or a familial unit when social change transforms cultural understandings without transforming structural realities or transforms structures without a simultaneous transformation in cultural priorities.

In a capitalist society, an individual's control over a situation may be fundamental to well-being. Focusing on more socially oriented societies, many people find well-being in the support of others. It appears, moreover, that the pleasures of reliance on social support may be a human need universally that anthropologists should consider as a component of well-being in even the most individualistic of societies (Derné 2009). *Ikigai*, a Japanese equivalent of the concept of well-being means "that which most makes one's life worth living" (Matthews 2009). This term serves as a way to compare individuals in different societies in the cultural formulation, social negotiation, and institutional channelling of their senses of what makes their lives worth living. Significance of one's life is the existential dimension of well-being. While the pursuit of significance is universal, the forms and styles by which it is pursued vary across society and individuals. Some pursue significance as a relationship with the divine, while for others, it is love for their countries.

There is a methodological challenge in exploring the concept of significance as well as any other concepts associated with well-being as it is the most intimate inner experience. Anthropologists may compare conceptions of well-being across cultures, but comparing the experience of wellbeing is not easy. In one anthropologist's cautionary words, "While public, shared concepts must help to shape private experience, it remains doubtful whether anthropologists have means for gaining access to that experience as experience" (Harris, 1989, 601-02 cited in Mathews 2009, 169). Most studies on well-being explore the cultural conceptions of well-being as much as actual experiences of well-being; the term well-being still remains elusive. The challenge of exploring well-being can be understood by the pursuit of its significance as a sociological and anthropological matter of individuals' social linkages, the difficulties are inherent in attempting to understand the pursuit of significance can be mitigated. *Ikigai* can serve as a means for such an understanding of how well-being is culturally, socially, and institutionally shaped in different societies.

Ikigai in Japanese is a complex term, with two significant meanings. One "the feeling that one's life is worth living" (Mathews 2009, 169) (*ikigai-kan*; in this sense, it seems close to the subjective sense of "well-being." Second, it is also "the object [the entity in the world] that makes one's life worth living" (*ikigai taishō*), whether one's work, one's lover, one's children, one's dream, or one's God (Mathews 2009, 169). In the latter meaning, *Ikigai* in this sense is not "well-being" as experienced but the element of one's social world that enables one to experience well-being. It is this sense of well-being that it is analysable and cross-culturally comparable.

In Japan, the term is very commonly used but it is difficult to grasp its meaning because it is abstract and also since its meanings have been contested. The meaning of *ikigai* includes self-realization, and /or commitment. These different formulations have different practical meanings. If *ikigai* is seen as self-realization, then if work or family isn't fulfilling, one may feel justified in leaving; but if *ikigai* is a matter of commitment to a group, then leaving is no more than selfishness, an abrogation of one's deepest commitment. The meaning of *ikigai* in media is seen to be shifting from 'commitment to group', to 'self-realization'. With changes in the economic condition leading to changes in Japanese institutions, the dominant cultural meaning of term *ikigai* is live for one's fulfilment. Due to lack of availability of career-track employment, young people in Japan are opting for temporary career options; as a result, they reject the *ikigai* of work. There is also a trend of not marrying among the youth. *Ikigai* of commitment

to the group has been replaced by *ikigai* of career. There is also changes among the elderly in the society who in earlier decades lived for company or family, but who now find that they have shed these roles and require something new to live for; their earlier commitment to the group has left many of them ill-prepared for life outside such groups. The problem of the elderly finding a purpose to live for, as well as that of the young refusing to adapt to “adult society,” is very particular and unique to Japan. The nation is facing rapid depopulation and staring at a society that is fast ageing and has fallen behind in replacing its population.

Ikigai in the 1970s and 1980s was conceived of in two ways, as self-realization and a commitment to one’s group. This is an echo of the historical transformation of the term (Wada 2001, 28–32), from its earlier formulation as fulfilling socially recognized values and roles to its later formulation as fulfilling one’s own individual purpose in life. The transformation of the meaning of *ikigai* took place during the Meiji era (1867-1912) which is paralleled the years during which European analysts began pondering the meanings of society’s newly emergent individualism, leading Durkheim to write of “the cult of the individual” and the moral reconstitution of society in the modern age. This conjunction of concerns over individualism implies that the reformulation of *ikigai* in Japan was not a matter for Japan alone, but rather a Japanese reflection of global modernity. This, in turn, indicates that *ikigai* and its analysis transcends Japan.

Ikigai may be conceptualized not simply as “that which makes one’s life worth living,” but also as “one’s deepest bond to one’s social world” “one’s deepest sense of social commitment” (Mathews 2009, 173). Most adults in affluent societies apparently do, in that some aspect of their lives makes their lives as a whole seem worth living to them, but people can live without *ikigai*, although not happily *Ikigai* usually changes over the life course, like when someone falls in love, gets into a relationship, or retires from work but this change in *Ikigai* is relatively stable. Most people locate *ikigai* in their future dreams when they are young, and in work or family during the prime of their life; sustaining these *ikigai* may become problematic in old age.

Ikigai is undoubtedly a significant factor in well-being one cannot attain a state of well-being without *ikigai*—but the terms are not synonymous. A person is born into a particular society and family which shapes the individual before they have any comprehension of what is happening; people emerge as volitional beings having been shaped by a fate over which one has had no control or even awareness. As people grow

older, they become products of their own biography, which cannot be escaped . This inevitability shapes how people conceive of and pursue *ikigai*.

Ikigai is channelled by institutional structures, structural principles organizing a society encourage or necessitate the pursuit of one's deepest commitment down some paths and not down others. Institutional policies may have decisive effects on the individual's pursuit of *ikigai*—whether a young person should bother with the university as a path to fulfilling her dream, whether a woman should pursue a career or stay at home raising children, or whether a middleaged person should take a risk in her careerthe self attains a sense of personal significance through *ikigai*.

The pursuit of significance is the existential meaning of *ikigai*; as individuals, humans seek to matter beyond ourselves, and *ikigai* can enable people to matter, by profoundly linking one to the social world, the source of meaning in human lives. Paradoxically, *ikigai* is also profoundly individual: although institutional structures of society may channel *ikigai* down certain paths, and pressure from others may nudge the pursuit of *ikigai* down some paths and not others, *ikigai* is something that no one outside oneself can fully mandate. The *ikigai* of men and women in the prime of their life (twenty-five to sixty years old tended to be work and family. However, the Japanese showed a marked gender division of *ikigai*: in Japan, the institutionally sanctioned values of men's commitment to company and women's commitment to family remains strong.

An interesting thing about gender and and work in Japan Was that Aside from the fact that women's wages as compared to men's wages are lower in Japan,, there is also the fact that Japanese tax laws discourage two spouses from working, by heavily taxing the second spouse's earnings beyond a certain minimum, thus “encouraging” married women to not work full-time This effectively means Japan's institutional structures favour long-term employment for men and low compensation for women in the workplace powerfully encourage the maintenance of the de facto *ikigai* of “men living for work and women for family,” despite the fact that a multiplicity of cultural voices in Japan argue against this.

The pursuit of significance is universal, but the forms that significance takes are matters of particular cultural shaping. Three ways in which *ikigai* as work is formulated in the United States, Hong Kong, and Japan, in terms of self, money, and group, respectively. These reflect larger cultural shaping of significance in the three societies. There are many alternative forms of the pursuit of significance in these societies; but

these dominant forms reveal that all three societies suffer, in varying degrees, from a “legitimation crisis”: the ties that bind individual to social order are frayed, their promise not fully believable. This may be a general contemporary malaise. Baumeister (1991, 360) coins the term “the mutual bluff” as describing the illusions set forth by self and society to maintain the self’s illusion of a meaningful life.

The ranking of countries in the style of economists, public health experts, and psychologists seems a bit problematic for *ikigai*. In Japan, institutions continue to demand a degree of suppression of the individual, even though the cultural discourse of individualism is widespread. Social pressure and institutional channeling may push young people towards following a set career path, and may push women towards living for family more than work. But while some Japanese are miserable at having made what they see as life-restricting choices (Mathews 1996, 82–87), and many young people are attempting to abandon the restrictive paths of their parents, other Japanese are happy being so cocooned, and having life laid out for them with few worries about “who they are” (Mathews 1996, 106–10).

In the United States, in contrast, a great degree of personal freedom is allowed in the pursuit of *ikigai*; for an unusual, talented person, this societal flexibility may enable them to fully develop their potential. However, while some Americans have used their freedom to change jobs and spouses to create happier lives for themselves (Mathews 1996, 87–92), others have suffered from too much freedom (Mathews 1996, 111–15); and one’s own individual pursuit of freedom may leave a trail of others’ emotional wreckage in its wake.

In Hong Kong, there is American-style freedom at work while at the same time Japanese style security in the family. Hong Kong has problems pertaining to *ikigai*, such as the high valuation given to money as a source of significance. There is also the fact that middle-class *ikigai* in Hong Kong is supported by the presence of maids from poorer societies, without which gender tension would no doubt be exacerbated. But Hong Kong does seem to allow career freedom on the basis of familial nurturance, in a sense a happy medium between the other two societies we have examined.

Different societies produce their own character types; selves are moulded by their society and recreate that society mainly in accordance with that moulding. These different character types may flourish in societies created after their own image. But there is a minority of people in each society who do not fit, who would be best suited to live in a society structured differently. Rather than ranking societies on a universal

scale, the theory of *ikigai* explored the different relations of individuals to society within the sociocultural structuring of *ikigai*. If a broad range of individuals in any society can be profiled as to their *ikigai* using this structure, then a phenomenological profile of that society could emerge.

Women, Work and Wellbeing

It is imperative to understand interlinks between women's work and wellbeing when the debate on women's empowerment goes around their education, employment and economic independence. Women's wellbeing cannot be studied in isolation since all women are working either doing the non-remunerative work in the domestic sphere or in both domestic and the public sphere.

Lesley Doyal (1990) explores the socio-economic and cultural production of women's health. Through the lens of the structural inequalities and gender differences, she explains women's deprivation in cultural and material aspects and how this deprivation produces gender disparities of health.

The gender identity of women is a cultural construction. Women's experiences across the world are different according to their age, sex, class, race and regional identity. Doyal (1990) looks into the gender variations in patterns of health and illness. And also explores the inequalities in health status, and differences in access to health care among women of different groups, and the complex social processes that shape biological and social realities. She argues that modern medicine had emphasized on curative care than preventive and its approach had delineated mind and body (Doyal 1990).

Doyal (1990) rejects 'crude universalism' theory and 'crude difference theory' in analyzing women's experiential reality. It focuses on the commonalities of women's experiences and sensitive to the complexities of socio-cultural and economic aspects of their lives. She argues that it is significant to focus on inequalities in the health status of women across different classes and races. The bodily experiences are common for women even when the cultural meanings to the experiences are context-specific. Irrespective of the difference in different social strata of class, race, and nationality women have a subordinate position and 'experience as objects of sexist practice' in most of the social and cultural context. They are materially deprived. The gender

disparity has a negative impact on achieving physical and mental well-being (Doyal 1990).

In the patriarchal society, the social structure is constructed by the men. In the social reproduction of family, household and society individual's identity follows a male order strongly influenced by patrilineage (Das Gupta & Chen 1995). Women are mere biological reproducers, while men are the 'social reproducers' (Das Gupta & Chen 1995). In these male constructed social structures, women are undervalued. The low value placed on women and their powerlessness in the patrilineal society has an adverse effect on their social and health status (Das Gupta & Chen 1995).

Doyal (1990) explores the emotional and psychological aspects of domestic labour, women's access to social support, and what women get in return for their work within their families. She argues that across different cultures, women are expected to be the 'caregivers' of their families (Doyal 1990). Its implication on their health depends on the socio-economic conditions of their household — marital status and satisfaction in marriage life impact on the mental health of women. Their lifetime care works put them in 'caring tricycle' where they take care of their children in young age, continue to care for elderly parents in middle age, and in old age, they have the responsibility of aged partner (Doyal 1990). Depression, tension, nervousness, and anxiety are outcomes of the cultural devaluation of women and the restriction of their social mobility within the domestic sphere. Social support is necessary for the physical and mental well-being of women. Cultural values attached to women's work and their contribution to their family constructs inequalities in access to income, wealth and other material resources (Doyal 1990). This leads to gender discrimination and male preferences.

Doyal (1990) discusses the risks and dangers of women in paid work. Women's employment is a result of a personal choice or financial needs, their domestic situations and availability of job opportunities. Even though women's waged work gives them economic independence, self-esteem and social support from their co-workers increases their mental well-being, it has negative implications as well. Denial of their autonomy to handle their personal income undermines their self-esteem despite their economic contribution. The advantages of paid work are negated by the nature of the work and the domestic conditions of these women.

Understanding women's work and its implications on their health and wellbeing is a complex phenomenon. Their health is socially and culturally produced through the economic structure, existing cultural values and norms, and social practices and social institutions. Socio-cultural and economic factors determine the values and status attached to women and their work in their respective societies. Her gender, class, caste, regional and religious identities intersect to produce her experiences of reality, which implies her health and wellbeing. Thus, studies on health inequalities of women across different class and race in their socio-cultural, economic and political context, contributes to a plethora of literature on different forms of health inequalities in different social contexts. The understanding of various challenges to wellbeing and health of professional-class women belonging to the educated middle-class strata with economic independence and high social status give insights to another form of micro reality. It raises questions on emancipatory roles of education, employment, income and social status in the lives of women and its implication on their wellbeing.

Chanana (2001) tries to make a contextual analysis of the question of gender equality and the debate centres on the question of education and employment as a vital medium to ensure better status and equality for women. The underlying assumption is that better employment opportunity for women gives economic independence, and it enhances their status. Societal attitudes towards working women have implications on the autonomy and social status they enjoy. She tries to bring in the Sociological concepts of 'role conflict', 'role extension', 'status dissonance' in understanding challenges to gender equality and empowerment of working women in larger structures has implications on their wellbeing (Chanana 2001). She argues that mere education and employment could not bring changes in their traditional norms and values (Chanana 2001). Working women undergo through role conflict as a family woman on the one hand and working women on the other. 'Role extension' creates stress and struggle in the lives of working women. The conservative and narrow-minded societal attitudes and role expectations of others and women themselves create 'role conflict' and stress in their lives (Chanana 2001). In the Indian social context, marriage is a 'social imperative' for women, whereas work is the same for men. Thus family plays a vital role in the lives of Indian women (Chanana 2001). Role perceptions, self-images and role expectations of women depends on multiple variables such as their age, marital status, familial responsibilities, whether having or not having children and age of

children. Role conflict emerges out of ‘status dissonance’, the difference in status they derive in their family and status they derive from their occupation (Chanana 2001). Theoretically, men’s identity is defined according to their roles at work, whereas women’s is defined according to their roles at home (Chanana 2001). Thus, psychosocial factors at work affect both men and women differently in different regions. Worker’s health is impacted by their work environment, their familial environment and the society they are embedded in.

Wang et al., (2008) conducted a study based on the data set of an extensive population-based mental health survey of Canadian Community Health Survey- Mental Health and Wellbeing. The study objective was to analyze the gender-specific association between workers stress, major depression, anxiety disorder, any mental disorder and the effects of demographic, socioeconomic, psychological and clinical variables on it. Demand-control model, effort-reward balance model and work-family conflict model are the three theoretical models used to understand workers health in the changing socio-economic context (Wang et al., 2008). Work-family conflict emerges when the person is incapable of balancing between their role as a worker and their familial roles as spouse, parent or caregiver (Wang et al., 2008). The study findings were high job insecurity, and lack of social support implied on mental health when high demand and low control over work impacted the mental health of both men and women. Single mothers and women having children below 12 years had adverse mental health. Women are more likely to rely on the social support system to cope up with stress and related problems (Wang et al., 2008).

Work-family conflict becomes significant in the lives of working women burdened with multiple roles and responsibilities. It emerges out of an interaction between multiple factors. Role ambiguity, role conflict, time-sharing between both work and domestic responsibilities create work-family conflict. In a study by Gani and Ara (2010), it was found that doctors, nurses, bank employees and media women face more work-family conflict than teachers and office working women. Young working women with a greater number of school-going children have more adaptability problems than elderly working women with grown-up children. The economic activity of women plays a role in the outbreak of work-family conflicts. The study propounds that higher the income of the women lesser the conflict experience of women. ‘Unfavourable and non-cooperative’ attitude of family members aggravates work-family conflict (Gani and Ara 2010). When educated wives with a progressive mindset

challenge the existing traditional behavioural norms and role expectations, it creates tensions and disharmony within the familial atmosphere. The situation gets complicated when the husband and other family members are reluctant to cooperate. The study found that most of the working women suffer intense physiological stress (Gani and Ara 2010). The consequences of role conflict increase in stress and strain, anxiety and guilt, family tension, physical disorder, reduced job satisfaction, reduced work commitment and performance, loss of self-esteem, weakened bond and marital conflicts (Gani and Ara 2010). Working women tend to develop coping mechanisms to deal with role conflict. The familial and social support system, is the significant means to resolve role conflict. Most women prefer to delink their professional and family lives and try to keep clear a boundary between the two and makes compromises (Gani and Ara 2010).

Haw (1982) argues work can be a significant source of stress, which produces adverse outcomes on health, which impact their mental and physical health. Haw identifies 'stress' as a factor influenced by the interrelationship of various other variables (Haw 1982). Haw adapts House's 'paradigm of stress research' as a framework for her analysis which includes (1) objective social conditions conducive to stress; (2) individual perceptions of stress; (3) individual responses to perceived stress; (4) more enduring outcomes of perceived stress, such as mental ill-health and cardiovascular disease; and (5) individual and situational conditioning variables that specify the relationships among the four sets of factors (cited in Haw 1982).

Stress can be defined as "an imbalance between the perceived demand and the person's perception of his or her ability to meet that demand" (Haw 1982 p.134). When perceived demand exceeds perceived capability, as well as the demand, fall short of it capability, it causes stress. Coping to and defending are the two kinds of response to stress. Haw's analysis of various literature sources on the response to stress among working women brings forth results stating that working married women had higher daily stress than housewives (cited in Haw 1982). At the same time, the former had higher life satisfaction (cited in Haw 1982) in terms of greater self-acceptance (cited in Haw 1982) and fewer psychiatric symptoms (cited in Haw 1982) in comparison to the other. Another study found out that working women had greater physical and emotional distress than men (cited in Haw 1982).

Over a prolonged period of time abnormal physiological, affective and behavioural response to stress permanently damages the physical or mental health. A

study of women in the professions (law, medicine, and college teaching) found that over half of them coped with the conflict between parental and work roles by temporarily lowering their career ambitions (cited in Haw 1982). The necessity to work, attitude towards work, familial responsibilities, lifestyles and job conditions has an impact on the physical and psychological wellbeing of working women. Haw (1982) further suggests adequate measuring of the attitude towards sex roles and distribution of familial responsibilities among family members will give a wider picture. Analysis of coping mechanisms and response to stress and its implications on health also needs to be explored.

The above literature sources discuss various factors that contribute to 'stress' and indicates its implications on the mental wellbeing of working women. Mental wellbeing impacts on psyche and soma of individuals. Socio-economic, cultural, psychological and political factors interplay in an individual's understanding and perception of determinants of well-being.

The Rationale of the Study

Kerala had witnessed massive socio-economic and cultural transformations from the colonial period to contemporary times. Social reformations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, legislative measures during the colonial and postcolonial period and economic policies restructured economic and political systems, caste structure, gender and class identities, kinship systems and property ownership (Devika 2005; Kodoth and Eapen 2005; Hapke 2013). These changes had redefined the value systems, social norms, power relations, culture and lifestyle of people in Kerala.

The significant achievements of the Kerala model of development are attributed to three key factors. The relative autonomy of the two kingdoms out of the three local kingdoms, Travancore and Cochin during the British period was significant in building educational and health infrastructure and awareness among the public. Secondly, the matrilineal kinship system gave relative autonomy to women, especially Nair women through land rights and contributed in creating awareness and access to health and education to these women. Thirdly the social and religious reform movements were significant in penetrating the benefits of progress and development down to the caste hierarchy and larger democratisation (Sen 1993 cited in Arun 1999).

Though Kerala ranks highest in the conventional indicators of gender development among the Indian states and often seen as the 'ideal' state, it is the highly

patriarchal region in the world (Hapke 2013). The transformation of the kinship system from a predominantly matrilineal system to patriarchy had negatively impacted the authority, power and security of women in the state, especially among the matrilineal communities. Women lost their privileges and rights when the matrilineal system was abolished through legislative measures and patriarchal system gained roots in the society (Eapen and Kodoth 2002).

Though Nair women inherit property from their natal homes, it is mostly considered as a form of dowry, which later on controlled and used by the husbands as capital for the investing in the business or buying more land or other houses. This practice gives legitimacy to the ideas of 'dowry controlled by husbands' (Arun 1999). Also, women's limited involvement in the agricultural activities, the narrow understanding of women's work, undervaluing and lack of recognition of women's contribution to the household negatively implies on their status and position in their household and their participation in the decision-making process (Arun 1999). There is an inadequacy in recognition of women's customary rights to their landed property in Kerala which in turn contribute to the gender gap in the economic wellbeing, social status and empowerment of women in the state. The current agrarian crisis and shift from an agrarian economy to a service-based economy lead to large scale disposing of landed properties of women, which in turn affects their entitlement to landed property and social status. The selling of land and the income going to men converts the land as a 'dowry controlled by husbands' (Arun 1999).

Social reformation and legislative measures tried to impart colonial modernity and new gendered identity through formal education. From 1920 onwards it addressed the gender separation of public and private domains (Devika 2005). The process of gendering the educational system is primarily motivated by patriarchal values. This had an underlying motive of 'properly gendering' them by creating, 'modern public-oriented male subjects and modern domestic-oriented female subjects' with new forms of gender hierarchies structured on patriarchal ideologies and power equations. Here the construction of the domestic identity of women through education was intended to benefit the society as a whole (Devika and Mukherjee 2007). Even in the post-independent period, young girls were forced to limit their process of individuation gained through education. Their individual identity and agency are shaped according to the economic and social requirement of the modern family (Devika and Mukherjee 2007).

Professional education also is gendered, and the demands of skills needed for each profession indirectly reiterates the gender roles of individuals. Disciplinary segregation of gender is visible in enrolment rates of each profession (Rajan&Sreerupa 2007; Hapke 2013). In the post-1980s gender barriers in access to professional education were challenged, and many female students were enrolled in many of the so-called 'male professions' such as Engineering, Law etc. But their familial responsibilities and patriarchal nature of market system pulled them back from entering into the job market. Familial responsibilities and multiple roles force women to make a choice between their career and family.

The massive migration to gulf countries in the 1970s had reshaped gender relations and normative gender conduct in the state, along with the emergence of a new middle class. The archetype of successful and wealthy Gulf migrant was the ideal for the aspirations of young Malayali men. Men's performance in accumulation and spending of wealth determine their position in the 'hierarchies of manliness' (Osella and Osella 2002). This reiterates the dominant gender ideology in Kerala that establishes man as the breadwinner and women's domesticity as the ideal (Hapke 2013). This has established men's superior authority women, and subsequently, women's sexuality became something to be protected and controlled (Osella and Osella 2002).

Migration had accelerated class formation and defined the cultural processes of class identity. Class is a structure and a process produced through the interaction of socio-cultural and economic capital of individuals (Dickey 2012 p.562). It is the source of power, determinant of respect and source of distribution of socio, economic and cultural resources (Dickey 2012). Middle-class significantly became a desirable position to be, which has 'social visibility' and are always 'judged by critical spectators' for their behaviour and social actions. It has both 'pleasure and anxiety' of being a middle class (Dickey 2012). The middle-class became 'socially significant' and 'culturally elaborate' with liberalisation with its physical features of 'income, occupation, education, consumer goods, housing and leisure activities' (Dickey 2012 p.561). Middle class constitute the dominant market with their growing purchasing power of consumer goods (Dickey 2012). They are expected to perform the social mores and behave according to the 'values of modernity and moderation' (Dickey 2012).

In the Indian context, class and caste, hierarchies overlap in various ways. Caste determines consumption attitudes and value given for the educational attainment of individuals. The historical roots of caste inequalities overshadow in the attainment of education and occupation and thus implies the mobility in the class hierarchy (Dickey 2012). Ideals of middle class such as ‘moderation, deliberation and decency’ are associated with upper caste, and it implies on their attitudes, values and practices (Dickey 2012).

The positive aspect of being in a middle class is associated with their earning capacity beyond subsistence level and ability to partake in the consumer economy whereas the negative aspects are judgment by the social spectators, the performance of their ‘consumerist class identity’ within their financial capacity, the adverse pressure to earn sufficiently to finance this consumption, the repercussions of poor performances and pressures of downward class mobility. This highlights the high instability and precariousness of middle-class identity (Dickey 2012, 578). Class determines people’s action, boundaries of their freedom and realm of choices. Class is a continuous process of re-forming the identity which requires significant effort, commitment and sacrifice and is ‘ascribed and claimed’ through social interaction (Dickey 2012).

The everyday life experiences of professional middle-class women are shaped by the interaction between the social structures of patriarchy, class, caste and gender identities, and the cultural values and norms. The social construction of wellbeing of professional women becomes significant with the understanding of the multidimensional nature of women’s work and their exposure to the public sphere. In the life of professional women, the patriarchal structure overlaps in her personal, familial and professional life. The concepts of ‘role conflict’, ‘role extension’, ‘status dissonance’ is central to understanding the perceptions of professional women’s wellbeing.

The societal and personal expectations and demands from her to be an efficient mother, faithful wife, caring caregiver to the elderly and at the same time to be competent and capable professional woman create role conflict. Studies among women in the professions (law, medicine, and college teaching) found that over half of them coped with the conflict between parental and work roles by temporarily lowering their career ambitions (Poloma 1972 cited in Haw 1982). These multiple factors are barriers in skill acquisition to compete and prove efficient in the market (Walby 1990). A professional woman challenges the gender norms and gender power structure at the

micro-level (within the family) and macro-level (larger economy and society). Though they have economic independence, social status and dignity in the society, women's access to social support especially from family, status dissonance, domestic and work circumstances determine the advantages and disadvantages of their paid work. Their perception of empowerment, individual freedom and autonomy, and life satisfaction depends on multiple factors such as their familial responsibilities, marital satisfaction, nature and circumstances of work and societal attitude towards their work.

Working women's 'role extension' as a family woman and working woman creates 'role conflict' when they cannot balance their different roles. Marital status is a significant variable of stress, in which married working women has a high level of physical and emotional distress than married and unmarried men. The prolonged period of distress permanently damages mental and physical health (Chanana 2001; Haw 1982).

The overlapping of patriarchy over the different domains of life of women forces women to adopt strategies to negotiate and bargain with it and to resist the power structures in active and passive ways (Kandiyoti 1988). Women's resistance and compliance with the multiple layers of oppression within different domains of life construct their parameters of wellbeing. Thus, the exploration of the meaning-making process of the experiential reality of professional women becomes relevant in developing critical reflections on the definition of the concept of development, women empowerment and its implications on wellbeing of individuals.

Objectives of the Research

Broader objective

- To explore the process of the social construction of professional women's wellbeing, its determinants and dimensions in their socio-cultural context.

Specific objectives

- To explore the role of power in defining multiple roles of professional women through social structures and processes
- To explore how their role performance conditions their everyday life experiences.

- To explore the implications of role extension on the individual self of professional women and their wellbeing in their social context.
- To explore how professional women, make meaning of power relations and their lived realities and perceive their wellbeing and empowerment.
- To explore how do professional women negotiate, rationalize and cope with the stresses and struggles of their everyday life.

Research Questions

- How do professional women understand and define their wellbeing and empowerment?
- What role does the social context have in their understanding of wellbeing?
- What are the various determinants and dimensions of wellbeing in the understanding of professional women in their social context?
- How do they perceive and evaluate their wellbeing and its determinants in their particular social context?
- How does the perception of wellbeing change across the life course of professional women?
- How does patriarchy intersect with the gender, class, caste identities and family relations of professional women through social structures and processes?
- What are the implications of this process of the intersection of patriarchy on the everyday lives of professional women?
- What role do middle class and gender identities have in constructing the wellbeing of professional women?
- What are the implications of these everyday life experiences of professional women on their subjective, mental, physical and relational being?
- How does the mind-soul-body interaction of the individual happen in their particular social context?

Research Design

The research was an enquiry into the processes of construction of everydayness of professional women in their social and cultural context in which their self is embedded. The research was designed in order to capture the nuanced ways power was operating in the lives of professional women through their interaction with the social structures

of family kinship, culture, class, caste and gender structures and their workspace. Professional women's phenomenological understanding of their position in their sociocultural context, how they understand and make meaning of their everydayness, how they relate them with their sociocultural contexts, the multiple ways of constructing their subjectivities through their everyday social interactions, the way they experience power in their everyday life, their response and reaction to power inequities were the main focus of the study. How power constitutes the everydayness and constructs wellbeing of the community, and the individuals were the primary focus in addressing the gender question in Kerala. Professional middle-class women's everydayness and their experiences power and the construction of wellbeing in the context of Kerala are expected to give a more nuanced picture of gender paradoxes in the acclaimed 'Kerala model'. The researches on gender paradoxes in Kerala focused on the women in the outlier and marginalised communities, while the experiences of professional women are under-researched.

Most of the wellbeing research begins with wellbeing measuring scales, and most studies are quantitative in nature. The researcher was also caught in this dilemma of whether wellbeing is a measurable component or not in the initial phase of my research. The statistical reports of development indices in Kerala portrayed a glossy picture of gender development. But the researcher's experience of being a native of Kerala, grew up seeing the paradoxes of the glorified 'Kerala model', and the entrenched patriarchy and unequal power relations constructing our everydayness. It was from those experiences; the researcher made the conscious decision to do an in-depth qualitative study to capture the nuances of power and how it operates in the everydayness of women. Being raised by a working mother and grown-up closely seeing her life the researcher wanted to understand and explore further the processes of constituting the everydayness of professional women, the social factors that disempower and empower them, the ways through which they embody their experiences, how their experiences of power imply on their capacity to engage with their everydayness. Here the researcher observed wellbeing as a process that emerges in their social interaction with their environment. So, my focus turned to how that process of construction of wellbeing happens? For that, I had to locate and address the embeddedness of women in their socio-cultural context. Wellbeing is relational and context-specific.

Selection of Interlocutors

Then the researcher had to make the choice of which section of professionals to be studied. The literature on constructing gender identity in Kerala discussed how certain professions were gendered and why women chose particular professions in order to uphold the feminine dispositions from corroding through the involvement of women in the labour market (Devika 2019). They argued about how femininity was constructed through gender roles and gender division of labour. Thus, the researcher thought of looking at the process of gendering professions and how this process enables and constrain women's entry and growth in these respective professions. Initially, the researcher chose five professions, lawyers, journalists, university teachers, doctors and IT professionals. Considering the limitations of the individual researcher, the researcher thought of conducting a pilot study and finalise on which professions to studied further. The pilot study was conducted with the intentions, to test the interview guide, test the feasibility and practical constraints of the research and also to filter which professions to be finalised. The inaccessibility to doctors, their hectic schedule was one primary reason for their inability to give time for the lengthy research process, was a practical constraint to approach them. The IT professionals were more connected to the global economy, unlike the other professions, and thus, their life experiences were different from the other professions. They also had practical constraints in committing time for the research process. The access to university teachers, lawyers and journalists were satisfactory, and there were parallels between their life experiences. Thus I/we chose to conduct the research among journalists, university teachers and lawyers.

Once the research questions were framed, the next question I had to address was the universe of the study, the field area. Though many of the researches and literature sources constructed the image of Malayalee women as a homogenised entity, the current researches of feminist historians, Sociologists and Anthropologists and bringing light to the regional and community disparities of receiving the benefits of development. The choice of Thiruvananthapuram City was made because of the cosmopolitan nature of the city and the historical significance of the place. The capital city was the hub of cultural and political movements during the colonial and post-colonial period. The active political presence, the presence of many government offices and the employment opportunities it generated attracted many people from across the state to the city. They were the aspiring middle class had access to education and stable income opportunities and highly influenced of the Nehruvian ideas of development.

The studies on domestic violence in the capital city also reported the higher prevalence rate of domestic violence in Thiruvananthapuram in comparison to other districts in Kerala. Being the capital city and the widespread media attention, it has been a reason for many media houses to open their bureaus and head offices in Thiruvananthapuram. The first university in Kerala is also located in Thiruvananthapuram. So, the historical, social and political significance of Thiruvananthapuram and more access to the professionals I intended to study were the factors that made the researcher to choose the city as the field of study. The journalists of both print and visual media, the lawyers, enrolled in Thiruvananthapuram BAR, the university teachers of Kerala University were broadly identified as the potential research subjects.

The next challenge was the selection of interlocutors — the research intended to explore the dynamic nature of wellbeing. Thus, parameters for the selection of the interlocutors considered how wellbeing is dynamic across different age groups and generations, how wellbeing differs according to the marital status, how wellbeing varies with experiences of motherhood, how wellbeing is experienced among women of different caste and religious groups. Thus, professional women of age group ranging from 25-60, single, married and divorced women, mothers with children of different age group, women belonging to upper caste, OBC, Dalit caste communities and Hindu, Christian and Muslim religious groups, and professional women in different positions in their professional hierarchies were selected using purposive random sampling. Two methods were adopted to choose the interlocutors. Initially, the potential research subjects were broadly identified among university teachers through their details provided on the university website and also through the researcher's personal contact. The lawyers and journalists were also initially selected through the personal contact of the researcher. Once the initial contacts were made, then the rest of the research participants were identified through snowball sampling technique, with the above-mentioned parameters. A total of 20 women participated in the research. There were 4 lawyers, 7 university teachers and 9 journalists working in both print and visual media.

Research Methodology, Methods and Techniques of Data Collection

The study was conducted to understand the lived experiences of professional women and the process of the social construction of their wellbeing from historical, sociological and feminist perspectives. Qualitative research methodology was used to conduct the research. An in-depth qualitative study using narrative analysis was adopted to explore

the phenomenological understanding of the everydayness of professional women. In-depth interviews were conducted to collect the narratives with an interview guide.

The narrative method helped to capture the experiences of the professional women shared in their own language. It was used to understand the historical, social and cultural moorings within which the narratives are produced (Sandu 2016). The narratives are embedded in the macrostructural context, and it is the device through which the world of the professional women is constructed (Sandu 2016). Narratives are the sites where the narrator engage with the structure and agency. Thus, narratives constitute and are constituted by the world (Sandu 2016). Narratives are the means through which the narrator constructs their world view and their self. Narratives are ‘the discourse as an action model’ because it is not merely the expression of words; instead, it is an ‘action’ as it ‘constitutes’ the reality rather than describing the reality (Sandu 2016).

The narrative analysis theorizes narratives as discourses. Knowledge and individual are product and producers of discourse. There is a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structures of the society and they are mutually constitutive (Sandu 2016). The power of language is central to narrative analysis because the experience is constituted through language, and the language constitute the reality (Sandu 2016).

The challenges of doing research on wellbeing were to capture the context-specific and relational aspects of the wellbeing of the research subjects. The research subject’s accounts of wellbeing, the identity of the researcher, cultural and disciplinary assumptions, methods of enquiry and data analysis, the place where the research happens and the cultural and socio-economic context of the research subjects are all key elements of wellbeing research (White & Blackmore 2016). The constructions of wellbeing have an intrinsic connection to the places in which they are generated and the research methods that produce the knowledge (White & Blackmore 2016). The context-specific understanding of wellbeing helps to explore the culture of the society as well.

In-depth interviews were used to collect the narratives. The interviews can be classified as elite interviews, given its nature through the class and social status of the professional middle-class. Each interlocutor was visited multiple times on an average three times and a maximum of five times. Meeting them multiple times and getting an appointment with them was more challenging. The hectic work schedule and the shift

work, particularly of the journalists, were a major constraint to get an appointment with them. This was intentionally done to make them get comfortable with the research process and the multiple meetings facilitated to build a reasonably good rapport with each one of them. Before beginning the research process, informed consent was taken from each one of them.

The structure of the questions or probes given to the research subjects and the flow and order of questions asked to them had implications on the narratives it generated. The narratives were co-produced through the interaction between the researcher and the interlocutor. The social position of the researcher and the interlocutor and our subjectivities had influenced the production of knowledge in multiple ways. The gender, regional and linguistic identity of the researcher and the affiliation of the researcher to this particular educational institution were an advantage to get access to the interlocutors. The researcher's personal experiences and ontological understanding contributed to developing the interview guide. During the interactions with the interlocutor, the researcher shared personal experiences at certain instances which facilitated the interlocutor to open up their experiences. The marital status of the interlocutor was also an advantage in discussing the certain sensitive experiences of the interlocutors. Thus, it was co-produced knowledge. A few of the interviews were emotional for the interlocutors and there were moments the researcher also became emotional listening to their stories. Those were moments of shared emotions which later facilitated to build a fairly good bonding with each other.

Many of the interlocutors were familiar to the researcher through their presence in the visual media or their academic and professional engagements. Thus, first meeting with some of them was like an experience of meeting a celebrity. But this familiarity and their social status and position in the respective professional space and in the public space did invoke a power hierarchy with the researcher. It was initially challenging to break the ice with some of the interlocutors who are quite popular and occupy a significant space in the public sphere of Kerala. That was partly due to the researcher's perceptions of the interlocutor's status and position in society. Unlike the researches among the working-class, illiterate and uneducated population where the researcher has a power dominance over the research subject, here the social position of the professional middle-class women, the research subject, had an advantage in the power relations. Their knowledge of research and some of theirs particularly the university teachers experience as a researcher and research supervisors was an advantage in the

study. That made the task of the researcher to make the research subject understand the significance and nature of the research. At the same time, the researcher was equally cautious of the possible ways of the interlocutors manipulating their response to defend and protect their class status and projecting a good image of themselves. The cultural embeddedness of middle-class and their class status has to be understood in their respective social context to interpret the value judgements they give to their status and social position.

At some point, the place where the interaction happened constrained and interrupted the research process. Most of the interviews were conducted in the workspace of the interlocutors, whereas a few were conducted at their residence. In the office space, interruptions of the colleagues and lack of privacy were factors that constrained during some sessions of interviews. If any important or sensitive information were missed out during a particular session, that was attempted to make up through the next sessions. WhatsApp chats and telephonic interactions with the interlocutors at times were medium for them to share certain experiences, which was sensitive and may have inhibitions to communicate directly in person. Many of the interlocutors openly shared that participating in this research process was an opportunity for them to reflect and introspect on their personal lives. Their busy schedule many times did not give them space and time to reflect on their lives. So, it was an exercise of revisiting their self and their social and cultural environment. This was an exercise for the researcher as well to reflect on the cultural and social embeddedness of the researcher's self. The narration of the experiences of the interlocutors and the researcher relating her experiences to the interlocutors were a moment of self-reflexivity.

Secondary data sources such as journal articles, books, and creative writings in Malayalam literature and films were also consulted. Secondary data were collected for the purpose of mapping the transformations of the socio-cultural and economic structures of Kerala, changes in gender power relations, the evolution of class structures.

Interpretation& Analysis of Narratives

The phenomenological understanding of everydayness and the role of power in constituting the lived experiences and wellbeing of professional women were the primary focus of the research. Thus, a combination of narrative analysis and discourse

analysis were used for interpreting and analysing the narratives. Discourses are shared and social, emanating out of interactions between social groups and the complex social structures in which the discourse is embedded (Phillip and Hardy 2002). Discourse analysis is grounded in an explicitly constructionist epistemology, that looks at language as constitutive and constructive of the reality, rather than reflective and representative of reality (Phillips and Hardy 2002). Discourse analysis tries to explore how socially produced ideas and objects are produced in the first place and how are they maintained and held in a place over time, and thus it uncovers the way social reality is produced (Phillips and Hardy 2002). Discourse analysis enables us to look into the constructivist and critical aspects of the phenomena. It explains the power dynamics implied in the construction of social identities and how various discursive practices evolved and legitimised in socio-cultural contexts. Critical discourse analysis further interprets how discursive activities shape life experiences in a particular social space. It helped in understanding how discourse, ideology and power constructed professional women's lived reality and thus their well-being and empowerment. Discourse analysis addressed the question of how a social reality came into existence (Phillips and Hardy 2002).

The narratives in both Malayalam and English were transcribed and translated to English. Verbatim transcriptions were done by the researcher herself. Then the narratives were interpreted and analysed thematically. After the transcriptions were completed the significant themes were identified. The particular set of experiences, feeling and emotions, and perceptions of the interlocutors were identified and listed in an excel sheet. The different set of themes were classified under different domains. The narratives were interpreted and analysed in thematically organised chapters of the thesis. The nuances of power relations, experiences of patriarchy, the gender paradoxes of modernity and development in constituting the lived experiences of professional women and their making meaning of their experiences, their resistance and negotiations to patriarchal power to claim their autonomy, freedom and wellbeing emerged as the domains of the research.

While interpreting and analysing the narratives, the researcher tried to make any value judgements and instead give voice and credibility to the lived experiences of professional women. There were instances where the researcher's political positions and moral values were in conflict with the interlocutor's experiences and political positions during the interpretation and analysis process. There were conscious attempts

made to remain value-neutral and give primacy to the experiences and meaning of the interlocutors.

Ethical Considerations

The interlocutors were interviewed only with their prior informed consent and permission. People who were unwilling to participate were given the freedom to choose not to take part in it. They were given prior permission if they wish to discontinue at any phase of the interview, and there was one person who withdrew after the first session of the interview. Adequate care and concern were taken not to hurt their emotions and feelings during the time of the interview. They were informed at the outset that the research was exclusively for academic purposes, and they should not get any immediate benefits or monetary benefits by taking part in the research. A written consent form was signed before the interview from every interlocutor.

Their names and identity are not disclosed, and high confidentiality is maintained. In the analysis and interpretation, their shared experiences are contextualised in their social setting to prevent errors in interpreting the process of meaning-making of lived realities of the interlocutors. Writing is political, and utmost care was given in the interpretation of their experiences and in theory building. They are given false names in the narrative interpretation and analysis to hide their identity.

Organisation of Chapters

Chapter 2, *Feminism for Wives and Patriarchy for Daughters: The Regressive Modernity and Reformist Patriarchy in Kerala*, discusses the paradoxes of Kerala's modernity, and the intricate ways of operationalising reformist patriarchy in the lives of professional women. The reformist patriarchy envisaged the standards and norms of 'women's liberation', in construction of Malayalee modernity in the early 20th Century. The social reformation and renaissance in Kerala imparted colonial modernity rooted in the Victorian moralities. Women's sexuality and identity became 'domesticated' through gendered education and socialisation that undermined women's autonomy and freedom. This social construction of feminine identity as 'domesticated women', whose primary roles and identity are embedded in their domestic space, is carried on through the intricate ways of operationalizing patriarchy in both public and private spaces of women's lives. Marriage becomes inevitable for women as one's identity as 'wife' and 'mother' is valued culturally resulting in the regulation of women's sexuality by the

husband or family. Women internalise patriarchy in the course of their lives by becoming the ‘torch bearers’ of patriarchy. The resulting oppression of women by women is a deathblow to challenging patriarchy and breaking its shackles. Through this process, the family becomes an undemocratic social institution where women’s status is undermined. The regressiveness in the familial or private domain overflows/seeps into the public space where women are treated as second-class citizens in their workspace. Objectification of women, power hierarchies that obstruct women’s growth in their career and sexual harassment at the workspace are different ways through which patriarchal structures operate in the public space. The lack of safety in public spaces and attacks on women who challenge patriarchal structures, both in the virtual world and on public platforms, are some of the modern forms of regressive modernity and manifestations of unequal gender relations in the state of Kerala.

Chapter 3 *‘The Diminutive Difference Between Sanity and Insanity’: Making Meaning of Lived Realities* is about the professional women’s interaction with the social structures and their phenomenological understanding of their everydayness. The construction of images of ‘superwoman’ is in a social context where the class and gender identities of professional women intersect. The professional middle-class women have career aspirations, but at the same time, they have domestic roles and responsibilities constructed through the norms of the gender division of labour. Their juggling of roles, the pressure to perform the ‘respectable femininity’, their career aspiration produces role conflict which negatively implies on their wellbeing. The experiences of symbolic violence and lack of respect and acknowledgement even while they compromise their self-interest for the benefit of the family constructs negative wellbeing and perceptions of indignities. The gender power relation within the domestic and professional spaces reproduce unequal gender hierarchy and redefines the nature of their labour in both the spaces. The discontentment with life and erosion of related self are the outcome of the permeating of power to their domestic and professional space to relegate women to an inferior position and denying their opportunities to actualise their goals and aspirations. The unfulfilled desires and discontentment with life are a reason for some people to look for satisfaction and emotional fulfilment in extra-marital relations. The role-conflict and failure to meet the expectations of others create marital discord. The experiences of violence negatively imply on their capacity to engage with their everydayness. The social constructionist perspective captured the

processes through which the everydayness of professional women are constructed through the phenomenological understanding of their lived realities.

Chapter 4, *I Made the Declaration of Freedom: Limits to Agency and Freedom* ‘discusses the conflict of interest between modern liberal values and the conventional norms and values in Kerala. The patriarchal structures shape gender relations, and women bargain with the unequal structures where their class and caste identities intersect. The power structures constrain women’s agency and autonomy through various social processes. Women’s lives are norm bound and value-laden. In the interaction with the systems of oppression, women manipulate, negotiate, and contest the power structures, and they are active social agents. Professional women’s access to and possession of different forms of capital, as well as the flow of capital, are used by them for self-actualisation and social transformation. Feminist- Bourdieusian framework is used to explore the nuances of power relations and how women deal with the unequal power structures.

Chapter 5 *Social Construction of Wellbeing of Professional Women* summarises and discusses the various social process constructed through the interaction of power with the social structures. Wellbeing is emergent and dynamic in this process of interaction of power with the social structures.

Chapter II - “Feminism for Daughters and Patriarchy for Wives”: The Regressive Modernity and Reformist Patriarchy in Kerala

Introduction

Kerala has an outstanding position in the social developmental index among the states in India. The trajectory of Kerala’s model development has its own advantages as well as disadvantages. While the human development indices show an exemplary achievement, the qualitative aspects of the lives of people in the state, especially people from the margins as well as women, reveal the different layers of inequalities and exclusions. The fruits of development are unequally distributed in terms of gender. The way Kerala society has progressed towards modernity is a result of its own unique history and trajectory.

The achievements of gender development in the state has a history that dates back to the colonial period. Kerala society has a long history of the existence of a matrilineal system in different parts of the state that goes back from the pre-colonial to colonial period. Many caste and religious communities practiced matrilineality which offered ‘identity, security and a certain autonomy’ to women with decision making powers on marriage and sexual relations (Saradamoni 1999). The system empowered women with property rights, authority and freedom to choose their life partners (Eapen and Kodoth 2002). Marriage was fluid and dissoluble, and women’s ‘maintenance and residence rights were attained on maternal lines’ (Saradamoni 1999). But during the British period, legislative measures were adopted in Travancore to abolish the matrilineal system and the impartibility of joint family property ownership (Eapen and Kodoth 2002). The matrilineal system in Kerala was the only kinship system abolished in the world through the legislative measures (Arunima 2003). This negatively impacted women’s status and autonomy.

The nineteenth and early twentieth century social transformations and reform movements restructured marriage and family through legal interventions that established a specific form of patriarchy i.e. ‘conjugal patriarchy’. This institutionalised husband’s authority over wife and children and restructured gender identities towards a conjugal home. Patrilineal family and patrilineality were strengthened through conjugal

patriarchy (Hapke 2013). The transformation from matriliney to patriarchy and institutionalisation of husband's authority over wife through conjugal patriarchal relations lead to the undermine women's rights and autonomy and deeply ingrained 'orthodoxy'. This orthodoxy intersects with the social, economic and political processes, giving rise to the visible 'paradoxes' in the Kerala model of development (Hapke 2013). These measures proved to deal a death blow to women's property rights. Eventually, women in the matrilineal caste communities of Nair and Ezhava castes in the Hindu community and Mappila Muslims in the Malabar region were denied control over ancestral property and decision-making power within their families of (Eapen and Kodoth 2002).

Larger modernisation processes were accelerated by these legislative measures which paved the way for economic, political, cultural, administrative, and institutional transformations. New forms of caste and national identity, gender relations, inheritance rights, and newer definitions of private and public domains were by-products of these transformations (Hapke 2013). Education aimed to edify the modern domesticated governable individual. Various socio-economic, political-legal factors gave a thrust to women's education and employment than to a quest for their autonomy (Devika and Mukherjee 2007).

Structural changes in property inheritance rights caused changes in the agrarian structure and relations of production which created stress in the economic conditions of the families. The economic stress created by changes in the agrarian structure and loss of property rights pushed women to enter into the job market (Devika and Mukherjee 2007). The socio-economic conditions of the households in the mid twentieth century had a pivotal role in shaping gender relations and the construction of domestic and public spaces (Devika 2002; Devika and Mukherjee 2007). In the lower caste and working-class families, they reiterated the middle-class notion of men as breadwinners and the ideal role of women as dependent housewives. This undermined the economic contribution of the women struggling for the survival of their families as 'supplementary wages' (Lindberg 2005). At the same time, economic contribution of women from low income households was inevitable for their survival. Thus, public spaces for women were constructed in a domesticated fashion with 'womanly activities' where their employment was legitimised as supplementary and supportive to their family's survival (Devika and Mukherjee 2007).

The cultural value ascribed to women's identity as a wife and mother modelled marriage as an inevitable aspect of her life. Marriage was deemed to be a social, cultural and economic necessity. The patriarchal values and norms associated with marriage undermined the status of women as dependents of men. The inevitability of marriage accelerated the practice of dowry and it evolved to be a grievous problem in Kerala (Lindberg 2005).

The social changes, imperialist and capitalist structures driven by hegemonic gender discourses and ideologies produced unequal gender relations leading to the process of *effeminization* (Lindberg 2005). The process of *effeminization* is the 'stereotyped characterization of women as opposite to men'. It is a new expression of femininity that sexualized the female body, through the control of its physical appearance. The practice of dowry is a part of the process of *effeminization* where women have an inferior status. (Lindberg, 2005, p.168)

The achievements in the conventional indicators of development were not transformative in nature towards liberating women by ensuring more autonomy and freedom (Kodoth & Eapen 2005; Devika & Mukherjee 2007; Hapke 2013). The growing trends of decline in child sex ratio, low female work participation, high female unemployment and rising crimes against women indicate the deteriorating status of women in Kerala. We thus witness the fact that gender inequality has a cultural and material base. Intersections of cultural ideologies with the political economy in a patriarchal system produce gender inequality (Hapke 2013).

Social reformation and the project of Kerala modernity during late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the legislative measures during colonial and postcolonial period and the economic policies had a massive impact on the social structures. It restructured the kinship system and property rights, gender power relations, caste and class structures, ownership and relations of production and political systems in Kerala (Devika 2005; Kodoth and Eapen 2005; Hapke 2013). These changes redefined the value systems, norms, and culture of the people in Kerala.

Regressive Modernity and Reformist Patriarchy

In the cultural history of Kerala through the process of reformation during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, there was an attempt to define the feminine identity in a particular manner. The reformist patriarchy envisioned the standards and

norms of 'women's liberation' in the Kerala modernity project of early twentieth century (Devika 2012). In the process of modernisation, the gender identity gained prominence as women became the 'vessel of culture' (Devika 2015).

The *Natyashastra* (believed to be compiled roughly between 500 BCE and 500 CE) describes three types of women *Kulina*, *vesya* and *bhrtya* based on their functions, lifestyle, sexual preferences, gestures and movements (Devika 2015). *Vesya* was regarded as the 'vessel of culture' as she provides aesthetic, intellectual and sexual pleasure to men of certain class and standard. *Kulina* women, on the other hand, were attached with the function of progeny and perpetuation of traditional norms and values. As *vesya* women were considered as the 'vessel of culture', they were the ones entitled to learn music, dance and to read. This historical ground explains the resistance to women's education in the early nineteenth century, wherein the argument was that women exposed to education would become immoral. The process of emancipation of women through education included learning painting, music, literature and etiquettes as the 'new woman' took over the function of epitomising 'vessel of culture' in a significantly different manner, where her newly acquired skills had to be showcased in the interior domestic spaces of the modern homes where these skills became a source of pleasure to the family (Devika 2005, 481–82).

Thus, social reformation and legislative measures in the nineteenth and early twentieth century imparted colonial modernity and a new gendered identity through formal education. From 1920 onwards, formal education addressed the gender separation of public and private domains (Devika 2005). The process of gendering the educational system is largely motivated by patriarchal values. This had the underlying motive of 'properly gendering' them by creating 'modern public-oriented male subjects and modern domestic-oriented female subjects' with new forms of gender hierarchies structured on patriarchal ideologies and power equations. Here, the construction of domestic identity of women through education was intended to benefit society as a whole (Devika and Mukherjee 2007). Even in the post-independence period young girls were forced to limit their process of individuation gained through education. Their individual identity and agency became shaped according to the economic and social requirement of modern family (Devika and Mukhejee 2007).

Women being the epitome of ‘vessel of culture’, were expected to be the perpetuators of cultural norms and traditional values³. A transgression of the normative roles and cultural value associated to women’s identity is then considered as deviance. The control of women’s sexuality by restricting their mobility is a visible expression of a regressive modernity with a growing misogynistic attitude of Malayali men towards women who challenge the hierarchy of gender power relations. It is predominantly an outpouring of the trauma and insecurities of men, especially the ‘*savarna*’ men, of the empowerment of their women (Devika 2018).

The contrast is when women become the ‘henchmen’ of the patriarchal power structures. Two days after the historic entry of two women of menstrual age into Sabarimala to offer prayers, a news report stated that one of the women who had entered the temple in the midst of violent protests and outrage was brutally attacked by her mother-in-law on her return home after the visit.

“I reached home at around 7 am. I entered the hall as the door was already open. When my mother-in-law knew it was me, she came from kitchen with a wooden stick and started attacking me. She said that I've slept with many others and they didn't want to be at that house and started abusing me. They attacked me some 10-12 times and hit my head as well. I couldn't even stand properly, still they dragged me out and closed the door” (Kanakadurga, 15th January 2019, News18)

These incidents throw light into the regressiveness of the modernity attained by the state. The above cited statement of Kanakadurga (44 years) portrays the mentality of Malayali society towards women who transgress the conventional norms and traditions of society. The physical assault she had to suffer calls our attention to the violence women endure in their domestic space. Verbal abuse and accusations of her having slept with many men’, are popular constructs of society towards women who violate its norms and values. In other words, they are considered ‘loose women.’ In such a scenario, a woman’s sexuality, her chastity and fidelity within a marital relation is often questioned and criticised when she trespasses normative values. Ostracising and abandoning such women are usually a part of the process of excommunicating transgressors so as to protect and uphold the status and honour/dignity/sanctity of the

³ The current debates on women’s entry to Sabarimala, the Ayyappa temple and the position of Association of Malayalam Movie Actors (AMMA) on #MeToo allegations has to be understood and analysed in the context of continuities of colonial modernity and the status of women in a reformist patriarchal structure.

family. Here, a woman who is supposed to be the ‘vessel of culture’, is considered to have violated the cultural values and traditions which she was obliged to protect. Labelling her as an ‘immoral’ woman, and excluding her from private and public spaces are the punishments she ‘deserves’ for transgressing gender norms. Women belonging to ‘respected’ families who conform to the societal expectations of performance of a particular kind of ‘respectable femininity’ are considered to uphold the status and dignity of their own family. A mother-in-law attacking her daughter-in-law who violated cultural norms in a sense invokes a moral power or supremacy to control and punish the transgressor to uphold the dignity and status of her own family in society.

The modernisation of Kerala society through renaissance and social transformation restructured gender and caste relations in the public and private spheres. It led to a certain level of idealism and progressiveness, which eventually produced a regressiveness in the way society approached liberal and progressive values in the later phase of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Through the reformist patriarchy the control of women’s life and sexuality was restricted to the private domains of the family. “Sabarimala was the perfect trigger for savarna and masculine trauma, festering under its social skin, to erupt in Kerala” (Devika 2018). The current social scenario in Kerala is the outpouring of patriarchy from the domestic space to the public space. This is the two-facedness of the Malayalee who pretends to be liberal and progressive outwardly and inwardly remains extremely conventional and conservative in their attitudes.

“Now the reason is because there is a lot of hypocrisy as far as the Kerala society is concerned. What is there on the surface need not be what there underneath? And especially with Kerala, may be one of the most seminal influences of the kind of social reform movements that we have had is, the difficulty in articulating positions that are politically incorrect. So, on the surface everybody is politically correct. But there is caste, there is dowry, there is gender inequality, there is domestic violence, all these things exist underneath. But on the surface, it is very difficult to put your fingers on it”.

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

Prof Geeta, who is a radical feminist, shares in these words her critical observations of the regressive modernity of Kerala society. She is reflecting her young age to the contemporary society where the waves of renaissance and progressiveness had shaped the attitudes and lives of her generation. The symbols of progressiveness

and revolution such as anti-dowry movements and opting for simple civil marriages instead of ostentatious weddings were very much welcomed and appreciated in the 1980s. But as society changed and moved towards a period of technological revolution, the very same symbols are now ridiculed. Even progressive movements are not forthcoming in propagating and embracing these revolutionary practices. The traces of idealism and progressiveness have completely vanished from contemporary discourse.

“The society I think has now changed but not as drastically, because all these things (conventional norms and values) are still there. Now it is more conducive for it to become open. These values were always there. But now the time has come. See, what it is underneath it is only when conducive, things come out. Today this is more conducive for many of these very regressive kinds of things to come out into the open and people don’t mind saying it now. When I was younger there was a problem articulating it. Now it is easy to articulate it, probably because of the kind of reform movement, enlightenment movements and things like that, Kerala renaissance and the trajectory because of that. Very many things were not possible even to articulate when I was young. But now it is easier. Say for example, I did not study in Ernakulam. But my friends who studied there in Maharajas tell me that, at that time when in the late 80s in Ernakulam in Maharajas, there was still anti-dowry slogans being shouted and they would stand around a tree and take oath, that none of the boys there would marry for dowry. Today nobody does that in campuses, right? Today even to do that is considered, they would become the laughing stock. In spite of the fact that there are very progressive, liberal youth wings, you know, nobody seems to be doing this kind of a thing. Nobody seems to say that I won’t marry for dowry, I would marry in a registrar office or I will go for a civil wedding. These are not happening nowadays. It was a trend to voice it and I don’t know how much it would happen. Because I was too young at that time. But nevertheless, there was a certain level of idealism in the air. The remnants of Kerala renaissance project which was still in the air. But today I think the idealism, even the traces of that idealism have vanished from many of the discourses that I hear around here academic institutions.”

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

The narrator thus compares her empowered self with the level of exposure and empowerment her students have access to in the current social context. Though she finds her students to be much more empowered than she was at their age, they need to express much more courage and perseverance to bring changes in their own life is a change in the larger society. They are swept away in the wave of consumerism and influenced by the patriarchal values concerning the performance of their feminine identity. The practice of the dowry system and the displaying of the body as an aesthetically-pleasing object in finery and adorning it with culture (Devika 2005) is not

challenged. In her opinion, there is a certain level of regressiveness in the way we approach institutions of marriage and family.

“The problem that I find now looking back, I see my students, are much more empowered than me. I did not have any kind of empowerment, but nevertheless this kind of a thing was possible even twenty-five years back... But even today girls are unwilling to say that I will not go for all these things. I am not going to put my foot down and say these things. This is something that which at a point, where today I would feel that a certain kind of regressiveness in the sense with which we approach marriage, the institution of family etc. because we seem to be regressing in fact. ... So that was one aspect.”

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

The regression in modernity is facilitated through patriarchal values in both the private and public spaces.

Intricate Ways of Operationalizing Patriarchy in the Kerala Context: Patriarchy in Public and Private Spaces

Patriarchy is operationalised in society through extremely intricate ways in both the private and public domains. Marriage becomes an inevitable reality for women as the roles of motherhood and wifehood are attached with cultural meanings. Marriage thus becomes an institution meant to control the sexuality of women and a means to safeguard tradition and culture of the society through the institution of family, rather than a social institution to ensure companionship to the parties entering into marital union. There is a normative social pressure built around the family for a woman to get married and settle into family life. Society projects single or unmarried women as sexually vulnerable and therefore required to be protected within a family set up. Their sexuality needs to be controlled hence, either by parents or the husband.

Advocate Anita, a divorcee and single mother shared her experience of being socially conditioned in her family by being told that ‘you have to go to another home tomorrow’. Being the eldest daughter in her family, the parents always shared their biggest worry of having only two daughters and no sons. The worry of parents is due to culturally constructed notions of sons as inheritors of ancestral property and providers of care to elderly parents. While being worried about not having a son, they, at the same time, condition their daughters towards their future role as wives in another household. This indicates the perceived and perpetuated inevitability of marriage for women and the cultural construction around women as the property of their husband’s

family. Again, this indicates cultural underpinnings of raising daughters to perform normative feminine roles and become the carriers of culture and tradition. Within the familial domain the process of social construction of gender roles through socialisation is thus underway.

“All my childhood I have heard this thing ‘we have only two girls, only two girls’. And I am kept on hearing this. And the thing that irritates me a lot is, ‘you have to go to another home tomorrow’. Right now, being at this home is not an issue at all. ‘Tomorrow another home’ is what I’m hearing from childhood and that’s bugging me.”

*(Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram,
June 2018)*

As she continues sharing her experience of the social construction of her gender roles and normative femininity⁴ she recollected the memories of her parents looking for a ‘perfect’ match, around the days when she started her career as a Human Resource Manager in a multinational company in a metro city. Although she was moving up the career ladder and opportunities were at her hand to explore her potential, her parents were worried about her ‘unsettled life.’ The ultimate settling of a woman’s life happens only with her embracing the inevitable reality of her life, her ultimate destiny- marriage. The normative values and meaning attributed to women’s role value her professional capacity only next to her domestic responsibilities. There exists pressure on women’s parents and their families to find a ‘suitable’ match for their daughter at the appropriate time, in order to control her sexuality.

“I learned a lot of things in Operations and later on shifted to HR when there was a vacancy. Now they want me to learn the business, so I’m promoted. But somehow, I’m feeling stuck. There is no permanent seat for me anywhere. I’m like running around from department to department. I’m learning different things, but my family was not supportive. They were like, why the hell you wanted to do all these things, get married and get your life settled. So, though on one side this match-making is going on and on the other side I’m rejecting guys. So, this thing was too much of a mess for my family. So, it was a lot of pressure for me.”

*- (Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram,
June 2018)*

⁴, the feminity constructed as an embodiment of cultural norms and values and feminine disposition

Kerala families display a significant paradoxical combination of enlightened fathers who render a certain amount of progressiveness, and mothers who are the victims of patriarchy. Pro Geeta experienced a coexistence of patriarchy and liberalism within her family. Her experience throws light on modernity in Kerala as a failed project with its regressiveness and fallibility. She attributes the credit of turning her into a feminist activist to her father who was very patriarchal in his outlook towards her mother. Her father's manner of treating her mother with no sense of feminism and the latter's suppression under this patriarchal influence stands in contrast to the way her father treated her. This raises the question as to why there is a bifurcation of men's attitude towards women as in, 'feminism is for daughters and patriarchy is for wives. Marital relations are highly unequal in terms of power relations where men oppress their wives as though they have the privilege of exercising their power and control over them. Here her mother is the representation of many women who are totally dependent on their husbands materially and economically. Wives' roles and responsibilities are restricted within the private space of her family. These women are victims of abuse, undignified treatment and violence. Daughters are their fathers' pride while wives are victims of patriarchy. But there is again another set of men who exercise their control and power and behave as a patriarch to both their wives and children.

“My father is a big patriarch when it comes to my mother. He didn't want a woman who is working. He wanted a woman who would stay at home and look after his kids. But at the same time, he just went to the office and would come back and stay at home. He wouldn't go anywhere and he was completely a family man. And he was the one who would bathe us, iron our uniforms and pack our tiffin. Amma would do the cooking. He loved doing all these things. But nevertheless, you know, when it came to Amma he didn't want her to be working or she could easily get a job at that time. He married her when she was seventeen. People who come to this capital city (of a north Indian state) at that point of time, huge public undertaking company, many of them got jobs there (sic). But he didn't allow her to do a job there. And everything related to the kitchen would be done either by her or by him, but not by us. So, he brought me up as a feminist. But at the same time, he made sure that there wasn't even a trace of feminism in the way he looked at or treated my mother. He could very easily abuse my mother in front of people. He could very easily talk about her father, her bad upbringing or something like that or her lack of taste, but with me he was the height of politeness and he

would make sure that no man would talk to me like that. So, it's a double bind. On one side we are all our father's daughters, but at the same time we all have wronged and victimized mothers. So, my entire strength I drew from my father. But at the same time, I cannot, but see that my father is also very, very patriarchal. Even today my mother doesn't have a job, she told me once, I mean she is a believer. When she goes to the temple, she steals money from my father's pocket in order to put it in the offering box [bhandaram]. Now when I became a working woman, I send her money. And my brother is much more of a feminist than me. So, he actually is much more judgmental about my father than I am. But I am tempted to mollycoddle him a little bit because, I also know that in spite of that face of his life that there is another face to him, which probably made me what I am today. So, I can understand the paradoxes and the problems there. I know that this is true for a lot many Malayalee men. When it comes to their wives it is very difficult, when it comes to their daughters, they want them to be (empowered and independent). So, this is again very interesting unique to Kerala, I think. So, there is a kind of bifurcation. Feminism is for daughters and patriarchy is for wives. But this is again shifting slightly now where I see a lot many men being very patriarchal to their daughters too."

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June2018)

Malati, a journalist with a TV channel shared her observations and experiences of patriarchy operating in her husband's family. Her father-in-law dominates her mother-in-law and the dominance is even visible in the public space when both of them are out together. The father-in-law would always walk ahead of her mother-in-law and that is a decision and action he makes consciously. But the father-in-law has two sets of rules when it comes to his wife on the one hand and his sons and daughters-in-law together on the other. When she took a career break after her son was born to take care of the child, she did not seriously consider or expect that she would be able to make a comeback to her profession. It was the father-in-law who insisted that she should plan towards returning to her profession within a a time frame. She is also perplexed with the bifurcation of his attitude and treatment towards two sets of women in his family.

"...if his (husband's) parents are walking together, his father always walks at least five feet ahead of mother. They do not walk together to a place. That is his decision that he will walk like that only. Amma would walk only behind him. That is their concept. He (husband) was brought up seeing this. But he is lot better than them. He cannot be compared with them. It is a patriarchal set up. But this achan is patriarchal only in the affairs with amma. But this same achan asked me when I resigned after my son was born, 'Malati when are you joining back in the channel?' That was the time everyone, including my mother-in-law and myself thought that I will not go for work again. I said

'Acha I will do it.' He said, 'no you should fix a date and work accordingly.' So, he is very patriarchal only to his wife, not to us. He wants all of us to work and move forward. Otherwise I did not feel him as that patriarchal.'

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, October 2017).

Family and marriage are two institutions in which patriarchy operates in its most intricate ways. Through these institutions women's sexuality is controlled, gender roles are constructed by attributing cultural meanings to it and women are socialised to adapt and perform 'respectable femininity' (Radhakrishnan 2011). Women are idealised in this power structure as the 'vessels of culture' (Devika 2005)

Gossip or rumours are another means through which patriarchy operates to belittle a woman's achievements, and destroy a woman through character assassination. Rumours are expressions of a desire for freedom and the vexation of denial of that freedom. It is also an expression of the insecurities of men with the empowerment of their women. A woman who transgresses conventional norms and disassociates herself from the performance of normative femininity is attacked with the weapon of gossip and rumours to put her down. The stereotypical constructions of feminine identity as a 'good woman' and 'bad woman' are very much engrained in the psyche of women. The moment the 'good girl' image is attacked, in most cases, women withdraw without even challenging or resisting the accusations. These kind of rumour sources are mostly not from one particular place, but an entire system conspires to put women down through such gossip and slander.

"One more incident that I want to tell you, which is again maybe it is typical for Kerala or may be typical of a large context. Specifically, in Kerala that has some kind of harassing. When I got the Fulbright fellowship I went on to US. When I came back, I came back to certain kind of rumours, that I didn't know what it is. That I have divorced my husband, I am on the verge of divorce. This came back to me years later and I asked my husband where did it come from. Because we never had any kind of issues by which we have talked to somebody or we have talked about a problem, nothing of that kind. We just could not understand how anybody could say that this person is getting divorced. There was a very interesting tale that has fun. My own supervisor asked me, 'I heard that you are in love with another man in America and you are going to divorce your husband. He is a very nice man, don't do that.' I was shocked, I didn't know what to do. When I discussed this with my husband both of us were younger at that point of time, we were trying to think about who is the enemy who created this kind of tale out of nothing. Today when I look back, I realise that it was not one enemy. There is an entire system, the entire society, that also had to find fault with a woman who is

going away, leaving her husband and child behind. And that was one gossip, a strand of gossip, that was one kind of thing trying to put me down in my place. The moment you gossip about a woman, the moment you start talking about her in these terms you know, the woman is put down. And she, very rarely women have the courage to fight back. Today I tell my girl students when they come to me with this kind of 'bad girl', 'bad woman' stereotype, which means that you are working, you are doing something with your life. This is the society's way of getting back at you. For me today somebody who says that I can understand where where is the source of that kind of gossips. It doesn't come from a concrete incident. It doesn't come from any factual details, it comes from only a desire, that this kind of woman only can be transgressive."

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

Unmarried and married women are equally vulnerable to becoming victims of gossip. There is a kind of implicit pressure to maintain the 'good name' by performing a normative type of femininity. This fear of gossip and pressure to perform the normative kind of femininity in a way explains society's disapproval of close or exclusive friendship between men and women. Gender norms in a way communicate about and condition women's sexual vulnerability thereby imposing control over women's sexuality.

"I went to University College for my Masters. There we were seven women among 18 men. The reason why I did not face any setbacks in my life was, when we are in a class like this, we should interact with all these 18 men in the same way. If we find one among those 18 as special and if others see some exclusivity [prathyekatha] in that relation I would not blame the people. Others would think why she has some special closeness to him. There is no need for feeling speciality with someone. Yes, there are differences among everyone. But if we treat everyone alike without feeling any speciality to someone, then there are no such problems arising. That is my experience and I never felt anything exclusively towards anyone."

-(Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017)

The intensity of labelling a woman as 'loose' and the pressure to maintain the 'good girl' image and perform a 'respectable femininity' at the cost of one's own wellbeing affects one's concept of 'self'. Pro Martina, who hails from a very prominent family in Thiruvananthapuram, had to endure an abusive marriage under the pressure of having to firstly maintain family and class status and to conform to the normative feminine identity. Labels such as 'rebel' and 'loose' are attached to women who transgress the performance of 'respectable femininity' which resonate ideas of domesticity, respectability and family values (Radhakrishnan 2011, 146). Women

breaking away from marriage are considered rebels. The cultural values attached to the role of wife, and the cultural significance of family as the space of perpetuating tradition and culture are impediments to women breaking away from marriage. When Pro Martina states ‘*Kerala society does not approve of women stepping out (of marriage)*’ it resonates the regressiveness of Kerala society and how deep-rooted patriarchy is in the minds of people.

“My marriage has ruined my life. [Marriage annu ente lifene thakarathathu] ... Oooh! Life was hell for me!... At my home in the city, we all had separate rooms, we enjoyed that independences, and our parents gave us so much freedom. This was we (usually people) never used to (sentence breaking) (get at the times of her young age). I, who had been brought up in this kind of atmosphere, suddenly, had not only to put up with a man who always doubted me, but also had to go to a family where you had no freedom... this man made my life hell for me! But I am still with this man, because Kerala society does not approve of women stepping out (of marriage). I have two sons, if something happens to my sons people would say, ‘she is such a arrogant woman, she behaved according to the Trivandrum culture.’ [avalu chillara ahankaari aano? Aa thiruvanathapuram culture kaanichathaanu]. My husband said, you have chattakkaari (Anglo Indian women who wear western dress, particularly frock) culture. They think, because we speak English, oh God! ‘She has chattakkaari culture, so she might have led a loose life in Thiruvananthapuram city’, some word he used! [Chattakkaari culture aanu, athukondu Thiruvanthapuram muzhuvan ayanju, entho oru vaakku upayogichu, alanju nadannu kaanum!] People like us from the villages shouldn’t have married you. [Nammalepole naattinpurathullavarannum kettikkondu varendathayirunnilla.]”

- (Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

Women are the gate keepers of culture and guardians of the family. Their personal motivation and desire have to be coterminous with the welfare, wellbeing and unity of their families. Pro Martina is double-burdened with the distress of the violence and lack of freedom to exercise her agency along with the remorse of not being able to take care of her aged and ill parents. She is caught up in the social construction of the image of a ‘good woman’ and her responsibility of being the guardian of the unity and wellbeing of her family at the cost of her own wellbeing. She does not find herself bold enough to break away from conventional norms and when she says she is scared; she is scared of society first and then her life partner. She is scared of asserting her choice and the price to be paid for it- the family status, her image of ‘good woman’ and the future of her children.

“... (Crying) She (mother) gave up everything so we could have a better tomorrow... and still she is suffering (crying loud). I cannot take her home and look after her [enikku veetil kondupoyi vachu nokkan pattathilla]. My husband never allows me. [Husband sammathikkathilla]. I cannot come out of home. If I come out of home (sentence breaking) [enikku veetil ninnu irangaan pattathilla. Veettilninnu irangiyaal (break)... If I leave him, they would get him married to somebody else and will say, she is a rebel woman [avalu thantendiya] she ruined her family [avalude kudumbathe nashipichathu ennu parayoolle]. So, I suffer all these distresses and moving on. [athukondu sahichu, sahichu munnottu pokunnu]... But my personal life is (such a mess). I haven't been able to come out of that. I don't have that kind of boldness. I am scared. [aa boldness onnum enikku illa. Enikku pedia.]”

(Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018)

Women are bound by the double burden of raising children to become moral and responsible citizens. Here this moral obligation became an impediment to making a choice to break away from an abusive relationship. Sons are entitled to get maternal care and paternal control for raising them as ‘good citizens’ who contribute to the nation’s development through the skills and potentials as competitors in the global market (Devika 2019). If children become rebels and go against the normative expectations of society, the mother is held responsible for their deviance. Thus, professional women are expected to ‘balance’ their career ambitions with the duties attached to them as family women to protect the ‘sacred and feminized domestic sphere’ and at the same time contribute to the economy and social development of the state (Radhakrishnan 2011). There is a culture of silencing within the patriarchal structure where women are forced to remain silent of the oppression, they endure in their everyday lives in order to safeguard the dignity and status of their families.

“...they (siblings) know certain things, but I doubt whether they know that, he is that extreme. How can I tell this to everyone? Mommy and papa know well. They (siblings) are like, if you don't want, leave the marriage. Take hard decisions. I fear how would it affect my children. My children will tell me, ‘if had you stepped out earlier, we would have been better.’ But for me, it is not like that. If I had stepped out, these boys would have been more rebellious. [ivanmaaru kurekoode thala thirinju nadakkum]. Because they are boys, if they don't have the control of the father, then people would say, ‘How fondly their father was taking care of those boys! He was taking these boys along on either side to the church, why did that woman do like that?’ Wouldn't they think that, I have only these things (academics as important)? [avarkkokke ithu maathrame ullo ennokke chinthikkathille?] For me my children, for whatever reason I hung on, they might have got damaged (sentence breaking).

My children think that if I had gone to my mother's house, they would have been better off."

- (Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

Women's ambition to flourish in their career is not equally appreciated as it is with men. The concept of 'ambition' has a negative connotation when it comes to women. Ambitious women are seen as women who are out to destroy their family life. The sexual connotations underlying this perception considers an ambitious woman as someone who can transgress all normative values and provide sexual favours in order to grow in their career. This sexual connotation also reflects the misogyny in society and the gender power structure which attributes professional success naturally to men. Women are considered as less talented and weak in their potential to grow in their career and have to provide some sexual favour in order to become equal to men in their career achievements. The negative connotation to 'ambition' can rip one's sense of self and kill one's determination and motivation to work hard and grow in their profession.

"In Kerala one thing is that they have to look at in two ways, one thing is women who achieve, and women who are out to achieve something with their lives. They say, 'She's very ambitious' [valare ambitious aanu]. Ambition is considered to be very, very negative in Kerala. Ambition which can be such a positive thing, but it's one thing that's different for women in Kerala. Because the moment you say somebody is ambitious, the picture is very clear. She is out to destroy her family; she is out to destroy herself in the process of being ambitious also it has a lot of negative sexual connotations. It will go to any extent to become what she wants to be kind of a person. So, these were the things that I had to fight. Because I was ambitious, I am ambitious, continue to be ambitious. But that is not the ambition to be the registrar, that is not the ambition to be the vice chancellor, not that kind of an ambition. My ambition is to my work. My work which would be known or which would be appreciated in a certain sense. So, even that kind of an ambition when it becomes negative, it becomes a great challenge to work in an atmosphere of that sort. So, these were the setbacks I really had to fight with. 'Oh, Geeta Pillai, okay, she is very ambitious'. That kind of a comment can kill you in certain context. In all my life I have had to battle with that. Now, as I grow older it doesn't matter."

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

The post-feminist trends in recent times that undermine the goals of feminist movements, and the society conspire to de-value or belittle the achievements of successful women. These trends invoke the cultural value and meaning attached to women's role as mother and 'vessel of culture' to defeat and put down ambitious and

successful women. Younger generation women are motivated to think in the manner that it is not needed to work hard to achieve anything in life. The social system that colludes to make women think this way projects that domesticated feminine identities of women are culturally approved and valued over their achievements in the professional space.

“But even then, now slowly people also realize that certain things that I do for, because there is a pleasure in research, there is a pleasure in the work I do. At least the next generation, my students have been able to tell them that. But it has not been easy precisely because of this. If on a Saturday you are travelling for 120 kms to go and deliver a lecture somewhere, naturally people will say, you are breaking the family, the family is suffering because of it. And the greatest setback I had was the entire society in a sense was able to convince my daughter that, this is not what women should be doing. But she is grown up to be a very independent girl. But at the same time, she feels that she has seen the pains that I have taken and she now thinks that it is not worth it. That is one place where you get defeated. When you are not able to continue with what you did in your life through, need not necessarily be your daughter, but whoever, to continue with that kind of work in the next generation, that is the way the society now may be has the last laugh as of now, because they have convinced my daughter that, ‘why you need to work this much? What’s the point?’ ‘Aren’t you a narcissist to work like this?’ So, these kinds of questions, its only when a young girl hits 40, will get the answer. That’s the huge price to pay. By then the options might be closed, or by then the thoughts that you options will always remain open, might not be there. That for me is very saddening, the thing that the kind of work culture or the kind of passion that you had for your work (..) in a postfeminist sense, I tried talking to you in the last session also. Women now feel that, ‘you don’t have to work like this’. [angane work cheyyanda karyam onnum illa.] You can get things in an easier manner. Nothing comes easy. When you take up these harsh positions, you become unpopular on one side, but also people don’t want to go through it. So, somebody who was in the home, seeing me work all through, my daughter thinks it really doesn’t matter to be someone like this. ‘I don’t want to be that. I don’t want to do this. I don’t want to struggle so much’. If I can get something easy, fine. Otherwise, why? Why bother? It in a sense is highly defeating to me. That is the greatest setback I have had in my life, honestly.”

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018))

Regressive modernity and reformist patriarchy operate through these subtle ways which leave a huge impact in the lives of women who aspire to grow in their career. Women entangled within their ambitions in life and the gendered roles and cultural values attached to family and marriage struggle to assert their agency and make choices in life. You are left out with two choices, either confine to the expectations of performing normatively feminine roles at the cost of your wellbeing or transgress the conventional norms for your wellbeing at the cost of being labeled a ‘rebel’ or

‘ambitious woman’ who destroyed her family. Both the choices have its negative implications on the self and wellbeing of women in a patriarchal structure.

Women as Torch Bearers of Patriarchy: Women Oppressing Women

The unique style of patriarchy operating in India and specifically in Kerala is through their women as its mouthpiece or torch bearers. “Why this paradox”, is a genuine question that can arise in our mind. When you compare Malayalee women to their counterparts in other parts of the country, i.e. in terms of their educational status, social mobility and role in the labour market, has to be taken into account to contextually understand this paradox of development. This throws light on the manner in which the thinking and performance of femininity of women in Kerala was disciplined and regulated through the values of colonial modernity or Victorian morality, rooted in the concept of disciplined and industrious bodies constructed through the imposition of religious moral and cultural values, that controlled any form of transgression of conventional norms.

The ‘structures of power domination is made up through the interlocking hierarchies’ (Fellows and Razack 1998) of caste, class and gender structures in the society. Women in the hierarchical structure are oppressed as well as are oppressors (Fellows and Razack 1998). Women who are oppressed and treated as subordinates by men at the same time strive to maintain dominant positions among other women. In this context, women tend to place her as the center of systems of domination as she feels this is the only way to legitimise her subordination by winning respectability in the competing marginal positions. When a woman strives to maintain her dominance among others who are subordinate to her, it would limit her opportunities to understand the struggles of other women who are more marginal than her in the structure of domination. Fellows and Razack (1998) phrase this practice as securing a “toehold on respectability.” This means that women in dominant positions understand and explain ‘other’ women’s lives and their experiences through the lens of their own ‘superiority’ and ‘dominant explanatory frameworks’ (Fellows and Razack 1998). This practice disempowers women from breaking away from the shackles of patriarchy operated through social structures and social institutions.

Prof Martina shared about her colleague and department Head who creates much trouble for her as well as other teachers and students in the department. Irrespective of her efficient performance in her professional role, the power she exercises on others is demoralising, forcing even the students to approach higher authorities for justice. Here her colleague becomes the mouthpiece of systems of domination and fails to understand the problems and challenges of other women and people who are below her in the power strata.

“They (research scholars) said the kind of treatment they are getting now is not at all conducive and the present head is behaving in a demoralising way with them. She is very efficient. But is habituated to dominate everyone at home, and that habituation to dominate is continued here in the workspace as well [Nalla midukki aanu, pakshe ee oru power maathramalla, veetil bharichulla sheelavum]. Her mother was also that kind of a lady.”

(Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018.)

Prof Geeta also shared her reflections of the manner in which patriarchy operates in her life via women as the mouthpiece of patriarchy. The statement often made, ‘a woman cannot stand the sight of other woman’ is in the light where there are hierarchies in the system of domination. Women in dominant positions strive to establish their cultural and moral superiority by referring to women who transgress these conventional norms as deviants and terming their behaviour as unacceptable. Conforming to the gender norms, her mother claims her legitimate cultural superiority as something entitled to by women who perform their femininity in socially acceptable ways. Here the mother reiterates implicitly the gender role of a married woman and her priority to the home over her career. Here the mother becomes the mouthpiece of patriarchy.

“Patriarchy in Kerala is extremely insidious. And its most oppressive tactic that of using of women... So, it is a very, very clever strategy and then they will say, ‘a woman cannot stand the sight of other women’. [oru penninu veroru pennine kandu kooda.] This is the final thing they would say. So, patriarchy, the way it operates in Kerala is mostly through women actually. Women become the mouth pieces of patriarchy and that is why it is so difficult to actually respond to it... But my mother is very conventional and she used to give me a lot of, in fact she was the personification of patriarchy that tormented me constantly. She continues to do even today, where she would call me up on a Sunday and ask me, ‘Where are you?’, and if I say I am working or I am in a meeting, then she would make it a point to rub it in, that you know, I was not doing the right thing. She continues to do that. She is the patriarchal voice for me, and not my father or brother or husband or my

friends. She continues to do that. So, it is interesting the way patriarchy works in India. It is not through men, actually it is through women, especially when you are a young girl growing up.”

(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

The home as a space attained centrality in the emerging social order in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The making of the middle-class home and the respectability attained through it were the modalities of hierarchical relations of class structure to legitimise and consolidate middle class ruling power in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe (Fellows and Razack 1998). The middle-class homes became a site of self-control, self-discipline and order by imposition of control over the manner of their living (Fellows and Razack 1998, 345). The home became the site of production and reproduction of class identity with the bourgeois bodies being connected to the making of a liberal democratic social order that replaced feudalism (Fellows and Razack 1998). The emergence of the need to protect the middle-class home and middle classes from pollution by the lower order and lifestyle was meant to legitimise and consolidate their power through perpetuating the systems of domination. The intellectual construct of ‘middle-class respectability’ invokes an ordered and self-regulated middle-class home and the individuals in it distinguish their lifestyle from that of the lower order in order to maintain their status and self-respect. They perceive frugality, devotion to duty and control of passions as superior to the degenerated lifestyle of the people of lower order (Mosse 1995). The middle-class identity constructed through specific lifestyles and a self-regulated personality constructed normative femininity. The respectability given to the performance of this normative femininity legitimises the social construction of this femininity. Normative femininity is attached to the gender roles of a domesticated woman.

When the maternal aunt of Prof Geeta emphasizes the domestic roles of women, she implicitly states that a woman must have the skill to perform both her domestic and professional roles exceptionally. A woman who can perform her professional skills efficiently but not her domestic responsibilities are devalued. The aunt reiterated that the domesticated woman is the ‘ideal woman’ irrespective her empowerment and achievements in the public domain.

“See, the thing is again in a family space, an appachy (father’s sister) of mine, asked me, it was to put me down, she asked me, ‘Do you know how to sweep the courtyard?’ [muttam thookkan ariyamo?] I was coming to the university...”

I said I don't know how to sweep the courtyard. [enikku muttam thookkan ariyathilla.] And she replied, 'these all are what women have to learn to do', [Ithokka aanu sthreekal padikkandathu] which means, you know, what I am doing now- the fact that I am driving my own car, coming here, teaching, lecturing, attending r talks and lectures is not important but knowing to sweep the courtyard is. She said, 'Look at Indira Gandhi, does she know how to make a good aviyal (A mixed vegetable curry in Kerala)?' [Indira Gandhiye kandille, oru nalla aviyal vakkan avarkku ariyamo?] Her entire universe shrinks into the aviyal that she makes."

(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

Women bear the discontentment of the denying of their freedom and agency. In the midst of the oppression and subordination they endure within the domains of family and workplace, they strive to claim moral and cultural superiority by internalising and conforming to gender norms. The process of striving to claim moral superiority, done by devaluing the achievements of other women who are their contemporaries within their power structure, is achieved by transgressing the same gender norms. Pro Geeta says, 'The power denied to these women, they grudge against others.' In her opinion, these women become the 'henchmen of patriarchy' here to oppress the transgressors of cultural norms by labelling them as 'rebels' and deviants, and attempt to 'puncture the ego of the other'. By doing this, they appropriate and reaffirm the domestic, feminine identity as culturally and morally valued and superior.

Here, Prof Geeta, a woman who challenges male domination in the public space is attacked continuously in order to subjugate her. Her experience says that, though she is a woman who manages to demonstrate certain level of excellence in the public space, which is predominantly dominated by men denied recognition to her professional credentials. The system of domination continually reminds her of her domestic responsibility as the fundamental and inseparable domain in life. Here the position of Prof Geeta as a feminist intellectual challenges the structures of domination of the men sharing the academic space with her, her intellectual position challenges patriarchal structures ideologically. In this case, the literal and ideological challenge she poses to the structures of domination places multi-layered impediments in gaining recognition for her academic work.

"I realised very early that it is very difficult to be a female intellectual in Kerala. They try to put you down for different things. Especially feminist intellectuals... Even when I bagged a post-doc fellowship from the UK what happened is that in the staff room once a woman made a comment, a

colleague of mine, 'We all have families to look after, we cannot go around the world like this. Only Pro Geeta can do that', which means the fellowship in a sense is a very negative thing. So, this is the way you are put down in your place and made to feel that what you are doing is an act of transgression... Kerala is again the society where patriarchy operates through its women. Women become the torch bearers of patriarchy, while men take stands that appear liberal on the surface, while their henchmen are actually women...Now the most difficult situations I have had in my life are because of such women, not because of men. To vindicate/justify such women, they have been denied certain kinds of agency. And to see a woman having that kind of agency, woman having desire, a woman travelling, a woman dressing up the way she wants, these are all things that just they cannot accept. So, power that has been denied to them also grudge others. So, it is much more difficult handling these women than it is handling men. Men, out of politeness might keep quiet, they might have a drink and say very bad things about you. But that's a different thing. You don't get to hear about it. But women make it a point to attempt to puncture your ego using these things."

(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)).

While Prof Geeta is attacked mostly on grounds of not conforming to domestic roles, another challenge that ambitious and successful women face is that of being attacked for the lack of moral integrity. Providing 'sexual favours' to men in authority is perceived an easy gateway to success and growth in the career ladder. Slandering and questioning a woman's moral integrity is one of the most powerful weapons to rebuff a woman. Women, quite often in these scenarios, are devastated and disempowered to fight back. When women gossip about other women, it exposes their hypocrisy and the paradox of Malayalee men who act as champions of women's cause in the public space while attempting to oppress women through gossip and slander in the private domain. When the desire to be successful was denied it makes them to envy and grudge others who were competent than them and became successful. Here the journalist Malati observes how women act in a more patriarchal manner than men in certain domains. It is women who take away the privilege of other women.

"...But if a woman gets popular quickly the kind of meaning they attribute to it is that she might have given some sexual favours to the head. [avalu headnte aduthu onnu kalichcu chirichu ninnittundavum.] Even now I hear some juniors here saying like that, when some girls who are very presentable and confident come to news reading, the other group would come and say, 'chechi (sister) we don't know to speak and interact sweetly' [chechi namukkonnum arinjooda ingane kalichcu chirichu samsarikkanonnum.] Mostly women talk like this. Mostly women are responsible for the denial of this privilege to women than men. How much ever the society progresses, this is one of the major contradictions we face. These very same women would do stories for

‘She News’ and try to empower the society against patriarchy, but once it comes to the personal domains of their life, these same people would talk and act in the same patriarchal way. I feel that it is women itself who take away their own privilege.”

-(Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, October 2017)

Mothers, the gate keepers of culture

Patriarchy creates a culture of internalising its norms and values. Uma Chakravarti (1993) discusses about how Brahmanical patriarchy in the Indian context makes women internalise oppression in the name of maintaining caste purity through controlling their sexuality. She traces the discursive construction of the oppression of women’s sexuality through the sacred texts and stories of Hinduism and Buddhism. Legitimising motherhood within a strictly controlled structure of a monogamous family to maintain caste purity and patrilineal succession raises the question of ‘management of female sexuality’ (Chakravarti 1993). Within this context evolves the concept of ‘*pativrata*’ where women control their sexuality by themselves. Chastity and fidelity of women were idealised within the religious and cultural context. The process of internalising of patriarchal values and women’s willingness to control their own sexuality, ‘invisibilised’ the structural and institutional control of women’s sexuality and subordination, and institutionalised patriarchy as an ideology by naturalising it (Chakravarti 1993).

Women who internalise patriarchal values are entrusted with the responsibility of ‘keeping patriarchy alive’. Idealising the concept of ‘*pativrata*’ and the celebration of female characters who were chaste and faithful to their husbands and protected their sexuality to maintain caste purity works towards naturalising the ideology of patriarchy. Here again, as discussed in the previous section, the transformation of disciplined feminine identity from *veshya* to *kulina* and the new feminine identity as the domesticated woman who is the ‘vessel of culture’ (Devika 2005) carries the burden of propagating patriarchy. Here, the upper-caste middle class homes discipline the female bodies to maintain purity and legitimacy to the systems of oppression to consolidate power. The system of oppression is a continuum of colonial modernity and caste and gender oppression within Brahmanical patriarchy.

Prof Geeta shared her experience, as we shall see in the narrative below, of her mother having two sets of values towards the professional roles of both her daughter

and son who were excelling in their professional life. While the son's overtime and hard work is considered empathetically and with pride in his excellence, the daughter's professional work is perceived as breaking the family norms and compromising the time she is expected to give her family. The mother is indirectly invoking the control of women's presence in the public space during late night and on off days as it was perceived as they are vulnerable to sexual violence. Women's mobility is controlled as a means to control her sexuality in the first place. The restriction of women to the home, the 'domestic space', reiterates the importance women have to give to their families and domestic responsibilities over work. A mother's reminder to her daughter of her 'devotion and duty' to her home is an implicit reminder of the need to perform her role as the 'vessel of culture' (Devika 2005).

"...but then on a regular day to day basis, my mother, she has two sets of values when it comes to my brother and me. My brother was awarded a PhD abroad, then came back and he is working in a big company in (a metro city), very well settled, much more well settled than me in fact. But the problem is, my mother talks to me using one language, and to him in another language. For example, on a Saturday when I am working, she would ask me, 'Why you are working today?' [Nee enthina innu work cheyyunne?] Sometimes she calls me up at 6PM and ask, 'Where are you?' When I say I am at the university then she asks, 'Why are you at the university at this time? Do they pay you for this? You go home', [nee veettil pokaan nokku] like that kind of a thing. For my brother she would say, 'He was in the office till 9 O'clock, my poor boy working'. You know, that is there! So, what I am saying is, all these come from the grooming that we have given our girl children, which actually is entrusted to the mother. The fathers are let off, because they go outside and they pretend secular democratic liberal moorings, but the mother is both on the receiving end and also the one who also has to propagate, who has to keep patriarchy alive."

(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

The responsibility of protecting and controlling the sexuality of unmarried daughters is entrusted to the family, especially with the mothers. The marrying off of daughters at the appropriate time to a suitable partner as a duty of the parents and family has to be understood within this context. Here, Malati, the journalist is sharing her experience of the initial days of her career. She was seen by her maternal uncle riding pillion on a bike with a much elder colleague from her office. Since the frequency of public transport is not that good, she was offered a lift to the office. When she met her uncle at that place, she greeted him normally. But in the evening when she returned home from work, she got into an unusual situation.

“...When I went home my mother was angry (laughing). [Vaikunneram njaan veettil chellumbol amma mugham okke veerpichirupundu]. Achan did not have any problem. He knows. I asked my mother, ‘What happened to you?’ That day she was crying and wailing. [annu kure karachilum pizhichilum issues okke undayatha] ... Other than that, there was no such extreme (restrictions) at home. It was mostly amma . Mothers generally have that kind of fear, right? Because of these fears there weres some restrictions... It is there in our society. [Ammayaanu ellathilum angane .Ammamaarkku oru pedi undallo! Athinte bhaagamayittu ulla restrictions cheyyum ennallathe... Societyil angane undu]. Since I was in a girls-only college, I did not have much issues of having male friends. But there was no difference in the attitude. [pakshe, attitude okke same thanneyaanu. Athil vyathyasam onnumilla].”

-(Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thirvananthapuram, October 2017).

Here she recalls the contradiction in the approach each of her parents had to this particular incident. While her father took it casually, her mother created a hue and cry. Her Brahmin upbringing and her mother’s education status as a post-graduate in Social Work has to be considered in this particular context. Her mother is a representation of the modern educated domesticated woman prototype, who have internalised patriarchal norms and are disempowered by society from expressing their agency and individuality. When she asks the question to herself and to the researcher, “*Mothers generally have that kind of fear, right?*”, she is, in a way, trying to rationalise and normalise the fear mostly Malayalee mothers have about their daughters. The ‘fear’ experienced by mothers is the outcome of their responsibility to control their daughters’ sexuality, which has been internalised through various discursive processes. The father here, who does not challenge this particular incident, becomes the face of fathers with liberal moorings. She then shared what happened in her family after she expressed interest in marrying a man who hails from the Nair caste which is lower to the Brahmin caste in hierarchy. The mother created problems as she was concerned about the ‘society’. As she observes, her mother and others who have a similar mentality as “*these are people who live in the minds of others and end their lives thinking of how others would evaluate their lives*” which illustrates the manner in which patriarchy operates in society. In the Vedic period while the state controlled the sexuality of women through the king, using coercive measures to punish the transgressors (Chakravarti 1993), here the society takes up the role of the state. When her father initiated the process of convincing his family members to approve his daughter’s choice of a groom, the mother was disempowered to break out of her shackles. Even though the mother approved the man her daughter

chose to marry, the cultural and religious practice of vegetarianism came as an impediment from giving her wholehearted approval. The mother in this context was bound by patriarchal norms that operate through caste and gender structures and cultural beliefs and practices. The society becomes the watchdog of women who transgress its norms. It coerces its individuals to conform to its norms and values.

“When I decided to marry a man outside your caste, there were many issues at home. Amma created problem. Achan was okay. Achan did not have such problems. Achan is quite progressive in thoughts, in his family also he spoke to everyone and convinced them. For Amma (.) It was not Amma who was scared. Amma was okay. Amma knows that if that’s the decision I have made, that would be a good decision. It’s the SOCIETY! What would they say? These are people who live in the minds of others and end their lives like that. [NAATTUKAAR! Avarenthu parayum? Angane mattullavarude manasil jeevichu jeevichu jeevitham theerkkunnavaaranu ivarokke] That I had to struggle a lot. Then I said no (.) I will not (continue in the relationship) anymore (voice feeble). After Amma met my now husband, after talking with him, she was okay with it. Even then she had problems with them being non-vegetarians as we are vegetarians. But later she made peace with it.”

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, October 2017).

The experience of lawyer Priyamvada brings forth the multiple complexities of patriarchy in society. She belongs to the Nair caste, which used to follow the matrilineal kinship system, which gave way to patriarchy through colonial legislations and the consequential social movements. When the matrilineal system was abolished, it led to a death blow to women’s autonomy and rights, and ensured men’s equal right to ownership of their ancestral property. Patriarchy became established and entrenched in the Indian context to maintain caste purity and to safeguard the ownership of property rights through the patrilineage system (Chakravarti 1993).

Adv Priyamvada, who is a very successful lawyer, is involved in a quite a few charitable activities. When her son was eight months old, she adopted twin children who were barely two years old and had lost their parents in a natural disaster. This action of hers invited much disapproval from her family, especially her mother. The mother did not accept the twin children till her death. The outcome of this was that not only did she pronounce a curse on her but also showed favouritism to Adv Priyamvada’s brothers by denying her property rights. Except for her disapproval on this particular matter, her mother was always dependent on her and she had lived close to her house.

The mother's disapproval explains two factors. First, the selling of the ancestral property outside the family instead of giving it to the daughter who has a legitimate right to it has to be understood in the cultural context of giving emotional and cultural value to the impartibility of ancestral property in the matrilineal communities. The practice of cross cousin marriage in the Nair community was meant to protect the impartibility of the familial property. The mother's decision of not giving the legitimate share of her ancestral property was an act of strong disapproval of her action to adopt the children. Second, the mother's disapproval points to the stigma attached to adoption within the Indian context. In the cultural perception of the Indian society, adoption of children becomes a violation of kinship norms (Bharadwaj 2003). The kinship system is 'culturally perceived as a connecting link between the domain of 'biology and society' and bestows legitimacy on the child, becoming the intimate link between these two domains. Thus, within the rules of kinship, only naturally born children are approved (Bharadwaj 2003). Adoption transgresses the purity and honour associated with the natural, biological and social link and thus social acceptance is not given to the adopted child as for the legitimate biological child (Bharadwaj 2003).

“Once my mother cursed me, “You foster these orphans [nee ee pandaarangale okke eduthu valarthu], they will prosper in their life, but your son will suffer” (sobbing). But she cursed out of her pain. And she was very partial while sharing our ancestral property and I was denied my share within the inheritance rights. She gave me just five cents of land and the rest was given to the three brothers. She said, ‘If the property is given to her, she will give it to the orphans’ [ivalkku koduthal ival ee pandaarangalkku kodukkukaye ullu] (sobbing)... Among us Nairs, the daughter have the right to ancestral property. We had a big house and acres of land. But my mother did not give anything to me because I adopted these two children. She gave everything to my brothers. But if I had moved the court, I would have got the right to inheritance easily. But I did not say anything. That was a compromise I made in my life. I never had any grievance [paribhavam] against my brothers or mother. They thought, if they gave me the property, I would share it with my adopted children. Then I thought, better their children enjoy it. I understand, most of the activists and those who do charity work have similar stories.”

(Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017).

Here the mother acts as the 'vessel of culture', the gatekeeper of patriarchy by defending the kinship norms through her strong disapproval of her daughter's adopted children and punishing her act of 'violation' of kinship norms by denying her rights to

ancestral property. Through the denial of property rights to her daughter, she holds upholds the norm of impartibility of property outside the family. She invokes the practise that property rights are only endowed on the legitimate biological children born within the kinship system. Patriarchy holds its clutches on the society through women, especially the mothers as mouthpieces and henchmen of patriarchy.

The Family an Undemocratic Institution

The denial of women's right to inheritance of property and the withholding of their access to and control of resources in the family weaken women's autonomy. This differential access to resources structures gender relations within the domain of the family (Eapen and Kodoth 2003). Gender relations in the family are characterised by both cooperation and conflict between the hierarchies of gender power relations. the gender power hierarchy is maintained and changed through bargaining between men and women, depends on their differential access to and control over resources (Sen 1990). The association of men with 'productive' work 'outside' the domain of the family and women's 'reproductive' work 'inside' the family keeps the gender disparity alive within the household (Eapen and Kodoth 2003). The bargaining power of the member is determined by multiple factors such as the strength of fall-back options outside the household when cooperation from the household ceases and the degree of the legitimacy of their claim (Eapen and Kodoth 2003). Women's behaviour and decision-making within households are deeply influenced by the entrenched social rules, norms and values (Kabeer 1999). The aspect of paid work does not sufficiently empower women to have control over their income or make 'self-interested' decisions. Women's inability to make decisions against societal values indicates this trend (Eapen and Kodoth 2003).

The lack of inheritance rights and control over property weakens women's bargaining power due to a lack of availability of fall-back options. This gender disparity within the domain of the family gives rise to patrifocal system which gives priority to the interests of men (Mukhopadhyay and Seymour 1994). When the patrifocal system becomes the norm, it disempowers women and weakens their autonomy to exercise agency. This makes the family an undemocratic institution in many ways.

Prof Geeta reflects on the manners in which family's function in Kerala society. The level of education an individual attains is for the purpose of showcasing it to the

public, rather than practicing within the intimate private spaces of the family. The functioning of the family is invariably as conservative, casteist and undemocratic.

“Family being very undemocratic institution, something I have repeated again and again in most of my classes and most of my lectures, we talk about democracy and where is democracy in the family? So, the institution of family has become overbearing and has becoming past-structure in itself as far as Kerala is concerned, where you go outside, you are liberal, you are democratic, you are everything, you are secular. But come back to the family, everything that is radically against everything that you are saying, everything that is casteist, everything that is totally undemocratic is within the private”.

(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

She continues by pointing out a major paradox in the family. Women are normatively expected to be embedded in the family wherein a woman has no life and identity other than those provided by the family. Men have the privilege of having their own social life, freedom and space outside the family. The normative expectations of women to be family-bound sabotage their desire of enjoying a social space, having freedom and expressing their individuality. The world of a woman is normatively constructed to be confined to her family.

“So, generally what happens is in Kerala, family is one space where you both grow but are also sabotaged by it . Like everything that you do has to be with your family, every single meal has to be with your family, every single outing has to be with the family, what you wear should be liked by your family, what you listen and eat, everything should be with the family oriented in a very hypocritical sense also. Everything is family oriented. This is all the more for women. Men do have their spaces outside.”

(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

In the social and cultural context of India, women are embedded in their families and it is their family that gives them identity. The South Asian spiritual principles project the personhood, body and birth as signs of current existence (Snell-Rood 2016) through an ‘alternate moral order’ (Menon & Shweder 1998 cited in Menon 2013, 211). Women, through their service, self-control, duty to the family and social responsibility uphold the alternate moral order (Menon 2013). Women’s moral capacity is expanded by their awareness of ‘living for others’ (Snell-Rood 2016). Claire Snell-Rood (2016) conducted a qualitative study among women in a Delhi slum in which she explored the phenomenological understanding of the lives of women and their perception in the midst of the inequalities they experience. These women who are ‘living for others’,

instead of for themselves subscribe to the moral and spiritual principles of karma and its effect on life after death, to give meaning to their very existence. They endured their circumstances and showed the capacity to change the meaning of their inequalities through their moral perspective, even when it did not bring any immediate change to their health and social conditions. Their actions, even when their selfless service to their families was not acknowledged or rewarded in any way, revealed their enactment of agency through their detachment from the output of their actions. Additionally, they articulated the need for acceptance of circumstances. Here the intentions behind their actions matter as these women believed that their actions were meant to build their selves (Snell-Rood 2016).

“Women looked past their ability to act, beyond their immediate circumstances, and beyond social distinctions. In so doing, they released their striving for ideals. On this plane, as they released their individual feelings, physical needs, and social distinctions, women argued they could find peace” (Snell-Rood 2016, 219).

Though women internalise the discursive construction of femininity and gender stereotypes, there arise some level of internal conflict within women, that force to develop strategies and coping mechanisms to negate this internal conflict. In this context they subscribe to moral principles to build their self and find inner peace rather than challenging the structures of inequality and oppression. It is in this context that we need to understand how the family continues to be an undemocratic institution.

Prof Geeta reflects on the lives of women who are her contemporaries. She observes that a majority of their lives are spent in constant sacrifice, where they live for others compromising their entitlement to leisure, pleasures, and hobbies. They internalise the denial and oppression to the extent that the sacrifice becomes a habit for them. They have become conditioned to constant self-denial so much so that they are unable to live for themselves after a point of time. Women get tired of the constant sacrifices they make for others, when it is not reciprocated in the deserving and expected manner. It becomes difficult for their capacity to adjust with and perform according to the normative values that govern the power relations within the family. When she calls out the example of another south Asian country which is well acclaimed for its development trajectory, Japan, where women file for divorce after their fifties, she is urging us to draw our attention to the parallels of oppression in other cultures as well.

“Again, what is interesting- most of the working women- 99.99 percent of the working women I have met are actually not living for themselves. They have not spent a minute for themselves, they have been struggling all this while. And even to reach a state that I have reached, it has become a habit, the sacrifice has become a habit and they are unable to relax, unable to live for themselves, maximum they might do is they might go to a beauty parlour and they come up with the statement ‘We want to do something for us as well no?’ [namakkum vendi enthenkilum cheyyande?] That is the maximum, I sometimes wonder is that all that they have to do for themselves? Maybe lightening the skin, or cutting your hair, is that all there is to it? Isn’t there something to their being which demands a different kind of, you know (sentence breaking) ... I heard that the middle age women in Japan are the ones who goes for divorce, because you reach a certain stage and you don’t want to put up with a lot of things, you don’t want to perform, you don’t want to adjust ... but I feel that once a woman struggles her way up till the time she turns fifty, which she is entitled to her leisure, she is entitled to her pleasures, she is entitled to her own hobbies, which probably has been sacrificed.”

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

Girija, the journalist is caught up between her career aspirations and her domestic responsibilities. Though she has access to opportunities and the social capital needed to actualise her dream of film making, the structural and cultural constraints are barriers for her to actualise her career aspirations. The embeddedness of women’s identity in their family and the normative construction of ‘respectable femininity’ as the woman who balance her family and career, and the cultural superiority attributed to the domestic roles of women are operating in her life. Considering her child who is very young to manage himself on his own, and her responsibilities of motherhood are the factors that pulls her back from achieving her career goals. She embodied the negative meaning given to the career ambitions of women and the cultural imposition on women as the nurturer and protector of the family. This embodiment constrains her agency and freedom to choose what she considers as valuable

“I like film making, and I have very close friends with whom I can work as assistants. I get invitations also. But the problem is I cannot leave home for two months. The family’s expectations imposed on me as a wife and mother are burdening me. While trying to meet everyone’s expectations, you cannot find time to meet your personal expectations and goals. I am meeting all their expectations, but not my own. I am keeping aside myself, and I am living as wife, mother, daughter and daughter-in-law. If I rate it in a 100 per cent scale, I think I live for myself only for 5 per cent. The rest 95 goes to meeting the expectation of others.”

(Girija, Journalist, 33 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram November 2017).

Prof Martina shares her experience of growing up, seeing the way her father treated her mother, who was also a university professor. Her mother, even though she was an earning member with an income of her own, the control of her income was given over to her husband. Her self-sacrifice and submissiveness towards her domineering husband make her ‘such a fine lady’. Internalising the oppression with gentleness and meekness, rather than questioning and challenging, was established as the norm for women. The father who had access to and control of her income and resources was the one who made decisions and dominated her mother and the family. The mother in the family was thus disempowered despite her educational status of a double PhD and as a university teacher, because of her lack of control of resources. This, due to the fact that, she lived in a society where women’s self-sacrifice for the wellbeing of the family is treated as the norm. Prof Martina honestly accepts the negative implications of her father’s dominance and undemocratic nature on their family and that the father treated their mother like a ‘doormat’. But she rationalises his dominance and power by considering the encouragement and space he provided her mother to pursue her academic goals. Also, the fact that he took good care of her mother who was suffering from arthritis from a very young age.

“Because mommy married at a very young age, papa was a very bossy person. We were growing up with these things in the family... she was always a doormat, a docile person. She would raise her voice sometimes, otherwise never was a bossy person. Papa was the one who made all the decisions. To be honest, this had affected our family negatively in many ways. Because even for the tiny things, she would give her salary to my father and would say ‘Children have these needs and you may give them money for that.’ ... She is such a fine lady. She has been sacrificing so much for the sake of the family — [Nammude familykku vendi homikkapetta sthree]. I feel pained, when I remember it [athorkkumbol enikku sangadam varua] (sobbing).”

(Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018)

Within the domain of the family, sacrifice and self-denial become a norm for women, and when there is no mutual reciprocation or understanding, it ends up in discontentment and rift among the partners. Women are conscious of the inequality they experience within the domain of their family. Women endure and compromise on the feudal nature of family relations on the grounds of love and service for the wellbeing of the family. When overseeing the wellbeing of the family is imposed on women as a norm and duty, the lack of acknowledgement or appreciation and any kind of support

or understanding from the partner produces discontentment in women. In this scenario, Malati shares about how she feels guilt when her son falls sick. She gets accused of not providing sufficient care even after doing everything possible on her part to take care of the child. It implicitly speaks about the cultural conditioning of women as the care giver of the family.

When she does her best to make everyone in the family comfortable and ensues everything runs smoothly, she hardly gets any support or help from her partner. This illustrates the cultural conditioning of gender roles and women's responsibility of taking care of the domestic space. The claim for her space happened only when she could not take any more criticism or ill treatment from her family. The extreme sacrifice she made by splitting her work hours during the shifts was because her income was indispensable for the survival of her family at that point in time. Again, she made adjustments in her work schedule in order to support her husband's work shift and to care for the unwell child. It was a strategy she evolved to balance her family and work life. As a result, not only was she not getting adequate sleep but her health was also compromised. In this scenario the professional mother is double-burdened with her care-giving role as well as her professional work.

The husband's constant criticism of and arguments with her while her remaining silent to avoid a fight, explains portrays how male domination I exercised in the family. Women are socially conditioned into a culture of silence. To avoid a fight, it is the woman who usually accepts the accusation and remain silent. They are additionally expected to act and speak prudently when the man is 'calm' enough to understand the context. Here a woman is expected to manage the anger of the man and explain her situation only at the appropriate time. Until the appropriate time and space is at hand, she is expected to endure the accusation and criticism. Now Malati, overburdened by the pressures of the multiple roles she is required to play while at the same time being constantly criticized for the mishaps which she is not directly responsible for, is then pushed to the limits leading to an outburst to demand her due respect and space. When she felt 'congested' with the lack of space to express her individuality, she becomes vocal and demands it. In this process of demanding of space, she is trying to build her 'self', claiming her due respect and acknowledgement for the selfless service and care she gives to her family.

“... criticisms are overruling and when there is hardly any appreciation that became a problem for me. In the beginning we were like good friends. After that, I became like a servant and he started becoming like a master. We do lot of thing out of love, right? Beyond that, it was imposed on me as my duty. If my son would sneeze in the car while we are going out, he would start accusing, ‘Why you didn’t do that? Why you forgot that?’ [Nee enthukondu athu cheythilla? Nee enthukondu athu orthilla?] And I was always feeling guilty, all the time guilty. Oh, I did not do that, oh, I did not care for my son enough. Before we start that journey, I might had prepared everything for the next day at home, keeping everything ready for the kid for the next day to take to school, helping the kid to complete her homework, packing everything needed for the journey, getting the children ready, everything was done by myself. While I am doing everything, he might be sitting idle, or watching TV or doing something on his phone. After having done everything when he asks, ‘Why you did not do this?’ I would always feel guilty, all the time. Then, one day it struck, ‘No, he can also do it, right?’ This thought came after so many years. One day I asked him, ‘No, you also could have remembered that.’ For him also, it was a sudden realization, afterwards this accusation has reduced a lot. Then we had problems between us, when my son was falling sick frequently. I started doing my duty from early in the morning 5 AM-9AM, 9 am he has to come to office, we were staying nearby then, but as my son is ill, I cannot take rest or anything and night 8 PM -12 AM, I do the next round duty. There is no system of split duty here. But I figured out on my own and I took special permission, otherwise I would not be able to come for work. And all others are too happy to give, because I took the extreme shifts. I was doing it not even taking care of my health. Because we would be able to sleep from 1AM to 4 AM. And you are getting only three hours sleep and you are not able to sleep during day time also. I was considering that another person should not be troubled. All these are feelings for him, he says I take too much strain, but at the same time he won’t lend any help. All these pressures were upon me. At that time, he asked me, ‘You should not do this, you should leave your job.’ Not to fight with him, I kept silent. Usually whatever issues are there, I keep silent at that very moment and I would talk with him after two days. At that time, he understands the situation and he would be okay. The day he asked me to leave my job, I burst out, shouted at him, [annu njaan pottitherichu, aake bahalam vachu] then he understood little bit. He created a situation where I was forced to raise my voice. [Forcefully bahalam vakkenda oru situation undakki.] Recently, I told him, even before marriage I told you that I had grown up enjoying my space. If my parents had given me that space, you are also bound to give. That space became totally non-existent [space theree illathayi] and I myself started feeling congested. Then I said, ‘I demand’, and it has made a lot of difference.”

(Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram,
November 2017

The domain of family where there is a lack of mutual understanding, support and care, and where one person dominates the other who is at the receiving end of the domination and humiliation, that’s where women are sabotaged within the family. The

cultural system conditions women to be family-bound and embedded within the family. Her every action is required to be oriented towards the wellbeing and good of the family as it is the family that gives her identity. The family becomes the site of social reproduction. The domestic domain comprised of home and family is the most vital phase of women's action. Women are the most influential social actors responsible for 'educating and cultivating the next generation' (Menon 2013, 4). When the cultural conditioning leads to roles and responsibilities becoming unilateral and not complementary, the family becomes an undemocratic institution in its functioning.

“Patriarchy is so deeply engrained that I don't even realise it is patriarchy”- Internalizing Patriarchy

Internalised patriarchy is the biggest roadblock to challenging it and breaking its hold over the lives of women in the context of Kerala. Though patriarchy exists world over, the way it operates in the lives of people who claim to be living in a progressive area with a considerable amount of development explains the paradox of the progressive modernity and development attained by them. Women internalise patriarchal norms through social conditioning. It is the goal of the Brahmanical patriarchal project to control women's sexuality, discursively constructing it as potentially dangerous and needing to be contained and controlled through the cultural norm of 'pativrata' (Chakravarti 1993). A woman's thought processes, expression of emotions, performance of individuality, loyalty and commitment to marriage and family are culturally conditioned and socially constructed. The process of unlearning this becomes difficult as one is bounded within cultural values which act as barriers to it. Social conditioning is so deeply embedded and blinding that most often women do not even realise what patriarchy is. In an ethos where oppression is expected to be endured silently through a culture of silence and submissiveness, it is difficult to unlearn and challenge patriarchy.

“As I rightly pointed out, within my home, my mother becomes the voice of patriarchy and not my father. It is much more difficult, there would be arguments that how do you call it patriarchy. The patriarchy is the mind set and this mind set has been internalized more by women. Kerala has been very successful in that project, where its women are much more patriarchal than men and therefore opposing patriarchy has also become (difficult), especially for women. Why I feel so sorry about this is because I see millions of girls trapped in homes where patriarchy operates through the mother. I am not saying patriarchy doesn't operate in the larger world, it definitely does. The

first stage in the most intimate spheres of your life when you have been given that kind of patriarchal training, it becomes very difficult to unlearn it after some time. You will have to unlearn being yourself because you become a part of that kind of system. Your thought, your mental processes, your emotional terrains, investments are moulded in tune to that society. Unpacking that kind of learning and unlearning- that is very, very difficult and that's the reason why I really feel sorry for the women of Kerala. So, even in Kerala when you say, 'Why aren't they protesting? Why aren't they doing anything?', they were taught into silence, they have been taught to be submissive, and so cleverly that they are unable to unlearn it."

(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

The Process of Normalising Gender Hierarchies

The process of internalisation of patriarchal values through discursive practices and its operationalising is not merely limited to the private domain. The spaces between private and public are not impermeable in nature. The fluidity between these two spaces leads to an outpouring of patriarchy from the private domain to public spaces thereby naturalising gender hierarchies. The lack of safety in public spaces for women is an outcome of this permeability of patriarchy to public domains, with the recent incidents in Kerala pointing to the policing of individuals and gender relations in the public spaces.

Prof Geeta, while sharing her experiences and reflection of mobility of women in public spaces, says that it has become tough as one is constantly objectified in the public space. Public spaces become difficult to manoeuvre as it does not ensure the safety and security of women. When she shares that she finds it 'extremely difficult to go out alone', it points to the scenario where society, by making public spaces unsafe and uncomfortable for women implicitly conveys that women are supposed to be accompanied 'men' to protect them from dangers to their body and sexuality.

"But again, you know, over the last few years I have noticed that, even as a working woman now, I find it extremely difficult to go out alone. The public spaces are becoming more and more problematic. Problematic in the sense, safety, I mean you can say certain things, but to practice them is becoming increasingly difficult. Travel for example. How do you travel? Now we need somebody to travel with because it becomes so unsafe. So, on the one side the attitudes and the hierocracies, the ideologies we were saying we're a part and parcel of the domestic and which were kept outside of the secular democratic spaces in the public sphere. It is actually spilling over into that sphere. So, women are finding that, many women are finding it that I think choosing,

many of my students to really get out of Kerala precisely because of this... My daughter for example, in spite of the fact we were so liberal at home, she wants to get out. Because she says, 'To go out and be ogled all the time is not something (I want), why would I do that?' Why would you want to be?"

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

Journalist Sangeeta, who is in her late forties, shared her sense of insecurity to walk freely in the public space. In stating that the insecurity she feels in the street is same for every woman in the state, the message is conveyed about the naturalizing of gender hierarchies in the public spaces and the wide prevalence of objectification of women in public spaces. Women have to develop their own strategies and mechanisms to defend themselves when they are alone in the street. The right of every women to walk securely without any fear is often violated in the public space.

"I felt unsafe several times. I feel the insecurity of a teenager when they are out in the streets, even today. That insecurity is experienced by every woman. When I am alone in the street, I would carry an umbrella. Keeping an open umbrella on your shoulder pointing back is always a defence mechanism. We cannot predict what could be going in the minds of men who approaching from behind on a cycle or a bike. You know, that insecurity is always there. When you are walking on the street you are always on the edge. I don't think this would be different for any woman."

-(Sangeetha, Journalist, 46 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

Sangeeta states that the space of security and freedom to live as human beings is shrinking in the current context. She attributes the changes in gender relations to the socialization of men in their families when they are young children, the influence of mass media and easy access to pornography. The rapid change in gender relations has to be contextualized within the growth of Hindutva forces in the society which enforce Brahmanical patriarchy and the oppression of women as a norm. Kerala society has been witnessing increasing cases of moral policing in recent times. In her understanding, the insecurity has grown to the level where one cannot trust the other. Her feelings of insecurity are also heightened due to the violence she had to endure when she decided to break away from an abusive marriage. She was threatened of acid attacks twenty years ago and she has lived her life with the trauma of violence and threat to her life. She was forced to assert her agency at the cost of putting her life at risk. The extreme and violent experiences of patriarchy in the lives of women leave them traumatized and in fear of their safety in both private and public spaces of life.

“... a situation where one can live secure as a human being. But that privilege is not accessible to everyone in our country. We don't have that security and freedom of mobility at any time and space we want to. So, attitude of men should change. But women have to bring that change. When mothers raise their sons, they should imbibe the values of respecting women in them, is my policy. Too much exposure to too many provocative things, that also affect these boy children. I won't demand freedom of movement even at 12 in the night. I would demand a social change and freedom where we can trust people and move freely, at least till 10 PM in the night. Unfortunately, we are in a situation where no one can trust anyone. I don't think in the coming times this will change; it is going to be worse. That security, that's gone.”

-(Sangeetha, Journalist, 46 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

The phenomenon of unsafe public spaces and naturalised gender hierarchies and gender roles are barriers for women from socialising and developing their comradeship. Women's lives are highly policed and structured such that they are forced to balance work and family equally. Pro Geeta shares her experience of unavailability of women friends to socialise with after work as they have to scuttle back home. Eve teasing, the lack of safety of public spaces after sunset and the labelling of women who may be seen in public places after sunset as 'loose' are different ways through which patriarchy polices and controls women's mobility and sexuality.

“...while most of the women that I have met, have been so policed and have been so educated, that they could not live up to the requirements that I would have of them as a friend. And even to say that let's go for a coffee together in Kerala, now working women they scuttle back home once its 4.30 or 5 PM, they hurry back home because they need to get back into their homes.”

(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

The permeability of patriarchy from the domestic to the public space operationalises through the discrimination of women and making their lives unsafe in the public and, as we shall see in the next section, professional spaces.

Women as Second-Class Citizens in the Workspace: Gender Discrimination and Patriarchy in Professional Domains

“For the first time in my life I began to realize that it was a crime to be a woman. . .” (Lockwood in LaTourette 2005, 871), writes Belva Lockwood, recounting her experience of hearing for admission to the Court of Claims, when the presiding judge

(Justice Drake), on seeing her in court, “. . . in measured words, announced “Mistress Lockwood, you are a woman.”” (Lockwood in Latourette 2005, 871).

From that nineteenth century scene, women have come a long way with an increased number of women entering mainstream professions, graduating better than their male counterparts, excelling in their career and even attaining top positions. But the journey from the ‘home-maker’ to a professional woman has not been an easy task. It is a story of struggle, rather it is the history of women who were bold enough to sacrifice their peace to ensure a better future for their successors. And even after this struggle, it is surely not a ‘happily ever after’ for women. Women are still discriminated against, emotionally and sexually harassed at the workplace, and struggle to balance their work-family appropriately.

In the backdrop of the nineteenth century cultural and religious scenario where women were expected to be model homemakers, they were advised to keep away from intellectually demanding jobs such as law and media. “While vocations such as teaching, nursing, and even medicine garnered some support as an extension of a woman’s allegedly inherent nurturing qualities, the law, termed as “hard, unpoetic and relentless” by nineteenth century attorney Clara Foltz, served as the antithesis of the “acceptable feminine endeavour” (LaTourette 2005, 859). “Her ‘natural and proper timidity and delicacy’ rendered her unfit to pursue the profession” (LaTourette 2005, 860) as Justice Bradley pointed out to Myra Bradwell, the esteemed editor of the *Chicago Legal News*. Even in the twenty-first century, the demands of marriage and motherhood continue to be a barrier for women from flourishing in their careers and, discrimination on the basis of sex in job placements are uniform throughout the country.

Adv Anitha shares her reflections on why the legal profession is perceived as a ‘male profession’. The kind of people lawyers are required to deal with and the nature of issues they handle are perceived as not conducive for women. Only women who are bold and strong enough to deal with disputing parties who come up with law suits or who can fight against the system of oppression can grow and flourish in their career. Here women are expected to fight for a cause, fight against the system and structures through their professional practice. But patriarchy that is entrenched in the minds of people, that operates through institutions and structures of oppression does not encourage women to speak and fight against the same system. In fact, not only do

women lawyers fight systems of oppression in the lives of the clients they represent, but also the structures that tries to silence and side-line them in their professional space.

“patriarchy plays a bigger role in our profession. Because it’s actually a male profession. It is not supposed to be so, but it is. Why it’s a male dominated profession, it’s because you are dealing with criminals, you are dealing with people in dispute, you are dealing with people who have a tendency to fight, whether they are coming for civil case or maybe, they are majorly emotionally disturbed, whoever comes, for some reason or the other. And they are likely for outburst. So generally, men perceive this as not a very conducive environment for women. If you notice women who are successful in this field, they are either negotiators or people who can mediate the disputing people or she will be a fighter herself. Be it a dispute against the state or against a crime or whatever it is, you cannot be the so-called feminine self, you cannot sit there protecting my image and all. You have to get out and speak for the other person, which is not a very easy job and it’s not. That’s why it’s slightly a dirty job and you are putting yourself in somebody else’s place. And there you have to bring peace in all negotiations and maintain that grace. So, unless you are cut out for that, not many women like that role. Now if you see, on an average, the women who come are women who are confident of themselves and they feel that can do more for others. Not necessarily they argue, or they shout. It is not mandatory that they have to be vocal. At least in their mind they should have a feeling that I am representing so and so and I can help, even if it is through their writing. A woman who does not even have this perception and thinking that I am a damsel-in-distress, she cannot be in this field. And that’s where if you have that element as a junior, that’s where the patriarchy comes in. Everyone tries to patronise, everybody is like the godfather or somebody is trying to groom you or teach you. Only thing is, it doesn’t come free. It has its own repercussions, they have their own agenda. There somewhere the male psychology matters a lot, the fact that you are independent, you are fierce, you may have to go against a lot of institutions when you are fighting a fight. At that time, they don’t like the fact that women speak up and fight it. For example, the lady advocate in Kashmir (referring to Kashmiri minor girl Asifa’s rape murder case), she has lot of opposition from her own bar, because she chose to stand with something that the majority didn’t want. That is likely here, but so far, we have not seen any case where a lawyer takes up a case and others oppose it, that’s not happened in Kerala yet. But it’s not very far or where a situation which says, it could be against the common interest can come.”

(Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

Malati, journalist, also shares her experience of gender discrimination at the workspace. Media now functions as a corporate industry for making profit rather than functioning as the fourth pillar of democracy. The society and the editorial board of the media perceives news as an intellectually demanding task which is the exclusive domain of men. The news broadcast has distinctions between political and

entertainment news. Often, while political news is reported and presented by male journalists, entertainment news programmes are reported and presented by female journalists. In her experience, the roles and profiles assigned to men and women having the same level of experience, potential and qualification are very much based on the prejudices and perceptions constructed on patriarchal norms. Women journalists face multiple levels of gender discrimination within their workspace. The denial of opportunities, refusing to give due recognition to the opinions expressed and humiliating women journalists by denying their representation in weekly review meetings are different ways of discriminating women in their workspace. When her colleagues encourage her knowing her potential and ask her to aim to become an output-chief, and her response to it as “*(This is possible) only if the men who are above me would die*”, it speaks strongly about their experience of gender discrimination and male domination in the industry. When she further states that “*I will never be considered above them. Even if I prove my capability in any way, I might never come to that position*”, these statements reflect how patriarchal norms are deeply entrenched in the workspace and how it determines a woman’s position and her opportunities to grow in her profession amidst high competition. Here then she points to the fear among men of women in a position of power acting much more efficient and capable than these men. The media industry, guided by patriarchal norms, always favours men and therefore the number of women who become successful in the midst of tough competition and male domination is abysmally low.

“patriarchy plays a bigger role in our profession. Because it’s actually a male profession. It is not supposed to be so, but it is. Why it’s a male dominated profession, it’s because you are dealing with criminals, you are dealing with people in dispute, you are dealing with people who have a tendency to fight, whether they are coming for civil case or maybe, they are majorly emotionally disturbed, whoever comes, for some reason or the other. And they are likely for outburst. So generally, men perceive this as not a very conducive environment for women. If you notice women who are successful in this field, they are either negotiators or people who can mediate the disputing people or she will be a fighter herself. Be it a dispute against the state or against a crime or whatever it is, you cannot be the so-called feminine self, you cannot sit there protecting my image and all. You have to get out and speak for the other person, which is not a very easy job and it’s not. That’s why it’s slightly a dirty job and you are putting yourself in somebody else’s place. And there you have to bring peace in all negotiations and maintain that grace. So, unless you are cut out for that, not many women like that role. Now if you see, on an average, the women who come are women who are confident of themselves and they feel that can do more for others. Not necessarily they argue, or they

shout. It is not mandatory that they have to be vocal. At least in their mind they should have a feeling that I am representing so and so and I can help, even if it is through their writing. A woman who does not even have this perception and thinking that I am a damsel-in-distress, she cannot be in this field. And that's where if you have that element as a junior, that's where the patriarchy comes in. Everyone tries to patronise, everybody is like the godfather or somebody is trying to groom you or teach you. Only thing is, it doesn't come free. It has its own repercussions, they have their own agenda. There somewhere the male psychology matters a lot, the fact that you are independent, you are fierce, you may have to go against a lot of institutions when you are fighting a fight. At that time, they don't like the fact that women speak up and fight it. For example, the lady advocate in Kashmir (referring to Kashmiri minor girl Asifa's rape murder case), she has lot of opposition from her own bar, because she chose to stand with something that the majority didn't want. That is likely here, but so far, we have not seen any case where a lawyer takes up a case and others oppose it, that's not happened in Kerala yet. But it's not very far or where a situation which says, it could be against the common interest can come"

(Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

The perception of the public and the audience about male and female journalists is also discriminatory in nature. A male journalist is always perceived and acknowledged as journalists whereas a woman journalist, especially those who anchor news bulletins and news programmes, are seen as 'anchors' and not as journalists. This perception of the audience denies the respect and recognition women journalists deserve from society. It demoralises them and destroys their professional self-esteem.

"A man who is in this profession, we are in limelight, we do makeup, and a man who does this is viewed as a journalist [oru pathrapravarthakanayittaanu samootham kanuka.] by the society. But a woman who is doing the same job is viewed as a 'news anchor', or a 'news reader' or programme anchor. This is a very evident expression of the kind of indignity a woman faces in this profession. I felt this in several places. People see us like a serial actress, or like an anchor who does an interactive talk show. They interact with us in this way. But a guy who is junior to me would be treated as a journalist, a media personnel. That is a very serious, glaring (indignity.)"

(Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, October 2017).

Advocate Anita shares her experiences in the profession of law. Though the 'crab mentality'⁵ is very common in the legal profession, the way a woman lawyer is treated if she grows ambitious is by attacking her morality. Women lawyers are

⁵ The negative attitude of blocking the career growth of the colleagues which evolves out of the emotions of envy and fear of their success in career

generally encouraged to be mediocre and maintain a low profile, while growing ambitious or becoming successful has its own consequences. The competition in the profession is very high and the ‘crab mentality’ always expects juniors to remain a junior rather than becoming independent and successful in their career. The attack on the moral life of female lawyers is guided by patriarchal norms where a woman is not expected to grow successful in her career and but to be confined to their domestic spaces. As discussed in the above section, an attack on the moral life of women is not contested or challenged by them adequately and it is a strong weapon to tarnish and morally destroy a person.

“See firstly, if you are a mediocre person, mediocre in the sense, if you maintain a low profile, you have somebody giving you cases and sort of managing with it, without being very active [valya bahalam onnum illathe], getting into some panel and not getting much into public image and living your own life, any profession is fine. Nobody is going to challenge you, nobody is going to question you, nobody is going to come with anything for you. But if you are the type who likes the limelight or you like to be known, expect that first character assassination is going to be regarding your moral side... But if you see across the board, more than a woman, or a divorcee, they see you as an average junior in this field and nobody wants you to grow. That is like crab mentality... They don’t want you to grow. They would love to see you as a junior always... Actually, nobody encourages you to put up an office, have your own clients. Very few people help you even if you go and ask them a doubt. Even if they answer your doubts, there are many who mislead you with false information, so that you commit a blunder. If somebody sees you with a client, some people think, let her grow. But some people come in as if they intend to help you and they snatch your client and leave. So, a lot of these things are there. But all are a part of the training. It is a problem with this field itself.”

(Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

For Prof Geeta, gender discrimination in the workspace and patriarchy operating through it are impediments on her path and she is forced to put up a constant fight with these forces. The male dominated system privileges men to reach higher positions and attain power than women, and the former’s voice is given credibility over the opinions and views of women with the same amount of experience and who are as qualified as their male counterparts.

I think it is to my credit that I have built my credentials burning the midnight oil, it is also with a lot of hard work that I reached a certain position. It is much easier if you are male. Because I see men who loiter around, are not doing one fourth of the work that I am doing. But nevertheless, they in higher

positions, yield power, and their voices are heard. So, the fight is much more difficult, but I enjoy the fight.

(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018))

The experiences of women from the three professions discussed here openly speaks about the fact that meritocracy, hard work and talent among women is not sufficiently rewarded enabling them to grow in their career. The patriarchal norms operating through societal structures function as systems of oppression, and for women to claim equality in their work space often becomes a fight at the cost of their wellbeing. Through the systems of oppression, women are often discriminated against and their career growth is curbed.

Work cultures in the work place are another blockade for women in the professional sphere. Being an intellectual and a feminist activist, Pro Geeta shares, she was always in a pressure to be politically correct with certain amount of fairness and maintain ethicality in the opinions she expresses. This pressure is built from a context where you are always looked down upon by male colleagues and victimised by their tantrums meant to hurt her ego. She had to put in extra effort and work harder in order to gain credibility for her academic work. The work culture was never conducive for her, as she was often attacked morally and emotionally at different phases. After she reached her fifties and could accomplish what she had aimed for in her career, she perceives that she is now in a safe zone, though the safety of that zone has no stability.

“Work culture again, in the initial days, until may be a few years back, I have had a tough time with work cultures in the work place. Because again all these things were part and parcel of it. No.2, male colleagues who look down upon you condescendingly and again the fact that, if they work for two hours and you have to work four hours or ten hours to prove yourself in a certain field. But now it is easy for me, because I have reached a stage in a sense that I have proved what needed to be proved. Difficult for them to tamper with my ego and/or tamper with my self-esteem, now. But at one point they did, I have changed my work place now, and in my earlier spaces especially when you are younger it is easy to spread tales, it is easy to spread whatever. Now at fifty it’s not so, they know that I am somebody to reckon with now. So, I have reached a safe zone if I can call it that, but even for me I know it’s very temporary. I have seen all this and I know for a woman no zone is a safe zone. At any point you know, given an opportunity, society can turn around, even the work place can turn around and they can accuse you or so. I am always on my toes, even now be alert to certain issues, be alert to be politically correct, sometimes especially when it comes gender issues... Everything cannot be feminism, there are also other marginalized positions, another side’s position.

So, even when I say I am a feminist, it need not necessarily mean that I will uphold anything to do with women even when that particular instance that the woman's position might be wrong. So, it's a fine balance, you have to be alert to all these things all the time. Actually, it puts a lot of pressure on you, because earlier if it was a pressure to struggle and to work hard. Now the pressure is also to keep up a certain kind of fairness in your dealings, keep up a certain kind of an ethicality if I can say... Because I think now more than anything else my position demands that. Ethical as an academic, ethical being, moral of course, ethicality is what I would like to precise."

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)).

The power hierarchies make the work culture unfavourable to women. The competition within a workspace structured by patriarchal norms makes women in higher positions to become the voice of systems of oppression. Ambitions, guided by intense competition makes people in the lower strata of hierarchy vulnerable to oppression. Malati shared her experience in the channel she worked at earlier. People with a promising future professionally are often targeted with the intention to demoralise them and humiliate their self-esteem. When the work culture produced so much negativity that it was beyond forbearance, she was forced to make a choice between sticking on with her career by fighting all odds or to be confined to her domestic responsibilities. Oppression due to the power hierarchy was expressed by discriminating her from the main profile she was handling, which is the output, creating an unfavourable general opinion about her by labelling her as a 'bad anchor' and humiliating her by treating her as non-existent when it came to matters under discussion on professional affairs. The oppression she experienced as 'someone intending to kill her', reflects the intensity of humiliation and tampering of her self-esteem as an individual and a budding professional. When women oppress women within the power hierarchy, it eventually leads to a failure of the fight to end systems of patriarchal oppressions.

"The worst experience I had in my career was from a woman itself from the other channel. When I gave my interview in 2005 January in that channel, they asked me who my favourite journalist was, I took her name itself. I kept her in that high regard. But when I started, there was no problem. She also considered me as fresher. So gradually they started give me the primetime bulletin, they made me anchor on Women's Day. At that time without any reason I started getting memos, asking for explanations. Then she started treating me as though I do not exist at all. That means, she was not even discussing professional matters with me, that would insult me so badly. When all these things were going on, I resigned. I was not thinking of joining here in

this channel, but I resigned. Too much of negativity, that was unbearable [bhayankara negativity, enikkathu thaangunnilla] And I had my child. Then I thought I better look after my child rather than taking up so much negativity. Then my seniors told me, 'You are the strongest woman anchor here. You are not someone who was supposed to leave like this. You have a promising career before you. If you are going to another channel, we will support you. We understand you and accept that she is 'that kind' (dominating) of a person. But you should not leave here because of this reason.' But I was firm in my decision to resign and I left for home. But then later she called and asked me, 'You should not resign today, you can resign a week later. If you resign today my career will be in jeopardy'. Then she was at that point of time, some 10-13 years before, as in the same position of mine now. She was already established. But I had just started. I was completely shattered, because even then she was just saying (thinking) of her career alone. I hadn't even started my career properly. She literally begged me not to resign [Njaan ninte veetil vannu ninte kaalu pidikkam, ninte husbandintem kaalu pidikkam]. [Giggling with a sarcasm]. Then my husband also advised me not to leave for any issue, and I joined back... It was that, somebody intending to kill us, thinking that my growth in career would be a challenge for her in future. We had two divisions, input and output. Usually anchors are in output. They had shifted me to input in between a year before these incidents took place. I never thought, it was through other way they were targeting me, I did not even have that much prudence to understand her intentions. I was thinking I should improve the input. I had worked in (another popular media house). The inputters of that channel are very capable. I was thinking I was put in the input division because I could utilize my experience in input in that channel to improve the input here. So, I was not much there in reading (anchoring). And it was not an issue for me. I am clear about the fact that I have a life beyond reading. [Readingnu appurathekku enikkoru life undu ennullathu krithyamaya oru dharana ulla aalanu njaan]. Later on only did I realise that I was intentionally kept away (discriminated). But the difficulty you feel when you realise that it was all intentional to keep us away, no! Then after my bulletin she would collect its rating and compare with the rating if somebody else had done the same bulletin next day and she took it to the meetings for discussions, she was trying to establish me as a bad anchor... Our job is very subjective. So, when I read the bulletin she would sit in the desk and create a public opinion, (high pitch) 'What is she asking?' It was not only to me, she would ask similar questions to many others also. Like that creating a public opinion against me and later on only I realised how she was working against me. Then I thought of leaving it as such. When my seniors and all scolded me, I joined back in that channel."

-(Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, October 2017).

Power Hierarchies and Gender Dimensions in The Professional Sphere

The nature of exploitation and the operation of power hierarchies in the profession of law is very well narrated in the experience of Adv Priyamvada. Serving as a junior

lawyer under a reputed senior who was her relative as well for eight years the initial phase of her career was very challenging. She had to literally beg the senior to assign the litigations that his office gets. She had to invest extra time, energy and potential to prove herself as efficient in her career. She was economically exploited as she was not given proper remuneration for the effort and hardwork she put in her profession. Even after she was asked to leave his office without any reason, the uncertainties of her future and career shattered her. It was an attack on her career ambitions and goals in life. When she says none of her family members had hurt her like he did, it was an act of symbolic violence where her future and life were put in jeopardy.

“See, I have been in this profession for 28 years. And in the initial seven to eight years I was under my senior. Afterwards I started independent practice. I did not choose to start independent practice on my own. He asked me to leave. There was an income tax raid in his office. We learn many things from experience. There were raids simultaneously in many other senior lawyers’ offices as well. He felt that having so many junior lawyers is the problem and he asked all of us to leave. He did not consider me for having followed him like a shadow for seven years [ee ezhu kollam adhehathodoppam oru nizhalu pole nadannu ennullathonnum addhekam alochichilla]. He asked me to leave. I did not have an office of my own. So, it was in my car that I kept all my files and I started. It was in ’98 that I got my first independent file. All the files I had before was from my old office. I did not take not any files from there. I did not even take my gown from there. I had gone on a tour with the permission from my office, when the raid happened. I was on leave for a month. When I came back, I got to know that many people had to leave the office. So, when I came back, I asked my senior shall I come?’, I used to call my senior elder brother. He said, ‘No, you start your independent practice. There are some problems in my office.’ Then my husband asked him, ‘how will she become independent? She does not have files and an office.’ He said, ‘That I don’t know. I asked everyone to leave.’ I don’t know, then I did not feel like going back and taking my gown. Then my husband asked him, ‘What will she do?’ So, he said, ‘she is very talented. If she begins independent practice she will excel.’

Then I started on June 1st. For one month I was completely tensed, thinking about what I would do. Remember I am a (B.Lisc) Bachelors in Library Science degree holder and I had got hundreds of job offers. That 1980s was a period that people with B.Lisc degree were in much demand. I made a choice not to take up those jobs. How old I turned when it was ’98? So, I got shocked, what would I do? Then I decided not to work under any other senior. If a senior could do this to me who was sincere and also his relative, I thought I should not have any more similar experiences. ...Ayyo! I don’t think anyone in this BAR has similar experience I had in that office (sobbing). I was not a junior like you all.) I even attended the case trial on the engagement day of my younger brother for that office. Every day I used to go to office early in the morning at 8 am and my husband would pick me back when he would return

from office . So, I used to stay till 5-6-6.30 pm in the office. My mother used to take care of my son. That is how I took care of that office. So, what happened now? I got a recognition that I am a sincere lawyer. (sobbing) He did not consider that I was his relative and did not think that let her stay back and others leave. That is the ungratefulness in this field [ee fieldnte oru nannikedu ennu parayunnathu athaanu]. ... You cannot understand the trauma I had when I was asked to leave without anything solid in hand after seven years of hard work in the office [ee oru professionil ezhu kollam cheythittu onnumillathe irangi pokendi varunnathinte bheegaratha ningal onnum vicharichal manasilakkan pattathilla]. When I think about that even today, I think if it might have been someone else, they might have committed suicide [vere vallavarum aayirunnenkil orupakshe aathmahatya cheythirunnirikkam]. I got completely distressed at that point [kaaranam angane njaan angu vinggi ninnupoyi ee fieldil]. ... Poor man! [paavam addheham] In 2004 he died... But I never had any grudges against him. Because we get guru once in a lifetime [guru jeevithathil orikkale ullu]. I did not go to any other senior later on. I have only one guru. That is enough. That was a lesson. I had books worth nearly one lakh and I left everything there. And in my WHOLE LIFE if any of my relatives or any one had hurt me and made me shed my tears, this was the only incident, by my senior. Because I used to face anything. None of my other family members hurt me. But this I got hurt [ithu njaan vedanichu]. Ayyo! That was a terrible pain (.) If I remember those days, I cry even today. I cry every day (.) till death I will cry. [Ayyo! Oru vallatha vedana aayirunnu (.) aalochichaal divasangal innum karayum (.) ennum karayum (.) maranam vareyum karayum.] You can understand that pain only if you go through a similar experience [Athu ningalkku angane oru anubhavam undakumbozhe manasilakathullu.] In our life we are committed to a goal and one fine morning WITHOUT ANY REASON (we are asked to leave), there was never any fault from my side. [Naam nammude lifeil ellam oru ithinu vendi cheythu kazhinjittu oru suprabhathathil oru KAARANAVUM ILLATHE, entethaaya oru kuttam undayirunnenkil enikkangane (sentence break)]. How can we accept [aaru sahikkum] when he blamed us juniors for the income tax raid in his office?"

-(Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram,
July 2017)

Objectification of women, sexual harassment at the workplace and the culture of silencing women are other ways of operationalising patriarchy in the workspace. Objectification of women with the growth of social media is an extreme form of humiliation a woman experiences in her workspace. Malati, shares her experience in the work place where men treat women as mere objects, a body rather than as an individual who deserves her due respect and dignity. She draws our attention to social media platforms where women who retaliate patriarchal influences are often attacked and bullied using derogatory comments and statements. The changes in gender power

relations and the objectification of women are reflected when she states that this trend is growing at an alarming rate.

“... indignities in a workspace, it should not just be journalism, in any workspace you are just a woman. For me, I am sure, all of us really know, at the end of the day, in the guy’s gang, they would talk about you just as a body or a woman or an object. But in a women’s group we never talk about a man in that manner. Or in a men’s group no one talks about a man in that manner. At the end of the day, how much ever well you interact with them, or how much ever motherly you try to become, at the end of the day for sixty-year-old men and twenty-year-old men, we are objects. I have had that realization. That realization may be because, I have heard my husband saying, what type of conversation happens in such type of gangs. I have heard about these kinds of conversations from the juniors who open up to us. That kind of indignity will always be there in their minds all the time. That kind of talk happens only among men. And I feel that kind of talk is increasing among men. That is the trend! That is increasing at an alarming rate with the growth of social media becoming a space for anyone to tarnish and bully others in any manner. We know what kind of response women who are quite active on social media would get if they respond or express their opinion on certain matters. This gets reflected in every workspace. This is a subject us women discuss here nowadays quite often. Sometimes even those men whom we consider as a younger brother, talk about us like an object only. This is there in every office space... So, when a woman comes to that space, her dignity, which is not expressed outwardly, but the dignity that comes from within, maybe affected.”

-(Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

A popular opinion about women who grow successful in their career is that it has only been made possible by giving some sexual favours to men in higher positions in the hierarchy or to people who act as sources of news. Character assassination and attacks on a woman’s moral integrity are major weapons of patriarchy to contain women’s growth.

“And in the profession, I already told right, from the very beginning it is not treated like we mean serious business. As a woman we are taken very lightly. That is the most striking denial of privilege when one enters this profession as women. I have heard this from many journalists from Trivandrum itself- if a male journalist is covering a certain beat in a channel and if the same beat in a rival channel is handled by a female journalist and if she is able to give an exclusive, his first reaction would be to call up the news source and say that, ‘You gave her the news when she bent before you’! [avalonnu kuninju kaanichappo nee avalkku aa vartha koduthu alle!] They try to establish that a woman can only get access to an exclusive news story through this means There were issues regarding this in an institution. This is the kind of attitude even society holds. The popular perception[dhaarana] is that, you might have

made some compromise somewhere if you have grown in your career beyond a point. But for a man it is not the same.

-(Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram,

November 2017)

Sexual harassment is an extreme operationalisation of patriarchy in the work space. It is a violence on the dignity and personhood of a woman. Adv Anitha's experience reflects how power hierarchies work obstructs women from exercising their agency.

In between this, there were two-three incidents where the Chairman's driver acted funny with me. So, I kept quiet initially. He came and gave me hints. I did not understand what this guy was talking. Then whenever I get up from my seat at the office, he could see me from a distance because of the glass cabin and he would come from the opposite direction when I walk. No matter how much ever space would be there, he would bump into me and go. Once it happened, second and third time it happened. After his first attempt I was cautious, I would keep my hand like this (in a defensive mode), we would look at each other, he would give a nasty smile and he go. I couldn't do anything, because I was in my probation period. But I was itching to hit him. But if I did hit him, it would turn into a messy affair. The next time I did not hit him, but I stood there and I called him (his name) (in an angry tone) and left. I don't know whether there were any eye witnesses. Even if there were, nobody cares about it. I knew that it was a lone battle. ... There was this manager to whom I had to report temporarily. Once I told him casually about this guy and he said 'Don't fight with him, he is the Chairman's driver'. ...The moment I entered there, there was this guy sitting, about whom I had reported (chairman's driver) after the manager and HR. This idiot says 'Oh, Anitha had an issue with (chairman's driver)'. This is not what I wanted to say there. Now that man asked, what's that. I said even now when I was coming this way, he was trying to bump into me. I said that the problem is, if this happens in the street, I will deal with it differently. But now the problem is he is a permanent employee and I'm a new recruit. I'm only on probation. So, what am I supposed to do? If this repeats once more, I may slap him. ... Then the question came, 'Why didn't you react? Why didn't you slap?' I said he is a permanent employee and I'm just on probation. If anybody resists and if an issue happens, I will not be able to substantiate what I do."

(Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram,

November 2017)

In the legal profession, demanding, giving and taking sexual favours from clients and juniors lawyers is considered common. Sexual exploitation is normalised in the profession. The narrative of Adv Anita portrays how sexual exploitation gets normalised in the professional space and how hierarchy of power works. The work environment with deserted work spaces after five in the evening makes the situation

conducive for sexual exploitation. The open secrecy of taking sexual favours for the service rendered by a lawyer becomes normalised when there is no shame attached to the practice and when the junior lawyers continue the practice once they become senior lawyers.

Junior lawyers and clients from financially unstable backgrounds are often exploited rather than women from “decent” middle class families with financial stability. When Adv Anita emphasizes women has the freedom and agency in deciding whether to give sexual favours or leave practice under the senior lawyer. But in the cases of women from financially unstable backgrounds are not left with much of an option as this profession itself does not give adequate financial stability in the initial phase of one’s career. Fighting back the sexual exploitation becomes much difficult in a system where beginning an independent practice itself is highly uncertain as the profession is perceived as male oriented and is male dominated. Attempts to complain or fight for justice from higher authorities such as the Bar Council would do much damage to one as one will be attacked in turn with accusations and one’s moral integrity would be questioned rather than receiving support or justice.

...the biggest problem is, I would say, there is ample opportunity for everything, unlike other professions. But I wouldn't say it is limited to this profession, because I faced it when I was in the corporate sector also. So, for me, that was not a big shock. But here what's the difference is, in the corporate environment, if you want to go beyond the what's permissible inside an office space, you have to go outside the campus. I mean that office premise to do anything. Or maybe you can have a relationship and you can be living in or you can come and sit in the office pretending you do not know anything. After 5.30-6 or 7 most of the offices don't have women present. Once you close the office door the space is yours, you can do what you want. Exactly this point is the reason why clients could be offering themselves instead of paying in cash. Male and female clients, instead of cash, they can offer themselves, as a, what do you call, consideration for the services rendered by the lawyer. Some clients must have done that. So anyway, there is a practice where clients have such a relationship with the lawyer. So, since that trend is there, or the juniors come to know that there is such a trend there, that barrier or that shame is not there ... If they get it, they get it, if not, then not, that's all. So, this is a common thing. If you are young, unmarried and from a descent family, chances are very low that they will offer anything. But if you are financially poor and if you are the kind that you express that you are financially unstable, naturally they will suggest the same consideration theory. So, if you want, you offer. That many people have taken that bait. In the past there is a trend of this sort, so naturally these guys who were juniors, now they are seniors and they feel, why can't I try the same technique? Because of these reasons there have been many situations where their marriages broke down

and they had to marry these women. Even are these things being there are one side, the legal community at large if you see, this is there. This is a drawback-partially, but see nobody is going to rape you. That's for sure. The fact is, the income is zero in this (profession). Some people utilize that fact, get it from the senior, offering this. That is their capability [athavarude midukku]. But unfortunately, when they see women who are very outgoing and friendly, these idiots, even if they want it or not, they keep making offers, give it throughout. Whether these advances go further or not depends on the way the girl tackles it or how she expresses it. Because unfortunately or fortunately, the advantage of the field is you are a junior only till you decide you are a junior. Here, there is no hierarchy. Nobody stops you from giving him a slap. It is equally bad to place a complaint in the Bar Council. But do you want to take the risk, is the only question here. In a corporate environment you can't slap your boss and remain in the organisation. That issue does not exist here. If you want to slap him, you can, if you want to complain, you can. But the woman who is deciding to react should be very clear about whom she is going up against and what is she going to do. Because they will create 100 times worse stories than these, to protect their image. And the most likely story they are going to say is, 'Oh she was sleeping with all the other guys, so I also asked, so what is the big deal?' So, it is very much prevalent. The only thing is, I believe, it totally depends on the way the girl reacts. Nobody is going to violate you totally. Because you will get a feel of it in the beginning itself. So, if all these factors are there where you avoid being in a secluded environment, or you don't stay back or you don't express yourself as a damsel-in-distress, you be professional, come, and if you need to slap, you slap, that's it. There is no real hierarchy. You are not an employee

(Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

The work environment and the vulnerability of women to become victims of sexual violence is attached to the field of journalism as well. The objectification of women and a work environment where a lone woman may be required to be surrounded by men in order to cover a story during odd work shifts makes them vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Journalist Sangeetha also emphasizes the need to exercise one's agency and the way women carry themselves in their workspace as means to protect themselves from sexual harassment and exploitation in the workspace.

...when we discuss about patriarchy in workspace, I think your experience of it would depend to an extent on the space you create for yourself in the workplace where men should stop seeing you as an object. I think if they understand how you carry yourself, I think they would stop bothering you. That is what I think. I don't know, I am not sure about that. I was always like that. And people who tried to penetrate into my space are very few. May be one or two, out of their foolishness. Or may be a momentary weakness. But it is very few in number. And again, there is one more thing, because I am not

doing fieldwork, my interaction with others is much limited. I don't have to move out of my space. I am free to choose my space. But things would be different for people who do fieldwork. Their work conditions would be like the lone women in a men's circle while going to shoot a story. They might have to work late night or early morning shifts. When forced to work in these work conditions, that might be difficult for them. In those situations, you can't actually help.

(Sangeetha, Journalist, 46 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

Conclusion

Patriarchy operates in the lives of women as a system of oppression through the social structure. Even though patriarchy exists everywhere across the world, the way it operates in the lives of women is through cultural norms and traditional practices unique and specific to a region. The context of Kerala where the modernity project was envisioned and executed opens up the paradoxes of the project itself. Cultural discourse and normative practices gives shape to a respectable femininity, which emphasizes the preservation of culture and giving prime importance to the family as the norm (Radhakrishnan 2009). The projection of women as the 'vessel of culture' and her domesticated identity impose immense pressure on women to be adapted to perform the role of normative femininity. Their aspirations for individuality and autonomy are curbed through normative values. The process of internalisation of patriarchal norms culminate in the naturalising of the gender hierarchy.

The pressures to perform normative femininity has implications on a woman's wellbeing. Their aspirations and ambitions are always repressed or controlled through systems of oppression functioning through the social structure. Women are culturally expected to endure gender discrimination, differential treatment within the workspace and in the domains of the family, sexual exploitation and violence, attack on their moral integrity and dignity in different domains of their life. Asserting their agency always has its own repercussions on women. The women who challenge the conventional norms and transgress the normative practices are labelled as 'rebels', they are stigmatised and ostracised in the society. Emotional pressures, frustration and discontentment of constraining their career ambitions, the struggles to balance their family and work space, the trauma of violence at emotional, mental, physical and sexual violence and enduring the trauma of violence has implications on the wellbeing of professional women.

Chapter III - 'The Diminutive Difference Between Sanity and Insanity': Making Meaning of Lived Realities

Introduction

The development of Kerala and its influence on the lives of its people are attributed to the post-colonial conditions of the state, conditioned through regional and national development projects, social reforms, liberalizing of the economy, transnational migration and global change. The modernisation process and social reform movements redefined caste, gender and class structures. It thus created anxieties and led to contested ideas of the meaning of progress and modernity (Chua 2014).

The everydayness of the lives of professional women is constructed through their interactions with multiple domains of their life. The phenomenological understanding of the lived-realities of professional women from their perspective broadens our understanding of how their life events influence the capacity to engage and cope with their everydayness.

The 'self' of an individual is a complex entity structured by a set of mental schemes and operations. In this complexity, the lived experience of the outer world enables an individual to make sense of the world. The body, through sensations, acts as a tool to experience the world. Thus, reasoning, sensations and emotions help an individual to make sense of the world. They both connect and distance the individual from reality on the basis of the negative and positive exposures the experience of reality generates. Reasoning, emotions and experiences also help us to judge the power relationship, and these are facilitators which handle and position the individual in a power relationship.

The everydayness is constituted through the interplay of power structures. The construction and idealisation of feminine images through discursive practices, that of a 'superwoman', aided by social pressures and aspirations of women lead to an internal conflict within them. The power inequalities in the domains of the family pours out to the professional domains. Ambitions to be a successful career woman along with balancing their family responsibilities compromises their mental wellbeing. This process of juggling roles leads to an erosion of self and disconnect with their self. The erosion of self and unfulfilled desires are reasons for some to seek fulfilment in

extramarital relations. Their discontentment in life and the lack of support from their life partners lead to marital discord. Consequently, marital discord quite often results in violent relations. That being said, the social construction of ‘the respectable femininity’, which encourages a culture of silencing and suppressing emotions, compels women to endure violence in isolation.

Customised Lives and Social Pressure to be a ‘Superwoman’

Though the State attained remarkable progress and modernity, a Women's primary identity was always tied to her familial responsibilities. The social reformations that redefined the gender identities placed the woman as the centre of the home, and her identity is integrally connected to her domestic responsibilities (Devika 2015). However, the process of market liberalisation redefined a new feminine identity, which is a combination of traditional and modern roles of women. Additionally, as women started getting access to higher education and started to enter the job market, here women were expected to be both a homemaker and a successful career woman who contributes generously to the development of the economy and State. It is in this context, the concept of ‘respectable femininity’ evolves (Radhakrishnan 2011). The woman who performs ‘respectable femininity’⁶ is striving to fit into the image of a ‘superwoman’ who has extraordinary skills to balance both her family and her profession. In the popular imagination, a successful woman is the one who is capable of balancing their roles and responsibilities in the domestic and public domains of her life.

In the neoliberal era, life was turning as event management for people. Everydayness of their life is crafted with the influence of new consumer and global culture. Consumerism became the new culture, rooted in utilitarian principles where people are trying to fulfil their unsatiated desires through more and more consumption. Consumption is regarded as a site where lower class and lower caste youth engage in expressing their agency, desire, pleasure and self-fashioning which shapes and is shaped by the local gendered moralities and the histories of community struggle. This leads to a contestation of ‘middle-classness’ in the region as the previously deprived sections also practice new cultural practices of ‘middle-classness’ and claim for status, citizenship and social power (Chua 2014). The aspirational middle class of Kerala, like

⁶ Refer Chapter 2

in many other instances, have the pressure to portray a picture-perfect image of themselves to society. High educational status, reputable white-collar job, consumer goods and the public display of wealth has become the benchmark for the middle-class identity of the people (Chua 2014). The liberalisation of the economy, transnational migration and foreign remittances had multi-layered implications on the aspirations of the people in the state. With the process of transnational migration, there is a circulation of ideas and culture along with the mobility of people.

Expectations of greater social mobility facilitated the increase in transnational migration. The outcome of this process was the interaction of traditional values and norms with the western culture and values. This interaction constructed new identities and perceptions of individual achievements. This juncture of interaction leaves a fear of losing the traditional values and culture which culminated in a new form of practising regressive modernity to treasure and preserve the tradition and culture. Here, women become the 'vessel of culture' (Devika 2015) with a moral responsibility to pass on the culture and tradition. Thus, a new form of feminine identity evolves, through the interaction and synthesis of modern and traditional values. The new images constructed around this 'respectable femininity' (Radhakrishnan 2011), the woman is expected to prioritise her family and balance both her profession and career. The popular films, advertisements also project this idea of a superwoman, who is a woman who balances her family and career responsibilities equally.

Anita, the lawyer, shared her reflection about the superficial nature of the contemporary society in Kerala. Her reflections discussed how neoliberalism is penetrating into the day to day life of individuals, and how globalisation and consumer culture changed people's perception of life satisfaction and happiness. The hyper-visibility of everyday life with the advent of social media redefine the ideas of success and happiness. The technological revolution and access to smartphones expanded the horizons of exposure to the global world. Social media has a heightened role in connecting people across the world. With an increase in virtual interaction, life has become event management, where the performance of self-had become customised for social media. With the interaction in the virtual world, everyone has pressure to portray themselves as 'happy souls' when their real self is eroded from its reality. Here the consumer culture is the new messiah, where people strive to consume more to find happiness and through their consumed products to portray themselves as a 'happy soul'.

From the clothes and accessories to the food you order, each item purposely projects an image of yourself to the world - a picture-perfect image of yours.

But this heightened consumption and the pressure to look happy is leaving people disconnected to their self and reality. The performance of self in a customised style is an expression of their aspirations and desires for happiness, success and achievement. The disconnect from reality and comparisons they make with the lives of others immerse them in discontentment. The study shows that discontentment with their lives has implications on their perceptions of self-worth and self-esteem. To cope up with the discontentment that which evolves out of comparison, people strive to achieve and prove themselves by overdoing things in their life. For them, the target is to attain a state of bliss, which they aspire and fantasise about achieving in life. And this bliss can be achieved through attaining their dream job, having more balance in the bank, or anything material which they think could give them happiness and satisfaction in life. This heightened comparison of one's own life with others, erosion of their self, and disconnect from reality is what constitutes poor wellbeing.

“In this present generation, you have women, across all sections having access to WhatsApp, Facebook and all. And this has subtly changed the perspective of ‘what the woman is’. Suddenly you have another set of ads coming in which the mother is a superwoman, she does that, she does this. That was probably till 2010-’12. Mother is a superwoman now, and now she is expected to do more than what she was expected to do earlier. By the time she comes to 2016-’17, the mother being cranky, the mother being crazy, the mother is not very lazy, but the father is doing the job. This is the new trend of the ads. See, you see a total shift in the public perception itself.

So, with WhatsApp and Facebook what happened is that, it’s not just for the women but for the society at large, there is a pressure to look happy. There is a pressure to look successful, and there is a pressure to look at the picture-perfect image of yourself, where you airbrush your face, airbrush your hair, where you shop for your photographs. You choose your destination of vacation for photographs. Everything is like an event management kind of thing. Even your funerals are customised for Facebook and WhatsApp. The minute you go order a dish, you knowingly or unknowingly a part of any foodie group, you are pressurized to focus on the look of the food rather than to eat the food. So subtly we are moving to a kind of society where we are very much polished and airbrushed on the surface and very damaged on the inside.

Now after all this airbrushed thing and when they come to a reality they think 'oh! My wife is not good after all', 'my life is not good after all', 'my husband is not an achiever as I am trying to portray'. So now there is this heightened comparison between people, and now they are trying to achieve that. Now they try to spend, and they overdo, everything they are trying to prove something. Now it is more about thinking and looking more into yourself and finding that kind of bliss point where you are trying to tell, yeah, this is that beautiful space in me that I'm trying to portray. It could be anything, it could be your job, it could be your cash, it could be anything”.

- (Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

Women trying to become a superwoman is part of this customised life to attain happiness and success. A working woman, at the same time, is equally a homemaker. The cultural conditioning and the internalisation of gender roles put pressure on women to balance both their family and professional responsibilities in a perfect manner. This is next to impossible without the help of an external support system. This juggling of multiple roles has an implication on their mental and physical wellbeing as well. In this instance, moral support and words of encouragement from the family aids in maintaining her inner wellbeing.

Malati, a journalist with two young children of eight and three years old, shared her experience of trying to balance her family and profession in the midst of shift work in the office, which was an immense mental and physical strain for her. Even then she was not adequately appreciated and respected by her husband. In their struggle of juggling between multiple roles, being treated with dignity and respect, and family's appreciation of their role performances imply on the subjective perceptions of the wellbeing of professional women. She was of the opinion that her perceptions of undignified treatment in the family affected her as a person.

When Malati shared about her experiences, she reflected on how women internalise their gender roles. The gender norms developed in the reformist patriarchal structure constructs the concept of 'respectable femininity', where a woman balances her career without compromising her domestic responsibilities and welfare of the family. Taking care of children and household responsibilities are vested on women as they are solely responsible for the welfare of their family and children. In the process of modernity, the career aspirations of women are limited and restricted with their

domestic responsibilities. It is in this context that society projects the image of a superwoman who manages her professional and domestic domains of life efficiently. When she says that she is a person who looks for perfection, she is somewhere striving to live up to this superwoman image.

So, when Malati is not adequately appreciated or is criticised for her minor shortcomings, it invokes a feeling of guilt in her. The guilt feeling is an outcome of internalisation of gender roles in a system which runs on the division of gender roles. Even though her husband sympathises with her efforts to make everything perfect, she says, a woman looks forward to empathy, material, physical support and appreciation from their partner rather than sympathy. It clearly states the need for an external support system for working women to balance their juggling roles.

When Malati strives to become a superwoman by multi-tasking, she becomes absent-minded and fails to manage things efficiently in the way she calculates and aspires for perfection. Her idea of a superwoman is connected to the popular perceptions of a successful woman, who manages even the trivial things of the home perfectly along with her professional responsibilities. Even though she has the aspiration to flourish in her career, she has the concern not to compromise on the emotional and physical needs of her children at the same place. All her aspirations and her perceptions of success are entangled in her responsibility to her children and her family. But in the end when she states that, the implication of striving to become the superwoman is ‘fatigue’ and ‘life is fatigue’, it explains the strain, the erosion of the self and draining of the energy in this struggle to attain perfection. The word ‘fatigue’ is an expression of how mechanical and ritualistic everyday life turns to be, where the individual gets alienated from their self and reality. In the absence of appreciation and support system, and instead of its criticism and guilt feeling, it tampers the perceptions of self-esteem and self-worth, which implies on your happiness and subjective wellbeing.

“... instances of not given adequate respect means, it’s a part of daily life. It’s a part of the daily processes. I would always say a working woman is equally a housewife. I had seen many housewives who are not working, don’t take care of children or household responsibilities. I am someone who always looks for perfection. Even my husband himself says I should not look for making everything perfect. So, when you struggle to work that superwoman concept, we expect appreciation mostly from our partner, right? At the end of the day too many things (sentence

breaking), what happens with me is, when I try to do too many things while doing multi-tasking, sometimes I become absent-minded. If I share a small instance, I am someone who is very calculative of time and try to maintain proper time management... My idea of a successful woman for so far was, the one who manages home, does everything at home personally, manages even the trivial things at home perfectly along with their job. This was my concept till recently, and I tried to live up to it. I tried to become a superwoman. There were times I even thought of managing things on my own instead of keeping a maid. When I realized that it is not practical, we did take help from some others. Then in the later phase, my concept is, widen our horizons in the career and achieve the maximum you can in your career, and at the same time, we should not lose our children. ... Trying to become this superwoman is fatigue. Life is fatigue. It is nothing else. That is the only outcome of trying to become a superwoman”.

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, October 2017).

Girija, the journalist, is burdened with her husband's expectations of her career growth and her failure to meet his expectations because of the gendered nature of the media institutions. Her husband, who is an IT professional claims that he is an IT professional with the heart of a journalist. When he could not fulfil his dreams of becoming a journalist, he was expecting to achieve that desire through the professional success of his journalist wife. But he fails to accept and understand the gender discriminatory practices in the media, which favour men and side-lines women with soft and entertainment news. Here, her poor wellbeing is evident in her interactions with her husband, who makes her feel that she is a 'failure' when she is not able to flourish in her career as he expects. Expectations of others and self-expectations are a constituting factor of stress, and when one fails to meet expectations, it leads to discontentment and poor wellbeing of individuals. Perceptions of success and failure set standards of goal one expects to achieve.

Girija herself is personally discontented with the discriminatory practice in the media, heightened competition to maintain and improve the rating of the channel and not given opportunities to enhance their skills and potentials. This grief and dissatisfaction with career growth are triggered when her husband criticises her for not accomplishing anything significant in her career. This perception of poor accomplishments and dissatisfaction with it constitute poor wellbeing. Instead of providing the needed support and understanding, her husband's words of criticism

tamper her ego and self-esteem, which in turn result in a constant fight in the family and creating marital discord in the family.

My husband is much ambitious for my career. He deeply desires to see me reaching the zenith of my career. He expected much from me, and when my career was turning to a soft side mode, he was distraught. For several years this was a major reason for the problems we had between us. He becomes much bothered about my career, and he would keep on talking about it, and it becomes a big problem between us. That aspect is not something I can sort, because it is our executive editors and managers who decide what assignment should be assigned to whom. We are in despair when we are not assigned according to our potentials, and we are underutilised. Then when you reach home, you would be condemned as not efficient, not doing anything in the career. Then he always compares me with this junior of mine. 'Look at him, what all things he does, and you are doing the same things you did seven years back'. You feel conscious about not meeting this expectation of his. But he is not counting the gender discrimination in the media space in getting assignments.

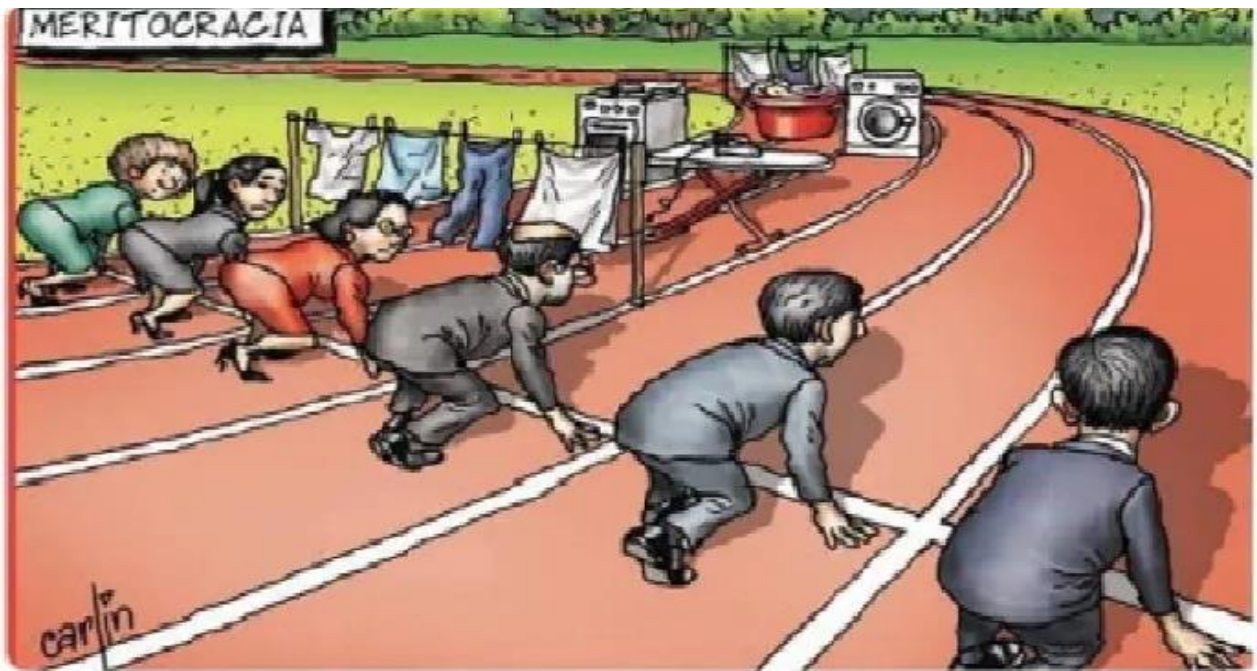
- (Girija, Journalist, 33 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

There is a conflict in the perceptions of success and failure for Girija. When she values her career achievements, especially since she is regarded as the face of positive news, which was endowed on to her through the news programme she is doing, the symbolic capital, the dignity and respect she gets in public space makes her feel like she is thriving. But not meeting the career expectations of her husband, and her husband's constant criticism makes her feel like she is failing. When the extended family fail to understand the nature of her work and her limitations in balancing her career and family and label her as a 'bad wife', it is a symbolic delegitimization of her feminine dispositions. In a regressive modern society constituted through gender norms determined by the reformist patriarchy place the domestic responsibilities of a working woman as valued important than their professional skills and roles. The burden of expectation from the family and their dissatisfaction with the performance of that role have a negative impact on the perceptions of self-worth and self-esteem, resulting in negative wellbeing.

But in a way, I always think of myself as successful. Because in Kerala, I am identified as a face of positive journalism. I am invited to give classes to journalism students in the university, I could do interviews quite excellently, I have a good network of friends I earned through this profession, in social media networks I am much cared and respected, I was never bullied or attacked in cyberspace or public space which is

quite unlikely for journalists. I know it is because of my positive vibes. But when I go home and talk with my husband in my bedroom, I feel I am a big failure [VANN tholvi aanennu]. I feel I couldn't reach anywhere; I feel that even today. In my mother in law's perception, I am not a good wife for her son. At the same time, she relies on me when she has any issues or problems. One day while we were shifting to our new home, she was there at my place. That day some conversations started, and she burst out all the emotions she had within. I was never ever got shocked like that in my life. Hearing all her accusations, I even fainted that day. All her complaints were, I am not taking care of her son the way she is expecting. Though she understands the problems of a working woman, she is not able to understand the challenges when you have shift work.

- (Girija, Journalist, 33 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).



Source: https://www.momspresso.com/parenting/article/businessman-anand-mahindra-posts-heartwarming-message-regarding-working-woman-on-twitter?utm_source=whatsapp

The cartoon shown above went viral on Twitter recently when the business Tycoon Anand Mahindra shared in his tweet. In the cartoon, it clearly depicts the women and men wearing formal dresses looking forward to stepping the career ladder has a different set of reality to encounter. When the men's path is evident and smooth, women have to cross hurdles, and perform their domestic responsibilities to flourish in

their career. Here a woman who is ambitious in life is expected to grow to the image of a superwoman who can balance both their career and family.

Ambition to be Successful

For a woman aspirations and ambitions to succeed in a career means they have to pay a higher cost than their male counterparts. For one the professional domain is highly male-dominated. Women have to make extra effort to prove themselves. In the experience of a 60 years old lawyer Priyamvada, sheer perseverance and determination along with the support of the family are crucial for women to grow in her profession. She was a senior lawyer and one among a very few female lawyers who handle criminal cases.

In the early days of her career, she was working as a junior of a very famous criminal lawyer in the BAR⁷. She had to work in an office environment with forty men. She followed her senior in his career journey like a ‘shadow’. She had to be gender neutral and bold enough to follow her senior lawyer like the ‘shadow’. The criticism and the scorn she received for following her senior reflects the societal attitude towards ambitious women and targeting them. In the culture and traditional practices, only the wife of a man has the right to follow him like a ‘shadow’. A married woman following another man is interpreted as transgressing the conventional norms, and questions are raised on her moral integrity. The ambition and determination to grow and succeed in her career was a motivation for Priyamvada, to be with her senior and learn from him. Her discursive empowerment to ignore the disdainful comments and stand firm in what she wanted to achieve emerged from her husband’s support, understanding, and trust in her.

When she says, she never noticed or found any female juniors following their senior male lawyers the way she did, it points to the boundaries of gender relations within the profession. Law is a profession dominated by male members and where there is a strong gender hierarchy, and where gender exploitation exists⁸. Hence, it becomes an impediment for women to grow in their career, until and unless they are bold enough to fight back the attempts to tamper their ego.

⁷ British Accreditation Regency

⁸ See chapter II

“In the office space, I had to fight because I was with these forty men. Even though my senior was a distant relative of mine, I did not get any special favours or help to be his relative. I had to literally beg him to give me cases because I had an interest in learning things. When he used to appear for trials in the court, I used to go sit with him and learn on my own. But if he wouldn’t have allowed me, I wouldn’t have learned anything. So, he helped me in that sense. But we had to go and get the judgements. When he used to appear for the trials, we had to prepare notes on our own, be with him full time, walk with him, help him. He might have felt it bothersome [arochakamaayi thonniyirikkam]. I am a junior lady advocate, though I was married woman and a mother by then. There were no other female lawyers in his office. I did not care about all these things, because I had the support of my husband and my senior. I don’t know whether any female lawyers had been after their male seniors like this; I never saw or noticed anyone. But I was like that. Because I was determined to learn, I wanted to grow, and become something in this profession, and I accompanied him everywhere to every court where he was doing the trials. [enikku padikkanam ennulathukondum, enikku valaranam ennu nirbandham ullathukondum, ee fieldil enthenkilum okke aayi theeranam ennu undayirunnathu kondum, addhehathinte koode oru santhathasahachariye pole, addheham case nadathunnal ella kodathikalilum njaan koode nadannu] After I am done with the work assigned to me, I would rush to the court where his trial is going on. . I had to face many comments and criticisms. My friends had asked me, ‘why are you following him like a shadow?’ [nee entha nizhalu pole nadakkunnathu?] ‘aren’t you ashamed to follow him like this?’ [ninakku naanam ille?] They said, ‘lady juniors don’t follow male seniors like this’. But I did not care about all these. I went there with a purpose to learn to practise law. I used to follow him like a shadow.”

- (Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017).

Challenges in Stepping the career ladder

When Adv. Priyamvada express her opinion and reflected on the challenge’s women face in order to grow in their career, she voices her opinion from the experience of a lawyer who had ample support from her family and the sheer determination to succeed. She reflects on the double burden of women to balance both their family and career as well as the power hierarchies which are unfavourable to young lawyers in the profession. When women have the disadvantages of unfavourable working environment and lack of support in the family it becomes a barrier for them to do the

necessary preparations and ‘home work’ for their work, and the lack of preparation reflects in their performance in the court. It is not that women do not have the skill to contribute to the economy, but the opportunities to develop the skills to perform well are denied (Walby 1990) because of her multiple responsibilities at home and work place. According to Adv Priyamvada, the sheer determination and strong will power to fight the inequalities and create opportunities on their own to develop their competence is another way possible to grow in their career. Her upper caste and upper-class status and the extraordinary support she received from her family was in a way a privilege for her. Since she did not have to experience the inequalities of a lower caste or class women, who, with no support network, may have to endure in the same profession.

Inequalities in power hierarchies and unhealthy professional competitions are barriers for aspiring junior lawyers to grow in their career. Women lawyers face double disadvantage since they belong to a lower status in the power and gender hierarchy. Though the law profession gives the flexibility to do their work according to the choice of the lawyer, it has an equal amount of uncertainty. Competition is very high in the profession, and there is no guarantee of getting cases in a consistent manner as long as one is established as a competent and successful lawyer. Women have to cross multiple barriers to attaining career growth. In the process of fighting the multiple barriers in career growth, women lawyers limit their career ambitions, which negatively impacts their self-esteem and wellbeing.

When Adv. Priyamvada states that it is the “laziness of female lawyers to make their environment conducive for them to work”, Her perception of ‘laziness’ of female lawyers is evolved from a position of privilege, in the class and caste hierarchy. When she says it is ‘laziness’ she blames the individual instead of the systemic inequalities. It can also be interpreted as when women’s agency and freedom are constrained through the systemic inequalities and oppression, it makes them lowering their career ambitions and aspirations. The flexibility of their work schedules is a reason for them as well as their family and close network to take their work very lightly. The barriers in career growth produce a negative motivation and which in turn, most women give up their aspirations to grow in their career. There is a contradiction where many women enrol to practice law, but the number of women continues to practice or get established in the career are very few. The lack of consistent income, lack of support from the colleagues

and family, power inequalities and sexual and economic exploitation are factoring that force women lawyers to drop out from their profession.

“You cannot go to court at 11 AM without doing the needed homework. Before you go to court, you have to prepare its rulings and study the case in detail. This profession needs ample homework. I think maybe because women are not getting the conducive environment to do this homework, there are many dropouts among women in this profession. I am very particular about reaching my office at 8 AM in the morning. If you are running straight to the court at 11 AM what can they do in the court? Who will give them a case? Even if they get a case what will they do with that case? You have to prepare for it at home as well as you have to do library references in the library to present a case. Otherwise, you can only go to the court and pray for time. That is one part. And if the family members are not supportive enough, that would also be a barrier for them to grow in their profession. That is why there are many dropouts in this field if there are any at all. I would say it is laziness to work [Work cheyyanulla madi ennu njaan parayum]. In my opinion, another reason is that they are not putting effort to make the situation conducive for them to work. [athinulla sahacharyangal shrishtikkan prayaasapedunnilla ennullathaanu veroru kaaryamennathu ennum njaan parayum]. Look at journalists, and they have to endure all rain and sun and work so hard to get a piece of news, investigative journalism is much more difficult. If you see in that sense which profession is easy? You should have that will to do work [joli cheyyanulla manassu veenam]. If you do your work (with determination), there is no better profession than this. We decide our fees. But there should be decency and ethics. I had done many criminal cases, murder cases for free for many poor people. Even now, I do many works for the poor. I am the populist lawyer [janakeeya vakeel aanu] in my place, and it’s all free service ... In this profession, you must do hard work. That is why it has become difficult for women [athukondaanu streekalkku athu pattaathathu]. You need that supportive environment at home; without that, it is not possible.

And again, in other offices, the seniors have to give the case bundle to the juniors as well. And senior would allow them to assist in cases only if the junior proves that they are dedicated and capable. If the senior has kept a case to entrust you tomorrow, and if I don’t turn up tomorrow, then I would lose that opportunity, right? He might have many cases to deal with. There are factors like that also is there. There is no easy money in this profession, and that is why people drop out.”

- (Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu Nair,
Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017)

The Role of Support Network and Career Growth

Many studies in different socio-cultural contexts prove that in stepping onto the career ladder, the support of the family and other social institutions are imperative. Law, teaching and journalism are careers which demand adequate learning and preparation. In a family environment with lesser moral and physical support, the workload for women increases tremendously. This affects their productivity, mental peace and wellbeing with poor quality of living.

Professor Resmi, who is in her early forties, with an adolescent daughter lives with her parents. The support she receives in the extended family helped her to balance her career and family life. Her parents take care of her daughter and her domestic responsibilities so that she could focus on her career. Because of the support of her extended family, she could work hard and get her professorship in her forties, which is quite unlikely in the university where she is teaching⁹.

“Yeah, we can grow in our career, but if we are striving to do on our own to grow in our career without any external support, this level of growth would be able to attain maybe only after 20 years”

- (Resmi, Professor, 45 years, Hindu Ezhava, Thiruvananthapuram, March 2017).

A conducive working environment at home is imperative for lawyers says Adv. Priyamvada. Getting peace of mind and space to do professional work at home has implications for their productivity and career. As a woman’s existence is interconnected and dependent on her family and society, balancing the ‘mental equilibrium’ is inevitable for every lawyer. She says she was ‘fortunate’ to get a husband who not only gives her peace of mind and space to work but also has a keen interest and extends his physical support whenever she needs it. She owes a share of success in her career to her husband’s extraordinary support he gives to her professional responsibilities.

“At home, my family is hugely supportive. My husband is a retired engineer from (state government undertaking institution) and my son is a legal advisor in a multinational company in Chennai. The support of family is inevitable for a lawyer. A peaceful atmosphere at home is always good for us as this work demands much of maintaining mental equilibrium. A peaceful atmosphere at home and cooperation from their family members would help lawyers to a great extent. I am lucky enough

⁹ One of her students was there at her place, once when I went to visit her during her rest after surviving a fatal accident. The student was saying that she became a professor at a very young age which is quite an unlikely achievement for teachers, especially lady teachers of that age.

to have both [Athu enikku bhagyavashaal kittiyittundu]. If you don't have that mental equilibrium, it is challenging for women to come and perform in the court. Some affairs of the home if we can do it with a mutual understanding and cooperation it is good and fine or else, we will have to fight for it. ... But my partner was extremely understanding of the nature and demands of my profession, and that helped me a lot. In my career growth, he can claim a good share being very supportive and understanding. Even though I do self-driving to court and office, he gives me peace of mind when I sit and work. He doesn't interfere in extraneous matters. Yes, I do admit that when we live in a family, there would be many problems coming on the way, but it is how we balance these issues along with your profession is the only way to grow in your career life.

I don't think women have can live independent of her society and family. [ithallathe sthreekkku samoothathe matti niruthi, kumbathe matti niruthi oru life undennu enikku thonnunnilla.] ... He (husband) has an interest in all these, fortunately. When he was working, he used to come to listen to my trials in court when he gets free time during the intervals. He extended that kind of support. He had given strong moral support. Even during murder case evidence collection, he used to accompany me, and he used to sit with me when I prepare murder case trials. These kinds of support he had always given me. He used to take care of my juniors quite well”.

- (Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017).

Juggling roles, responsibilities and career growth

Juggling roles and switching from one role to other roles within a fraction of seconds are always exhaustive for working women as they continuously go through this process. Caregiving roles are stressful for women when they balance their profession and their family's needs. In order to manage the stress and balance your responsibilities, women have to develop their own strategy or compromise on either of their responsibility. Illness, problems in the family, the need to care for ailing family members makes women feel burdened. Raising young children, caring for ageing parents are the two set of roles that needs more investment of energy, time and emotions. Though caring for the ailing mother was very stressful for Adv Priyamvada in the midst of a significant case she appeared for, her perseverance, experience and courage helped her to balance her profession and career. Again, the flexible timing of her profession helped her to take breaks to care of her mother. Juggling between her multiple roles was stressful and drained her emotionally.

“When you become sick or have some problem in the family, and you are supposed to balance your work, you feel burdened up. My mother fell sick when the trial of a murder case was going on. That was a situation I felt

really burdened by. I tried to balance both perfectly. I go and take care of my mother when I get a break from work. But I cannot take my profession for granted. That was an overburden at that point of time. That was a very stressful period. It says duty first. Can we not run away from that right? We have to overcome that stress. Here my experience helped. I could manage better without much preparation because my experience was helpful. With the same amount of courage, I managed the domestic responsibilities at the same time. When I was raising my kids, I had to fight many struggles. That had given me good mental strength.”

- (Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017).

Anita, the lawyer says juggling roles are an intrinsic part of women through the socialisation that she receives. She points out that the difficulty of women living with their husband and family to come and take care of parents living separately. For women living in the nuclear family system, lack of external support system to take care of their immediate family in her absence, and distance between the place of stay from their parent's place are more stressful.

Though it becomes stressful for her to perform multiple roles in terms of taking care of parents when they are ill, home and professional responsibilities, she is able to cope because of family support. She said that the understanding of her parents is an excellent source of strength and support for women like her who are single mothers. She further narrated how the family and children of working women get adapted to their work life schedule and how they cooperate and mutually support each other. When one lives in an extended family one shares a symbiotic relationship. Though the times of illness and similar crisis disrupts the daily routine and sharing of responsibilities, once things are back to normal, the equilibrium is restored.

“Somewhere, it is intrinsically in a woman to juggle roles is a part of it. And when you are especially with family, maybe if I am living with my husband separately, it might be difficult for me to come and take care of my parents because of the two locations. Coming out from there and taking care of them is going to be a big task. Presently I don't have that issue. Here it is a family thing, and I can manage, yes, it is stressful, but I get a lot of support from these people. When I was doing my LLB, she (her daughter) was nine months old. From that time onwards, she would come and ask ‘mom, are you studying? You have an exam?’ then I say, ‘yes I have exam’, then she would say ‘you study then’. So, she doesn't disturb me, she comes to play, and knows that I am studying, she would leave me. That was the time when she was two-three around. By the time she was

four, I had finished my LLB. From that time onward, she knows that her mother has work to do. She was given colour pencils, and I sit opposite to her and do my work. She was trained in that way. Now she says, 'if you want, I will type'. She does the typing job when I need help. Working women's children and their families groomed in that way. Somewhere the family is also adapted to it, and somewhere they know that. Somewhere they know if there is a problem in the office or if I have to travel outside, they are very considerate about it. They are part of this cycle. I guess only with their help you can work. You cannot survive without them, and it's a symbiotic kind of thing. You get support. If someday I am working crazy, at this age of forty, my mother would come and feed me (laughing). Because I can't type and eat at the same time. What I mean is managing these other roles has its own perks. The moment I go crazy with all the hospital cases, work and home and all tuitions, the moment they all are on track I get much of their other support."

- (Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

Domestic responsibilities burden women as they are culturally conditioned to take up the sole burden of household responsibilities irrespective of their work status. When Malati, the journalist, makes the statement "... more than a working woman, I am a homemaker, right?" she reinstates the normative conditioning of the minds of women in her society. But when she further questions "right? [alle]", she is looking forward to an affirmation from the interviewer. The question represents the conflict within her mind, between the normative conditioning and her confusion vis-à-vis her concept of freedom and shared responsibilities with her partner. She further narrates the consequences of how unequal sharing of domestic responsibilities between partners in the same profession negatively impacts the career growth of women. The lack of access to update her skills and knowledge creates a discontentment and affects the quality of her career performance. More than that, the lack of respect and feeling of being used by the family without a word of appreciation affects her self-worth and self-esteem. Not receiving the needed physical and moral support nor getting adequate acknowledgement and respect creates discontentment and feelings of depression in women. In this context to protect her dignity and reclaim her self-worth, she had to revolt against her husband.

"... sometimes, you, you be like (thinking) you are taken for granted, right? I am the mother of my children, and at the same time, you are a homemaker too [veettamma koodeyaanu]. I don't agree with the saying that I am a working woman. More than a working woman, I am a homemaker, right? Being a working woman doesn't exempt you from

being a homemaker. When we are taking up all these responsibilities, aah, we are taken for granted. But for husbands, every morning one hour, one and a half hours they read the newspaper. They have an advantage. And I at the same time don't even see the headlines of the newspaper. So not getting updated is my disadvantage. And then when you hear the question, 'you are a news editor, and you didn't know about that news?' From where will I get to know? After some time, I revolted."

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

While balancing both career and family life, it is all the more challenging for single women if they have no external support. Sangeeta, the journalist, was in Chennai when she started her career and her daughter was a little child at that time. She was recovering from the trauma of her divorce and was in the last phase of her litigation for the custody of her daughter. At that time, her mother was the source of strength and support for her. Because she had the support of her mother, she did not experience the many challenges of raising her daughter as a single mother. But she harbours guilt of not having given sufficient time to her daughter when she was growing up. This creates doubts in her mind whether the emotional bond with her daughter was what her child expected from her. The juggling of roles creates stresses and strain on women. They end up investing more energy and effort to balance their emotions and affections in their relationships¹⁰. These deliberate efforts to balance emotions arising out of interaction with the family produce much stress and strain for women. The anxiety of 'losing' children, if emotional bonding is poor, results in guilt and inadequacy. Many of them feel that they are unable to do justice to the emotional needs of the family and meet the benchmark set by cultural and social expectations. This guilt arises out of the social conditioning, of what is expected in terms of respectable femininity.

"My mother is a huge pillar of strength. And I did not get any transfers in my job. When I was working on the other channel, I was in Chennai, and my mother took care of my daughter. Now she (daughter) left Trivandrum. So, I never felt challenging in raising her. If there were any issues or needs, my mother used to handle it. It is only with the emotional attachments (with the daughter). Sometimes I feel I did not (do well). Now,

¹⁰ Malati, the journalist, shared raising children is a huge worry for her. *"That's a huge tension, huge tension, because we are not there, we are physically not available for them whenever they need us... On the whole, this is the only thing I'm tensed about. I give the needed time to husband, he doesn't demand. And he doesn't need my time as much as my children would need. Every day I make sure I communicate with him at least for 10 minutes... They are not emotionally depended to achan. But both are very emotionally dependent on me. That is the only problem I have."*

sometimes I feel, did I live up to her expectations? I sometimes feel, did I fail her in some way? But I can't help it."

- (*Sangeeta, Journalist, 48 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018*).

Entangled Motherhood

The relationship between the mother and child is glorified as the strongest relationship in the world. Motherhood is a demanding and exhaustive responsibility. Motherhood is a life-transforming event for women wherein children change the priorities of their life. Even though mothers enjoy caregiving and expressing affection to their children, the pressure to be perfect mothers produces anxiety and guilt, especially when they are unable to match up to societal expectations.

Even when women face inequalities in their familial relations and workspace, they believe them as embedded in these relationships. They find that their relationships, even if it is unequal, enrich their wellbeing. They feel that their 'inner self-esteem' is defined by the feeling that they are capable of being there for someone in need and their 'outer self-esteem' is defined by the feeling that they are valued and needed. They create their own dependencies, wherein their care and presence are valued and appreciated. Women are entangled in the network of relationships, which in turn makes them vulnerable. It creates her dependency on family, community, neighbours and powerful classes. Her identity built on familial and social ties are imperative (Snell-Rood 2016). Family is understood as a place for care and symbolic resource for their survival. (Snell-Rood 2016).

Malati, the journalist, feels the satisfaction and contentment when her children are obsessive over her and demand her attention and time. Her 'outer self-esteem' increases as she is valued and needed by her children. She perceives the children's obsession for her as the reciprocation of the affection and care she gives them, and this gives her a deep sense of contentment and a higher 'inner self-esteem'. It makes her feel self-worth that she was able to perform the role of a mother perfectly. Even though her work schedule does not give her much time to spend with her children, she makes an extra effort to compensate that lack of time with quality of time, playing with the children the game they want to play, spending time with them and builds a proper

communication. Though it is exhausting for her, she enjoys spending time with her children and the feeling of self-esteem gives her a sense of inner wellbeing.

For women, a family is a place where caregiving is expected. At the same time caregiving is also exhausting as the demands are endless. Managing families leave most women chronically worried and exhausted (Snell-Rood 2016). Working women with shift work schedules have the extra burden in terms of stretching themselves beyond their physical and emotional capacities to be available for their family. When the children are in need of them, the nature of their work and working shifts acts as a barrier for them to meet the needs of their children. In Malati's opinion, the children of working mothers develop a sense of insecurity as the mothers might not be physically available for them in their needs. In her experience, her daughter grew insecure, lacking confidence, more demanding and adamant in nature, emotional and sensitive. This produces guilt and a sense of deep helplessness in the mother. This situation aggravates as anxiety, which results in poor mental wellbeing.

"I am someone who has the motherly feeling very much. I dreamt of becoming a mother at the age of 16, and I found a name for my child then onwards. After my child was born, it changed everything. Sometimes when we sit back and think, I get awestruck thinking, I am a mother of two kids! But I managed it very well, I guess. Both my kids are obsessive about me. I think that itself is a testimony for me. Because I know mothers who are with their kids for 24 hours and who do not stay apart from their kids not even for a night, and I know the kids won't even look for their mother if they are not around and they don't even give a kiss to the mother. It is all the kids reciprocating the kind of affection they receive from the mother. But my kids always demand my attention, affection and presence. What I think is the quantity I miss for them I manage with the quality time. I try to balance my absence with the kind of affection and care I show to them. If I say, my daughter has much of the insecurities of the child of a working woman, compared to my son that I could not manage. I feel sad about it. [athenikku vishamam ulla kaaryamaanu.] Because she is a very insecure girl. She is very attention seeking. She gets emotional very easily and very sensitive. She is not that confident and feels secure, like other children of her age who always has her mother with her. I always have to push her saying, amma is with you. I have to give her the confidence saying she is smart and efficient. She is like very diffident. That is because I am not doing a regular job. She has very small wishes and needs. She needs my lips whenever she sleeps, and she wakes up. That is because we are not working during the standard timings. They might want us besides them when they go to sleep or when they wake up. These kinds of insecurities are more there in my daughter. For my son, I was with him till he was one and a half years old. Then after I joined for work also, my work schedule was a bit more liberal because I was senior by then. Recently only I

started getting shifts. So, he is not that insecure. But the reasons for her insecurities are majorly my work shifts.”

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

Radhika, the lawyer, shared about her going into postpartum depression when she realised that she gave birth to a girl child. The increase in violence and crime against women and young girls in Kerala women, invokes fear and anxiety in parents about the security of their children. The severe anxiety made her fall into postpartum depression. The wellbeing of Radhika is emergent in her interaction with society and her parenting role. The joy of motherhood is limited where girl children are highly vulnerable to violence and discrimination.

“Two hours after my daughter was born, I went into postpartum depression. It was a complicated situation. I had severe anxiety because she was a girl child. I was anxious about her security. I was worried about how I am going to raise a girl child in our society where she hardly has any security. Maybe I am a lawyer, and I get to see the vulnerability and problems of people so closely, that affected me when she was born.”

- (Radhika, Lawyer, 41 years, Hindu Ezhava, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2017).

Societal expectations define a particular type of motherhood that produces multiple pressures and generate guilt consciousness and self-doubt when the mothers fail to perform. Anita, the lawyer, was relating the emotional and physical strain of raising a child. Often the services and sacrifices of mothers are taken for granted and the women are socially conditioned to perform these roles without expecting any rewards. Thus, parenting responsibilities and roles are non-remunerative work. Anita shared her internal conflicts and self-doubts while raising her daughter. The normative values portray mothers as a self-sacrificial lamb and abode of unconditional love for their children. But she as a mother had experienced emotions of craziness, frustrations, stupidity and selfishness, but the society never talks about the internal conflicts that mothers have to undergo. As often the emotions and conflicts of the mothers are not discussed in the families or on any other platforms when the mother undergoes these realities, they tend to blame themselves and experience a deep sense of guilt. The self-contempt, like a bad mother, in turn, ignites their aspiration to be a superwoman. When the mothers are not adequately appreciated and do not get any external support from the family or any other institutions, and instead of that they are criticised for their

shortcomings, it hinders their sense of self-esteem which produces a guilt trip and contribute to poor inner wellbeing.

“it’s a very sad situation (laughing). I mean again stereotype because, there’s this lady on Facebook, I forgot her name, that lady keeps on telling, how women need not to feel guilty, for not feeling in a certain way. Exactly in the way we are saying, what our talk was. You taught women are very tolerant, very patient, they are forgiving like the earth and the minute the mother sees the child other than love nothing comes. But that’s where you start doubting yourself and am I really a woman or is there something wrong with me? Because the minute the child was born, I was very happy. After that the only thing I could think was, can I just go to sleep? I was not feeling any love, I wanted to sleep. From that point itself you start doubting yourself that you are a bad mother. I couldn’t imagine anything better than getting some sound sleep. And I can’t get proper sleep. The only option is get used to the option of not to sleeping. There is no option to sleep. Then you learn how to change diaper in your sleep. Other than getting used to it, your priority to get sleep, and you not getting sleep and you getting irritated doesn’t change. So, everything goes like that. In the sense that, earlier if there was a bar of chocolate, I break into two pieces and one goes to my sister and the other piece into my mouth. Now it’s like I look at the chocolate, then the child, then I think does the child need it, can I eat it? So, this process goes on. If you by chance you eat it and you feel guilty, and you think, I should have given to the child. I never had this problem with my sister. In case you eat it, you think, what a bad mother, you didn’t think of your child. This guilt trip is always there. Nobody had told you the mother goes through the trip, and nobody had told you that the mother could be selfish, stupid and idiotic, cranky, crazy nothing. So, you don’t know whether these things exist for real mothers. Because I never asked my mother does she has these kinds of feelings. So that’s when you realise, okay maybe they also might have felt bad when you didn’t share something with them. Maybe they felt bad when you didn’t ask them whether they want to sleep. Maybe they felt bad when you didn’t give them a better piece. Because we have never noticed. So, I mean all these things, nobody actually discusses, it is genuine. You want to sleep, and you have your own agenda, everybody else messing it up. That frustration you feel that why I am the one sitting and doing all this. Why are others not doing this? These things and doubts you feel whether you are really cut out to be a woman? All these things, in the end, it comes back to you.”

- (Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

In this context, Prof. Geeta is critiquing the way the normative constructions of motherhood are overestimated. The pressure to perform a certain kind of motherhood does not give adequate space for the mother and child to form a natural bond without any pressures of perfection and order. In the cultural context of Kerala, the identity of

a mother revolves around their motherhood. The overemphasis on the emotional bonding a mother and child develop, fails to catch the essence of the vulnerability a woman undergoes with her becoming a mother. In real-life however, women deal with their realities in a different way once they attain motherhood. Part of the vulnerability of mothers is due to the normative pressures to perform a particular kind of motherhood. Motherhood is imposed on women as a duty-bound responsibility, and because of that, mothers are not able to enjoy their motherhood in the real sense.

Not being able to give substantive time to their children during their childhood remains a source of guilt foremost working mothers. Even when they have external support to take care of the children, their physical unavailability and lack of participation in the children's growing time remains a regret for them. This is a sacrifice they make to grow and achieve milestones in their careers.

“See, motherhood for me was never, I mean motherhood is grossly overrated in India. Motherhood as this whole mystique you create on motherhood, people who are an inkling of the feminist theory would know what I am talking about, right? So, it's grossly overestimated and but then you are also in constant pressure to perform a certain kind of motherhood. I might not be that kind of overly motherly, motherly. People are egging you on to do that, and your entire identity starts revolving around it. But one thing that I realised that the motherhood taught me is how vulnerable we are. Motherhood taught me that my ego, my being is as vulnerable as an eggshell. Because children also have great capacity to make, you understand in one go, the entire essence of your life may be. It makes you vulnerable also when a part of you walks in and out of situations you would have handled differently. So, there are a lot of many ways in which motherhood taught me a lot of lessons. And I think motherhood really made me think I am vulnerable. And I think motherhood is what makes women vulnerable because of the immense responsibility that society has invested in it by which no matter what you undergo. If you are a mother, how can you leave your daughter or son behind? This constant harping of glorified motherhood is now I think we need to take. Now I think that people should enjoy motherhood which we don't, because of the enormous burden that we are taught to look at it, I mean that is the kind of the way we look at motherhood. I think motherhood could be enjoyed. But right now, the way it is practised in India, motherhood is not enjoyed. It is a duty, and it's the entire mystique you created around motherhood. If honestly saying, a simple mother-child relation is not evolving. Only when the child grows up, or you get into another level of consciousness, we realize that. And also, another thing as a working mother, I think today what I am missing most is the fact that many of the beautiful moments when my daughter was growing up, I did not have time to sit with her. That is again the one thing that I really feel sad about. Maybe those were

the moments that I should have taken more, maybe I should have participated more, so it is that one single guilt I have, it is that.”

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

Girija, the journalist, shared her experience of how the work culture in her office space permeate on her wellbeing during her pregnancy and post childbirth. Not getting adequate opportunities and freedom to work implies on one's productivity and negative accomplishments result in poor wellbeing. In this context, the emotional weakness of a woman during pregnancy would add to the perceptions of poor self-worth and self-esteem. Since she was new to the place and joined the firm during pregnancy, she had to invest extra effort, and energy to prove herself and not display the physical and emotional weaknesses attributed to pregnancy. During a time when she needed more rest and a pleasant environment, she had to work in an adverse work environment that did not adequately support the pregnant mothers. This had a physical and emotional toll on her. Post-delivery when she gained weight, instead of giving her confidence and understanding the biological processes, the comments and body shaming by a few of her colleagues affected her emotionally and mentally, which even led her to hate to go for work. All these situations culminated in postpartum depression where she had continued crying spells, sadness, anger and mood swings.

“When I was pregnant, I switched to another channel because the channel I was working started becoming financially unstable. The work culture in the new channel was entirely different. I was not getting the same space here in the new place like before, to express my opinions and freedom to make decisions. ... Even after I gave birth to my son, there was no support and cooperation from the firm, especially in matters of giving work shifts convenient for me. I had the feeling everyone is observing me. When I joined in this new place, I was pregnant, and because of that, I was emotionally weak as well. I had the feeling that I was not able to do justice to their expectations from me. Those two years in that channel are the two years I hate the most, filled with emotional traumas. So even during morning shifts when I had severe morning sickness and vomiting, I still went to the office. I was working even until eight months of my pregnancy. After 3.5 months of my maternity leave, I joined back in the office. After delivery, I put on weight. Then some of my colleagues commented ‘you look scary’ ‘you gained much weight’. That had affected me so severely. That is part of a biological process. That was not the time for body shaming; instead, you are supposed to support me. Those comments had emotionally affected me so severely. But I tried my best not to affect my performance. I was insistent not to make anyone say a negative comment about my performance. But that had severely affected me emotionally. I was always sad and unhappy, always crying. Sometimes when I call to the

office to take permission to come late during some shift, and I was unable to ask even that. Sadness! We are emotionally weak at that time. They did not even give me a loss of pay leave. That had affected me emotionally, but because I was insistent, it did not affect my performance.”

- (Girija, Journalist, 33 years, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

The effects of the work atmosphere had permeated on the family relationship of Girija. The postpartum depression she was suffering from made her experience a lack of care, concern and attention from husband and family members. When she was in need of support, understanding and care she did not get that from both her family and workspace which made her condition precarious. The work pressure made sadness her constant emotional state. Her anger at her husband and taking out her frustration on him is an act of bargaining care and attention from him. It was an indirect way of communicating her emotional vulnerability. The responsibility of caring for the child and at the same time the office not cooperating to the needs and responsibility of the mother in giving her a convenient work shift and leave on days she needs to be attentive to the child affected her badly. Her experience talks about the necessity of more sensitisation of postpartum depression and the work culture more sensitive to the needs and problems of pregnant and mothers with young children.

“Whenever I go home, I get angry — continually crying, always sadness, anger. I was always angry at my husband. I took out all my pressure in the office on people at home. That was the time I was vulnerable to postpartum depression. I felt my husband was not caring for me. When his parents are around, he would spend time with them and play with my baby. I felt my office schedule and work was not a matter of concern for them. I was feeling depressed, crying spells and sadness. That was the time my best friend called me, and she figured out I was going through a troubling phase. Then her timely intervention, her frequent phone calls and support helped me to overcome that and become the jovial person again. She could understand my problems, but my family could not understand that. I hated going to the office at that time, and when I am back home, I take out all my frustration on my husband. I was always sad and angry. The root cause was work pressure. After I resigned from that office that problems were resolved to a great extent. That troubled me a lot. The constant emotional state was sadness [Sthayi bhaavam sangadam]. When I start talking about my child, I will start crying. Even if my child was ill, I had to come to the office. I did not get leave”

-(Girija, Journalist, 33 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict is a reality every working woman experiences. The efforts to meet the demands of both professional and domestic responsibilities and the need to prioritise the responsibilities often lead to work-family conflict. The lack of understanding and support from family members to manage different roles leads to stress and poor productivity in everyday affairs. Career aspirations conflicting with the family needs and demands leads to emotional struggles and stress and anxiety in their day to day life.

For Renju, the Assistant professor, her son developing a neurological problem and his dependency on her was a major challenge for her career aspirations. She is a very efficient and dedicated teacher and research guide. She had been very committed to her students and profession irrespective of her poor health conditions. Managing a problem child who needs much of her attention, along with her teaching and administrative responsibilities in the university was affecting her emotionally and physically. Her stress, work pressure and anxiety she embodies it and manifests as asthma. This poor mental and physical health affects her wellbeing and productivity. In between maintaining her academic involvements at a minimum level was a strategy she developed not to completely fall back in her career once she would get settled and make a comeback. In the midst of all the challenges holding on to her career aspirations demanded an extra amount of effort and strain.

“My elder son was very demanding. Because he developed this neurotic problem, he was very attention seeking and I had to be there for him all the time. That was really a struggling phase. But I tried to maintain a minimum level of academic activities because I knew that once I step out of it, then it will be very difficult for me to come back. But my son used to ask ‘why amma has to work like this? Why does she have to go to these conferences and workshops? Why can’t she be at home and help me with my lessons all the time?’ I had to take leave from the university during his board exams. I was the department head when he was in his 10th standard, and I relinquished my headship before my term got over because I was not able to give time to him. It was too much of a strain for me during that headship. I was not even able to give sufficient time to my students as well... When our children do not understand our career demands and our career interests, and they become very demanding, it creates work-family conflict... When I get too much stressed out, I develop asthma. Then I cannot come and teach. Last time when you called me, I

did not pick the call because I was given voice rest. When it happens, I have no option other than going on leave and take complete rest.

(Renju, Asst. Professor, 46 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017).

Career achievements and accomplishments contribute to the sense of positive evaluation of oneself and sense of growth and development (Keyes 2006) as a professional, which are factors that contribute to the psychological wellbeing. But the other factors of a positive relationship with others, including the family, is interconnected with the wellbeing. The happiness and satisfaction of the achievements are dependent on the other determining factors such as the capacity to build and nurture positive and good relationships. Prof. Resmi shared her experience of getting Fulbright fellowship for the teaching faculties a few years ago and the challenges and struggles she had to endure to make her dream come true. Though it is an excellent achievement in her career, her husband was not at all supportive in her pursuing the fellowship. At the threat of a divorce, she challenged her husband's power and authority by daring to still pursue the fellowship. Though her action was a symbol of her discursive empowerment, the decision had deep-rooted repercussions in herself. She was not fully able to engage with the programme as the fear of breaking her marriage was always disturbing her. The fellow member of the team noticed her sorrow and fear in her eyes. It explains the depth of pain, anxiety and internal conflict she endured during that time. The lack of support and encouragement from the family in the career life of women aggravates the work-family conflict, which results in the poor mental wellbeing. This quite often leads to depression and anxiety disorders.

“When I got the Fulbright fellowship, my husband was against me taking the fellowship and going to the US. He was very insistent that I cannot leave my daughter and go. My parents were there taking care of her. My parents were supporting me. He said, ‘if you go once you come back, you will be receiving the divorce notice’. My in-laws said ‘you go, once you are back, we will see what he will do’. And I dared to go. Then he stopped having any kind of communication with me while I was there. Till a few months after I came back, this non-communication continued. Then our friends interfered and helped us to patch up. When I was there in the US, the coordinator of the program one day came and asked me, is there anything wrong with me. Because she could see some deep sorrow in my eyes. How can I be happy and enjoy the whole thing when I am uncertain about the future of my marriage?”

- (Resmi, Professor, 44 years, Hindu Ezhava, Thiruvananthapuram, December 2017)

The multiple roles and responsibilities of women in both the workspace and family have implications for their productivity and career performance. “We do not have time” is a constant problem every woman, especially career women, encounter in their daily life. The double burden of responsibilities snatches away their time for themselves, the time to invest in the learning and skill development for their career growth. This affects their career performance negatively, which in turn is responsible for their poor self-esteem and self-evaluation. The poor self-awareness affects their confidence levels.

Malati, the journalist, shared about her mixed feeling being a career woman and family woman at the same time. Though the celebrity status gives her the pleasure of being recognized by the public and is a source of pride for the family, the multiple roles and responsibilities leads to an alienation from the professional work she does. It is rather women not getting enough time to develop and update their professional skills and knowledge than their lack of interest in learning that acts as a barrier for their career growth and development. Once she leaves the office, then the work of her life begins at home. Alienation from work and working mechanically rather than with a job satisfaction degrades the interest and passion for their work, which eventually affects their psychosocial wellbeing. Here she reiterates how imperative it is to have an external support system is for a professional woman to balance both their career and family life.

“Factors I would say, it is the family’s support. Because, unlike other professions, this is not an ordinary profession. Acting is not an ordinary profession, but it has got all the glamour, all the money, all the privileges, everything is there. So, others see them as a different being, they are celebrities, and have all the advantages of being in that profession. We are celebrities at one time, but we are not celebrities also. I travel by bus. There is no difference like that. But if we go somewhere, we will be recognized. If you look at the positive part, you feel happy about being recognized, and our family might be proud of us, all of it is there. But if our parents are not staying with us, or no other family member is ready to share the struggles and difficulties we have in this profession, that is the problem. For people who have a proper family back-up, it is an important support system. For me a working woman has internally, how many women are willing to learn further is something different, but the reality is, unlike men we are not able to invest that much time for further studying. But if we are not married or we do not have children, we can dedicate that time for it. But we do not have time. I read newspaper several years only during the time I anchor the bulletin. If I am not anchoring news, that day I do not read the newspaper. Or at night 11PM

might be the time I read the newspaper. Imagine how much that would have affected my news anchoring. Sometimes when I go to anchor the bulletin, I am not updated of the news after my shift on the previous day. I am totally cut off. It is not because I was watching a movie. My work, actually after I leave my office, is when the work in my life begins. [ente pani, njaan ividunnu irangumbozhaanu serikkum ente jeevithathile panikal thudangunnathu.] I find a problem with the orientation; my next generation does not have any orientation at all. There are hardly any people in this profession in the new generation with a genuine interested in news. They chose a career, and are working in that very mechanically. They might not be even knowing what are the main news today. It is not just trainees, but those who are a bit more experienced are also like that. They themselves have to decide. I don't know the problem with their upbringing of women's attitude. These are the factors. Other factors... mmm... It is not that female anchor are not talented or not any less than their counterparts in their dedication or anything”.

- (Malati, Journalist, 36years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

Adv. Priyamvada shared about the nature of her work and how their personal inconveniences should stay out from professional life. The uncertainty of getting litigations and high level of competition demands to prove the potential to be established as a good lawyer. In this context, their work demands more of their physical availability, investment of energy and time. In that scenario, poor health conditions and illness cannot be given as reasons to take off from their work. Before the law, justice delayed is justice denied. Thus, lawyers have the moral and professional obligation to give priority to their clients. Appearing as the lawyer for the important criminal cases while being ill is an overburden for the lawyer. In those situations, Adv Priyamvada appeared for the trial taking an additional dose of medicine to subside her illness and give the hearing without any fail. In those situations, the work pressure implies on the physical and psychological wellbeing of the lawyer.

“Once we take up litigation, even if the litigant comes or did not come to the court, we should be sincere to the case. Now the CBI case of which the trial is going, I am representing the 2nd accused. But I was admitted to the hospital with a 103-degree fever. Still, I took an injection and went to the court for trial. I cannot give my illness as an excuse in the court. My personal inconveniences are not an excuse to take leave from the court. That is the speciality of this profession.”

- (Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017).

When Adv. Priyamvada further shared about the emotional and mental struggles she encountered in balancing her domestic and professional roles, she reiterated how her professional training as a lawyer helped her to develop skills to switch different tasks relatively efficiently. Her narrations of lived experiences explain how women understand and perform their 'self' in a collectivist society, and identity embedded in the family. When women sacrifice their personal interests and luxuries for the welfare of the family, the family, in turn, is expected to be the space where they can express themselves, the family as the space that provides the needed support and strength to survive their daily lives.

To balance the multiple roles of women efficiently, proper balancing of mental equilibrium is imperative. The process of balancing mental equilibrium depends on multiple factors, such as having support from one's social network. When she talked about the construction of mental equilibrium through favourable circumstances she meant that the understanding of family members about her challenges in managing both professional and domestic responsibilities, someone in the family to listen to her heart with empathy, family members sharing the domestic responsibilities and giving her space and time to build her knowledge and develop skills to grow in her career.

The challenges she had in balancing her professional and domestic roles during the board exams and entrance exam preparation of her children reiterates the aspirations and pressure of the upper middle class to either maintain or grow in their professional and class status. A mother's success is measured with the success of the education of their children (Arun 2018). These aspirations of class and status mobility produce anxiety disorders and mental stress among the middle class as going down in the status ladder, and poor performance of children is perceived as negatively impacting their prestige and status.

Adv. Priyamvada lacked support from her extended family to raise children, more so because they disapproved of her decision to adopt two children. This was a challenge for her on two levels, firstly, the burden of taking care of the children, and secondly, the emotional turmoil she had to endure by standing firm in her decision to raise the adopted children against the disapproval of her family. Belonging to a Nair family and being the only daughter among three sons, the tradition of matrilineal kinship system gave her relative status and importance in the family. The family's

disapproval of her choice to adopt the children was reflected through the denial of property rights to her. While she was always valued and consulted for all other familial needs in her natal family, dealing with this strong disapproval of the family and paying a great price for her decision was a painful situation for her.

“when my children were giving their board exams and preparing for entrance was a burdening time period. But all of them got admissions in the merit seat and I truly believe that it is God’s grace. I had to sacrifice my small luxuries for their education. The positive aspect of being a lawyer is we can quickly assimilate, adjudicate and analyse things. We are trained in that way. Once you reach the court, you forget everything. Then when we come home, there we have another set of problems, but since I had someone to share, it was not that difficult. But we did not get much support from the family in raising our children (because she adopted two sons and family disapproved the adoption). If we had to manage everything efficiently, we should have a mental equilibrium to balance everything. That mental equilibrium can be constructed only if we have the circumstances around is favourable to us. Our partner’s help is inevitable in this process. And we need the support and understanding of our children as well. And I was always ready to make compromises. If there were no compromises, this was not possible. If you are ready to give up your mulish nature [pidivaashi] and ready to make some adjustments, then life would be less troublesome.”

- (Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017).

Contradictions and Compromises in Daily Life

The cultural value given to the family status and pressure on women to defend and protect the dignity and honour of her family, is a kind of cultural imposition on women to produce a culture of silence. Women, especially in the middle class and upper middle class, have to bear the burden of this cultural imposition more than women in working-class families. Feminine identity constructed as the ‘vessel of culture’ and the responsibility of women as the defender and protector of family honour and unity makes their life precarious as they are expected to remain silent about violence and dysfunctions of their family and suppress their emotions. Prof. Resmi shared her experience of suppressing her pain, grief and anxiety of the breaking up of her family when she was performing a significant responsibility in her professional capacity. International collaborations and being part of the coordinating team is perceived as a great achievement and career exposure for the faculties in the state university she was working. She got the position as a coordinator of a collaborative project which speaks volumes of her professional efficiency and excellence. At the same time, she was

enduring the infidelity of her husband and silently bearing her pain to protect the unity of her family. This was a situation where she was forced to confront his acts. He left home, breaking the family after the confrontation. The problems in the family were worsened in the midst of the visit of her collaborating partners. Those were the times when she was unable to take off from her work, and she had to give her full time to the University.

In the context of a collectivist society, women are trapped between the cultural construction of images of honour and unity of the family, moral responsibility imposed on them to safeguard the family and their aspirations of career excellence. In this scenario the concept of women's rights and freedom, women's agency and empowerment are challenged. From this narrative, it is apparent that Prof. Resmi was forced to remain silent, suppressing her emotions of pain and grief. The moment the society gets to know about the tragedy in her family, the responsibility of breaking the family and failure of controlling the husband's sexuality instead of satisfying his desires will ultimately be hers. The knowledge about the breakup of her family would lead to damaging the honour and image of the family as well as questioning her feminine self and identity.

"I was the coordinator of this collaboration with this foreign university. These foreign delegates visited the university as part of the project, and I was running after the valedictory function. I had to make the presentation of the whole project in front of the audience including the registrar and VC and the foreign delegates. The function was on the next day after my husband left our home. I cannot show any grief or pain, and I had to silently suffer and show up with a happy face"

- (Resmi, Professor, 44 years, Thiruvananthapuram, March 2017)

For Adv. Priyamvada the compromises she had to make in her life was to maintain the peace and unity in the family. Her submissiveness and obedience to her husband without challenging it in even in times when she knew he was not right was rationalised on the grounds of support he gives her. According to her, a husband and wife relationship is the most robust and deep friendship, which has to be deeper than any other friendships. Blind devotion to her husband without challenging his faults and submission is rooted from in her religious identity. Submission and obedience to the husband are considered as a virtue along with the wife's fidelity to her husband in Hindu mythology and religious scriptures. Here her submission and acceptance of her

husband's interests are to an intense level where she is unable to differentiate whether her act of submission is a sacrifice or not. Her strategy of preserving and maintaining her relationship with her friends and close family members is to give blind agreement to their opinions instead of arguing or attempting to correct them when they are wrong. This act of correcting the wrongs in her perception implies dominance and power over others who have to be treated as equals. It is through acts of compromises and prudent actions not to hurt the ego of the other person, she maintains and preserves good relationships and ensure her peace of mind.

“Even though my husband is a very friendly person and gets well with family and all, sometime I felt he was a bit possessive. He had no issues with my friends’ circle. But after marriage I restricted my friends circle. I had a huge bunch of friends and limited them after marriage because my friendship with my husband was the strongest [athithiri kanatha friendship aayathukondu] and he could substitute everyone [addheham ellattinum ponnathaayathukondum]. And he disliked some people, women only. He had no issues with my male friends. He did not show any displeasure in interacting with them. But they were people who were expecting a lot from me. They wanted me to participate in their family like a family member. So, I could not meet their expectations. I did not feel any guilt consciousness for that yet. After 30 years a very close friend of mine called me and said ‘how close we all were. After your marriage when you got a husband like him you left all of us’. Then I introspected and I felt she was right. I had done this. But I don’t know is that sacrifice. Then I avoid certain things which my husband did not like. I do not analyse the right and wrong in that. Certain people, he did not like much. Even in the family, he has varied preferences for people. Among my three brothers, he doesn’t like one brother that much. I don’t know what the reason is. So, with those people, I keep a bit distance. I balance both sides to avoid collateral damage. Sometimes, if he forbids me from going somewhere, I obey him. I do not think much about it then because he was there as a strong pillar all throughout my life. Much more than my mother. So, I have no issues in being submissive to him and making compromises for him. Sometimes, he may say things which are wrong, and I could never agree to it. But I don’t argue with him. I think that is the secret of the success of our friendship. If someone is wrong and I have dominance over that person as a senior or as a teacher, I would correct them. But among friends, I don’t argue and try to put them down. I never try to establish my dominance over them through an argument. I am very particular about that, and I think that is my achievement [vijayamaanathu]. I never try to argue and establish my dominance in my friendships. I never treated any of my friends as means. They are ends in themselves.”

- (Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017).

Throughout her family's disapproval of her adopting two children and the denial of property rights to her Adv. Priyamvada silently endured without challenging their actions either legally or in person¹¹. She perceives as this as the most significant compromise she had ever made in her life. The compromise and silent acceptance of the injustice towards her, she rationalises as actions which were necessary to keep the peace in the family and maintaining a good relationship with her extended family. Though the mother denied her property rights, the mother's curse was more hurting than the denial of her rights to the ancestral property. The superstitious belief of the curse of elders brings wrath and misfortunes on the ones cursed partly produces anxiety and fear about the future of her son. Her tears and sobbing when recollecting this particular past experience and stating that her own son earns more than her adopted children, the narrative becomes the expression of her mixed emotions of pain and anxiety.

“Oh!! Very much! The family had problems accepting our adopted children. No one supported us. I cannot imagine taking up the responsibility of those children now. Some days at night, we both sit together and think, how were we been able to take the risk of adopting two children? Nowadays I don't take much of the case files to home, I am limiting the number of cases I take up. So, we have enough time. Now our favourite pass time is recollecting our past life with contentment and happiness. He asks me, 'Was that we who did it?' Even I think with astonishment, how could we do all these? ... We struggled a lot at that time. I cannot even imagine. If it was now, I would have tired of crying. At that time, I faced all kinds of odds... Once my mother cursed me, (sobbing) you foster these orphans [nee ee pandaarangale okke eduthu valarthu], they will prosper in their life, but your son will suffer (sobbing)(.) But she cursed out of her pain. And she was partial in sharing our property and I was denied of my share. She gave me just 5 cents of land and the rest were given to three brothers. She said, 'if the property is given to her, she will give it to the orphans' [ivalkku koduthal ival ee pandaarangalkku kodukkukaye ullu] (sobbing)... (Sobbing) I have no pain other than this one in my life. [aa oru vedana maathrame ullu. Ente lifeil athu allathe vere oru kuzhappavum illa]. If God willing may God give good fortune to my son. Her words are still alive in my heart (sobbing) ... I have no pain in that. My mother cursed so, out of her grief. After my marriage, it was only for 2.5 years I stayed separated from my mother. All throughout these years till her death, I was with her. Either I took care of her at my home or I used to be with her. ... Among us Nairs, the daughter had the right to ancestral property. We had a big house and acres of land.

¹¹ The family's disapproval of adoption is the manifestation of the conservative attitude mixed constructed in a society which values only the progeny through blood relation (Discussed in detail in chapter II).

She gave everything to my brothers. But if I had moved to the court, I would have won it easily. But I did not say anything. That was a compromise I made in my life. I never had any grievances [paribhavam] against my brothers or mother. They thought, if they gave me the property, I would share it with my adopted children. Then I thought, better their children enjoy it. I understand that most of the activists and those who do charity works have a similar story. ...Yes, very much. They are against our charity works I had done an adventure not many would not dare to do, right? But no one has any disputes with me, because they got everything”

- (Priyamvada, Lawyer, 60 years, Hindu, Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017).

Malati, journalist, narrated a sequence of experiences wherein she encountered contradictions and made compromises in her everyday life. Changing her husband’s traditional mindset about family and the role that he expected of his wife was an achievement that she made. Her husband was raised in a very traditional and conservative family where his father exercised his authority and power over his mother as his right. When she justifies her husband stating that he is much better than her father in law and her husband has changed after marriage and was willing to accept a working wife despite his ideal of a homemaker wife and traditional family. This illustrates the struggle and effort she invested to claim her space and freedom to pursue her dream career. When she states even when professional women claim gender equality they might be treated like ‘sweepers’, that is reflected in the undignified treatment and devaluation of the work and sacrifice women do in their domestic space.

“We might be someone talking about gender equality and all. But when we come to the experiential level reality, we might be treated like “sweepers”. That is definitely there. I took charge of ‘She News’ out of my interest. In that, we discuss women’s dignity, self-esteem and all. One should be that blest to be treated with that kind of dignity by their partners. I have some cousins who treat their wife as more than equal or sharing their domestic responsibilities without any kind of ego. I feel these contradictions would be there even in the lives of these so-called feminists as well. But I think, as a person I have changed my husband’s attitude a lot. He wanted to marry a housewife and a traditional family life. But he has changed a lot. That’s is something that makes me happy. But still, these contradictions are there.”

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

Making compromises for personal interests and needs of women in their everyday life is normalised, and it is socially expected from every ‘girl in transition in becoming a woman or mother’. The society, through normative values, imposes and

conditions women to make sacrifices and compromise for the greater good for the welfare of the family and society. Women are perceived as the abode of tenderness and compassion and are hardly acknowledged and respected for what she shares with her family and society. Among women, this produces discontentment, poor self-esteem, frustration, and disconnect with the relations. It negatively affects their capacity to nurture and care for others. This lack of reciprocating the respect and compassion she deserves rips off her dignity, where she is forced to develop her strategies to claim her 'self' and wellbeing.

When they compromise their personal desires and goals to balance career and family it creates a situation where they are unable to devote time to develop professional skills and their career plans and ambitions remain unfulfilled. Unable to devote time for reading books, watching films and sacrificing personal care are part of the everyday life of Malati. Anchoring news demands the journalists be presentable and compromising on personal care invokes criticisms that affects their career performances. When she was reprimanded by the management for going on air with grey hair, she was forced to fetch time for personal care. Getting a haircut was a sign of asserting her freedom when she was feeling mechanical and bored with her daily routine.

“There are some personal interest or personal desires I give up for the family, and at times for career. Reading is something important in that. For several years it was never possible to spend quality time in reading. For the past four-five months, I restarted it forcefully. But I missed out a lot, a lot. That is the most important thing. There are many good films I have to watch. And I said I have some specific desires to accomplish in my career. I did not get enough time to think about those projects. I kept those things aside. These are things I missed out. ...In everyday life, there is nothing called doing personal care. [nammale paricharikkuka ennu parayunna saadhanam illa.] You even cut your nails only when it very necessary. I even look at the mirror only when I come here. There is nothing called personal care. [avanavane paricharikkuka ennullathilla.] It's been ages since I went to a beauty parlour. The make-up artist here does your eyebrows. My friend says your haircut reflects your attitude. This haircut I got is a form of freedom proclamation I did (gentle laugh). I got this haircut when I got bored with myself, bored of my life. I had long hair and my husband always says not to get a haircut. I went and got a haircut just because he asked me not to get haircut. Except for two visits I made to a saloon to get a haircut, I don't even remember when I visited a beauty parlour for the last time. After my son was born, I never went.

Because I have nobody to take care of children, this was something I kept aside. And I have many grey hairs. I was walking around with this grey hair for two years. I did not do anything about it. And Mahesh said, don't do anything, it is suiting you. So, I did not do anything. Once I was called by DM after seeing my grey hair on air. So, I can't go on air with that. So, they would apply something before I go on air. Last day one of my co-anchors asked me, 'what happened, you did henna on your hair?' I said I got a maid at home. (laughing). This personal care was something I had given up for several years. You know how important it is 'being presentable' in our profession. Other than that, I haven't made that big compromises in my life. But these compromises I think is natural in the transition of a girl towards a lady or a mother."

(Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

She narrated her experience, the struggles in making her decision to take a career break after her second child was born. Sacrificing all her career aspirations and dreams in her life, she was forced to make a compromise for not letting her children suffer because of the shift work she had to do. The insecurities and troubles that her daughters faced were due to her physical unavailability when the child needed her the most. Making a choice for the welfare of children over the opportunities that would make her realise her aspirations was painful at that point in time. However, the financial constraints in the family forced her to come back to her profession after a year and a half of her taking the career break. Though it was a painful decision, she had to do it — the disapproval of her mother about the choice she made added to the stress she was experiencing. Making tough decisions at crucial moments and weighing the decisions against one's own priorities contributes to stress and anxiety. The uncertainties regarding the future and the fear and doubt of the choices being made affect the psychosocial wellbeing of women. They try to rationalise the pain of sacrificing their career and personal aspirations and ambitions as a necessary compromise that they have made for the wellbeing of their children. The pressure to take a career break while sacrificing aspirations and suppressing the pain is on mothers, and it is a cultural and normative imposition of the burden of motherhood. In the absence of support networks, mothers are forced to make compromises and sacrifices for the welfare of children and family.

"Yes, taking a career break a significant compromise. Even though I felt despondent in making that compromise, I thought I should not let my children suffer. [athu njaan ente kuttikal vishamikkenda ennu vicharichu cheythathanu, njaan nannayi vishamicha compromise aanu.] That would

be the most significant compromise I had done in my life. I had kept aside all my desires [ente aagrahangal ellam maattivachu cheytha compromise aanu.] I thought I would never come back to this profession when I made the decision. I had no hope that I would come back after a gap. I decided that time, and I am leaving it up here. My amma created a big issue, she went hysterical, because she had to give up her job, she had a big-time problem with it. Amma had created much pressure, and I was very stressful on those days. So that might be the most significant compromise I might have made in my life”.

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, October 2017).

Experiencing unequal power in intimate family relations

The experiences of unequal power relations in intimate relations have far reaching effects on the perceptions of self-esteem and self-worth. The power dynamics within the family leads to emotional and mental violence. Prof. Martina shared about how her husband exercised his power over her and tried to bring her life under his control. This is symbolic violence exercised on her, which became part of her everyday life. Her regret is all about her inability to contest the authoritarian power of her husband and breaking away from the marriage, which affected her perceptions of herself negatively leading to poor self-esteem. This, in turn, produced grief about her children who were severely affected growing up in a discordant family environment. Her husband was insecure about her completion of her PhD thesis, expanding her career growth and thus, was paranoid that she would be out of his control. As a result, he used violent means to control her and made the family environment inconducive for her to work. In the midst of all these troubles, he created many difficulties within the family, which was challenging for her to balance both her domestic responsibilities and her career. Her inefficiency to balance her responsibilities and roles contributed to her low self-esteem. The kind of unequal power relations she experienced in her family was at the emotional and mental level that snatched away her freedom to assert her agency, freedom to make choices regarding her career, freedom to access opportunities to grow in her career, and the power that made her children seem like ‘damaged goods’. It constructed perceptions of poor self-esteem, poor self-worth, inefficiency to balance her multiples roles, caged her freedom and disempowered her, which had negative consequences for her wellbeing.

“Oh, God! What all the damage he has done to the children! He damaged my children so severely. It was all because I couldn’t rise to the occasion. I

should have been willing to face the consequences and ended the marriage there and left with my children [randum kalpichu murichittu eduthondu pokanamayirunnu.] ... I had to finish my PhD work. He would not cooperate by any means. He had done his work. He did not stop me by holding my hand or like that. But the situation at home is not conducive to work. I had to manage two children, the housemaid and all. A lady who is not that efficient; it was slightly tricky. He felt, or somebody told him, 'if she gets a PhD as well, then you won't be able to bring her under your control at all. Usually, wherever she goes to give classes, she is quite popular and in demand. Once she gets a PhD also, then you won't get her in your control at all. You will get a salary in a salaried job even if you don't do the work properly'. I don't know did anyone tell him like that or because of his fundamental nature he thought like that".

- (Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

For Malati, the journalist, experiencing power was more at an emotional and mental level. She challenges the conceptualisation of empowerment as having the space to make decisions and voice one's own opinion. Making decisions for the family is not what actually makes one powerful, instead of respecting the decision and supporting the decision maker irrespective of the consequences is what actually gives power to women in her perception. Blame game and responsibility of the decisions on the decision maker contributes to guilt.

For her, power is the force that controls one's actions and power is exercised on a mental level. Her experience of unequal power was treating her in an undignified way. It denied respect and acknowledgement for what she does for the family, controlled her decisions and actions through the emotional and mental exercise of power, and constructed circumstances that forced her to surrender her individuality. Through blame game and control of emotions and thoughts, the power exercised on her generated feelings of humiliation and sent her on a guilt trip. This forced her to surrender her individuality. Instead, she had the added pressure to make decisions on behalf of the family members, such as helping her husband to choose a shirt because he himself is very indecisive in nature. His indecisiveness is, in a way, an excuse to run away from his responsibilities. This burden of making decisions for the family she finds as pressure rather than as a symbol of empowerment.

"Power (.) means, if it is someone who makes a decision makes one powerful, then I am the one who is powerful. Because he is very indecisive, he cannot make decisions on anything. Every matter he leaves it to me. But the problem is that somebody will think, oh she is dominant.

But, when I was made responsible for every decision I made or did not make, in between I stopped. I said this is not going to work. Because if you had endured all the responsibility of making decisions on me, then you should be willing to stand with me if the decision I made goes wrong. I stopped (making decision) because of putting the blame on me if there is any problem saying, 'you are responsible for everything'. I totally stopped making decisions, whatever it may be. Sometimes it was a very minute thing. If it rains when we go out, he will create a problem saying, 'it is you who said to go out now and see it is raining'. That could be the most important decisions as well, and it can be anything. In that way, I am powerful. I am the one who makes the decision in my home. That is there. How he exerts power on me, that's a mental thing. [Athoru mental saadhanam aanu]. It is not at all physical. I shared with you about the guilty feeling he created in me, especially about children. In that way, he has exerted power on me. He never made any physical interference in a way, objecting my mobility when I plan to go somewhere. But he tries to draw that line in everything for me. But this is what happens, and he tries to find fault in everything. This nature I had seen in all men. [ella kaaryangalilum thettu kooduthal kandu pidikkuka ennullathaanu. Athu njaan ella aanungalilum kandittundu.] Instead of appreciating in matters which we really deserve it, they try to find more fault in us. Power is enacted on a mental level. Through that, they are able to control us in everything. In everything our decisions are bound by, (this thought) 'what would they think?' [Avarenthu chinthikkum ennullathu.] But their decisions might not be bound like that, 'whatever they think of it, (I don't care) this is my need, my matter'. That is how they do everything. But on the other side in every minute thing we do, we think, 'what would they think?' In that way, they are dominating full our thought levels. That is the kind of power I had experienced; the power imposed on me. Decisions of course I make, because if he goes to buy a shirt, he can't decide he wants to buy or not buy it. And in the end, I have to tell him what to choose. I don't feel that is always right. I felt it like he is running away from responsibilities."

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

Domestic Violence and Marital Rape

The inequality of power relations within the intimate space of the family quite often results in domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Prevention Act of 2005 in India defines domestic violence as “omission or commission or conduct of the respondent shall constitute domestic violence in case it - (a) harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse; or

- (b) harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security; or
- (c) has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clause (a) or clause (b); or
- (d) otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person¹²” (The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005).

Under the PWDV Act 2005, it defines physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse of women as domestic violence. When the act defines what kind of actions are treated as domestic violence and on which grounds women can claim protection from violence the discussion here focuses on how unequal power relations leads to violence and how it interrupts a women’s capacity to engage with their everyday life. Women as protectors and defenders of the family honour and dignity are culturally and socially silenced to talk about the violence they experience in their intimate spaces. In this cultural context, women are held responsible for the dysfunctions of the family and this often adds to the pressure to suppress their emotions and silently bears the problems within the family.

Malati, journalist, perceives violence as a harm to a person which rips apart either your body or the inner-self. A word or act that annihilates someone completely is violence. When she makes the statement ‘every woman in every phase undergoes mental violence’ she is reflecting on the lives of women she encountered in her life. Her experience of violence was more of emotional violence through guilt trips induced by her husband, by blaming and finding fault in every decision and actions she made. When she states a word can ‘annihilate you completely’ it explains the intensity and depth of hurt and damage emotional, mental and verbal abuse can do to the selfhood of women.

“I never faced any kind of physical violence yet (sigh and mild laugh). I think every woman in every phase undergoes the mental violence I shared before. That is there, but I did not have to suffer that much [athu valya thothonnum enikku anubhavikkendi vannittilla.] (...)... Violence is something that rips apart your body or can be your inner self or anything. That is everything is violence. That, just with a word you can annihilate

¹² http://chdlsa.gov.in/right_menu/act/pdf/domviolence.pdf

*you completely. [oru vaakkukondu thanne nammale illandankkam, alle?]
That is also violence. It is a harm to our self."*

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin,
Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

Prof. Martina shared her experience of domestic violence, physical, verbal and emotional abuse she had to endure in her family life. In the narration of her experiences, she talked about the continuity of domestic violence women had to endure across generations and how children growing up in that kind of family environment get affected. Her father, who is also equally a patriarch used to abuse her mother. Her mother, who was also a professor in the same department she was teaching, was a double PhD holder, a rare achievement one can make in life. She completed her PhD after she got married and in the midst of giving birth to and raising five children. When she says "...papa and his generation used to beat their wives", she was pointing to how the violence of men on women was normalised and unchallenged in the older generation in Kerala. Her narrative points out to historical continuity of violence where women were forced to suppress their emotions, silently enduring violence irrespective of whether they were educated or financially contributing to the family. Here the concept of constructing 'respectable femininity' laden with cultural norms and values has to be understood in its particular context.

Her narration of experiences reflects the precariousness of the lives of many middle-class women when they are forced to endure violence silently. The fragility of suppression of emotions and the pressure to put up a happy face is highlighted when she says "*many women carry a furnace inside*". When she makes the statement, "*many women endure wife battering and violence even when they adorn high positions and inability to share or discuss that in public spaces*", she is pointing her finger to the hypocrisy of the 'empowered' Malayali society. The violence in the intimate space is out of the purview of public discussion and is relegated to matters of private space. she could not resist against being battered by her husband because she grew up seeing her father's violence because she was growing up seeing her father's violence and her mother's silent suffering. Also, children who grow up in a domestically violent environment are more likely to perpetrate violence. Women silently endure, and men tend to instigate violence on their partners (Agarwal and Panda 2007). This inability to resist violence and the pressure to defend family honour resulted in anxiety disorder, fear and perceptions of poor self-worth and self-esteem in her. She perceives herself as

inefficient to handle the multiple roles and responsibilities expertly. She lived in constant fear of violence and abuse of her husband till her children grew up and revolted against their father.

“Later on, in my life, my husband is a too bossy character. He is not even like Papa (her father), more than that. Papa and his generation people were used to beating their wives, right? And my mother used to be a vessel [paathram] for many things. Maybe growing up seeing this, when it came to my husband I could not resist much. My husband used to beat me badly [ente husband enne kaaryamayi perumarumayirunnu]. Now, after my children grew up (he mellowed down). Even if people are there in good positions, in some family’s women have to take wife beating and wife battering. When we see them, they would be smiling and very happy. I don’t know, and many women carry a furnace or an erupting volcano inside them [nammalu puramennu kaanumbol avaru chirichondu nokkum, bhayankara santhashamayittu nikkum. Ulliloru umitheee aano, neripodaano, enthovannariyathilla, nenjilu theekkundum kondu nadakkunnayaanu pala sthreekalum]”.

- (Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

Marital rape is a taboo to be discussed in public in the Indian context as it goes against the Hindu conception of a devout wife, and the Manusmriti’s instruction of ‘pativrata’ or the wife to give herself to fulfil the desires of her husband like a ‘veshya’. It does not discuss the concept of consent or a wife’s agency to deny the sexual pleasures to her husband if she is unwilling to have intercourse. In this context, men take it as their privilege to demand and force women to fulfil their sexual desires. The issue of marital rape is clearly a concern in Kerala society and has received attention in literature and film. The Malayalam feature film, *Ottamuri velicham* [Light in the room] by Rahul Riji Nair received the Kerala State award for the best film in 2017 for discussing the concept of marital rape and domestic violence¹³. The film discusses the

¹³ The film is set in a plot where a young bride Sudha is coming to her conjugal family, living in isolated land in forest area. Her husband Chandran is a psychopath who does electrical and mechanical works and married her under family pressure. The young couple lives in a make shift room a dilapidated house along with Chandran’s aging mother and brother Ramesh.

Trouble is beginning from the opening scene of a small wedding party trekking the mountain roads in a jeep suddenly breaks down. This is considered as a bad omen and the other character whispers in the ears of the man. While Sudha waits nervously in the inner room, the men get drunk just outside her window which has a missing shutter. When the groom finally stumbles inside, she resists his advance and he leave her. In the following scenes capture the discomfort and nervousness of Sudha which makes her sleepless. The hand-made light fixture that changes the colour of the light is without a switch, and Chandran claim it as the “invention of his life” and forbids everyone to touch that. This light creates

violence and marital rape endured by Sudha, a young, innocent girl, who is married to Chandran. The character Chandran in the film is a psychopath. He violently retaliates and suppresses people who criticise and questions his violent behaviour and actions. The angry man is portrayed as a 'bundle of complexes' as his business partner tells him on his face. When he says "no one should instruct me how to behave to my wife" (Chandran, Ottamuri Velicham), he becomes the face of many husbands who induce

discomfort to her at night. The thin curtain which serves as the door to the room and the missing shutters of the window denies her privacy.

The wild boar that ruins the kitchen garden of the mother and the light in the room are symbolically representing the violence and domination of her husband. The mother says to Sudha that 'Chandran was afraid of darkness in his childhood' when she requests the mother to ask her husband to keep a switch for the light. Here the light is symbolically represented as the shield to over his fear and inadequacies and his ways of asserting his dominance and power over others.

The brother is angry at the way Chandran treats Sudha and he asks Chandran's business partner to advise him how to behave with his wife. He violently retaliates to everyone who questioned his ways of behaviour with his wife. His anger with other men challenging his domination over his wife goes into a wild rage when Sudha brings him lunch at his workplace. Hearing his brother's criticism of his violent ways he goes to consummate the marriage saying 'no one should teach me how to behave with my wife' and brutally attacking her with fists and hand tools he uses in the electric shop such as hammer, screwdrivers and pliers. The scenes are not showing graphically but the screaming and cries of the woman and the background music portrays the intensity of pain women undergoing marital rape. Chandran trying to close her mouth to in order to silence her scream. The supporting actors turning a blind eye to the screams makes it evident marital rapes are not uncommon and their silence explains how tabooed the concept of marital rape to discuss in the public.

The mother-in-law coming to console her the next day sharing her experience of violence by her husband, saying she has not forgotten the pain of violence. It is the mental, emotional trauma and physical pain she indicates to. Mother in law says, 'you should not feel angry at him, he has a bad temper. Otherwise he is a nice fellow. You should try not irritate him (by questioning him and giving him back answers).' This is how most women in the society rationalise the violence and anger of their partners and cope up with violence. Chandran growing up seeing the violence induced on his mother adapts the violent nature of his father who is no more.

The following scenes and song sequences clearly showing the marks of brutal violence on her, finding difficulty to walk and bruises over body, mother in law tending her with hot water treatment. But she is trying to escape the violence. He denies her request to visit her family saying that your mother is no more and you don't know who is your father. In that moment when she states 'even though I don't know my father, he knew how to love his woman', explains her feelings of being unloved and undignified treatment. It makes him angry. In that context she tries to escape from their but he finds her and bring her back dragging on her hair. Then every time her attempts to murder him goes in vain. When she makes a trap to trap the wild boar, she says to the little girl in the neighbourhood the precariousness of her life. 'If they are not letting us live, we will also not let them live. No one cares about the life of a human being in this forest'. The film comes to the climax scenes where Chandran dies when the cloud burst and in the havoc it creates. And Sudha looking at Chandran who drowns and swept away in the gush of river water flow with a relief. The cloud burst is symbolically represented as the suppressed emotions of Sudha pouring out. That scene makes her strong to even resist the sexual advancement of her brother in law and the film ends with the scene she switching off the light in the room.

violence on their wives and try to control them by asserting their power and authority. The film discusses how poverty, pressures and troubles of men to provide for the family, the male ego, desire for recognition shapes the psyche of men.

The wild boar that ruins the kitchen garden of the mother, the poisonous scorpions that come out after the hailstones, the light without switch claimed as “the invention of my life” by Chandran symbolically represents the violence, domination and the damage he does to his wife. Though the act of marital rape is shown off camera, the screams and cries of Sudha, the bruises on her body, the trauma and fear she has when Chandran enters the room, her attempt to run away from home and her attempts to murder him explains the intensity of violence and the pain and trauma the young woman endures. Through her pain and trauma, the director explains the psyche of men who induce violence on their women. Anger, alcohol use, sexual domination over the wife, inducing violence to control women are perceived as symbols of masculinity. The violent retaliation to the challenges and questions on their behaviour is a mechanism to defend their male ego and claim their masculinity.

Prof. Martina hailing from a reputed family shared her heart-breaking experiences of domestic violence and marital rape. She doubts her womanhood and her emotional balance, which is perceived as lacking interest and excitement for physical intimacy in her marriage. And she attributes this lack of interest as the reason for her husband’s suspicion that she has extra-marital relations or doubts about whether she had any past relations. The suspicion of her husband and his accusations on her fidelity and chastity forces her to act as if she is interested in having sexual relation with him¹⁴.

The trauma and torture she underwent during sexual relation were more painful and traumatic as it was physical, sexual and emotional violence she had to endure. The questions on her chastity and fidelity were questions on her integrity as a dutiful wife. Even when she was forced to fulfil his sexual desires, the question on her morality was an experience of annihilating her selfhood and integrity. The experience of marital rape created fear and an anxiety disorder in her. When she says “*I do not want to do anything with this man*”, and, “*I was afraid when he comes close to me*” it narrates the fear, the

¹⁴ Her narrations of most intimate and personal experiences and course of events with the researcher became more open with the assurance that she is sharing with a married person who could understand her deep entrenched trauma and pain.

trauma, the aversion, and the abusive relation created in place of physical intimacy. When she says her son is damaged, she attributes it to the marital rape and physical violence she had to endure during her pregnancy.

The narration of experiences the struggles and pain she endured living with a man who bore suspicion and suffered from chronic doubting disorder. The control and violence he exercised on her permeated into her professional space. Her absence from home and her exposure to have a more comprehensive socialisation in an academic space where a refresher course happens, triggered the suspicious nature of her husband. His insecurities and suspicion interrupted her academic activities, which caused her regret of not being able to complete the work she had initiated. It also made her fearful of socialising with her colleagues as she would be abused and accused of infidelity. The pain and trauma of violence forced her to become guarded and confined to herself. The trauma always forced her to be alert and fearful while socialising with others, especially men. Her mental and physical wellbeing was compromised, along with the quality of her relationships.

“I had to face violence only after my marriage. Before my marriage, I thought the world was different. People used to tell regarding; it is better for you to join the convent than getting married. Obviously, our way of (showing interest in marriage) was not that appealing. When people used to get excited, I never felt any excitement. That means there is something wrong with me. Sometimes I try to analyse it, probably that might be one of the reasons where my husband doubts me. ‘Why it is like that for you? Normal women are not like this. Then you have some past relationship somewhere. You had all sorts of pleasure, and then you got married to me. That’s why you are like this.’ I had to, what to say, act [abhinayikkanam] as I am interested. I had never known anything. I don’t know how these two children were born to me. Then what do you want from that relationship? Even this man was, he used to check after physical relationship, are there any marks on my body. Did anyone else do something? ‘Why it is red over here?’ I don’t know, can I tell you all this! Are you married?

Caroline: Yeah, I am married.

he says, ‘all your body parts are fair’, the portion of inner thighs where it rubs are dark for everyone no. ‘why this part is dark? It looks like this portion was burnt? Why is your breast bruised around your nipples?’ My dear! I don’t want to do anything with this man! (both hands on the head and expressing the trauma she experienced). He forces me into when I am not interested, not only he makes me go through this torture, I never enjoyed this particular thing. He did this to me (marital rape), and after that, when you hear these (allegations) (sigh) (sentence break)!!

... He used to throw utensils on me. When I was pregnant, I was scared when he comes close to me! (tone of being afraid) [enikku pedi aayirunnu angeru aduthu varumbo]. I don't know how my elder son was born. Because when I came back from Delhi, he had a feeling that I had some (previous relation) ... In the initial days of our marriage, I had to go for a refresher course in Delhi. Before that, I got a course in Mysore. Within a week I went to Mysore, he came to Mysore one day like a mad man. What happened? I thought somebody died at home. Either his side or my side family member. He said, 'you have to come now itself, I came to take you back home'. Where do you think he took me to? The vehicle straight went to Kanyakumari. For what purpose he took me there? In the initial days, he did not want to stay away from me. He is imagining that something else is happening here with me. At least I should be given a chance to complete what I went to do. Then there was this requirement to do a refresher course to get promoted to next grade. And it was on technology, my subject as well. I had to even go to the church priest, who was his colleague. I said anyways I could not meet my requirement, so I am ready to leave this. Then the priest said, 'Sir why don't you also go with her? It's just a matter of booking the ticket.' When I was booking the ticket, I never thought he would hang around. I thought he would drop me in Delhi and leave. So, I did only the onward ticket. Then he again started doubting. 'What's the problem if I stay back with you?' Then immediately I made arrangements for that. He created hell for me there. I introduced him to everyone there, and it was our honeymoon period. He would stay back with me, and every time we come back (sentence breaking) (create problems). He was sitting in that (hotel) room and grabbed my cheeks (demonstrating how he did) and here I got marks [avide roomil irunnittu ente kavilu ingane pidichittu ivide marks vannu]. He grabbed my face, to be honest, I urinated on the bed, and he said 'your smile, your smile is the most beautiful' (angry tone) [avalude oru chiri! Avalude oru chiri aanu ettavum manoharam polum]. Oh, my good Lord! I don't know who made this comment (trauma in the tone), I had to bear the pain! [enikkalle athinte pain vannathu]. Sometimes this senior professor who was there in the project, he did not have anything to say, he can't say, this lady is beautiful. So probably he might have said very randomly, 'your wife is a fine lady, she has a nice smile'. He was repeating these words and my God! I think my son was conceived sometime during this time. You can see that this child is a damaged child".

- (Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thycadu, July 2018).

Men's Psyche and Women Enduring Violence

Martina's experience of a violent and abusive marital relationship is not a one-off situation. The problem is quite widespread, and therefore it has found a place in Malayalee cinema. *Uyare* [In the heights] directed by Manu Ashokan narrates the challenges and troubles of Pallavi Ravindran (played by Parvathy), an aspiring pilot, whose dreams and life takes downward shift to an abusive relationship. The film

narrates how she grows stronger in the process of encountering personal and professional battles. The film delves into the composite and complex shades of patriarchy, where we see Pallavi's boyfriend Govind's (Asif Ali) insecurities and ego develop as he fails at a job interview and henceforth, he cannot bear the presence of a successful woman like her. His possessiveness makes him control the way she dresses up, ties her hair and presents herself. The first half of the film discusses subtle reflections of casual sexism and misogyny. Pallavi's character is ambitious, which makes her more grounded, yet, less ordinary. Even when she admits to the fact of his obsession and overtly controlling nature, she is struggling to break away from the emotional dependency they share with each other. She defends Govind even when her father asks her, is this the right choice she is making. She rationalises his possessiveness and emotional dependency through a past experience where he had stood by her and gave her confidence when she had gone through a humiliating experience when they were in school.

The undercurrent of chauvinism and misogyny expressed by Govind builds into an upsurge that leads to the atrocious chapter in Pallavi's life. The constant phone calls he makes to her, even during her class hours, disrupts her studies, and there she is forced to balance between her passion and her love. The insecurities of men with the empowerment and freedom of women are subtly narrated in the frequent phone calls he makes to her. Govind expresses his displeasure with her new look, freedom, empowerment, and the insecurities she has in making new male friends after she joins the aviation academy. When he says "so things have to be as you say?" (Govind, Uyare, 2019), her response "at least on some occasions" (Pallavi, Uyare, 2019) captures her experiences of total submission to his desires and fantasies. While she asserts her agency to defend her integrity when it was questioned, the angry boyfriend responds by attacking her with acid. But the film shows Pallavi becoming a victim of her circumstances. The scenes portray the mental agony of an acid-attack victim, but the film does not let the viewers settle into that emotion. It further shows Pallavi rebuilding herself. Post-attack and as a survivor Pallavi happen to meet Govind and when he states "but your life is all settled" (Govind, Uyare, 2019), it captures the nuances of chauvinism and no regret or remorse for his actions.

The character of Govind reflects the psyche of many men we encounter in the Keralite society. Possessiveness makes men overprotective of their women. The emotional dependence on partners and paranoia of losing the affections of the partner, the insecurities of the empowerment and freedom of women, and inducing control and power over women are specific characteristics of the oppressive and authoritarian attitude of chauvinist men.

Anita, Lawyer, shared her observations and reflections on the behaviour and perceptions of people who mostly approach her on divorce cases. Her observations reflect the attitude and behaviour of the character Govind displays in the film *Uyare*. The underlying issues of most of the problems we encounter in everyday life are because of certain unresolved issues manifesting itself as psychiatric or emotional problems. The uncontrolled temper of man, and the confusion it creates in the man as well as in his partner, about his behaviour and not resolved or not aware of the fact that he needs a psychiatric evaluation. Women are severely getting affected with the uncontrolled temper and violence of men, as in many cases, it leads to depression in women. But the confused state of mind and the emotional dependency between the partners makes women rationalise that 'he is fine as long as he is into that temper mode'. Women find ways and learn to adapt to the behavioural patterns of men. The root cause of many of the problems is the suspicion of men. The suspicions are constructed through either their experiences of witnessing the lives of their parents or close people to him or through his own past life experiences. Suspicions are outcomes of deeply entrenched insecurities and fear of losing the affection of the partner or paranoia of infidelity of the partner.

Erosion of the related self and disintegration of kinship systems are a death blow to resolving the underlying problems and insecurities. This has created a bottled-up new generation. The hypervisibility of life with the advent of social media, heightened aspirations of social mobility and success, constant comparison with other's life and success end up in unfulfilled desires and depression among people. The process of juggling between life expectations and perceived notions of failure end in discontentment with life. People are increasingly getting confined to fulfilling their own desires wherein the sense of responsibility is diminishing, and social bonding is weakening.

“Apart from that, you have exceedingly large number of suicide cases, exceedingly high number of mentally unstable people, who are unable to control their temper for some strange reasons and they have not taken a psychiatric evaluation. They feel it’s just a temper, and they don’t need any psychiatric evaluation. So, most of the times you talk to the clients and even then, the partner is not sure whether her spouse has really an issue or not. Because otherwise, he would be a good husband, he would be a very loving man, takes care of everything, but the minute his temper starts, he becomes someone whom she cannot control at all, he doesn’t know what he does. There is another matter of issue which I have recently noticed is this, he is fine as long as he is not into that temper mode. Once he goes into that temper thing, he doesn’t know what he says. He is capable of lot of harm. After that for two three days he doesn’t talk, then he comes back to normal and he is better than what he was before. And the girl is totally confused and now she is going into depression. He is perfectly okay. It’s just the two three days in a month or he goes into this. But she is permanently confused. And she can’t be really sure whether she is really safe with this person. The entire family tells her, leave the guy, he is unstable, she can’t, she is like I’m used to this pattern now. That is another bottom-line problem where there are lot of unresolved issues, psychiatric or some emotional problems where nobody has taken out time to figure out what really is the underlying issue.

And there are times when the parents of these people would have had some kind of relationship, or some problem which has carved the person to such an extent that they suspect that the spouse would be doing such a thing. That in their logical sense know that the wife would never do that. But the suspicion is there. Or they would suddenly switch off all the sexual relationships, because they have the doubt that the other person may cheat. So that is another trend. Basically, it is all about, deep down there are lot of insecurities, lot of issues, which each person had to solve, which probably if they had proper friends, proper systems as in the older days, may be could have been resolved by good friends, good relatives. Now the present generation is bottled up and we are trying to find a happiness in the virtual world. And we are comparing ourselves with, things could be there in others life and we don’t have. That is creating a huge vacuum for a kind of depression, because we are not able to attain that bliss point. So, this juggle between that expectation and that acceptance of failure or that perceived notion of failure, that is creating this huge discontent. And at the same time nobody has that feeling that, my life is supposed to be or, so many other people are connected to it, so I need to survive or I need to be the protector of them; that duty sense or sense of responsibility is

diminishing. When parents feel their gratification is more important than children or relationships, earlier they were socially bound. Now that is not there”.

- (Anita, lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

In this context of erosion of self and brewing insecurities and discontentment with life, the economic independence of women makes a change to the social context. In the earlier generation women’s economic dependence forced them to endure in silence the violence and problems in the family. In the contemporary social context economic independence of women gives them an identity, security, empowerment and freedom to exist on their own. This aggravates the insecurities of men and hurts their male ego.

Now I think the only difference the salary of women makes is; this pressure and this reality is there. Why to suffer? I don’t think the physical abuse and wife battering has increased from earlier days. It might be in the same proportion. In those days, there might be a reason for wife battering, but now a days even the one beating his wife doesn’t know himself why he is beating. It is the male ego is being hurt. Especially when the woman gets high payment and gets good position, they fear, the woman can exist on their own. That insecurity is there in men, even if that exists in reality or not.

- (Anita, lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

Lawyer Anita narrated an incident that happened with a friend of hers. This young man working in a corporate sector married to a lady scientist who was very smart and efficient. She had opinions of her own, very good aesthetic sense and good socialisation skills. But her friend, the husband, has developed insecurities concerning his wife’s smartness, efficiency, opinions and skills. There was no deliberate attempt from the woman to either state or prove that she is smart, successful and efficient. The insecurities and complexes of the men are constructed through his perceived insult and perceptions of lack of respect from his wife.

“... So, what we see in general is, lot of such complexities are there in men. Where she has never said I am more successful or I earn more, I am better off, I am a scientist. These types of words she never used. But if you

ask him, these are his complaints about her. That she is successful, she thinks that she is too good, she is this that. She is that, but she hasn't said that. All these are his perceptions... The perceived insult or lack of respect, something like that. That work out very badly with certain people."

-(Anita, lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

The discursive construction of stereotypes of status and power of man and woman in the gender power hierarchy, the interplay of gender power relations in the families is made constructed through popular culture, TV serials and cinema. The stereotypical images or ideals of relationships guides the interaction of people and it constructs the perceptions of a lack of respect, the perceived insult and indignities if the interactions violate the ideal notions of the interactants. The value judgements evolve out of the established standards and norms which may blind the individuals from understanding and accepting the realities.

"Main thing is, in the sense, earlier, maybe giving respect and taking respect was little bit part of the culture. Now it's a choice. If you want you do it, otherwise you don't do it... And there is this ah, I think partially because of the stupid serials also, they are trying to portray the woman as the poor [paavam], submissive, and her family is supposed to be even more submissive. Contrary to that when the girl's side seem to be very strong and demanding, boys' side can't handle it. Because that is not what is taught to them. And they don't realise that each family is weird on its own way. In certain places, there girl's fathers might be dominating, in certain places the boy's mother's might be dominating. There is no point in approaching them with your stereotypes, they are all individual people, they are all weird in their own way. Most of the things in husband wife relation can be clear out, if they have some open communication or if there is a common person where they both can interact. Both unfortunately nobody bothers to look at the different angle. Nobody goes for mediation as well. Once men feel this disrespect, they won't listen to anybody after a point. If you listen to some speeches and all they say, women need love and appreciation and men need only respect. They don't want your love. So, where there is a perceived insult is there, you tell them anything, the matter is not going to be solved".

-(Anita, lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

In her opinion, problems remain unresolved because the solution sought for the problems are inappropriate and insufficient to address the issues. A psychological and

psychiatric evaluation and solution is inevitable to address the deep entrenched unresolved problems of men. In a context of erosion of related self, a collective response from either the family or the friends to step in for mediation and extending support is imperative. When couples go for divorce, the children are affected in that process. Divorce is not the solution, and it produces more of a damaged generation.

Prof. Martina shared her experiences of living with a husband who suffered from a psychological disorder, that of a Relationship Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Her narration of experiences and events in her life reflects on the behavioural patterns of her husband and how it had transformed her and her children's life. Her husband's complicated and perceived feeling of inferior status evolved out of his comparison of his own family's socio-economic status with the social and economic status of her family. His fear of the possibility of treating him with lower status and low value in his in-law's family would have been the probable trigger to oppress and control his wife through violence. His abusive behaviour was to claim respect and recognition from his wife asserting his power on her. His perceptions of low self-esteem and lower family status in relation to the status and dignity of his wife generated insecurities and fear of dishonour in him.

The past relationship experiences of individuals questions and challenges the moral conscience of other individuals. A guilty conscience haunts the individuals, and they attribute the meaning they perceive to every other relationship. This is a mechanism to conceal their guilt and claim moral superiority over others. Witnessing illicit relationships carefully, especially the relationship of parents, close family members or friends affects the capacity of the individual to trust and respect others. This experience could create fear in trusting others and mistrust in relations leads to view every relation with dubious eyes.

Growing up in a wealthy and honoured family with high socio-economic status, the verbal abuse and the vulgar language her husband uses makes her feel humiliated and rips her dignity. When she says "this kind of talk and language is not there in my culture", she is claiming the cultural superiority, decency and social status of the family.

"It would take only 20 minutes for you to reach home. Nobody drops me or picks me from here. I travel by bus and my children were small then. It is now my son would come and pick me. Sometimes when he drops me, I think he should not get late to college, I said drop me somewhere in the

bus stop, I would go on my own. Then he would say, it is that I want to meet someone and that's why asking to drop me half the way. My dear, whatever I do he would talk only in this sense! His language is this filthy, we are not used to hearing that. We have a different culture, but this kind of talk and language is not there in my culture. And we never led a free life like the chattakkaari”.

- (Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

When she says marriage ‘ruined’ [*thakarathathu*] her life and her husband’s delusion ‘uprooted’ [*verode pizhuthathu*] their family, the verbs she uses gives the glimpse of the depth of pain and trials she endured in her life. She points to the paradoxes of the character of her husband when she says he is professionally efficient but in the domestic space his authoritarianism and violence failed him as a family man. His delusions that many men desired his wife triggered the violent behaviour in him. Being a victim to his delusions and paranoia, and his violent behaviour, she narrated she has become haggard and inefficient to perform her multiple roles. Becoming ‘haggard’ was an expression of how the trauma and fear had implied on her body, and it was indicating to the embodying of trauma and tribulations of everyday life.

“My marriage had ruined my life. [Marriage annu ente lifene thakarathathu]. I still stay there. I am revealing the very confidential matters in life. I don't know why I should never have gone for that marriage. I was always obedient to my family. My husband's family are from the village. ...And my husband is a massive bundle of complexes. He is fairly good looking, smart and an efficient teacher. He writes good books. He is a stickler for perfection. Unlike me, he is a very organised person. There won't be a disorganised person like me. All these are there, but he has chronic doubting disorder (samshayam) (Relationship-Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). His delusion had badly uprooted my family. [ente kudumbathe adiverode pizhuthathu ithaanu, ellaatinum samshayam]. He doubts everything. He feels somebody is walking behind me, somebody is doing that. Many men are desiring your wife. [aarokkeyo thante bhaaryaye kaamshikkunnu]. If this wife wanted to, there were many people behind, there was a time I was good looking [ee bharyakku veenamenkil, ethroyo peru nadannoru, kandaal chovvulloru kaalam undayirunnu]. I was never like this. Now I haggard and became in this state. I was quite good looking in my family. I had good fair complexion. Now you would ask, who? This woman? (mild laughter). ...Now you should see my husband. He is looking very able bodied. Now you see me, what happened to me? Why I am telling you is this, this man where ever he turns, he used to imagine that all these men sitting here had some past relationship with me”.

- (Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

She narrated the process of constructing suspicion of her fidelity in his mind. Her husband's perceptions and his behaviour were shaped according to the social standards of the ideal age of a woman to get married, and social constructions of marriage between families of matching socio-economic status. Her perceptions that she was not meant for family life, and unromantic to express wifely emotions and feelings are different mechanisms through which she rationalises the troubles in her marriage. It is also a process of self-blaming evolves out of poor self-worth and self-esteem. She narrates how her freedom and independence within her natal home got switched to an experience of caged living after marriage because of her husband's suspicions. Constant fear and trauma of his accusations and violence, humiliating experiences of being abused in a filthy language, the physical abuse and caged living made her life experience of hell.

You know what this man thought when people started saying, 'Sir she is so and so person's family? Do you know about their family status? ...How did you get this lottery?' Do you know what this man thought? So, then she has some problem. Or else why did they marry her off to my family? He is justified. I was someone who did not even properly look at the face of any men. I did not have that kind of inclination much. That's not because I hate. Certain people are not meant for certain things. And this man, wherever I turn, if I am travelling in a bus, or in the railway station, he imagines, the people who are coming and sitting next to me are for some other purpose.

When I stand on the bus, he would ask, why did you turn that side? Why did that man come and stood beside you? Oooh! Life was hell for me! I was like a small insect in my home, we all had separate rooms in our house, we enjoyed that independent status, and our parents gave us so much freedom. This is we never used to (sentence breaking) (get at those times), me who was brought up in this kind of atmosphere, suddenly, had not only to put up with a man who is always with dubious eyes but also had to go to a family where you had no freedom. My father in law was a poor thing, but this man made my life hell for me. But I am still with this man, because Kerala society does not approve of women stepping out (of marriage).

*(Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic,
Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).*

The unfavourable circumstances at her home and her professional responsibilities were barriers for her to complete her PhD within the stipulated time. When her supervisor retired, she had no other option but to complete her PhD at any

cost. (since she was a faculty in the university department, it was compulsory for her to have a PhD). Also, since she did not have a conducive environment at home to complete her work, she took the children and went to her home to work from there for three months. But after she went to university, he took back the children with an expectation that she will come back if children are brought back home. But she was determined enough at that point of time to complete her PhD as she was left with no other choice, thus stayed back at her mother's place. But the children had to suffer the repercussions of her choice.

When she says her child is 'damaged' and qualifies her husband as 'wretched man', the words carry the grief, pain, helplessness and anger she experienced. The children were also victims of their father's violence and behavioural disorders. Bruises and sufferings of children intensified her pain as it triggered feelings of self-contempt due to her helplessness. She was entangled in her helplessness, pain and trauma of seeing the sufferings of her children, the need of the hour to complete her PhD. She was forced to make a choice and stay firm in her determination to complete her PhD, as it was imperative for her career and part of her awareness that the violence instigated by her husband is to stall her PhD from completion.

"...You can see that this child is a damaged child. He is such a nice child, but that trauma, when I was not around for some time (she was in her mother's house to complete her PhD work), he tortured this child, this wretched man! [Athreyum nalloru kunju, njaan avide kurachu naal illathirunnappol, ee kunjine ittannu peedipichathu, aa vrithiketta manushyan.] This wretched man commanded my child, 'you should not even call your mother', the maids would dial my number for my children. When he is not around, and my children call me, his mother who was there tell him 'these boys called their mother today' [eda, ivanmaaru innu ivarude thallaye vilicharunnu!] Hearing this, he would beat my children. Sometimes when I go to meet my children in their school, I had seen their body with bruised marks, like we cut the fish to fry [Nammalu varukkan vendi meen varayathilliyo, athupole paadu]. What can I do, dear? In a typical case, you should go and file a case against him. Then I was thinking, and I would bear this for some more time, once I am done with this, I will go back immediately. He just wanted to stall (.) I should not do that, PhD. He knew the prospects of being in a university with a PhD degree."

(Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

She narrated how the marriage ruined her life and transformed her into a different person in the course of time. From a very active and vibrant person with

various talents and skills who had exposure, she was forced to be confined to the four walls of home. The trauma of violence and abuse creates fear and anxiety. Completely disconnecting oneself from social space was a strategy adopted to defend their integrity and mental peace in the midst of all tribulations. The verbal abuse and allegations of infidelity and extramarital affairs made when she at times came back home slightly late, are to be understood in a context where women's sexuality and fidelity are culturally valued, and men are expected to be defenders and protectors of women's sexuality. The deep-rooted insecurities and suspicions of men in this cultural context often leads to severe marital discord and suspicion of the moral integrity of the partner. When a person suffers from psychological problems such as trust issues and paranoia, family relationships becomes complex and violence as part of everyday life. In this context, women who are accused of infidelity experience humiliation and her moral integrity comes under question. The cultural meaning given to the fidelity and sexuality of women and women adapting that value system makes them feel ripped off her dignity and moral integrity when they are accused of infidelity.

In this process of experiencing tribulations, she rationalises it on the grounds that it is his psychological ailment, chronic doubting disorder [*samshaya rogam*] that makes him behave in a particular manner. It is this point she accepts as the reality and tries to move on. When she says, 'the saner person ought to make the compromise', she admits and attributes her husband's behaviour as insanity, a pathological condition which needs medical help.

"...I don't know can you call me a butterfly, I was totally a different type of person, I was actively participating in dance, sports. I used to be a sports woman. I was Kerala state hockey player. During Onam, I was a participant in thiruvahirakali in museum, 3-4 years consecutively we had a troupe sort of thing. I learned dance in my childhood and I was interested in various extra-curricular activities. After my marriage, I never tried to involve in anything [oridavum thiriyan njaan shramichittilla]. If I was late for five minutes, he used to give different meanings for that. He asks, I was with whom? He saw somebody running from under the bed! My Lord! (trauma tone). ...And again, when somebody asks him, 'how did you get such a fine woman?', he was like, 'how did you know that she is a fine lady? You had a relationship with her?' he can only think like that. He can only think in sexual terms and all these things. For me this horrible (sentence breaking), I shared certain instances earlier no, he would look for spots and marks on my body, Jesus! (expressions of trauma and pain) How can you love such a person? (.) Other than the fact when you think, he is the father of my children

(.)Only at that moment, then also I am (assuring myself) it's because Jesus let him have this ailment. My brother always tells me, 'Susan, remember, it is the saner person who ought to make all the adjustments'. It is always there in my mind. Because I believe I have this sanity more, I made all these adjustments''.

(Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

Looking at everything and anything with a dubious eye is the symptom of the psychological disorder he has. His perceived alienation in the family, perceptions of black magic done against him, perceived threat induced by his family to his life, perceived infidelity of his wife she attributes to some unresolved problems of his past life. In her perception, it is his past experience of illegitimate relationship with women and the guilt feeling he has about his actions constructions his perceptions and thoughts about his wife as an infidel woman.

"Somebody went and told him, your children are growing up and they need space to study and all. And teacher also doesn't have any space to keep her books and stuffs. So, he made a room on the top floor behind his office and shifted there with a roof garden where he planted all his vegetables and all. And now he says, 'in my home, I had become an alien and had to shift to the top floor.' We didn't ask him to shift there. ...But whenever he needs, he comes down. He would come to the kitchen, what he thinks is I poison the food I give him. If he thinks like that, what can I do? And he says, my mother and father has done some black magic against him. 'After I had something from here (home), I got stomach trouble, and they had put something in the pickle bottle.' It's all psychological. To be honest, you please don't misunderstand him, [sathyam paranjaal mole thettidharikkalle], he is a nice person, but unfortunately with this ailment. If they get this chronic doubting disorder, what can we do? Can we forsake them? [samshaya rogam vannal namukku enthucheyyan pattum? Namukku avare thalli kalayan pattumo?]

...Once we all leave, he comes and inspects, are there any traces of any illicit things. He says, if he hears any sound there in the top floor, he comes and asks, 'why are you changing this grating? You want to stuff something there'. He accuses that I went and I did something, and I want to keep that there. The vulgar terms he uses! Now I have to ask the corporation people to clean that place. You want to hide those remains of things you had somewhere else, even if he hears a mild noise like 'Krrr' he connects it with such things!

What I would say is that maybe his experience. Whenever he sees a cover and a bathing towel, he would come and ask for what purpose you used it? He had some history. They had rubber estate and all. When they went to the hillside, they might have done something. They look at us through the lens of the type of women who consented with them then. This woman is

different, she is not like the women in the rubber plantations. You had seen only that kind of women.”

(Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

Lawyer Anita had a troubled marriage as well, she was married to a man suffering from paranoia. Her husband's family concealed the fact about his psychological condition, and they got her married to him in order to get a family visa to Canada. Her marriage happened within a span of fifteen days, and she did not get sufficient time to interact or know the guy better. Her experience narrated how her marriage to a psychologically ill person turned her life upside down. Living with people who have psychological ailments affects the life of their partners in multiple ways. There were multiple factors that made complicated Anita's life. Her status changed from economically independent to dependent on her husband's income as she had to resign her job when she moved to Bombay after marriage. In that scenario moving to a new place and having not much access to outside world and relationships alienated her from the social world. In that context absence of any options to distract her mind from the troubles and uncertainties she was facing, made her life precarious. Gradually she fell into depression as all the troubles and problems she faced was piling up and she was embodying it. as she fell into depression. entangled in a problem without any appropriate solution made her life precarious and complex. Even when she realised the deceit happened to her and her instincts prompted her to react to the situation, she was confused between which course of action to take further. The confusion stems out of the social norms that forbid women to react at the face of injustice. During her college days, she was an active student who collectivised students to protest against the gross injustice on them.

Now she is confused as she has constructed an image of herself as someone who reacts to unjust situations even when others choose to remain silent. This was a pressure for her to build and maintain a 'good girl' image at the cost of her wellbeing and welfare. The gender norms that construct the code of conduct acts as a disadvantage and forbids her freedom to react and right to justice. In this context of helplessness, she was a force to 'be switched off totally and become emotionally dead'. This process forced her to lead a mechanical life and encounters an existential crisis. Crying, which was quite unlikely for her, was developed as a mechanism to remain sane as she realises there is just a 'hairline difference between sanity and insanity'. It was a coping strategy

in the crisis situation and an attempt to ‘not lose herself’. Lack of appetite, crying spells, alienating oneself from the social networks were the symptoms of depression she underwent in this crisis situation.

In the midst of undergoing depression, she developed her own strategies to cope up with the crisis situation. She tried to engage her mind in activities such as art and craft even when she was not fond of those activities, watching ‘stupid’ TV serials so that she can remain brain dead without thinking about her life situations were strategies of resilience with her life situations. Her concern of her family’s devastation at the moment they get to know about her fate made her more precarious and that affection and concern for the family made her make a deliberate decision to not to communicate about it with the family. And she was not passively accepting her fate and reality of life. When she stated “*I’m switching off, my old personality is gone. I’m not that old person*” she was very aware of the transition happening within her and but the complexities of her circumstances made her totally helpless in those moments.

“After the marriage, I realised this guy has a mental problem. He was on medication for paranoia. I didn’t know the name was paranoia. They said these are tablets for some depression because he couldn’t go to Canada. And I go to Bombay with him, and there the mother gave some unlabelled medicines saying, these are the homeopathy medicines for depression. And three times you have to give it to him. That’s when I realised that it was a trap. Everything was planned earlier. I was clueless about what is happening. I want to protest. But the problem is, now I have created an image for myself, which now works to my disadvantage. Anything I say, everybody would say, oh she was protesting earlier itself. She is big Jhansi ki Rani. Everything she has to protest. Now I have to rework and create an image for myself where I have to prove, no no no, I am not that Jhansi ki rani. I’m not going to react. This was becoming tough for me. Because here I know I have to react. But react to what I don’t know, and then what to do, I don’t know. In the end, either you divorce or you continue. Divorce seemed very unlikely. I don’t have an apt reason for that. To continue, how, I don’t know. So, I switched off totally, emotionally dead — existence minimal. I stopped eating much, I was not interested. I cry a lot. I never cry by the way. Started crying because I felt I was on the border of sanity and insanity. I could feel that any minute there was just a hairline difference, I can lose myself. So (.) I can’t discuss with anyone. I stopped talking to my family because if I talk, they will find out something wrong with me. Then I was like, how do I preserve my sanity? I was dependent heavily on television. Started watching stupid serials. I knew it was stupid. The reason why you watch serials is you knew you can be brain dead if you watch serials. I don’t have to think. So, I started watching them. I

started searching for books, I hate art and craft. I hate feminine things. Now I had a book for art and craft. I had books on household things, one book for cookeries and one book to copy speeches and talks, spiritual things. So, I used to copy the recipes when it was cookery show time. It's not that I write sometimes. The reason is I started making a routine for myself. If I have to stay sane, I have to do these things, to stay alive. I know I'm hitting the rock bottom. To be frank, this guy knew very well what was happening with me. Because somewhere they had planned the entire script. The idea was to send me back home, and I should go on my own. They don't want to be the one sending me away. I should go on my own. And I'm not going. So, they are making things tough for me, so I can leave. Now from an income earning person, I have become dependent on him for 3500 rupees. I have to run a house in that, write a budget and show it to him. Technically that was tough... But I'm going with it, and I'm taking it as a challenge. I don't understand why. Because I think of why to fight with him when this guy is doing it purposely, why fight with him? Now I used to manage with that, and I sort of got used to it. I told you, I switched off slowly. I'm switching off, and my old personality is gone. I'm not that old person. And then I sense, there is something wrong with me”.

-(Anita, lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

When she connects her life to the freedom struggle of prisoners imprisoned in Port Blair, Andaman Nicobar she tried to convey the caged experience she felt with her husband. The alienation, torture, trauma, hopelessness, and detainment she experienced was equated to life in prison. The life of an educated working woman who was economically independent and empowered was put down to a dependent status with full of uncertainties and inaction.

“We were watching the movie Kalapani, and suddenly he says, ‘how tough for people is to stay in that jail’. And I say, I don't find much difference between my life and that now. Then he said ‘you mean you are not comfortable with this life now’? I said yes. I don't know why I said that. But he said okay. God sort of made him say or said through him, he said, ‘okay, I'll enrol you for some classes.’ He said ‘you go for some art and craft and you will have something to do’. So, he sent me for flower making. Flower making, I hate, but now I have a passion that full time I'm making flowers. From the time I wake up till I go to bed, I'm making flowers. Because keeping my hands busy, my mind is switched off, keeping watching something and doing this.”

- (Anita, lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

Culture of Silencing and Suppressed Emotions

The experiences of violence, the pain and emotions it generates are often belittled or silenced in the Indian context. Families and the intimate spaces silence the pain and cries of women by attributing the capacity to endure tribulations and forgiveness as an integral part of feminine identity. In a culturally conditioned context, value-laden feminine identity was obliged to remain silent to protect the honour of their men and their family. With the empowerment and financial independence of women, some are coming forward to speak out to the world of the violence, tribulations and exploitation they endure in both domestic and public spaces. Social media provides a significant platform for women to articulate their emotions and struggles. It is not the intensity of violence increased, but silenced cries are given a voice in the current social context. The private became public with more gender sensitisation and empowerment of women.

“All these kind of violence and oppression were there from the very beginning. But women were silenced within the domains of their family. Many women were abused by their near and dear ones. But with the advent of social media and the influence it has on women, many women come forward courageously to report it, which is a good thing”

- (Priyamvada, Journalist, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2017).

Prof. Martina endured her grief and regret of not taking care of her ailing elderly parents because her husband does not allow her to fulfil her responsibilities to her parents. The trauma of violence and his psychological condition of doubting disorder made her life complex. For the sake of protecting the family’s unity and the wellbeing of her children, she suffered these distresses and moved on. She says it is her fate to live in fear of her husband and violence till her death. She is unable to communicate to her siblings of the intensity of her sufferings as they fail to understand her problems and concerns empathetically.

“My siblings know certain things, but I doubt whether they know that, he is that extreme. How can I tell this to everyone? Mommy and papa know well. They (siblings) are like if you don’t want, leave the marriage. Take hard decisions. I fear how it would affect my children. My children tell me, ‘if had you stepped out earlier, we would have been better.’ But for me, it is not like that. If I had stepped out, these boys would have been more rebel. [ivanmaaru kurekoode thala thirinju nadakkum]”

- (Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

However, one may enjoy the power and position in the public domain, the intimate domestic space is fragile and vulnerable for many women. The gravity of pain and the distress she endured are reflected in her expression of “suffering like in a furnace” and “did not enjoy the freedom of a working woman in a slum”. Even if one gets the exposure to adorn the position and power, it does not give satisfaction and fulfilment until and unless she is equally respected and treated with dignity in the domestic space. The troubles and tribulations in the domestic space negatively affect their mental wellbeing and mental equilibrium. This has negative consequences for their productivity and performance in the workspace. The concern for the wellbeing of parents, the troubles in the family and pressure to safeguard the family status and honour are barriers for her to break the normative values and take harsh decisions in life. These multiple factors construct poor wellbeing.

“I adorned many positions except becoming the syndicate member. There were many positions I literally relinquished it. [valicherinju kalanja ethra positions undennariyumo?] I couldn't make to it. But still what I suffered is like in a furnace (sentence breaking) I did not enjoy the freedom even a working woman in a slum would enjoy. And a woman who was used to the royal life in her home and when she came here, my God! My life went on a roller-coaster [ente jeevitham thakidam marinju]. I cannot share it with the outside world (pitch very low) [onnum purathu parayanum pattunnilla]. My parents would get hurt. People would say all women who got married in that family have one or the other problem. My sister who married the Hindu is not together now.”

- (Martina, Professor, 59 years, Christian Latin Catholic, Thycadu, July 2018).

Unfulfilled Desires and Extramarital Relations

Suppressed emotions and troubles in family life make women emotionally vulnerable and fragile. In that context, receiving emotional support, understanding and affection from others make them emotionally dependent on people who extend support to them. This emotional vulnerability is one of the fundamental factors that often leads to extramarital relationships. The nature of work in which men and women are working in close proximity for a long time and working at odd hours during shift work are other circumstances that lead to extramarital relationships. The Malayalam film Cocktail (2010) discusses the experiences of people who are in an extramarital relationship and

the emotions of their spouses when they get know about the deceit of their partners¹⁵. The climax scene of this thriller film reveals that the lead character, Ravi, was in extramarital relation with the wife of the antagonist Venkatesh and the course of events were a drama planned by both Venkatesh and Parvathy, Ravi's wife. It was in order to make both their spouses experience the pain, and emotional turmoil both Parvathy and Venkitesh went through from the moment they got to know about their spouse's cheating. The film talks of various factors that lead married people to seek fulfilment in their extramarital relations. For a woman, the lack of care and affection, lack of quality time spent with her husband because of his busy work schedule, and unfulfilled emotional and sexual desires are reasons for an average extramarital relation. In that context, the close friendship with a male colleague, hero-worship stems from his success and smartness makes a woman vulnerable to fall in a relationship with another man. The film points its fingers to the moral consciousness and integrity of people who are in extramarital relations. There is a scene where Venkatesh asks Ravi to fix a deal with a sex worker in the street at night. In the climax scene Venkatesh's question to his wife Devi "that woman became a sex worker for her livelihood, and she is called *veshya*

¹⁵ The film *Cocktail* (2010) directed by Arun Kumar Aravind was a thriller discussed about extra marital relationships. The films plot was set in Kochi with the lead characters Ravi Abraham played by Anoop Menon, his wife Parvathy played by Samvrutha Sunil and Venkitesh played by Jayasurya. Ravi Abraham is one of the master brains behind the success of the construction firm he is working with. His success and talents are envied by many other within and outside the office space. He is a perfect family man living happily with his wife Parvathy and daughter Ammu. Life goes upside down for Ravi and Parvathy one fine morning, when a stranger Venkatesh asks for a lift in their car. He is a psychopath and he begin to blackmail the couple. He says he had kidnapped their daughter and with a phone call he can kill the child who was in the care of a baby sitter.

He gives several bizarre instructions one after the other and made both Ravi and Parvathy to drive around in the city with him and makes them perform several tasks. He makes them withdraw the entire money in their account, sets that in fire and throws it to the river along with their wallets. Then leak Ravi's firm's top-secret business plans to their rival group, followed by forcing Ravi to bargain with a sex worker in the street. Then they are trapped in a local lodge and he tries to misbehave with Parvathy. Their final destination is a house which is said to be the boss's house. The final task to Ravi was to shoot his boss to save his daughter. There the story takes a twist. While entering the house to his surprise Ravi finds his colleague Devi there.

It is Devi's house, the stranger Venkatesh is her husband, and Ravi and Devi were having an extramarital affair. The entire day's events were a drama plotted and enacted by Venky and Parvathy. It was an attempt by both of them to make their spouses aware of the experience of deep hurt by their partners' deceit. The film ends with a scene where Ravi and Parvathy a year later at a hospital to give some charity donations on Parvathy's birthday. There they see a paralyzed Devi, who had a failed attempted suicide being cared for by her affectionate husband Venkitesh.

(prostitute) and what should I call you Devi?” (Venki, Cocktail, 2010), is a challenge and criticism of the moral integrity of people who are in extramarital relation. In another scene where Venkatesh traps both Ravi and Parvathy and Venkatesh tries to touch Parvathy inappropriately, Ravi reacts violently. In the climax scene, Venkatesh asks this question to Ravi, “do you remember the pain and reaction when I tried to touch your wife inappropriately?” (Venki, Cocktail, 2010) So, what would be the intensity of my pain when you both decided to spend a day and night together in my absence?’ When Parvathy reveals to Ravi that she was also in on the plan, she tells him, “You did not lose anything (he was made to believe that he lost all his bank balance and his career) except a wife who trusted you blindly” (Parvathy, Cocktail, 2010).’ These dialogues reflect the intensity of emotional turmoil and the pain of losing trust in partners when they get to know about the deceit of spouses. This shackles the foundation of many family relations.

The climax scene begins with Ravi reaching Devi’s house without knowing that it is her house. There seeing Ravi perplexed, Devi asks him, ‘why are you so upset? Is it your guilty conscience of deceiving Parvathy haunting you? I too have same guilty conscience.’ This captures the wellbeing of partners who are in extramarital relationships. Even when they seek fulfilment of emotions and desires, in the bottom of their heart they encounter the guilt trip, the anxiety and fear of their family knowing about it and aftermath of it the uncertainties of the future of their family life haunt them¹⁶. The moral consciousness invokes guilty conscience even when they pretend to be happy.

¹⁶ A research subject who is a divorced woman shared about her extramarital relationship with a colleague of hers. He was going through a troublesome marriage. He feels both him and his daughter lack the affection, care and concern of his wife. The constant fights he has with his wife and his unfulfilled needs and desires were the reason for him to find fulfilment and solace in extramarital relationship with this friend of him. Her tender care and genuine concern attracted him. Even though she was not willing initially to be in relationship with this man and she is aware of the fact that they have no future in this relationship, eventually she fell in love with this man. When his wife got to know about the relationship, it troubled their marriage further. The situation further complicated as now both of them are emotionally attached and finding it emotionally stressful to break up their extramarital relationship. She had a nervous breakdown and undergoing psychiatric treatment for depression. Insomnia, uncontrolled temper, anxiety, grief, emotional anguish and suicidal tendency are the mental condition and experiences she underwent. He started getting addicted to alcohol consumption.

The guilt trip always haunted our research subject. She had the fear of the probability of breaking the relationship of both husband and wife and ruining their marriage because of their extra marital relationship. She narrated, her experience of living as divorcee with a young daughter and knowing the challenges, pain and struggles of this life she does not want that man’s wife and child to experience the same.

In the film, unfulfilled desires of Devi prompted her to fall in a relationship with Ravi. But in his confession to his wife Parvathy, Ravi clearly stated that he did not feel anything lacking in his marriage, but it was a mistake that happened to him. In the film, when Ravi is asked to kill Devi using a gun by Venkitesh and strike the triggers, and he realises there was no bullet in it. Then Venkitesh asks Ravi, 'I wish if you did not pull the trigger. So, was it really true love you had for her or where you been finding fulfilment from the pleasure of physical intimacy?' (Venki, Cocktail, 2010). The question that arises here is what reasons leads to extramarital relations? Why the desires remain unfulfilled? How do extramarital relations imply on the wellbeing of both parties involved in it as well as their spouses and family relations?

Lawyer Anita reflected on the erosion of related self, heightened aspirations and life expectations in the neo-liberal world, pressures to live happily and unattainability of targeted bliss point set in reference to the achievements and success of others as factors that lead to discontentment among individuals. There is a constant quest to explore one's identity and sexuality. Women attempt to break their perceptions of caged life in a value system. Economic independence and exposure to liberal ideologies through exposure to social world generates the perception in women they are not 'sexually liberated'. Social media are platforms to express women's suppressed emotions, anger and discontentment voice their opinions.

Women finding solace and comfort in extramarital relations perceive their actions as a symbol of sexual liberation. These relationships are getting more of peer approval, and support and the shame and contempt attached to it are declining with women's equal involvement in these relationships. This sexual liberation and empowerment of women, in turn, construct insecurities in men. Men are in a morally inferior position to challenge and critique women's involvement in many cases as men were involved in such relations much before women. In this context, when a spouse gets to know about extramarital affairs of their partner and if they are equally guilty of it, that makes their family relations hollow and dead from inside. It breaks their trust, and the strength of a relationship depends on the kind of compromises and adjustments they make to move on. If the partner is dissenting to the actions of their spouses, it culminates in divorce. Extramarital relations are a common reason for the clients who approach her for divorce, and she is stating it is very common in the society now.

“When you are not able to achieve that bliss point, you are feeling very lost. And then, men to sort of deviate that to sports or may be surfing the TV, watch the net, watch a lot of porn. Women at the same time are now slowly hitting the gym. They are now taking care of their looks, and now this is creating insecurities with men, on the other side. Women are now focusing more on their looks, their diet, how they dress and somewhere down the line, women feel sexually they are not liberated. Unfortunately, they realise that the present generation which is now in their thirties, soon realise that, they had a wrong sense of or the ideals they had till now or the good girl image is not what they really wanted. Suddenly now there is a rebellion, but without thinking of the repercussions. Now suddenly they are exploring their sexuality, they are trying to raise their voice on Facebook, and they try to protest on a lot of things. Because they think after thirty-five, they have attained a kind of liberty. But what we see at the same time, so many extramarital relations happening where women are also equally involved. So, they don't feel regret, shame, and they don't cover up for their acts. And men are not in a position to really point fingers because they have started it way before the women. So, there are only two options left, either they move ahead ignoring the other side, and it's an empty relationship. But they are just for the sake of WhatsApp and Facebook. The relations are practically dead. And they have lived parallel relationships, which both of them ignore or instead they chose to ignore. Other set of relationships which reach the court are because they found better partners or better options. Or sometimes the other partner is not ready for this arrangement after a point. Where he finds it or she finds it difficult to digest that the other person has another partner. But it is a fact that when you dissect into it, extra-marital affairs are very common. And now, absolutely there is no bar or no shame attached to it.”

- (Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

Self-centred people seeking instant gratification without thinking of the consequences of their actions are a significant factor of increase in extramarital relations. The feeling of discontentment that ‘I did not get what I was supposed to get’ brewing out of the individual’s unfulfilled aspirations and expectations of life. The discursive construction of sanctions to extramarital relations through pulp fictions and TV serials makes many people approve of it. The perceptions of extramarital relations as a tabooed act that corrupt the sanctity of the institution of marriage is detached from its moral values and projected as the symbol of progressiveness and sexual liberation. The involvement of peer groups in building and nurturing extramarital relations has a dual side. People who approve the extramarital relations of their friends may not themselves risk involving in extramarital relations as they are confused between their moral consciousness guided by cultural values vs their inclination for ideologies of sexual liberation and freedom.

“Yeah, people are becoming more self-centred. So, it’s only about their instant gratification. The repercussions, the implications, in the long run, they are not really thinking about it. So, it’s only, many cases when they come here and they discuss, and they see how complicated it is once they get divorced and they took for granted is so messed up when it comes to a legal system. They even start thinking of reunion. Only because they realise the children will no longer be the same, how much ever they try to patch it up from outside. The children cannot exist in the new arrangement. And one of them will inevitably lose access to the child. Many people then they start re-thinking of what they did. Till then it’s all about themselves and what they can get and what they are. So, if you keep asking them about, ‘I was rushed into this marriage and somebody cheated me to this. This is not what I was supposed to get’. This is all stemming from the fact that, what was at one point their situation and what they perceived themselves to be. Today they think they are better off, they would have got something better off. I have not attained what I should have got. This, especially that is because there are a lot of people in the peer group, encourage, extra-marital also. Because if you see a serial today, every serial would have blatant extra-marital relationships, I don’t know, there is a stupid serial there, whenever I eat my dinner, I watch it. There in one character is a lady police officer, she is married to somebody and she makes a big ruckus in that house, she has an affair with an MLA. He is also married and now she has conceived his child. And they show this very casually. There is no shaming, there is no moral of the story, there is no feeling that, ‘oh, she should not have done that. See she did it wrong.’ You think, ‘oh, she did it, why didn’t I think of it earlier?’ This is the all you can think off. But it sounds so cool. Yeah! They wanted to marry, so they did. So? It’s as cool as that. Only when you show a person, I mean earlier you see a character takes a wrong decision, because of that wrong decision how the people around them are affected, how that person goes through a turmoil, finally how her life goes haywire because of that wrong decision. That was the earlier thing printed in our minds. If you take a wrong step, we people are affected, so you knew that you would land in a mess. Here it is showing you that the good girl keeps crying throughout every episode and the others who seemed to have taken the short cuts don’t seem to have any toughness. They have more options. And they just handle the problems as they come. This sounds cooler. And somewhere the peer group also thinks, ‘okay I’m tied in so and so situation and I cannot do such and such things. But if anybody else wants to do I will encourage. As far I don’t land in any trouble is fine. But I don’t mind supporting a lot of these things.”

- (Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox,
Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

The moral questions attached to the extramarital relations prompt individuals who approve it to constantly rationalise and justify the moral conflict they experience

within. When peer members come in contact with the life of members in their peer circle and analyse the reasons for falling in such relationships, their moral conflicts burden them to find reasons to justify it. Malati, journalist, said that her perceptions of taboo attached to extramarital relationships changed when she realised certain extramarital relations helped some of her peer members who were having troubled marriages to survive as they get emotional fulfilment in their lives. Her witnessing of people carrying extramarital relations in a healthy way implies on the way people managing their relations without ruining their marriages and limit their relationship within the purview of emotional fulfilment rather than of sexual fulfilment. For her extramarital relations are a lifeline for many people and medicine for the hurt and damage, their marriage did to them.

“After your studies and thinking that you have an idea of everything, and coming to a space like this, we consider extra-marital relations as something (sentence breaking) (cannot be accepted). But over the years, what I have understood is that all extramarital relationships are not as dangerous [apakadamullathalla] as we think. In some instances, some people survive [jeevipichunirthunnathu] only because of these extramarital relations. This we see in our day to day life. I thought as we see in the newspaper there are 5-6 partners. I had seen numerous extramarital relations. And when we find that among people who are close to us, we start finding justifications for it. I had seen people who carry their extramarital relations in a very healthy way. So, now the kind of taboo I had for these had changed. Sometimes I felt some people survive because of this.

It is a kind of emotional support. You are giving the other person a reason to live. Or they might be overcoming the wounds of insult and abuse they face in the other relation through this way. Or this is a way for them to get some kind of emotional support. I had seen several relationships in this way.”

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

Sexual poverty or unfulfilled desires are the root cause of the increase in extramarital relations. The questions of moral integrity, the moral and cultural meaning attributed to fidelity in marriage, the disciplining and ordering of sexual desires in monogamous marriage are values and meaning antagonistic to sexual liberation. Individuals who approve extramarital relationships straddle a thin line between their perceptions of sexual liberation and moral integrity. Often this moral conflict makes them approve extramarital relations that give emotional support and ‘reason for people

to live' as 'meaningful and fruitful', whereas relations which develop to intimate sexual relations and ruins family relationships as 'dangerous'.

Married couples who are unable to find fulfilment in their sexual union fail to build an emotional bond with each other. This dissatisfaction in their married life often are reasons for people to seek fulfilment and happiness in extramarital relations.

“There cannot be any connection drawn between ‘sexual poverty’ and extramarital relations. I haven’t seen any relationship where a connection between both can be made. Whatever relations I had seen were fruitful and meaningful. What I had seen mostly is of emotional kind of relations. I haven’t seen any lustful kind of relations. Maybe I haven’t been aware of that kind of relationships. The relations the outside world gets to know about are kind of the ones we appreciate, or we approve as okay kind of relations. There were two friends of ours who had troublesome marriages and some of us friends tried to bring these two together because they were really good friends too. Maybe I cannot talk about this to my mother. But I have tried. I thought if they start a relationship, both will survive. I felt these relationships are fruitful in some way or the other. My experiences never let me see this from an orthodox view as a taboo. When we look at these relationships from outside, we do not feel like this. But when we come amongst people and when we see this among them, I feel it is justifiable. And objectification of women is a product of vulgarity or voyeurism. And that is much prevalent among Malayali men.

CN: In our society, there is a considerable pressure of bearing a child immediately after marriage. It is with a notion to control men through your sexual power.

Malati: Yes, yes. It is right. Those people who could not exercise that sexual power or those who do not find satisfaction in the marital union have problems in the family. It is the root cause. That is there. Because of this, their emotional bond declines”.

- (Malati, Journalist, 36 years, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

The spouses of individuals involved in extramarital relationships undergo emotional and mental struggles when the secrecy of the deceit of their spouses are revealed to them. It ruptures the relationship of the couple emotionally, mentally and physically. Knowing about the extramarital affairs of the spouse is often a shocking experience for the other person. The breach of their trust leads to anger, irritability, grief and pain in them. The experience of living with a deceiving spouse is an experience of tampering their self. The mental and emotional struggles to accept the reality, the shock and helplessness of being cheated on and to suppress these emotions for protecting the family unity and dignity negatively affect the mental and physical health of women.

Prof. Resmi stayed in her marriage for 16 years even after knowing of her husband's numerous extramarital relations for the sake of her daughter. It was a conscious choice she made to protect her family unity. But this had eroded her physically and mentally. She was undergoing severe mood swings. Anger was a strategy she developed to cover up her husband's deceit from her mother and daughter. Suppressed emotions manifested in severe headaches. Even though she enjoys being independent and managing things on her own, it was emotionally much stressful for her to fulfil the needs and desires of her daughter. She had to compensate for the lack of time and support her daughter expected from her father. She struggled to suppress her longingness of quality time and companionship of her husband. When the situation went out of hand, she had to take psychological help to maintain her mental equilibrium.

She developed an aversion to the presence of her husband, constant irritability and anger and depression in the course of time. Her countering of his actions was retaliated with verbal abuses, questions on her moral integrity and accusations of doubting disorder. When her mental state was eroding, she attempted suicide twice. Her daughter was also equally devastated of knowing about her father's extramarital affairs and his children from other relations. Making comparisons of her with other women were experiences of humiliation and annihilating her selfhood. The anguish and anger had an implication on her behaviour and ways of engagement with her social environment.

“Two attempts (of suicide) taught me that it is not easy to put an end to your life. But still, the thoughts of suicide always lingered in my mind. There were nights when I used to cry alone, sometimes lying down closely on the floor. The icy cold touch of marble floor slowly embracing me. Some days I used to bang my head against some objects in a fit of rage. I used to throw plates across, creating lots of sounds... and tantrums! My several utensils still have that mark with them. I will show you. I was recollecting those days. To my surprise, I realise I have forgotten many things. Sometimes he even used to abuse or rather mock me after having sex with me. He used to tell, ‘you don’t have the capacity.’ When such a comment comes, when I am being compared to others, it was rather a humiliating moment for me. Those were days I suffered a from severe headache. I knew when these tensions and troubles increase and suppressing all these emotions manifest in headache. Now my life is very hectic with the responsibility of dean, syndicate member, professor, department head blah blah... Many things I lost from my memory.”

- (Resmi, Professor, 44 years, Hindu Ezhava, WhatsApp messages, March 2019).

Conclusion

The role of discursive constructions of the image of a 'superwoman' and the normative construction of 'respectable femininity' construct the ideas of successful woman as someone who balances both their domestic and professional responsibilities without any fail. Access to social mobility and empowerment through education and employment opportunities, in turn, enhanced the career aspirations and motives. But the regressive modernity and reformist patriarchy though they 'allow' women to pursue a career, it constraints women's aspirations through multiple ways. A working woman is equally a homemaker who has to prioritise the domestic responsibilities equally. In that context, without the support of an extended family or outsourcing of their responsibilities, women's growth and success in their career are constrained. Additionally, the overpouring of patriarchy in the public spaces sabotage women in their workspace. They are denied their access to key positions and significant roles in their workspace because of their gender identity. The gender division of labour and gender stereotyping operates in the workspace as well. The unequal gender power relations in both workspace and familial domains make women vulnerable to symbolic violence. The psyche of Malayali men and their insecurities with the empowerment of their women culminate in their violent behaviour towards women. Through imposing, gender norms and gender division of labour women's identity and their primary responsibilities are tied to their domestic space and responsibilities respectively.

Women living with men having severe psychological problems and enduring violence has an implication on their physical and mental wellbeing. Violence and marital discord are one of the reasons for the increase in extramarital relationships in recent times. Though people look for satisfaction and fulfilment in extramarital relations, their guilty conscience hinders their wellbeing. The poor mental and physical wellbeing of the partners of people who involve in extramarital relationships are the results of the breach of trust caused by the infidelity of their partners. Extramarital relationships are one of the reasons for the increase in divorce rates.

The everydayness of the lives of professional women is embedded in social structures. Their life experiences are constructed through their interactions with various power structures. Their response to each life event, both trivial and significant events

are determined by the positive or negative implications of these events in their lives. These responses are the significant markers of their capacity to engage with their everyday life. The value systems and normative practices are constructed in the context of unequal power relations. There is a quest and struggle to claim their self and identity, stability and equilibrium, their mental and emotional wellbeing within every woman when they encounter challenging life events. Women are not passive recipients of inequalities of power and oppression. Though power operated through social structures and value systems impedes on their wellbeing, they rationalise, contest and develop mechanisms to cope with these power structures.

Chapter IV - 'I Made the Declaration of Freedom': Limits to Agency and Freedom

“Thankam, I wish if I were a man! If I were a man, I would have given freedom to my wife, and to all women. I would have sacrificed my life for the freedom of my country and freedom of the entire humankind” (Lalithambika Antharjanam, Agnisakshi).

These are the words of Devaki, in the Malayalam classic 'Agnisakshi' by Lalitambika Antharjanam. The words echo a young woman's ardent desire for freedom. Devaki was also called Thetikutti, who later became a freedom fighter popularly known as 'Devibehan' and in the end, became a monk in the valleys of Himalayas was the central character of the novel. As the story goes, she comes as a young bride and replanted in her conjugal home ruled by age-old orthodox religious beliefs, practices and conservative norms and values.

The plot of the novel is set in the context of the radical social transformation in the Namboothiri (Malayala Brahmin) community during the independence struggle. The eloquence of Antharjanam's style narrates the experiences of the Namboothiris who adhere to traditional norms, values and orthodox religious practice and their internal struggle and resistance to the modern progressive and liberal values. Devaki the young bride inspired by the progressive and modern democratic values of her brother who is a freedom fighter, experiencing the suffocation of internal conflict when she was caged within the four walls of the conservative orthodox Namboothiri family of her husband. As the novel progresses, it narrates the struggles and conflicts of Devaki who is stuck between the patriarchal structures enacted through conservative norms and values and her desire to break the shackles of patriarchy to embrace modern democratic values. She wants to do this in order to actualise her individual freedom and autonomy. The story takes a twist when she is denied permission to go to her natal home to visit and take care of her ailing mother. Her brother's participation in the social reformation movements and the community's resistance to his progressive ideas makes him and his family as outcastes within the Namboothiri community. In this context Devaki was forced to assert her agency, forgoing the foliage of subservient domestic femininity.

She decides to leave her conjugal home at the cost of expulsion from the family and separation from her husband. Later, the story portrays the picture of an empowered, independent woman who is a close ally of Mahatma Gandhi in the freedom struggle. Devaki is on a quest for her own 'self' and fulfilment. Her soul is restless and she struggles to find meaning and purpose in her life while actively participating in the freedom struggle. This takes her to the Himalayas where she is transformed as a monk.

Though the novel progresses with Devaki's self-explorations and her quest for self-fulfilment, it gives insights to how structure and agency interact. Through this interaction, it throws up several levels of contradictions and conflicts between modern and feudal, patriarchal norms and values. The structures of gender, caste and class positions shape the subjectivities of Devaki through her experiences with these structures in everyday life. In her quest for self-actualisation and liberation from the constraining structures, she contests with power relations. She critiques and questions the oppression of Namboothiri women within the domestic space. For instance, she wanted to wear a blouse to cover her upper body, which was resisted vehemently by the elder women in the family. During the reform movements, of the late 1920s and 1930s, Namboothiri women had the right to wear a blouse to cover themselves. The Purists accused the action as a breach of customs as in their beliefs of 'modesty and moral superiority' which lays in not covering up (Pillai 2017). Those who started wearing a blouse were excommunicated (Pillai 2017).

It is the cultural capital of education that gave Devaki the exposure to the outside world and access to learning and reading progressive literature. The Namboothiri community tried to delegitimize progressive ideas by labelling them as misleading and impure. Therefore, the social reformers were seen as outcasts who were polluting the community were excommunicated. The attitude of the community was to 'block the trading value' (Skeggs 1997) of progressive ideas and safeguarding their symbolic capital. They deemed traditional norms and religious practices as legitimate for consolidating their power and position by considering the other section, who break the conventional norms as inferior. The assertion of one's agency to bring changes in their lives and to bring about social transformation depended upon the degree of access to and the possession of 'capital' within the structural context and the freedom to utilize the capital within the context (Skeggs1997).

In the developmental context of Kerala, gender and capital contributed substantially to the developmental achievements (Arun 2018). The land ownership rights and autonomy of women in the Nair communities were significant factors that contributed social awareness, educational and health achievements (Arun 2018). Devaki, who is the central character of *Antharjanam*, is a representation of the first-generation of enlightened women who took part in the social movements in the state. Devaki was the representation of many Malayali women who fought within their domestic space and public space for their freedom from oppression, as well as asserting their agency for self-actualisation and social transformation.

Taking the lead from Devaki, this chapter presents a discussion on the interaction of structure and agency in the context of unequal power relations and positioning of women in this interaction. The chapter tries to explore the factors that contribute to the paradoxes of development in the state and what shapes the structure of gender relations in that context. The interference of norms and discursive practices in the lives of women through these structures determines the spectrum of choices women have access to, in this power relation and in the different ways they bargain with patriarchy to assert their agency for self-actualisation.

Symbolic and Cultural Power in the Social Context of Kerala

The social reform movements during the colonial period known as Kerala renaissance, and the reform movements during the post-independent movement adhered to modern democratic values without bringing much radical changes to the traditional normative values. This constructed the gender and caste identities in a peculiar form¹⁷ that produced a complex social structure (Devika 2005). In the post-liberalisation period and heightened outmigration in the state redefined the notions of feminine and masculine identities (Osella and Osell ,2000). There is constant social change happening in Kerala in this globalised era, and the outmigration and social mobility through the transformation of the economy, education and migration reshape the class and gender structures and lifestyle and choices of individuals.

The study explores conflict of interest between modern liberal values and the conventional norms and values in Kerala. It is imperative to understand the nature of

¹⁷ Refer to Chapter 2

the social structure that shapes the gender relations, and how women bargain with the unequal structures where their class and caste identities intersect. In this exploration, it is imperative to understand professional women's access to and possession of different forms of capital as well as the flow of capital for self-actualisation and social transformation. Thus, the feminist-Bourdieuian theoretical framework is used to understand and interpret the paradoxes of the hegemonic model of development and the position of women in that context.

In this process of social analysis, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic relations in social reproduction helps us to understand how material and symbolic power is accumulated and flows across the structure for social reproduction. The asymmetrical gender power relations in the context of Kerala are habitually constituted and reconstituted through discursive social practices and divergent social relations in various social contexts (Arun 2018). Arun (2018) conceptualises 'gender' as 'mutually constituted through the relationship between field and habitus'. Field is defined as the social space individuals inhabit, where social interactions such as discussions, negotiations and conflicts are produced. Individuals are governed by tacit rules, practices, customs and conventions in their respective fields and individuals move from one field to the other. For Bourdieu, social field is a universe or microcosm (sub-field) in which agents and institutions are integrated and interacted with each other in accordance with field specific rules. Tacit rules internalised by the agent in order to appropriate practices and strategies bind the fields. Field is defined as a "locus of struggle" when defined in the context of agency and structure. Since field is considered a network of positions and individuals occupying the field have a different set of aims, intentions and objectives, they strategize in an effort to the maximise their own objectives and goals. In this process, whoever occupies positions of power or are located in the hierarchy of power have relative advantages and disadvantages of maximising their goals respective to their possibilities and constraints of the structure where they are positioned.

Symbolic and cultural power are core tenets of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of capital. Thus, this conceptual framework is used in her study to analyse how the symbolic, human and cultural capital possessed by women in the form of embodied gender or female capital had contributed to the Kerala model of development. The model structured through reformative and welfare social policies and cultural practices

that brought social change ‘endowed’ women with high literacy rate, high life expectancy at birth, low female and maternal mortality rate with low fertility rate. These symbolic and cultural dimensions of female capital, she conceptualises as ‘gender capital’ (Arun 2018). The way gender power inequalities operate and prevail in the domestic and public spaces in the society construct different forms of gender capital. The invisible nature of symbolic violence facilitates the embeddedness of different forms of domination in the everyday life of individuals and this process socially reproduce inequalities. The symbolic violence has implications for women’s status, violates their agency in social relations and it legitimises structures of domination (Arun 2018). She argues, “gendered capital pervades cultural and symbolic practices, which could be referred to as doxa, or shared practices that uphold forms of domination and hierarchy within a patriarchal system” (Arun 2018, 4).

This chapter analyses how professional women in the developmental context of Kerala are located within the complex structure and how they are mutually constituted through the field and habitus. The interplay of power within the structures can be further explained through the interaction of structure and agency. Structures act as rules and determine and condition individual thoughts and actions. The individuals are not passive victims of structures, but they constantly negotiate with the structures through resources, i.e. capital valued by each particular field. The access and possession of different forms of gender capital are significant in understanding the patterns of ways they utilise the capital or assert their agency to bargain with the systems of domination for social reproduction and social change.

Negotiating Patriarchy and Contesting Power Relations

Professional women in the popular imagination enjoy a certain degree of freedom and empowerment and have a crucial role to play in the decision-making processes within their household and in their workspace. In the context of Kerala, the social structures where these professional women are embedded are largely shaped by the norms and values of reformist patriarchy and ideas of modernity. Thus, it is imperative to understand the nature of the structures in which their lives are embedded and how these structures through various social processes enable and constrain their agency and empowerment.

The concept of structure and agency are often theorized as a dichotomous phenomenon; structure is patterned and systematic, whereas agency is contingent and random. Structure is considered as a constraint and agency as freedom, structure is seen in terms of collective and agency as an individual (Hays 1994). Social structures are patterns of social life which transcends the individuals. Social structures are produced through individual actions and at the same time it produces the mould to fit individual actors. Social structures are both enabling and constraining (Giddens 1976) and they are the underlying base of power and human self-understanding. Social structures more or less guide human thinking and action and flexible in its resistance to change (Hays 1994).

The concept of agency in this context are possible within the enabling aspects of the social structure and at the same time limited within the same structures. Agency has implications for a spectrum of alternative forms of behaviour and the choices people make out of the possible alternatives (Hays 1994). In this context, choices need not necessarily imply intentionality. Choices are made both consciously and unconsciously which may have both intended or unintended consequences. Choices are mostly socially conditioned, especially the collective choices. Choices are made by the agents in their social contexts of structurally provided possibilities and limitations, and thus it has definitive patterns and also comprehensible (Hays 1994). Thus, agency is not 'pure will' of individuals or their absolute freedom, but it is the individual and collective autonomy situated in the realm of constraining and enabling features of social structure (Hays 1994). "Sociological understanding of agency then, does not confuse it with individualism, subjectivity, randomness, absolute freedom, or action in general, but recognised it as embracing social choices that occur within structurally defined limits among structurally provided alternatives" (Hays 1994, 65).

Social structure has two central elements that are interconnected with each other; (i) system of social relations and (ii) system of meaning which are analytically distinct in nature (Hays 1994). System of social relations comprise of the patterns of roles, the type of domination among the categories of class, gender, caste, religious, educational, age and position in the family. Systems of meanings is quite often equated with culture, and it also includes the values and beliefs systems of social groups, their languages, their forms of knowledge system, their perceptions, common sense, the

interactional practices in the social groups, their material products and the ways of life established by these (Hays 1994).

In her conceptualisation Hays (1994), defines culture as ‘social structure’. Culture is both the product of human interactions, organise thoughts and embedded in human behaviour and ways of life, internalised in their personalities and produce certain forms of human interactions. It is both subjective and objective as it has ideal and material existence, enabling and constraining as it is externalised in institutions. The social structure has its own underlying logic of functioning, it has systems of knowledge, language as well as norms, values and beliefs (Hays 1994). Structures can limit individuals both ideologically and relationally. Ideologically, it limits the choices of individuals to what is ‘acceptable’ and ‘conceivable’. Relationally, it constrains by limiting the ‘impact’ and ‘efficacy’ of our choices despite the depth of reasoning and effort of action we do (Hays 1994).

Structures, are constituted by mutually sustaining cultural schemas-mental constructs- and sets of resources- (the embodiment or media and outcome of schemas), that enable and constrain social action and tend to be reproduced by the social action (Sewell 1992). Giddens (1981) conceptualise ‘social structures as both the medium and outcome of the practices that constitute the social systems.’ In his argument, structures are enacted by human agents who are ‘knowledgeable’ by practicing their structured knowledge. Agents are empowered by structures, both by the knowledge of cultural schemas that enables them to mobilize resources and by the access to resources that enables them to enact schemas (Sewell 1992).

To be an agent means to be capable of exerting some degree of control over the social relations in which one is enmeshed, which in turn implies the ability to transform those social relations to some degree. As I see it, agents are empowered to act with and against others by structures: they have knowledge of the schemas that inform social life and have access to some measure of human and nonhuman resources. Agency arises from the actor's knowledge of schemas, which means the ability to apply them to new contexts. Or, to put the same thing the other way around, agency arises from the actor's control of resources, which means the capacity to reinterpret or mobilize an array of resources in terms of schemas other than those that constituted the array. Agency is implied by the existence of structures (Sewell 1992, 20).

The cultural and historical determinism of agency in a particular social context of the agent makes it take specific forms and enormous variations, since agency is based on the range of cultural schemas and the resources available to the agent. Though

agency entails the ability to bring about transformations in the structure through collective and individual action, coordination and cooperation, persuasion and coercion, the extent of the agency exercised by the individual person depends on the power differences and their positions in their social organisations (Sewell 1992) .

Amartya Sen (1985) defines agency as the ‘ability’ to set and pursue individual goals and interests, one’s own as well as others wellbeing, pursuit of values, respecting social and moral norms and capacity to act upon personal commitments (cited in Peter 2003). In terms of Capability approach, Sen (1985) put forth an alternative for social evaluation of agency. Capability approach has two dimensions; where the individual identifying which functioning as valuable and secondly which functioning, they are able to achieve if they want to do so. The set of functioning the individual is able to achieve to a satisfying degree is considered as their capability (Sen 1985).

Professional women in the social context of Kerala are attempted to be understood as both the product and creator of the social structures of gender, class, caste, cultural structures. Their very identity is embedded in these structures and they are not merely passive recipients of the social processes that enact these structures. They are the product of both their field and habitus.

The habitus is the internalisation of certain structures and histories and is a ‘practice unifying and practice- generating principle’ (Bourdieu 1990a: 101). The habitus is the functioning that generates and organises the everyday practices and representations of professional women through embodying their dispositions in their respective social field. Their dispositions are the ‘tendencies, propensities and inclinations’ (Bourdieu 1977) they learn as they grow up. They are agents of the same social processes, ‘knowledgeable agents’ have knowledge of the habitus, i.e. scheme of things, or ‘cultural schemas’ through which they understand their everyday world and through this understanding they learn how to live in the world. The volume of the capital or ‘resources’ they possess enable and constraint the individuals within the structural milieu. It is in this context they develop their strategies to pursue goals which they value as important. It is in this context the ‘doxa’ which Bourdieu terms as the tacit knowledge internalised by the individuals, which is taken for granted sets the social boundaries and limits the social behaviour in pursuit of the goals. Here the habitus limits the practices and strategies and ensures that agents act in accordance with

the field specific rules. Thus, Bourdieu understands habitus as structured structures that are predisposed to act as structuring structures.

The structures largely shaped with the ideas of regressive modernity and reformist patriarchy in different forms constraint the individual agency of these professional women. As knowledgeable agents capable of bringing social transformations, they constantly bargain with patriarchy both subtly and overtly to claim their individuality and safeguard their wellbeing. They are active agents who make decisions in their everyday life as empowered individuals, challenging the libertarian ideas of empowerment, autonomy and freedom.

Habitus also structures practices and reproduces social fields. Habitus operates as a worldview, which is a “framework of cognitive apprehension, moral judgment, ethical commitments or aesthetic inclinations – the habitus becomes the basis for enacting that worldview through practices” (Chopra 2003, 426). Since the professional women are the products of society and structured in a habitus they are influenced by the habitus, and start behaving naturally through the doxa dispositions in their habitus which reproduces the structures.

The assertion of individual agency is influenced by the habitus. The habitus with the tacit rules influences individuals through the dispositions to make a choice over the other or to engage in a set of practices in comparison with the others (Chopra 2003). In this process of decision making, evaluation of ‘autonomy’ of the individual matters significantly. Herman (1991) says, effective autonomy is the medium through which agency is expressed. Autonomy is explained as the ‘condition of the will’ that enables to exercise agency. Individuals being rational beings have the will that could be interfered with (external constraints and possibilities) and thus, agency is situated (cited in Peter 2003).

Peter (2003) suggests ‘situated agency’ as a focal point of social evaluation. The limited effective agency in women’s situations are not necessarily impairing their ‘moral autonomy’ or does not imply on the absence of ‘agency-capabilty’, but they indeed develop their own subtle strategies of resistance to the unequal power structures (Peter 2003). The situatedness of women’s agency are in the realm of social structure of the respective society.

The contexts with the influence of social norms and experiences does form beliefs and shape the preferences of individuals (Peter 2003). In the family, women devalue their contribution to their households emphasizing the social perception of high

value to the market functions. When it is compounded by their low bargaining power, with their altruistic nature of preferring the wellbeing of family members over their own, and the cultural conditioning of silently bearing their oppression makes them reluctant to engage in high bargaining (Sen 1985).

Bina Agarwal (1997) critiquing Sen's presumption of women's overtly acceptance of the social norms as their acceptance of intra-household inequalities. She explains it instead as the reflection of their lack of alternate options (Agarwal 1997). The intra-household decision making process and resource allocation depends on the 'bargaining' power of the family members and the intrahousehold interactions are characterised by cooperation and conflict. The strength of the 'fall-back' options of the individual determines the bargaining power of that person within their household (Agarwal 1997). The fall-back options are external to the household which includes parental wealth, non-wage income and legal structure that govern the institutions of marriage and family (McElroy 1990 cited in Agarwal 1997).

In patriarchal systems of different socio-cultural contexts, the different sets of concrete constraints women develop their own strategies and coping mechanisms to maximise their social security as well as optimise their life options with varying potentials for active and passive resistance in the face of oppression (Kandiyoti 1988). This strategizing of women within the constraints of patriarchal system, is termed as 'bargaining patriarchy' (Kandiyoti 1988). This patriarchal bargaining shapes the gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology that shapes the gender power relations of that particular society (Kandiyoti 1988). Women in the sub-Saharan Africa region with relative autonomy, resisted and protested the attempts to devaluing their labour, total appropriation of their production by their husbands and complete material dependence on their husbands in order to defend and protect their autonomy (Kandiyoti 1988). In these regions, classical patriarchy was practiced, patrilineage and patrilocal system are followed. In this patriarchal system, son preference is a strong norm and dowry practices are existing. In this system, the youngest female members (daughters-in-law) were often subservient to the male members and elder female members of the family. There is a cyclical fluctuation of power hierarchies attached to the status and position of women in the family. The process of gaining power is attached with progeny of sons, growing age and achieving the status of mother in law. This anticipation of gaining power in future collide to produce their own subordination in their young age at the cost of their wellbeing

(Kandiyoti 1988). Thus, women develop interpersonal strategies to manipulate their family relationships, such as attempts to gain affections of their married sons in order to maximise their security and their life chances (Kandiyoti 1988). The passive resistance of these women to the transformations and breaking up of the patriarchal system is in a way to reinstate the patriarchal bargaining, their 'protection' and increased 'male responsibility'. In return for their subservience and propriety, often becomes as a retreat to conservatism (Kandiyoti 1988).

Agarwal (1997) in her study on the gender relations within the household, looked at the role of sociocultural norms in determining bargaining power of women in the household and their importance in the control over the resources. Women are socialised in a way to perceive altruistic self, whereas men are more oriented to pursuing individualistic personal goal fulfilment (Agarwal 1997). The outcome of the bargaining favourable to one depends on the degree of value one attaches to their own wellbeing relative to the wellbeing of others (Agarwal 1997). The patriarchal bargains explain women's rational choice and the shaping of their unconscious aspects of gendered subjectivity as it permeates both their early socialisation and current socio-cultural context (Kandiyoti 1988). In the cultural contexts, where women are expected to refrain from explicit bargaining, they use implicit forms of contestations within the family, such as "persistent complaining, pleading ill-health, playing off male affine and consanguine against each other, threatening to return to natal home, withdrawing into silence, withholding sex from husbands" (Agarwal 1997, 28).

Women as 'knowledgeable agents' according to their structured knowledge of unequal gender power relations express their resistance and disapproval to the systems of inequality both overtly and covertly. The overt expressions of accepting or complying to unequal gender power relations even when they are uncomfortable with the inequalities are reflections of their 'survival strategies' to pursue their own interests, even when they are constrained within the structure (Agarwal 1997). Women are socialised to act altruistically because their material conditions make them differentially dependent on men. Women are relatively dependent to their family than because of their social seclusion in the outside social institutions, women's higher life expectancy, social disability attached to widowhood and thus their survival options outside the family are very limited. This forces them to maximise their family interest as it is to

safeguard their self-interest in terms of security and social support in the long term (Agarwal 1997).

Professional women in the study are perceived as knowledgeable agents with structured knowledge of the nature and functioning of the social structures they are embedded in. The decisions and choices they make are influenced by the habitus of the field they are located in, and these choices they make shapes their lived realities and life experiences. Women negotiate, confirm and conflict with the way the structures enable and constrain their 'capability', to aspire and pursue their goals which they perceive valuable. Their life experiences reflect how the structures are constituted and the meaning they attribute to the structures and social processes that brings the structures to life. Their lives are embedded in the family structures, the patriarchal structures that operates in the society at large and governed by the dominant cultural values and norms. Their agency is situated in this social and cultural context. Thus, the analysis of their 'situated agency' primarily address the characteristics of the cultural and relational structures in the respective social contexts where it operates, and its logics and patterns of functioning i.e. the habitus of the respective field. Secondly, the conditions and processes that enable and constrain agency to be possible. Evaluation of their agency also draws the attention to the value attributed to the particular action of women and the context in which they act, i.e. the specific motivation and constraints of actions. In this evaluation, professional women's access to different set of capital and how power operates to value certain resources as valuable in certain structural context will be analysed. It stresses on the degree of freedom the individual enjoyed in pursuit of whatever the goals or values which the person value as important (Sen 1985).

This chapter discusses the extreme range of limits to agency and at different level how women deal with it differently. The limits and possibilities of 'agency' attempted to analyse through the lens of structures of both patriarchy which constructs notions of femininity and masculinity within the larger changing cultural milieu, as well as notions of modernity that fetter this expression of individual choices. The Feminist-Bourdieusian framework throws more insights in the analysis of professional women's status and position within the structural context, their access to the capital to negotiate and contest the power structures, different ways through which the mobility of capital strengthens and weakens their bargaining power and agency to bring structural changes in their lives. The chapter discusses the interaction of structure and agency within the

domains of marriage, family and workspace and how professional women negotiate and contest with the power structures in their everyday practices. It is in this process of interaction in the social fields mediated by habitus, their wellbeing emerges.

Match Making and Choice of Marriage

The big fat weddings and exorbitant dowries are very common in contemporary Kerala. The penetration of consumer culture in the everyday lives of Malayalis and the change in taste and preferences with the outmigration together with the influence of mass media can be largely attributed to these changes. This interpretation of marriage practices requires a deep understanding of the rules and logic that govern the marriage market, from the process of making choices of marriage and the marriageable age, to the qualifications and credentials. This includes, educational qualifications of the bride and groom, 'good name' and reputation of the families entering the conjugal relations, the interaction of class and caste structures as well as the position of women in the whole process. In this process, the cultural and symbolic capital has much value in the pursuit of the goals and objectives of parties entering in marital union.

As discussed in chapter 2 marriage is considered as the ultimate end of a woman's life and getting married and entering '*grihashthrama*' is treated as one getting settled in life. Even though women attained high literacy rate and have access to higher education, women's marriageable age did not correspond to the educational status she attained. Society implies immense pressure to get married on a woman and her parents once she reaches her twenties. As men entering the job market with the IT revolution at a relatively young age and attaining economic security and stability with high income, has pushed back a man's marriageable age (to within the twenties). Men getting married at an early age put pressure on women and their parents to get the girl married off at a relatively young age as it would become difficult for them to find a 'suitable' boy.

These common trends prevalent in society are attributed to the social constructions of domesticity and centrality of marital status and family structure in defining a woman's key identity. Caste and class structures have a pivotal role in defining the rules and logic of marriage. Marriage is an institution through which class and caste structures are reproduced. The manner in which a marriage operates is similar to a market, wherein the different forms of economic, cultural, symbolic and social

capitals are traded to buy the best suitable alliance. Though there is an increase in the number of love marriages in contemporary Kerala, to get approval from the family for such relationships is relatively difficult. Even now, arranged marriages are considered as respectable and a norm. As discussed in chapter 2 in the case of Malati, the journalist, it is mostly the value given to the customs and practices associated with the caste as sacred and it is through marriage and family these practices that structure the structures are reproduced. Inter-caste marriages violate the reproduction of caste structures and thus, these structures constrain the agency of individuals to enter into a marriage of their choice. In her case, she has to move downwards in the caste hierarchy as she being a Brahmin and getting married to a Nair man which is lower than the Brahmin community violate's the reproduction of caste structure and caste hierarchy. The purity and pollution attached to the caste practices such as food habits and the conservatism the upper caste maintain, to claim to their superiority and the symbolic capital it endows on them acted as a constraint on her choice. It is her mother's fear of society that acted as the major constraint rather than not being convinced with the person whom her daughter chose to marry. It is a society that acts as the steward of the norms and traditions that are products of the structures and in turn, also reproduce these structures. Punishments are given to the transgressors of the normative order, such as labelling them as 'rebels', 'bad woman', or in the extreme cases excommunicating them from the family or caste. Through these punishments, the society manages to instil fear in the minds of members of the society to conform to the norms and thus reproduce the structure. In this context, she was waiting for the family to approve of her choice. It was a negotiation she was making through giving time to her family, particularly mother, to think and encouraging her to meet the man whom she was in a relationship with. The value is given to the consent of the parents, their approval and blessings in the society which considers family as a sacred institution and considers family relationships as social capital, made her negotiate with the family rather than conflicting with them to pursue her goals.

In her situation, the uncertainty of the family's consent, the long waiting period, the constant negotiations, the feeling of guilt of going against the wishes of parents has negative consequences on her wellbeing. It was a conflict between her desires and personal interests and family's happiness and togetherness. Her actions and negotiations to safeguard her family without damaging her relationship with them and

to fulfil her desire of getting married to the man of her choice takes a toll on her emotional and mental wellbeing. She felt “*this will not work out*”. In moments of hopelessness, she cultivated an optimistic attitude and developed the strategy ‘give time’ to transform the situation. Once her mother met her husband and she was convinced of her daughter’s choice that manipulation of rule of game, ‘give time’ was fruitful to pursue her goal.

The experience of lawyer Radhika also points to the interplay of caste in marriages. Belonging to an OBC caste and her husband from the Dalit caste was again violating the reproduction of caste structures and caste practices. While her sister’s husbands and sisters were well placed, her husband was not equally well-off at the time he proposed to her. The middle-class aspirations and imagination of a successful and well-off life interfered with her choice and constrained her agency. The preference for a son in a patriarchal and patrilineal kinship system projects a daughter as a burden, as they had to be married off with a dowry which incurs a financial burden on the parents. In a patrilineal system, the parents are not entitled to their daughter’s support and care in their old age. It also burdens the parents with a moral responsibility to raise their daughter’s as ‘well mannered’ domestic women as they can perform their familial obligations in their conjugal home without fail. This feminine qualities of ‘well mannered’, ‘well behaved’, ‘well-groomed’, ‘submissive’, are feminine capital for women which would give her better prospective groom in the marriage market.

In developing a ‘radical streak’ and cultivating masculine dispositions was a strategy Radhika developed to challenge the normative expectations of the society of a woman. She had a conflicting relationship with the normative systems of society. But when it came to her marriage, she adopted both conflict and negotiation as her strategies to pursue her goal. When the caste and class structures acted as constraining factors, Radhika being a ‘knowledgeable’ actor, understands the tacit rules of the class, caste and family structures, and how these rules are constraining her agency to pursue her goals in the respective field. The strategies she adopts stem from this understanding of habitus. This process of negotiation and conflicts to pursue the goals is both challenging and a struggle that produces stresses and anxieties that has a negative effect on their wellbeing.

“We met each other in the law college. We were classmates and that is how we fell in relationship. But when it came to marriage, things were not at all

smooth. We were from different castes. That was a barrier for my family to approve it. He came to my home officially asking my hand to my parents. But my father was very adamant. Again, we had to constantly negotiate with the family, there were fights between me and my father. After a point of time he agreed to it. My other two sisters were married and they all were well placed in their life. From the childhood onwards I had this nature of doing things what my heart says. Here I was going against the interests of my parents... My father was working in Tamil Nadu. When we were there always our neighbours used to say you have only daughters. I used to get irritated when I hear that. What is wrong if you don't have a son? And because of that I nurtured a rebel streak in me and I was a bit tomboyish."

(Radhika Lawyer, 44 Years, Hindu Ezhava, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2017).

Class structures play a predominant role in defining the nature of the marriage market next to the caste system. Access to education and outmigration provided sources of upward class mobility for different sections of people in Kerala. Girija, journalist hailing from an agrarian and small business family through her enrolment in a professional course of journalism got access to the cultural capital which was an avenue for upward social mobility.

Falling in love with a man of the upper class and the desire to get married to the man of her choice was constrained within the operation of class structures. Marriage alliances with people of same caste and more or less of same class systems are the prevalent norm in the society. When she conveyed her desire to get married, the only condition her parents put forth was that the 'horoscope' should match, a practice stringently followed in matchmaking among Hindu religious communities. However, her husband's family's disapproval of their marriage in the initial days was due to two reasons. Firstly, she was found not to be a suitable match for their family's class status because of her economic and cultural background. Secondly, she was the 'choice' of their son, which has to be read in the context where love marriages are not much encouraged and approved. Love marriages are quite often talked about in the society with a pinch of disdain and as an outcome of bad parenting as well as bringing dishonour to the family. It is an act of transgressing the societal norms where the interests and decision-making power of parents on behalf of children are valued the most.

When her in-laws and family evaluated her as a mismatch to their family's class status, it was indeed a humiliating experience for her and hurt her self-esteem. The

possession of social and cultural capital was a mismatch between the families. Thus, taking a marriage alliance from a family lower in class status was perceived as a negative implication on their symbolic capital, as it is perceived as a dishonour to their family. But, in this situation, it created a crisis with her emotional and mental wellbeing. It was her cultural capital, the glamour, visibility and social recognition of her profession as a journalist that came to her aid. Also belonging to the same caste communities was an advantage, as it did not complicate the situation further.

Balancing the emotional and mental equilibrium in the midst of a hectic work schedule and career aspirations was more challenging and stressful for Girija. The feelings of humiliation, uncertainties of fulfilling her desire to get married to the man of her choice and ambitions of well-settled family life, the anxieties of these uncertainties, hectic work schedule and work pressure were conflated with the constraints of class system. Her agency was limited and constrained within the norms and standards of the class system.

Though she was not directly conflicting and was trying to negotiate with her husband's family during that period to get their approval for her marriage, it did imply negatively on her wellbeing. It was a time of pain, feeling of helplessness and immense stress for her. The cultural capital that she had acquired through her profession was substituting the inadequacies of her social and economic capital. Her profession acted as a resource in pursuing their goal of getting married in the midst of all resistance and disapproval of their relationship. Though they approved the marriage, meeting the demands in the way the marriage had to be conducted was much beyond what her family could afford to do. Even when the family was ready to make a compromise, they had set out the conditions to cling to and safeguard their symbolic capital, their social status. Here, Girija was forced to make an extra effort to prove herself and satisfy her in-laws to arrange the marriage. In addition to this, she also had to negotiate and make compromises to secure a safe place for herself in the conjugal family. She ultimately succeeded in pursuing her goal over a period of time by becoming their favourite daughter-in-law, whom they could always rely on.

Over time, her experiences constructed through the interplay of field and habitus determined her wellbeing, which was emerging in her interaction with the family structure, class system and societal norms. The narrative clearly states the dynamic

nature of wellbeing which varies with the change in the nature of interactions happening in a particular context. During the period of negotiations with the family to approve their marriage was very stressful and painful. As she secured a place in the family, when she was being consulted on issues, treated as dearest daughter in law equivalent to a daughter, it boosts her self-esteem and makes her feel valued and wanted. The negative and stressful life events constitute poor mental and emotional wellbeing, whereas in the positive and happy life events emerges positive wellbeing.

“He was introduced to me by a common friend of us. We met twice with this friend and third meeting he proposed me. For me it was like a good marriage proposal, well-educated and well-placed man. On the day he proposed me I told my mother about him and she told ‘tell your father as well’. When we consider your marriage if they come with a proposal, we can definitely consider it, provided your horoscopes match. But there were some issues in his family. They are all high-profile upper middle-class family. And mine is an agrarian family and my father was in financial crisis because his small business collapsed. That was the same period he was in Calcutta on an on-site project. So, he would come for four days in a month. On the way to home and on the way back to Calcutta he used to spend half day with me. Rest of the two days he had constant fight with his family to get their approval for this proposal. Their only problem is, this was a love affair and it was his choice. That was the beginning time of my career. I had to work for 12 hours from 4 AM to 4-4.30PM. And he also comes back from office very late. So, by the time he would get free to talk to me it would be 11-11.30 PM. And I have to wake up at 3.30 AM to go for work. And all throughout these phone calls we have only to discuss about his fights with his family and sorting out the issues. That was a very stressful time period for me. The problems were cultural, social and family status issues which we cannot sort it out. That was a great pressure. Not a single day I could not go to sleep peacefully. Everyday ends with tears. Those things were sorted out later on. It was an issue till engagement. They had certain conditions about conducting marriage, which was very challenging for my parents. They insisted to conduct the marriage in Kochi, which was very difficult for my parents. So, it was either we together or I alone went to Kochi on off days and arranged everything on my own. In my office, my colleagues used to make fun of me saying ‘she was the one who conducted her marriage on her own’. It was very stressful and saddening situation. My brother came from Gulf only a week before my marriage. I was just 23 -24 years at that time.

I just wanted this to get it over. And a person like me who has a little too much of self-respect [abhimaanam], it was very difficult. Their problem with me is that ‘I am not a match for their status’. That’s a big problem. This is not something people with high self-esteem [atmaabhimaanam] could take. In that situation my career had helped. I started appearing in the screen. So that changed their perceptions slightly, and gradually made them accept me. When

family and friends acknowledge me as the face appearing on TV screen, that made them mellow down. I told you, they have social awareness and sense of news and they feel proud of me being a journalist now. But that did not change the situation overnight, because they were quite adamant in their stands. But that was a gradual change. And there was lack of staff in the office also. Because of that I got many opportunities to be on air, and that gave me a good exposure and boosted my career. That was the golden age of my career. And then they also gradually accepted me in that space. Then they could balance whatever they found as deficient in me with the status and glamour of my career. But after marriage there was never any kind of these conversations or attitude they had. I am their dearest daughter in law, no, their daughter now. In every decision making they ask my opinion, many things me and my mother in law decide together. Especially when my brother in law was getting married, I was given a major role and status. Now everything changed and it is a happy married life. But that had put some strain in the relations between both the families. Though there are no direct conversations on that, sometimes I feel my mother and all still have carried the pain of that hurt feelings. ... Good that we both are from the same caste, Nair community. If caste was also different, I think this would have never worked.”

-(Girija, 33 years, Hindu Nair, Journalist, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017).

Parental expectations of children are very high in the social context of Kerala, as the educational success and achievement of their children are regarded as the symbol of parent's success (Arun 2018). In this context, the disdain and dishonour the society gives to love marriages is a punitive mechanism for people who transgress the norms and thus reproduce arranged marriage systems as the norm. The fear of this dishonour and being contempt as 'bad parenting' forces parents to disapprove the marital choices of their own children. In the experience of Keerthana, lawyer, both her family and her husband's family belonged to the same class status and both of their parents were government servants and educated people. Orthodox and Jacobite are two denominations of Christians who share equal caste status and their beliefs and ritual practices are more or less the same. In this context, it is not the class and caste status that were acting as barriers, instead the normative order practiced in a regressive modern society that constrained her agency to get married to the man of her choice.

In her experience, she had to endure dislike of her conjugal family for a long time. She was submissive to her conjugal family, where she was always careful not to establish a conflicting relationship. Her friends and colleagues who were present there when the researcher was interacting with her, testified to the fact that her in-laws were

always emotionally torturing her and she endured it silently. The silence in a way was a negotiation she made with her conjugal family to not to put her in jeopardy.

Like Girija, it is her cultural capital, her profession of the law that came to her aid. When she got the opportunity to resolve the issues between her father-in-law and siblings, it was she who initiated and convinced her husband to join her to resolve the issue. Knowing how complicated the issue is, it was playing the rule of the game to get access to social capital, a respectable place in their family network. It was her cultural capital that enabled her to cultivate symbolic capital.

“In my family, I was brought up with much freedom. I was given the freedom to choose my career, and they always encouraged me to make my own choices. So, when I told my parents that I like a guy and I would like to get married to him, they took it quite positively. They trust my choices. On the other side, my husband’s parents are quite more orthodox, and my father in law is very dominating in his attitude and behaviour. When he presented in his family about me, it was very difficult for them to accept and approve it. They did not expect that their son will find a woman of his choice. One reason was, I am Jacobite Christian, and he is Orthodox Christian. It was only after so much of negotiations my husband could convince his parents to approve the marriage. ... That dislike for this marriage always reflected in the way they treated me till a point of time. Then there was a land dispute among my father in law and his siblings and cousins. Since it would take so many years to get a favourable judgement from the court, nobody moved to the court. It was at that time, one of his siblings had some financial crisis, and urgently needed some money. The only source they had was this landed property. So, they initiated the partition and settlement of their dispute. So, they approached me because I am a lawyer. It was a very complicated case. My husband and I took the initiative to resolve this issue. I clearly explained to them what are the legal complications and suggested a solution to resolve it amicably. They all accepted my suggestions. Afterwards, things gradually started changing. They started respecting me and valuing my opinions in their decision making. Things had mellowed down to a great extent.”

(Keerthana, 38 Years, Christian Jacobite, Lawyer, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

Even though the families disapproved of the love marriages in the above case, it was either through their constant negotiations or wise play according to the context and situation or through their cultural capital over a period of time that enabled them to access symbolic capital, respect and space in their conjugal families. In a society which values family as social capital, individuals often make negotiations and compromises at the cost of their wellbeing to get access to and possess it. When the individual interest

conflicts with their family interest, and in the context in which family has a major role in making the decision on marriage, individuals use negotiations with the family to pursue their individual interests. The unity and togetherness of family is valued as much as vital and important. It is through the family and kinship relations that the structures of class and caste get reproduced in society.

Practices of Dowry

There is a growing trend of big fat weddings and the practice of dowry in Kerala. The predominant matrilineal system and matrilocal practices attributed inheritance rights to women among different caste and religious communities in Kerala. Prevalence of cross-cousin marriages alleviated society from dowry practices in the early twentieth century.

Lindberg (2014) looks at the emergence and spread of the practice of dowry through historical traditions of the same among various communities and how do people account for its existence. Various interpretations to dowry system were found in different accounts. Dowry was given as a compensation for the maintenance of a housewife or her inheritance rights over her husband's property (Goody and Tambiah 1989 cited in Lindberg 2014). It is also given as an inheritance by parents to their daughter's as a share of their property during the daughter's marriage (Sen 1989). The disintegration of matrilineal system and legislations in 1925 on inheritance rights gave way to the evolution of the dowry system among the Nair communities (Jeffery 1992 cited in Lindberg 2014).

The caste structure in Kerala has a pivotal role in the spread of dowry system. Social prestige and high social status are associated with the inflation of dowry practices among higher caste people who practised it to separate from lower caste (Anderson 2003, Srinivas 2005 cited in Lindberg 2014). Lower caste seeking upward social mobility in a stratified society imitated the cultural behaviours, social customs and practices of the upper caste. In the early twentieth century, bride-price (price paid by the groom to the bride's family) was prevalent among the lower caste community of Pulayas. This was later prohibited by Pulaya Caste Association in 1939 and transformed into dowry which the husband could control (Uyl 1966, Alexander 1968 cited in Lindberg 2014). This transformation was viewed as 'social awakening' and 'modernising' the community to sanction patrilineal family system and control men and women's sexuality through promoting marriages (Nair 1995 cited in Lindberg 2014). In a nutshell, it represents high gender inequality in the society in which a woman's

value is determined by the amount of dowry her parents are willing to pay (Srinivas 2005 cited in Lindberg 2014).

Among the Namboodiri Brahmins and Syrian Christians, the traditions of Brahmins converted to Christianity practised patrilineal system and dowry contrary to other communities in Travancore. Dowry which was often projected as a woman's share of inheritance in their parental property lost its value, as the groom's parents demanded and determined exorbitant dowry in accordance with the potential qualifications of the groom. This culminated in the evolution of strict patriarchal rules and regulations regarding property rights and inheritance among Syrian Christians (Lindberg 2014).

Evolution and practice of dowry system in Kerala differs in different regions and communities. Various socio-economic and cultural factors are attributed to its evolution and practice. The changes from matrilineal society to patriarchal nuclear families, migration and evolution of new middle-class societies as well as the growth of consumer culture with the shift in the economy had a pivotal role in the growth of dowry practices in Kerala. The diversity of kinship practices among various caste and religious communities influenced the practice of dowry within their familial systems. Dowry is considered as an inheritance among Syrian Christians and Namboothiri Brahmins. In both the cases women did not have land inheritance rights and thus it is paid in cash or kind to groom's father in which eventually women lose control over it (Lindberg 2014). In contemporary times, it is paid in different ways such as automobiles, houses and expensive consumer goods. The amount given as dowry is dependent on how much the bride is valued and loved in her natal family. The financial status, education and ability of the groom is also taken into consideration in an effort to take care of his family (Lindberg 2014).

Among the working class and lower caste communities dowry was not practised in earlier days and post 1970s. The trend began with Gulf migration and post 1990s there was a widespread practice of dowry. The earlier practice of dowry indicated matrilineal tradition of inheritance in which a woman is gifted small plots of land during her marriage from her mother (Lindberg 2014). Modern dowries are a culmination of two traditions; the Nair matrilineal inheritance of property rights and Brahmin and Syrian Christian practice of providing expensive dowries. Cash and gold are the predominant ways of giving dowries in which gold is presented to women directly as a symbol of prosperity, femininity and an asset for crisis situations (Lindberg 2014).

Exorbitant dowries had been paid and demanded with the increase in migration to Gulf countries. 'Extended dowries' are in demand after a long time of marriage and dowry related violence are on the rise with these practices. Being a 'housewife' is ideal among working-class and with this trend, there is a decline in female labour force participation. The ideology of 'domesticity' and decline in workforce participation increase the practice of dowry (Rajaraman 1983; Sen 1989 cited in Lindberg 2014).

Dowry is paid as a status symbol and upward social mobility for the bride's family and drastically increased with the outmigration (Lindberg 2014; Eapen and Kodoth 2002). Though a woman's higher education than the groom can be used in lieu of dowry, many women end up as housewives in Kerala and do not make use of their qualifications (Lindberg 2014). Lindberg (2014) views dowry as a practice beyond a woman's oppression with its nature of becoming an 'obligatory pay' to the groom. It is paid as an 'advance compensation' to maintaining a bride, 'marriage fee' for the privilege of getting married, to ensure economic security and good treatment of bride in her in-laws' family (Dalmia and Praveena 2005; Srinivas cited in Lindberg 2014). The emergence of new consumer cultural norms defined the practice of dowry as a status symbol for a bride's family and means to capital accumulation to the groom's family in the context of consumer culture (Kodoth 2008). This increased economic and social pressure on bride's family and on girl and default in it accelerates dowry-related crimes in the states in current times (Hapke 2013). Dowry system reflects the larger gender power structure in which women are in an inferior status in the society and are forced to negotiate with the existing inequality (Lindberg 2014).

Though in the communities like the Nair community which was matrilineal and matrilineal, women were entitled to the inheritance of landed property. It is given to them as dowry during the time of marriage in the form of landed property, cash or gold. Though dowry is given as economic capital, an asset to be used in times of crisis in many cases a woman's control over the dowry is minimal. In many cases, it is the husband who uses it to build a house, or for further investment in business or procuring other properties by selling the dowry of women (Arun 1999). Arun (1999) argues that this gave legitimacy for male control of dowry, wherein many cases it is either the husband or the natal family has more control over the landed property than the woman herself. In this context, woman's bargaining power within the domestic space is eroded and it increases dowry related violence against women.

“Symbolic violence is perpetually embedded in social norms and attitudes towards cultural practices such as dowry, and it is often accepted as everyday practices” (Arun 2018, 120). The process of institutionalisation and normalisation of dowry practices (Kodoth 2010) lead to a continuation or permanence of violence in women’s lives (Arun 2018). This is the space where symbolic violence accompanies physical violence (Arun 2018). This, Arun (2018) argues that is an ‘erosion of female and feminine capital’ as there is a reversal in the way women were valued in a matrilineal community and the claims the kinship practice had of ensuring gender equality.

Breaking Conventional Styles of Marriage

In a socio-cultural context where big fat weddings and exorbitant dowries are normalised and projected as a status symbol, it becomes challenging and difficult to break the norms for the individuals. Prof Geeta shared her experience of her marriage where she and her husband went against the conventional practices and had a simple wedding which was well acclaimed at that point of her time, twenty-nine years back. Later on, her daughter had a civil marriage with a man from another religious community, rather a simpler wedding than Prof Geeta’s.

For Prof Geeta, a simple wedding breaking the conventional norms was in a way an expression of her empowerment, asserting her agency to practice what she believes. For her, breaking the conventional norms was a process of disassociating herself with the particular kind of femininity, which sexualised female body through the control of their physical appearance (Lindberg 2005). Their marriage was much celebrated in the media at that time as a revolutionary wedding, as it was revolting against the normalised and institutionalised practices of marriage. Here, the liberal upbringing she received in her family, especially by her father empowered her to make decisions which she believed true to her. Her husband, also shares similar liberal and feminist ideologies was strengthening her to assert her agency to go for a marriage of her choice. The social capital of family relations, their support and backing were strengthening her to break the normative orders of the society.

“When I was doing my II M A the proposal came again. Because, I knew the person and my parents were also fairly comfortable, I didn’t want to go for a system where, you know marriage at that time was inevitable. Today I would say no. But at that point of time given the kind of circumstances that you are moulded by, I felt that it was inevitable, and such inevitability, it is better marry somebody I know. Really, I was never been prepared for marriage and

never thought of marriage when something like came and this man, my husband at that point of time he was doing his PhD in Journalism in Trivandrum. When he said that he doesn't believe in dowry, ornaments, thali, a lot many things I have grown to hate and associate with everything conventional in Kerala, here was a young man who said he don't believe in all these. I thought, it's not normal that you meet people like this every day. It is being my luck for I did not push it further by, maybe by denying him. His parents were also very keen. So, I decided to get married. So actually, it came out of the bolt, or bolt out of the blue even for me, because I never thought of marriage till then. But this on the spur of this moment I decided, because these were the parameters I thought about. Somebody in academia, he has JRF in Mass Communication, 1st JRF in the State and all that. So, we had a very simple wedding, a very revolutionary wedding at that point of time. I said I don't wear any ornaments, I did not wear, but one mala (chain). There were no marriage halls in my village at that time. Only place was Temple hall. In order for the temple hall to be given you had to register. My father refused to be part of NSS. Then my uncle registered. Anyway, we got married, a very simple wedding. At that time in the newspapers and magazines our wedding was a big news. People wrote about. Everybody was full of praise. But today nobody goes for that kind of a marriage. I wore a simple cotton saree worth Rs.500 or something. My mother wanted to uphold. Because she wanted to come in all the finery, but she said how can I do this if you are going to do like this. My mother wanted all these fineries and all my relatives but then the bride was not wearing any ornaments. So, they were felt a little let down, but then we both my husband and I put her down that this is how we wanted to be. We didn't even have a video. So that was how it was. But my father was insistent that we should have a feast, because people coming from outside and all that. Anyway, that is how that happened."

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

Latika and her husband hailed from families who were active in party politics associated with progressive and liberal ideologies. The same progressive ideologies shaped and constituted their outlook and approach towards society and family. In their case as well, the support network of their families was their social capital that enabled them to break the conventional norms of marriage and instead go for an inter-religious marriage.

But in this process, Latika's experience saying that women have to invest more effort to gain acceptance and recognition in the society. Adapting to food habits of her husband's family was an initial challenge for her. She, being one among the first-generation female journalists in the city, decided to take a career break when the news media institution went through a financial crisis and had to shut down for many years. She committed those years of career-break to raising her children as responsible citizens, and giving back end support to her husband's political activism and involve

more in the cultural activism. In a society that values family as the heart of its culture and existence, it is a challenge for people who opt for mix marriages to preserve the sanctity of family. Any kind of dysfunction in the kind of marriage that broke the conventional norms will be victimised and labelled for their transgression. To avoid this pointing of finger by society those individuals entering into mix marriages are forced to put more effort to maintain harmony and order in their family.

“That was the time we all were active in the party politics. We all were like a family. There were times I had gone with these male friends to paste posters and tie banners at night in the city. I was given that much freedom at home. It was then many of our friends were getting married amongst each other. In the end it was me and my husband were left out. Then we thought why don't we get married then? We both know each other well, share the same ideology. That is how we got married in the party office. ... it was difficult for me to adjust to his family in the beginning. I am from a vegetarian family. They Muslims cannot imagine a meal without non-veg. His family was quite accommodative and I also adjusted to it gradually. ...After my children were born, I took a break for a few years. It was also with a purpose of giving much more social acceptance (kurachukooode oru maanam nalkaan vendi kooode aayirunnu) to the inter-caste inter-religious marriages like us.”

(Latika, journalist, 60 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

Choosing to be Single

In the cultural context of a society which values marriage as inevitable and the end of an individual's life, the decision to remain single invokes immense social pressure on the individual. Single women are perceived as a threat as their sexuality is unguarded in the institution of marriage and family. It is also the patriarchal mindset envying the freedom and liberty enjoyed by the single women label them as 'loose' women and their sexuality a threat to the functioning of society.

Anna, Asst. Professor is a young faculty who values her freedom as the most important aspect in her life. She was active in student politics during her university life as well. The liberal environment of the university campus where she pursued her degrees, her exposure through the student political activism shaped her as an independent and free thinker. Freedom to work, freedom to engage in extra-curricular activities in the university space, engaging with the society through her political activism is more fulfilling and gives her a sense of accomplishment in life. It has a positive impact on her wellbeing. Even when she finds herself as empowered and independent, the society pressurises her to get married. As this pressure becomes

unbearable, she is forced to avoid social gatherings, which restricts her access to social capital. She is forced to compromise on her social capital to safeguard her wellbeing. It is the normative order of the society that institutionalised certain age limit as the marriageable age for women. When these norms constrain the individual agency at one place, here Anna tries to find fulfilment in her academic achievements and the cultural capital it would give.

“In our society if a girl is not married by 25-26 years, the parents will have to bear immense pressure from the society. Once you cross 30 years and not married yet then you cannot handle the pressure. In my case my parents are understanding, but they have immense pressure from relatives and others. Nowadays I avoid going for any family functions because I can no more bear these pestering on marriage. It is not that I don’t want to get married, but sometimes it is better to remain single than getting married to a wrong person. My concern is I cannot compromise on my freedom I enjoy right now. I was living independently from the time I started doing my Masters degree. I was teaching as ad-hoc lecturer and started earning from my M.Phil. course time onward. I was financially independent as well. I cherish my freedom very much. Since I have no family and responsibilities, I can commit more time into my academic work. I get that time and space because I am single. I am really apprehensive when it comes to marriage whether I will have to compromise on this freedom I am enjoying right now. Or whether that person will give me the space to pursue my academic work and my interests. If I find someone who would give me this space, who accepts me as I am, who will not interfere in my space and freedom, then I might be open to marriage. My freedom is what I value the most.”

(Anna, Assistant Professor, 34 Years, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

Rahina, journalist is from northern Kerala. It was unusual for a girl from Muslim community in that locality to enter a profession like journalism. It is her passion for journalism and her hard work helped her to build a career in this profession which she perceives as giving her ‘identity and empowerment’. Thus, career is what she values the most. Rahina was the third child among the four daughters and she lost her father when she was in high school. Now, she is the source of support for her widowed mother and younger sister. She did not get sufficient support from the family to pursue journalism as a career. It was through her hard work and confidence that helped her to enter the profession of her choice and excel in her career. The nature and demands of her work are difficult to meet in a family life situation where women of her age have to make a choice between family and career. In her context, the community she belongs has a negative perception towards women working. Thus, she has apprehensions

whether the man and his family would accept her with her profession and give her the freedom to work after marriage. Therefore, she has to contend with the societal pressures for her to get married as well as the desire to achieve growth in her career. Here, she puts forth the condition to remain single till she gets a man who would fulfil the parameters she has.

“I don’t know whether marriage is meant for me or not (eyes turned moist). You may have an idea of how conservative people are from my place and especially from my community. Since my family has some progressive outlook towards women’s education and women working, I was fortunate enough to pursue a career of my choice. But when it comes to marriage situation is dicey. In my locality, hardly there would be any women of my age who are unmarried. 28 years for them has crossed the marriageable age bar long time back. Now from all sides people are pushing this thought that if I am not married now, I may have to remain single all throughout my life. Later on, I would become alone, siblings, family and friends cannot support me beyond a limit. ... Once you are in this profession you feel empowered, standing for a cause, connected to the society. You enjoy a certain level of freedom. Now to get a man from my community understanding the nature of my profession and work, adjusting to the demands of my work and respecting my freedom is very difficult. If I can find someone with these qualities I will consider of marriage. My career is most important for me. It defined my identity and empowered me in all means.”

(Rahina, Journalist, 30 Years, Thiruvananthapuram, April 2017).

Preeju, journalist is an independent woman with her own ideologies and perceptions of life. She is the second child among four daughters. Since journalism is perceived to be a masculine profession, it is more challenging for these women to find suitable matches through the system of arranged marriage. The working in shifts and demands of the work are barriers to run a family without much trouble. Though, the nursing profession also requires women to work in shifts, the feminine dispositions attached to the profession, the demand for nurses in foreign countries and the possibilities of out-migration makes them more in demand in the marriage market than journalists. It is in that context her younger sister received marriage proposals even when she was still not married. Here, in the choice of marriage she asserts her agency to get married only to someone who could understand her priorities and her perceptions of life, rather she prefers to remain single in life.

“Our society is more concerned than our family in getting us married. At times it gets too irritating. My parents concern is that until and unless I get married, they cannot consider alliances coming for my younger sister. She is a BSc nurse, so she is in demand than me. I told my parents very clearly; you

can consider if any good alliances come for my younger sister. I will get married only if I find someone who accepts me as I am, who can understand me and my beliefs and ideology.”

(Preeju, Journalist, 29 Years, Christian Pentecost, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2016).

All these women whom I have interacted with, are in their late twenties and early thirties had crossed the marriageable age according to the normative standards of society.. Since marriage is an inevitable social reality in their cultural context, they did not make a conscious decision to remain single forever. But the empowerment they attained through education and career enabled them to challenge the normative orders within their limits. Though society and family are a constraining factor as well as imposing pressures on them to get married, it is their cultural capital that enables them to assert their agency to remain single until they could find someone who would fit in the parameters they set.

Walking Out of Marriage

“My first trip after getting divorced. There is only one word in heart and body ‘freedom.’ ... I want to do everything I desired to do. I want to unleash the liberty denied with my marriage” (Dhwani, Trivandrum Lodge, 2012).

The character of Dhwani, a writer, played by Honey Rose in the Film Trivandrum Lodge directed by V.K. Prakash (2012) comes down to Kochi to write a novel about the city after her divorce. She is a sexually liberated woman who openly expresses her desire to ‘fornicate the abandoned’ and experience all kinds of sexual freedom. She desires to lead a life free from all restrictions of society and the institutions of family and marriage. The film challenges the norms and standards of Malayali femininity through the character of Dhwani. When she expresses her desire to explore her sexual freedom and live a life she desired, her friend Sareena warns her of the moral police and asks her to conceal her Malayali identity to escape from them.

This film helps to provide critical reflection into how society looks at and deals with individuals, especially women who walk out from marriage and break with their families. The individuals breaking away from marriage are considered to be transgressors of conventional norms. They are treated as pathological and punished as an ‘attempt to delegitimise, devalue and block their trading potential’ (Skeggs 1997). Femininity is considered as symbolic capital consolidated and legitimised to give power

and position in society (Skeggs 1997). Thus, the transgressors of the conventional norms are symbolically delegitimated.

The breaking up of marriages is an intense contestation to the institution of marriage. However, in a society like Kerala, where women are bound by gender norms have to deal with set boundaries for liberation and emancipation when they break away from troublesome marriages. They are stigmatised and labelled as rebellious and loose women. They are treated as deviants who went against the normative order of the institution of marriage and family. The society perceives them as vulnerable to sexual violence since they have no protection of a male member. The sexual integrity of women is regarded as symbolic capital in a society that ties the honour of a woman to her sexual purity. Women who break away from marriages are perceived as women who lack feminine dispositions that constitute their gender capital. Caring, nurturing, endurance, submissiveness and forgiveness are perceived as relatively feminine dispositions. These feminine dispositions make women a ‘vessel of culture’ and responsible for keeping the family united.

Women are bound by gender norms within the institutions of marriage and family, and it restrains their autonomy and freedom within the domestic space. When the problems within the domestic space are unresolvable amicably, women are forced to assert their agency and break the gender norms to walk out of abusive relationships.

Sangeeta, the journalist, is the only daughter of her parents, and she lost her father in her childhood. Her mother was a college lecturer. When her mother fell ill, the insecurity felt by her single mother forced her into a marriage. Though she sensed something wrong with the man, her inability to place the problem and her ailing mother’s insecurity constrained her to reject the marriage proposal. Though it was a troublesome marriage which was an ‘unpleasant experience’ for her, she tried to negotiate and move on with it. Confine to herself was the strategy she devised to cope with the troubles in the marriage. When the strategy failed to meet the goal of living together in harmony, she had to break the structure to safeguard her wellbeing.

“Marriage was an unpleasant incident in my life. I did not have any dreams about marriage or a life partner. Till then, I was in a complacent comfortable bubble. I got confined to my little world comprised of my home and mine and my mother’s friends. I was not interested in breaking away from this little world. Suddenly my mother fell ill, and she became anxious. She thought if anything happens to her, there will be no one to take care of me. So that is

how I had to get married. I was forced to get married. I did not have any objection. I thought anyways one day I have to get married, then let this may happen. Because of that, I did not feel much disappointed. Even before marriage, I knew there was something wrong. But I did not know how to place it. It was because I do not interact with people that much and I had minimal interaction with men because my entire studies were in women's only institution. So, I could not place this problem rightly. I was not even able to tell my mother what exactly is the problem. But I could sense something is wrong. After marriage, I realised what the problems were. It was tough to move ahead. But still, I was willing to continue in that marriage. What I thought was I would live in my bubble. He has his way [ayaalkku ayalude vazhi]. Then it became nearly impossible. That is how I moved out of that relation. I decided on my own to move out of it. As I said earlier after I moved out of it, that turned to be positive for me."

(Sangeeta, Journalist, 46 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

The process of breaking away from the marriage was a traumatising experience for Sangeeta. The harsh reality of court proceedings was a stressful experience. The mental harassment she had to face in the courtroom and severe torture she experienced from her husband and his family during the period of litigation was clearly an act of gendered domination and symbolic violence. The mental, emotional and financial crisis she endured made her powerless and subordinate to the dominance of her husband. Symbolic violence she experienced made her feel 'worn-out', and her selfhood was 'annihilated'. When the trauma was unbearable for her, relocating her to another place was the strategy she devised to hold on to her 'self' and safeguard her from further emotional collapse.

"Yes, I indeed suffered a lot then. This court, case, advocates and all were an unfamiliar, harsh world. That all were a harsh reality. I had seen the actual colour of many so-called 'feminist' judges then. When you experience all these, I was worn-out [maduppayirunnu]. That is when I felt I needed a change and decided to break away from everything, thinking I should not stay back here anymore [ivide thane adiyaan vayya ennu theerumanichathum]. So, I cannot say that this experience has pulled me down. But it was indeed a very stressful period for me [Bhayankara stressful aayirunnu]."

Five years was terrible. Even I had a financial crisis as well. I did not have a permanent job; the occasional work I get on the channel was the only work I had. Yes, my mother had income, but for a middle-class family like us cannot bear a severe crisis like this immediately after a bearing the expenses of marriage. So, that created a financial crisis. The mental stress was adding up to the burden. They were quite an influential family. They tortured us severely [avaru vallathe upadravichu nammale]. They harassed me professionally and personally, did slandering and used all other means of annihilating a person [avaru orupaadu upadravikkan sharamichu, professionally, personally,

slanderingum athu pole oru vyaktiye illathaakkanulla ella maargavum avaru nokki]. After all, these got over, I tried to put all these at the back and moved on.”

(Sangeeta, Journalist. 46 years, Hindu Nair Thiruvanthapuram, June 2018).

The uncertainties of the life of her marriage, the trauma of divorce proceedings, the fear of losing custody of her daughter limited her joy of becoming a mother. The responsibility of mothering during the phase of severe crisis had a negative implication on her wellbeing, as it added more to the stress and anxiety. The anxiety and fear of losing her child made her overprotective and forced her to fight eight long years of legal battle for the wellbeing of the child. The legal fight over her child was her bargaining with patriarchy, her husband's dominance and power. When she is breaking away from marriage and drifting apart from the family, she looked forward to the child as someone who would give meaning and purpose in life, a reason to live. Through this act of bargaining with patriarchy, she was not only trying to safeguard her daughter's wellbeing but also to retrieve her own life back to normalcy.

“I got to know that I was pregnant when I was with him. It was an unexpected pregnancy. I was happy initially when I came to know about pregnancy. But I myself was not sure of how long my marriage would last. Amidst all these trepidations, my joy of becoming a mother had many limitations and boundaries. However, she was born after we got separated. After she was born, I was like a normal mother. Again, my fears made me extra protective of my child. They demanded the custody of the child during the litigation in court. My lawyer also said usually in the child possession rights cases, and the father would get the custody of the child. That had affected me so severely [athu vallathe baadhikkume]. So, I became fiercely protective. Except that everything else was normal. After some time, those fears also waned. The fight was for her. The fight was for her wellbeing. Maybe if I left her to them, all those fights would have ended.”

(Sangeeta, Journalist, 46 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

The experiences of immense stress and trauma negatively imply on the capacity of individuals to effectively engage with their everydayness. Sangeeta found solace and strength in spiritual scripture, Bhagavad Geeta. It is a coping mechanism she developed to cultivate her wellbeing, 'instinct to survive' in the most challenging times. When social capital is insufficient to give her support, she relied on the supernatural power to cultivate inner strength and inner wellbeing to sail through the storms. She rationalises

the traumatic experiences she had to endure stating that it forced her to relocate and made her think about the alternative options available to move on with her life. The forced relocation and financial crisis enabled her to gain an opportunity that was path-breaking in her career.

“That was indeed a very tough situation. I did not know how did I deal with it. Sometimes I think, am I the same person even today? It is a twin life. It was a tough situation. Almost eight years, it was very tough. How did I deal with it, I do not know! I have strong faith in God. It is not that I always visit the temple and pray. However, I believe in that power. I think that faith in God was something that helped me to survive. I always believed in that power. I used to read Bhagavad Gita regularly at that time. If I read something like that, I would feel more at peace. It was an instinct to survive. So, I started reading that. I started to develop a habit of meditating on that. That is how I survived. Otherwise, there was nobody to help. Yes, human beings could help, but sometimes we feel everything and everyone is against us. Even in the court, judges, police, everything you feel is your adversaries. In those situations, there is nothing else. So, in those situations, this faith was like haywire.”

(Sangeeta, Journalist. 46 Years, Hindu Nair Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018).

Rejitha is a single mother and a journalist. She had a troublesome childhood where her father deserted her family. Growing up without a father under the protection of her maternal uncles weakened her status and position in the family in a patriarchal system. Once the maternal uncles marry and their family comes into the field, she had to be at the mercy of their wives who have the ability to control the family’s resources. In that situation, the abandoned sister and her children are considered an additional burden to the brothers. In this context, she lacks both economic and social capital, her bargaining power and autonomy is also weakened. This vulnerable social position and lack of space to voice her opinion, she was forced to get married to a man who was working in the Gulf.

Marriage is also a means of upward social mobility for many working-class populations in Kerala (Osella and Osella 2000). The aspirations of social mobility through marriage gave immense demand to the men working in the Gulf countries. It is with the same aspirations of social mobility she was given to the Gulf man in marriage in a hurry without enquiring much about him and his background. The series of events after her marriage made her suffer domestic violence, ranging from intimate partner violence to violence by the extended family. The man had a psychiatric condition of chronic doubting disorder. The behaviour of the man due to his psychiatric condition

made him more violent towards her. She was denied freedom of mobility and he restricted her social interactions and social networking. Denying her freedom to work ripped her apart from her access to economic capital and thus eroded her fallback option in the time of crisis. Her restricted access to her natal family and social network was a barrier for her to seek external help in her condition. It was a perpetuation of symbolic violence and domination she experienced at the emotional, mental and physical levels. Accusations of infidelity and cooking up stories questioning her moral integrity is another form of symbolic violence to keep her subordinate to her husband. It is rather challenging to bear false accusations of illicit relationship with her blood relations who raised her up. This is a mechanism adopted by her husband to control any form of her resistance and retaliation to his power and domination

“My father left us when I was a child. Then my maternal uncles and grandparents took care of my brother and me. So, for everything, my mother had to depend on my uncles. And my uncles were quite influential in that locality. They were active in party politics. Our villagers consulted them to resolve issues and crisis in the locality as well as in many of their families. One of my uncle's wife, our aunt, always expressed her displeasure with my uncles caring for us. My aunt brought me a marriage proposal saying that the guy is working in the Gulf, and the family status of both of us would match. I was not very keen about that proposal, but my uncles were pretty interested. Since my mother is dependent on them, she has not much voice in our matters. So, my mother also asked me to consider it. And I was forced into this marriage. After our meeting in the presence of all our family members, the marriage was held in 15 days. I did not get an opportunity to interact or get to know the person much. On the day of our marriage, when I reached his home, I understood that none of his family was interested in the alliance and because he was insistent, they had to agree to the marriage. I felt unwelcome and humiliated. The entire house was in a mess, and they did not do the dishes for days. Two days after, when I went to our place for the first visit, I told my family I could not live in that family, and I am coming back. But they consoled me and gave me confidence. Then I went back to his place. But he and his family made my life a hell. I had to endure extreme domestic violence both from him and in-laws. His problem was chronic doubting disorder. He asked me to quit my job after marriage, and I had to obey. Now I am totally dependent on him. I was not allowed to go anywhere without him. He would always talk nonsense connecting me with other men. He did not even let me go to my natal home because he was doubtful that I had illicit relations with my uncles as well. In between, he went to the Gulf. While he was in the Gulf, he used to control me all the time over the phone. And his family continued torturing me.”

*(Rejitha, Journalist 34 years, Hindu Ezhava,
Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)*

Continued violence and her family's attempt to resolve the issue was futile. His psychiatric problem was incurable. When things were beyond her control and capacity to bear, she asserted her agency to leave the abusive marriage with her child. The family's disapproval of her demand to get a divorce even after knowing the intensity of the problem she suffered is an act to hold on to their symbolic capital, the family honour, the respect and honour her uncles have in their society they gained through political activism. They value their symbolic capital over the life of their own niece and her child. This symbolic capital is a gateway to accumulate power, position and status in the society and also to access social capital. This is also a way reformist patriarchy and regressive modernity operates in the lives of people. Though her uncles believe in progressive ideologies, when it comes to the practical ground, they think and act in a way not to transgress the normative order of the society. The uncles reproduce the same system of domination and oppression as they fear the punitive mechanism of society. The transgressors of conventional norms and those who support them are ostracised, condemned, and in their context, their integrity and value system are questioned. It is through this doxa, the internalised norms and fear of punishment the individual agency is restricted and constrained.

"Somehow my uncles happened to know about it, and they came and convinced his family to take me home for a few days. There gains my aunt interfered, and she advised me to plan a child when he is on leave. Then I thought okay if that might bring a change in him to let me consider that. Meanwhile, he left his job and returned home saying he will start some business here. That made my life all the more difficult. In between, I conceived. The situation got further worsened day by day. My child also had to suffer. One day when it became totally unbearable, I left for my home with my child. I said I want a divorce. But my family was against me going for a divorce. Then the families intervened and sent us for counselling. The counsellor said, he has a psychiatric problem; his doubting disorder cannot be cured. The counsellor advised it is better for us to go for a divorce. But my uncles were not willing to accept that. They were the ones who resolves problems in the families and marital discord among couples in my locality. So, they had a fear of society pointing fingers on their integrity and people would condemn them and dishonour them if I go for divorce. They told me if I go for divorce, then they will have no relationship with me, and I would never be allowed to step into my mother's natal home."

(Rejitha, Journalist, 34 years, Hindu ezhava, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

In her context lack of fallback options, poor availability of economic and social capital and her fear of going back to the trauma of violence and sufferings in her

marriage forced her to do an act of self-destruction. She went into a deep depression, attempted suicide that was outcomes of the patriarchal oppression. These operate through the structures of family and kinship, to constraint her individual agency to break away from an abusive marriage. Though she hit rock bottom during this phase of her life, she bounced back to life through utilising her cultural capital to make a life. She asserted her agency to break the conventional norms and walk out of the marriage. She utilised her education, a professional degree in journalism to fetch a job and stand independently. That was her strategy of retaliating the oppression and symbolic violence she experienced from her husband, both from her natal and conjugal family.

“I was so much under stress, and I couldn’t bear any more. That night I had sleeping pills and attempted suicide. I was taken to the hospital immediately so they could save my life. While I was getting discharged one of my uncles told me, it was better if you had died. Then I did not feel like going back to their home. Once I recovered, I took up a job in Trivandrum in a print media office as asst editor. Then I filed a divorce petition against him. He continued torturing me over the phone even after the litigation was filed. Finally, he agreed to go for mutual divorce and did not ask the custody of my child. He had to give some landed property on my daughter’s name as compensation. I said my daughter don’t want that. What is the point of taking compensation from a father who never loved or cared for her? Then I was adamant that I should not depend on anyone even to get a chocolate for my daughter. After a few months, my mother shifted along with me to take care of my child. She would go on and off to our native place to take care of our home. My brother was not talking to me for a few years. Now he understands my situations, and he is also supporting me. Then I got better placement in this print media office and switched to this place. I am working here on a contractual basis. I rented a decent house near to my office.”

(Rejitha, Journalist, 34 Hindu Ezhava, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2018).

Professor Resmi, knowing that her husband had many extramarital affairs, she stayed in her marriage for sixteen years just for the sake of her child, so that she would not have to grow up without a father. The value a society bestows upon the family for the protection and upbringing of children limits individual agency. She had access to economic capital, social, cultural and symbolic capital, which would empower her to assert her agency to break away from a marriage where she was continually cheated on by her husband. Emotions play a vital role in making crucial decisions in life. Even though she possessed all the capital needed to raise her daughter single-handedly, the concern for her daughter’s right to get her emotional needs, her father’s love and affection and to grow in a family environment forced her to make negotiations in her

marriage. She was made to feel ‘symbolically delegitimised’, and her female dispositions or female capital was inadequate to satisfy her husband. That feeling was rather humiliating. It had a negative impact on her physical and mental wellbeing¹⁸. When she was tired of negotiating, she experienced depression, made attempts of suicide, an attempt of self-destruction. When the daughter came to know of her father’s behaviour and her decision to break the family, gave her the emotional strength to walk out of the marriage. Children and their needs make mothers more vulnerable in making the decision in life.

“When I got to know the actual colour of my husband for the first time, I was pregnant with my daughter. For sixteen years, knowing that this man is continuously cheating me, I endured it for my daughter not to become fatherless. My mother always loved him like a son. She says when he stays with our family, we have to compromise and accommodate him. At times I feel am I the daughter or daughter in law of my mother?... I knew about almost thirteen women in his life. I wonder how many would have been there, which I did not get to know about it. There were times I was falling into depression. I was annoyed all the time. I hated him even coming close to me and preparing food for him. Twice I tried to end my life. Then I realised that it is also not very easy. There was a stage where he forced my daughter and me to come and live with him separately if we wanted to live as a family. Then we moved out with him. That was the time he got into a relationship with one of my relatives who approached him to be the prosecutor in her divorce case. I knew that he was eyeing on her bank balance and assets. But with that, some of our other family members also got to know about his perverted nature. It was around the same time I got to know that he had another illicit wife and a child in that before he married me. When my daughter also got to know about it, she was very shocked. One day she said she wants to meet him in private in his office. I was slightly apprehensive, but I sent her with my driver to his office. After the meeting, when she reached home, she did not tell me what did they discuss or what he said. But she came and told me, ‘Amma you take care of your health because from today I have only you and you have only me. I no more want him as my father.’ Then I decided if she doesn’t want why should I cling on to this relation. We filed for a mutual divorce. My father asked, ‘shouldn’t you have done this little early?’ Now my daughter took my permission to remove her father’s name as her surname. She despises her father like anything. She hates anyone talking about him.”

(Resmi, Professor, 44 Years, Hindu Ezhava, Thiruvananthapuram, March 2017).

Women are not passive victims of oppression and violence but, they develop their strategies to bargain with the system to claim the resources and utilise their capital

¹⁸ Refer back to Chapter III on the section on extramarital relationships

to pursue their goals. Though walking out of marriage gives them a sense of emancipation and freedom, but it is limited in a society ruled by patriarchal norms and values. Though divorce was considered a taboo in the Kerala society, there is an increase in the divorce rate with the improvement in women's fall-back option gained through employment and financial securities¹⁹.

Remarriage and Challenges

Anita, a lawyer and a divorcee for the past fourteen years, is considering remarriage at the pressure of her family. Her narration of experiences of talking with men whom she met on matrimonial sites explains how society and men look at divorced women and the vulnerabilities they are exposed to. Remarriage is a process where one has to start from scratch. The process of remarriage itself is challenging and it is even more so to find a suitable partner. The parties considering remarriage after divorce are individuals who have the 'experience' of marriage. They are knowledgeable agents, who know what criteria and parameters they want to look for in their partners. At the same time, many of them carry the baggage of trauma or troubles they endured in their previous marriage.

From her experience, Anita shared how she literally bargained her symbolic capital with the man with whom she was talking to. The man's attitude of taking her for granted and lack of respect and dignity is symbolic violence, the outcome of male domination. The image of a 'saviour' the guy attributes to himself to save a 'damsel in distress' is the reflection of male domination and female subordination. In the onset of domination and symbolic violence, she bargains symbolic capital such as, respect and equal treatment and clearly communicates her unwillingness to be subservient to him. It was an act of contestation of patriarchal power dominance and holding on to her individuality and dignity.

“Finally, there was one guy; he was actually taking me for granted. I just kept quiet because I thought if it works let it work, I will not (.) But I had strong objections to a lot of things where he was, and then I thought to let it be, let it go till, because he never had an issue with the child or her being with us, something like that. Considering all these, I thought let it go till it can, but at the same time, I kept a close watch on him. Then after a point, I realised he is not worth a try. Then I told him, ‘see you feel this are the areas where she didn’t treat you well. I

¹⁹ Refer to Chapter III

said if you want to start again, you have to put all that baggage down. I said I could be only a good friend and I can be understanding to you. Once I am a wife, I cannot keep pampering you for whatever she didn't give you. That's not happening. Just like you cannot do whatever the other guy didn't do. At least start from there with the understanding that you had a past, but we can start only from where we are forty. You have to understand that you also need a remarriage. It's not my job to make you feel good. I am not here to make you feel good and tell you that you are my saviour you came to save me out of some ditch'. If that's the perspective, that's where they are wrong. They feel a single woman in India and sitting with her child for 12 years. So, whatever we say she will look up to us because we will be her saviour. I said, 'good, I liked the image, but if you have to be the saviour, you have to make me feel equally important. Instead of that, if you think that I am the damsel in distress, unfortunately, I have to tell you, if I have 12,000 rupees, I will get a housemaid. After five years, my daughter will turn 18. Then why do I need you? Then what you can provide is a green card or citizenship, that I don't want. There you are ganging me wrong. If I can survive until here, I can manage another five years. You treat me as an equal, give me that respect and care. I don't feel like, okay you saved me like out of nothing. I have to work more, run more and then I should make you happy also. Why?' Just try to find out ways to make 12,000 rupees, and my maid will do all my work. I told him; basically your perception of me is wrong. Why he made me say so is, he told me 'you were sitting at home for 12 years and you did not marry. Now, who will come to marry you other than me?' I gave this long speech for this statement''.

(Anita, Lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

In the process of remarriage, the knowledge she has of the intensity of the damage a wrong decision can make and how her life would be constrained, enables her to act wisely according to the rules of the game. The process of self-reflection places her self-image as a person with 'some merit'. In this process of self-reflection, she analysed the fears and apprehensions she was carrying around, and realised the necessity to make the next step to move on with her life. It is a process of bringing meaning to her life. She did not involve her family to a large extent in the matchmaking process. When she states that she did not want to assess the guy with the measuring yard of her parents, she acts as an empowered woman asserting her agency. But finding a match on her own has its consequences as well. The process of decision-making and figuring out the whereabouts of the person whom she talks with is a stressful process for her. Now considering a remarriage, she has to take her daughter also into account. The fears and insecurities of the traumatic experience of past marriage is a constraint in her decision-making process. The responsibility and wellbeing of her daughter add to the burden of

decision making. As she cannot risk another failure of a marriage, she has to act prudently not to end up with another mistake in her life.

“After saying all these out of anger, I reflected on what I spoke. Afterwards, I started re-evaluating myself, and I thought, this is not his fault, this is your fault, where you have put your bars so low. They have imagined that you are very tolerant and you can go ahead with anything. Afterwards, to whomever I spoke to, I told them, I am not in a mood to tolerate nonsense. If you are worth it, I will give my time, if not, I have no time to waste. I am like this now, and earlier, it was not like this. They perceived that I tolerated an insane person, never filed for divorce, so even if I do something, she will keep quiet and sit. I gave this image myself, and it’s a fact. Now even I get remarried and even if it is a mess I cannot come back. They understood that side of me. That’s why I got the same kind of idiots. Now it is straightforward. Better behave properly or just get lost. I don’t need. Then they have respect. Because they know she is somebody with some merit. This is the cycle when I say fourteen years, and it is a cycle. Again, the process is not complete. I am going through the same things. There somewhere you realise it was okay till a point, after till here if you have to stay on you have to go one step higher. ... Even if your self-pity or whatever it is, you are still looking at the same things. Same fear, even if you are looking for remarriage, you are looking for the same type of characteristics, or maybe you are looking with the same fears. It is not really a walk of faith; it is more of fear. This process is very stressful. It is affecting me in a sense, when I went through this entire circle of searching for another guy, I didn’t want my family to involve, because I didn’t want them to look with their yards. But when the pressure came on me, because if I’m taking a decision, the pressure is on me. That’s where I started panicking. Because, I am supposed to analyse the guy, I’m supposed to find out the reason for his divorce. I do CID work. I check his background; all this probably a family should have done. Then my mind says, ‘if this is the story, there is something problematic (gadbad) in this. Let’s go search for the rest’. This intuition is actually irritating me. But always my hunch comes right. That is a problem. I mean, but these are all piling up to become a stress. There are times you wish that; you could ignore it and not see that. But that’s the only thing you can see and what you can do? If you are being very practical and thinking that if he drinks, let him be. But my problem is I am visualising it and thinking in this way. What would happen if he gets drunk and behaves in this way in front of the child? The child is not his. How would my child take it? This may never happen also. This is how my thought process goes on. ... This causes a kind of pressure because it is a long-distance conversation. You are not meeting this person. On the one side, this person is going on rattling up with questions, and the other person does not have an answer to it. So that’s also creating a kind of tension for both either party.”

*(Anita, lawyer, 40 years, Christian Orthodox, Thiruvananthapuram,
June 2018)*

Intra-household Negotiations and Bargaining

If the family fails to serve the purpose of the institution, it becomes another space of reproduction of gender inequalities. When oppression and violence are beyond the endurance of the individual, the above-stated narratives show women opting to walk out of their marriage, breaking their families transgressing the societal norms of femininity. There is another category of women who accommodate the domination and choose to stay within the family. The accommodation is made through constant negotiations, contestations and bargaining to pursue the goal of safeguarding the unity of the family and freedom to fulfil their career goals. These constant negotiations, compromises, and bargaining have implications for their wellbeing at each phase of life.

Suffering domestic and sexual violence for a prolonged period of time impairs the physical and mental health of the victim. The experiences of Prof Martina discussed in the previous chapters²⁰ clearly explains how women's lives are norm bound, and the ways through which social norms restrain a woman's agency. Prof Martina by her social background and social status belongs to a privileged elite class with access to economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. The social norms were barriers for her to utilise her various capital to bring a change in her social condition. Growing up, seeing a dominating father and subservient mother, she internalised submission to domestic violence. Through embodying tolerating violence, she was unable to assert her agency to break the system of oppression and symbolic violence. She values the symbolic capital, the honour, status and dignity of her family, her children's right to emotional needs over her wellbeing. Thus, she remains subservient to the dominance and violence of her husband, suffering the trauma and pain of violence.

Malati, the journalist was making constant negotiations and compromises, which includes taking a break from her career after the birth of her second son. But her feelings were not reciprocated by her husband in terms of respect and acknowledgement and so she was disappointed. His habit of continuously finding faults in what she does without understanding and acknowledging her contribution, she felt alienated from the family and from her husband. She felt that the space that enabled her to be herself was

²⁰ Refer Chapter II and III

non-existent, and she was running for the family like a machine. The words of discouragement and blame game of her husband ‘symbolically delegitimated’ her feminine capital (Skeggs 1997) as inadequate to run the family. The act of continuously finding fault in what the other person does without acknowledging their contributions and giving them due respect are different modes of domination and symbolic violence.

Even while experiencing symbolic violence, Malati developed her own strategies to deal with it. Maintaining silence in a situation that would lead to an argument is one strategy she adopts. Responding to the same issue after two days when her husband is in a better mood and trying to convince her standpoints and opinions is a mechanism she devised to bargain with his dominance and make him understand and wherever needed to make him accept her opinions. It is an implicit act of bargaining with patriarchy. Silence is also a powerful language to communicate her dissent or difference of opinion. When she states that she made ‘the declaration of freedom’ it was an explicit bargain with the patriarchy. When she demanded respect and her space, it was an effort to access symbolic capital. It was asserting her agency to hold on to her individuality and reclaim her selfhood. Symbolic capital, the respect and honour an individual deserves as a human being is very core to the wellbeing of an individual.

“I started doing my duty from early in the morning 5 AM-9AM, 9 am he has to come to the office, we were staying nearby then, but as my son is ill, I cannot rest or anything and night 8 PM -12 AM I do the next round duty. There is no system of split duty here. But I figured out on my own, and I took special permission. Otherwise, I will not be able to come to work. And all others are too happy to give because I took the extreme shifts. I was doing it, not even taking care of my health. I could hardly sleep for three hours in between 1AM to 4 AM. I was considering that he should not be troubled. He was feeling concerned, saying I take too much strain. But at the same time, he won’t lend any help. All these pressures were upon me. One day he asked me to leave the job instead of taking the extra strain. Knowing that responding to it would lead to an argument, I kept silent. Whatever issues are there, I keep silent at that moment, and I would talk with him after two days. Then his mind would be calm enough to understand and he would agree to what I say. But one day, I burst out, shouted at him, [annu njaan pottitherichu, aake bahalam vachu] then he understood a little bit. Forcefully he created a situation where I had to raise my voice. [bahalam vakkenda oru situation undakki.] Recently, I told him, even before marriage, my parents had given me my own space, and you are also bound to give that space. That space became totally non-existent [space theree illathayi], and I myself started feeling congested. Then I said, ‘I demand’. This demanding has made a lot of difference in our relationship. I had seen the change reflecting even in my news anchoring as well. Because it was around the same time, I made a declaration of freedom [Swathanthrya

prakhyapanam] at home and at the office. ... One day he came and asked me, 'you don't like me anymore? You were a good friend of mine. Now we don't gel with each other, and no communication is there, nothing is there between us.' Then I said it is not my problem. If you are considering me as a friend, then I should get this (respect) a friend deserves. I was not getting it. So, I was into a shell. I was literally in a shell. I was feeling aloof from everything. That was around the same time I had that realization that in the office also, even after we worked for so many years, I became nothing, and I was in a terrible state [aake mosham avasthyilayirunnu]. He came to an understanding level after the open conversation. I am someone who hardly demands to get something. That even in the office or at home, it is my decision that I will not demand anything. Then, when he came and asked me what was going wrong with me, and I openly demanded my due respect. That had helped our relationship. He has realized that I need that space. I need to get the respect a human being deserves. [oru manushyanu kittenda respect kittanam ennullathaanu.]”.

(Malati, Journalist, 36 years Hindu brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

In a patriarchal society, feminine capital are valued assets to efficiently run a family. Girija, the journalist, has to work in shifts in the office. Irrespective of this, she is expected to be a homemaker as well. When the shift at the office is over, she has to work in the next shift which is at home. She narrated an experience where she was asked to make a cup of tea when she was just back home at 1AM after her night shift. When she was reluctant to meet the demands, her husband's tone of the response invoked a feeling of guilt in her. In a patriarchal society, women internalise their gender roles and norms, and this process reproduces gender power relations in the domestic space. The poor performance of embodied gender roles invokes a guilty consciousness in them. The 'awakening of the woman', Girija refers to is the feminine capital, and poor performances of gender roles are the lack of feminine capital to reproduce the gender power relations. Denying the demands which are inconvenient for her at that time is a way of contesting the male dominance and power assertion. When their agency is constrained by gender norms, they make power negotiation and emotional negotiations not to create disharmony in the family.

Women's work is valued as supplementing the family income if the husband's income is higher than the wife's pay scale. In that context, the wife's career is undervalued. The lack of respect and recognition for her professional work and domestic work makes Girija feel a symbolic delegitimization of her feminine capital and dispositions. Negotiations and compromises are made for the good and welfare of

the family. Making compromises for the happiness of others at the cost of their own happiness leads to discontentment. When similar situations distress her to cultivate inner wellbeing and safeguard her selfhood, she utilises her social capital, the friendship networks as stress busters. That is a coping mechanism she devised to deal with situations that construct ill-being.

“Yes, I do get furious [aathmarosham vallaandu varum]. I give back answers and make excellent dialogue delivery. My husband would say it is irritating (chori). When I get angry, he would say, ‘If it is for asking a cup of tea, I am made to hear this long lecture, then I don’t want the tea.’ When I hear that, I feel guilty consciousness and it awake the woman in me [nammude ullile sthree unarum]. Then I go and make the tea. It is a kind of both power negotiation and emotional negotiation. In similar situations, what I think is that, if his demands are not tedious to do at that time and if it gives him happiness, better do. Don’t spoil his happiness and family peace by disobeying or disagreeing to do that. ... His lack of understanding and devaluing my professional work makes me sad at times. He might not be demanding these things if he feels that I had a very hectic work schedule in the office. But then I think if I could bring peace instead of unhappiness in the family, then let me compromise. Since I have these friends as a stress-busters, I release my emotions by sharing with them. But if I don’t let this out, the feelings of lack of acknowledgement and appreciation in both my office space and at home would eventually make me feel unhappy and depressed”

(Girija, Journalist, 33 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

Prof Ramani is a scientist who needs to commit more time in the research lab. Her husband is understanding of her priorities and gives her the freedom and space to pursue her academic interests without any objection. But the family is totally dependent on her. The gender norms that define gender division of labour in the domestic space and the endowment of domestic responsibilities on women constrain women’s career ambitions. The family’s non-cooperation and lack of support in sharing the burden of domestic responsibilities are burdening her. Even though she voices her discontentment, she expresses in a limited way. The fear of losing real freedom and privileges limit her agency to challenge the domination and unequal gender power relations. Instead of actively challenging the oppressive system, she limits her career ambitions.

“My husband gives the needed space to pursue my academic and research work, and he has no objections in staying for a long time in the department even after university working hours to do my work. But his support in sharing the domestic responsibilities and domestic chores are very minimal. It is again

my responsibility to take care of the needs of our children, run after their admission process, go for parent-teacher meetings. And we don't have any maid at home. So, I have to manage everything single handed. Recently we started building a home. I have to run after arranging the finances for that as well. Sometimes, it turns very burdening. Especially when we have works piling up here. At times I argue with him and ask him why don't you support me in all these affairs. But I try to limit my reaction to a level where he does not get offended and hurt. If he feels offended, he might not give the freedom and space he is giving me right now to pursue my academic interest. So, I somehow manage things on my own... I have a dream research project in mind. In India, there is hardly any work done in that area. But I also need some international training or collaboration to take up that kind of work, along with the support of really committed and efficient students. But in the current situation at my home where my husband and children are not ready to take up other responsibilities, I kept apart from all those plans. Sometimes I think I have achieved these much in my career. Now I should consider my family's interest more. But that dream keeps popping up in my mind".

(Ramani, Professor, 52 years, Hindu Dalit, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018)

The gender norms are that structure gender division of labour endows the domestic roles and responsibilities on women. Women are internalising these norms through discursive practices and social interactions. Women embodying these schemas in their respective field reproduce gender power relations. In this context, women make explicit and implicit bargains and negotiations with the patriarchal power structures to cultivate their wellbeing, to claim their selfhood and individuality.

Contesting and Negotiating Power Relations in the Work Space

Power relations operating in public spaces control and constrain women's agency and autonomy. In professional spaces, the masculine dispositions are values wherein within the households, the feminine dispositions are of higher value and importance. Women who are role players in both domains internalise these dispositions and embody it in the respective fields to perform the roles endowed on them. In gender power relations operating in a structural system, the doxic order delegitimises female capital where women's opinion, their roles are valued secondary to that of men. "When women pursue the most powerful and well-paid positions gender power relations and the doxic order de-legitimate feminine and female capitals and nullify their strategic usefulness. This is where masculine and male capitals continue to prevail – in the struggle for money and power" (Huppertz 2009, 59). The devaluing of female capital deprives the opportunities of women to grow in their career.

As women make constant negotiations and bargaining in the domestic space, they contest and negotiate power structure operating in their professional space as well. Prof Geeta deals with the power structures in society primarily and in the academic space in a soft and delicate way. Being a feminist, social scientist and academician their opinions and responses to various social aspects and social issues are judged continuously. In that context, as a privileged class whose opinions can impact public opinion, they are alert to be 'politically correct' when they place their statements. As feminist academicians, they can challenge the androcentric biases in the knowledge system and turn the knowledge production as a 'political endeavour' (McCall 1992). Thus, their academic engagements can be more of a subversive activity (McCall 1992). Prof Geeta has her patented style of subversiveness where she portrays her as a very traditional woman, but in her classes, she slips in her radicalism and ideologies in a subtle way where the audience/students could receive it. But in the outside space among the colleagues, she don't express her radical streak much. Rendering radical ideology in a softest and subtle form is her patented style of subversiveness.

"When you come to the professional kind of background, you have to tread more delicately in Kerala. ... initially, I did land in a lot of trouble because of my unconventional kind of response to things. But over a period of time, I also slowly mellow down to a point where, I made it more to a subversive activity. I would take it to my classes and in between I would slip it in, and so my feminism in the sense of radical kind of feminism that I pose in between my teachings. So, it begins in my classroom and I am seeing over a long period of time it is disseminating from my classroom. But then with my colleagues' people around me I might not appear to be so radical. Say for example, I have been taking classes in the Academic Staff College for a long time, may be for the last 20 years. When I go and take class for college teachers in feminist theory, my subversiveness works in a different way. I myself dress up in a very traditional Kerala saree and go. So, the point is, otherwise, suppose I am radical from the very sight, it is very difficult for me even my words to reach them. So, my point of interaction with them is predicated on a certain kind of politics where, it is much more subversive. It is much later they realize what I am saying is a different power lens all together. So what I do is I dress up in a Kerala saree and go, they say, Oh! a traditional lady, not very radical, but then I would slip it in and I would make sure that everything I would say in a radical manner would be there in what I am saying in a soft. So, that is the way I have functioned, which in a specific way something that I would say, I am patented. I don't know may be a soft feminine kind of a thing but I believes that this makes much more change in Kerala and I think that I played a very important role in disseminating this kind of things amongst my students. This has been my tactic, but it's not easy. I do it very delicately."

(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

She attributes the radicalism she carries to her liberal family, which moulded her ideologies and views of life. She takes her activism to the classroom spaces and social media platforms than more on the streets. Putting up pictures of her solo travels on Facebook is with a purpose to inspire other women to desire, and break the barriers that restrict their mobility. These are her style of functioning and challenging the patriarchal structures.

“And even on the personal front many of the things that I do because I come from a different, more liberal family. I would not articulate it in the staff room. I would not articulate in front of my colleagues. I travel all around the world. If I am invited to JNU, I might take off a bus and go to Dharamsala, I might go to Jammu and Kashmir, I do what I want to do. Very consciously I put it on Facebook, to let my students and the whole community know that there are women who can travel like this, and you can go to places you never thought that you could be gone alone and like that. And I make it a point to do that. I flaunt it in a sense, just to, also maybe to instigate and inspire at least one person to break the barriers and come out. People might think that why I am posting it. But I post it with a purpose. But then, over a period of time I have learnt that maybe it is not necessary for me to articulate it. But I do tell it my class and motivate my students to do it, and take up and frame their desires, understand that the body is different and the body for them can also be used in radically different ways what they have been taught. But all these happens, but I do it in a different way. My style of functioning in a different way, for maybe a more radical feminist that you would meet. But I think I am very, very radical the way I have lived my life, the way I have desired, the way I have loved, the way I have spent and I have lived all those things and I have taught. This is, sum in substance, you know what really makes me.”

-(Geeta, Professor, 50 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2018)

When the power relations in a workspace are governed by gender norms, women especially with family responsibilities, stepping to a power position is very challenging. Here in the patriarchal system, power is vested with men, and thus system favours men. When Girija, the journalist highlights that in the history of visual media in Kerala had only one woman executive-editor, that magnifies the way patriarchy works in the media industry and denies opportunities to women to establish themselves in the industry. The gendered stereotyping penetrates in the media industry and project's women as incapable of adorning managerial and executive positions. Even when women embody masculine dispositions, their gender capital is symbolically delegitimated as not of the right sort of capital. Thus, gender norms deny opportunities

for women to prove their potential and block their access to cultural capital, their skills and potentials.

“Power is an emotional element. In the office space, obviously, it is men who have power. In the history of visual media in Kerala, there was only one-woman executive editor. It is challenging for women to step up that power ladder, and the industry is not providing that space or not being open to women growing. Either a single woman or widow who has no family responsibilities can step up the career ladder compared to the rest. For us, the emotional bonding with the family will be pulling back. Only men get support from the system, so power is vested in him; even if it is the office space, or in the overall patriarchal system. The system bestows power with men. And it is not easy for a woman to reach that position in that patriarchal system. The system thinks a woman is incapable of managing higher power positions. To cross this barrier, I need to prove my potential and gain power. For that, we need opportunities. Actually, opportunities give us power. But we are denied of opportunities. Because nobody is ready to experiment with new people fearing that if that person is not received by the audience, they will lose out in the competition.”

(Girija, Journalist, 33 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

The increase in the number of visual and print media led to competition among each other to increase their ratings and thus maximizing profit. In this transformation of media to a profit-making industry, certain unethical practices also became part of the game. News is commodified, and news which has greater demand and sale value is only communicated to the masses. Girija stated that she would assert her agency to relinquish her job if she was asked to do something totally unethical, that would damage someone’s honour and dignity itself. She values moral and ethical consciousness as important than her job. Removing the news heads from the rundown of an infamous person without the knowledge of anyone is an implicit way of resisting the power structures. Her resistance to commodify the news they sell using women anchors on the special occasion days is also a resistance to the capitalist power structures. These are the resistance to certain practices that normalize the gender power structure and objectification of women. Certain times when they are in a position not to actively place their resistance, they devise strategies and find reasons to rationalise and cope up with the system.

“We know that the media is functioning as an industry with the motive of profit maximisation. They would give news only, which has market demand. If

particular news is sellable, then they would sell that particular news. Yes, we know that there are unethical practices in this industry. For e.g. the latest controversy of honey trap the other channel did recently is totally an unethical practice. If my institution asks me to do something similar, I would overtly refuse and would say that I don't want to work with your institution anymore. When we give the advertisement of this X gold merchant, we know that he is a fraud. But we cannot help it because for us the advertisement is what matters the most. Sometimes we might cut off the news from the rundown for the bulletin about the same fellow without anyone knowing of it and express our resistance. If you take all these as part of capitalist market functions and these all are for profit maximising, and your news is a product for sale and selling it according to the demands, you can't partly rationalise your guilty conscience. ... Women anchors are asked to anchor news on Onam days in traditional attire and all. But in show business, women have more market value than men [Show businessil sthreekal aanu purushanmarekkaal ere vittu pokunnathu]. When we are asked to dress up on occasional days and do the news programs, I make issues. We have a problem with this way of using us. But if normal viewers psychology, if it is even me, I would watch a programme if a good-looking person is doing that."

Girija, Journalist, 33 years, Hindu Nair, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

Malati, the journalist, had an open confrontation with the media office authorities who assign them their tasks. It was a direct bargain with patriarchy when she said "I demand what I deserve" and it was a sharper way of bargaining by threatening to quit her job. Openly demanding was an act to regain her self-worth, confidence and wellbeing. It was open communication as to how patriarchy constrains the lives of women in her profession and how it implies on their personality. When the patriarchal structure symbolically delegitimises cultural and gender capital of women as less valued in the media industry, it is an overt expression of dominance that reproduces unequal gender power relations. The act of bargaining for the due share is an act of challenging the systems of domination and inequality.

"When I felt that my personality and my career is affected because I was not given the duties and responsibilities a person who has these many years of experience should get. In the office, I demanded, I was not getting what I deserve according to my experience and potential. I openly told them I might be forced to leave the job if it is not giving any further career growth. I conveyed my office people that, the realization that I have not achieved a substantial career growth even after so many years of work experience has started affecting my personality. ... Then it brought back the confidence in my anchoring. Even then, I couldn't get back to my old self. What I was five years before in my anchoring, I have not retained it yet. I had been lagging behind. I want to retain and renew my professional skills. Then, I want to do some other

projects. Even if I am here, I have some ideas for a programme. Not about news, I am thinking of doing something else.”

(Malati, Journalist, 36, Hindu Brahmin, Thiruvananthapuram, November 2017)

Prof Ramani highlighted her experiences of caste discrimination in the academic spaces and in the administrative spaces. Trivandrum and the locals are infamous for caste domination and caste discrimination. They are very explicit in making casteist statements and casteist attitude. In the university space, caste plays a vital role in the appointment of people to prominent power positions. This came across almost all narratives of university teachers. The University teachers who are from lower and marginal castes and religious communities experienced caste discrimination more than others who are from upper caste communities. Caste domination is asserted to consolidate power and position to the dominant caste groups and symbolically delegitimise the position and power of people who are from other communities and marginal communities. Prof Ramani also shared how the intersection of her gender, caste identities and her disposition of soft-spoken nature caused to marginalise and humiliate her in a public space like a syndicate board meeting of the university. When the VC denied her permission to speak in the syndicate meeting in which she is also a member holding power and status, it was an act of symbolic delegitimization of her symbolic and cultural capital. That mode of domination is symbolic violence instigated on her. This act of humiliation tarnishes to confidence and tamper the ego of the person. When she was unable to challenge this domination by asserting her right to speak in an aggressive way, it was her male colleagues who spoke on behalf of her and challenged the power and dominance of authorities in power and position.

“Trivandrum people are relatively casteist than the other people from other parts of the state. They are very explicit in expressing their caste discrimination and caste domination. In the department, when I started my teaching career, I had observed students from marginalised caste communities were given low grades even when they were smart students. I was helpless to do anything at that time because I myself was a young faculty and from a marginal community. When the yearly system changed to the semester system and the new teachers who are more sensitive to these issues joined after the retirement of the elderly teachers, there are hardly any discriminatory practices in the department. Now students are graded according to their performance. ... Sometimes I felt I was not very much accepted in some academic spaces. I felt it several times that my gender and caste identities are barriers for me to get acceptability in those spaces. When I was the syndicate member, there were instances where the VC did not allow me to speak. I felt maybe because I am a soft spoken person and not aggressive in my arguments,

I got sidelined. Or else, maybe because I am a woman. But this practice of VC repeatedly continued in two-three syndicate meetings. Then my colleagues in the syndicate fought with the VC and asked him to allow me to speak. That became an issue and a piece of news in the newspaper. They said I got sidelined because of my Dalit caste identity. But I don't think it is not just the caste identity, but I think both my soft-spoken nature and my gender identity were also factors that made VC show a discriminatory attitude towards me”
(Ramani, Professor, 52 years, Hindu Dalit, Thiruvananthapuram, July 2018).

In the profession of the law, there is an open system of hierarchy existing between the lawyer and the client, the senior lawyers and junior lawyers. In the operationalising of this hierarchy, the systems of dominance are always reproduced. The clients are always at the mercy of the lawyer. Radhika, the lawyer, shared about how this system of dominance can take rough shapes of harassment, humiliation, exploitation and symbolic violence against the clients. The lawyer's admonishing of her colleague was an act of her bargaining with the patriarchy on behalf of the client to defend her dignity and rights. In that context, the gender power relations and the professional hierarchical relations were a double advantage for her colleague to harass his client. The powerlessness or subordinate position of the client was exploited by the male colleague. When the client was powerless and constraint to assert her agency, Adv Radhika speaks and fights on behalf of her. Here her cultural capital and her equal power with her colleague was an asset to admonish him and challenge his act of domination.

“I was working in the public prosecutor's office for some time. There were incidents where I had to fight with the male junior lawyers of the prosecutor in the office. When the clients are asked to come to the office for briefing the case, some of them are very rude to the clients. Once I was working in the office and, in the next room, a woman client had been questioned by another male colleague of mine, as part of briefing her case. I could overhear the questions he asked her and his mocking her. As a woman, I was feeling very uncomfortable with the way he asked questions to her. After a point of time, I went to his cabin and admonished him. You should respect her dignity and human rights. There were similar incidents happened and I reacted the same way. I did go out of the box and fought for clients who came for justice.”

(Radhika , Lawyer, 44, Hindu Ezhava, Thiruvananthapuram, June 2017).

Conclusion

Professional women are embedded in the family structures, culture and society which constitute the field. Their everyday practices are constituted through the negotiations, compromises and contestations they make with the power structures. In the cultural context of their lives, the regressive modernity and reformist patriarchy endowed mental and cultural schemas that define the power relations with various hierarchical structures such as gender, caste and class. The reformist patriarchy that defined the gender norms and values are embodied and reproduced through social interactions between the social structures. The power relations operated through the structures limit the agency of professional women in their respective social context. When the habitus, the functioning of structures through embodying the norms constrain the individual agency, these women bargain with patriarchy, they make negotiations and contest the structural relations using their dispositions or capital. Professional women have access to cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital. In their social context, when the structures constrain their agency, they utilise their dispositions and capital to pursue their goals and reproduction of the system.

Structures both constrain and enable individual choices. Women make certain choices in a specific social context. In particular contexts, they assert a transformative agency to bring a change and transformation in the structure and the context. There is a wide spectrum of choices available to these women. Professional women are norms and values bound to making choices. Gender, caste and class norms define the relationship between individuals interacting in the social space and these norms determine whose and what capital and dispositions are valued in a particular social context. Through this process, the structures are reproduced. Those who transgress the doxic orders and norms are punished by society for their non-compliance. This is to bring order and harmony in the social reproduction of structures. In this process of reproduction, the modes of domination lead to symbolic violence in the meso-micro and macro levels.

Professional women are not passive victims of power relations. They are knowledgeable agents utilise their dispositions and capital to pursue their goals even when the structures and the norms that govern them constrain their agency. They devise their strategies to bargain, contest, negotiate and comply with the power structures. In

that context, their assertion of agency, full autonomy and empowerment have a contextual meaning and significance. Overtly and covertly they contest and negotiate with the power structures to claim their resources and cultivate their wellbeing.

Chapter V - Professional Women and Their Social Construction of Wellbeing: Discussion and Conclusion

The process of the social construction of wellbeing among professional women was informed by a combination of a sociological, feminist and psychological theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks. The radical feminist perspective, multi-cultural feminist perspective and, the feminist- Bourdeusian framework, were used to analyse the gender power relations operating in the socio-cultural context of Kerala. The social constructionist perspective was used to analyse the process of constructing their everyday reality. The phenomenological understanding of the everydayness of professional interpreted how they make meaning of their everydayness. The Bourdieusian framework helped to analyse the operation of power in the everydayness of the professional women and their phenomenological understanding of this everydayness. The thesis looked at the way reformist patriarchy and regressive modernity position women in the social context and constitute their everyday lives and understand how power operates in their micro and macro level. It further examined how professional women exercise their agency and how it gets represented in their daily lives. The embeddedness of women explained how they make meaning of their lived realities. Professional women who have access to cultural and social capital are constrained to exercise their agency and autonomy. But they are not passive victims of oppression and unequal power relations. They negotiate, rationalise, contest and cope up with the unequal power relations in their everyday life.

Social Transformations and the Gender Question in Kerala

Women's high literacy rate and education, and their social awareness contributed significantly to the development of the 'Kerala model' the state attained (Arun 2018). The matrilineal system that endowed autonomy and empowerment to women, the relative autonomy of the princely states of Travancore and Cochin during the colonial period, the missionary interventions that imparted modern education and health care services, the political and social transformation movements were attributed as factors that contributed to this gender capital (Arun 2018). But the legal interventions that brought changes in the kinship structures and economic transformation with the change in the economy from agrarian to the service-based economy had negatively impacted women's autonomy and property rights (Arun 2018). Feminist scholars have

written extensively on the historical processes of change in gender power relations, the construction of feminine identity and domestication of women through gender norms and discursive practices (Devika 2015, 2019; Eapen and Kodoth 2002). Through their scholarly writings, they exposed the gender paradoxes of the well-acclaimed Kerala model of development. Their research also throws light on how marginalised communities such as Dalits, tribals, fishing communities became the outliers of this development (Arun 2018; Devika 2002). The increase in violence and crime rates against women, the higher suicide rate among women, the gender differences in the prevalence of mental illnesses among women and the increase in divorce rates, though attributed to social awareness, empowerment of women and a higher rate of reporting, reflected the unequal gender power relations in the state (Mukhopadhyay 2007; Devika & Mukhopadhyay 2007). Though the powerlessness and inequalities of women in the marginalised and minority communities are addressed in the researches, the experience of power and patriarchy that constituting the lived realities of middle-class women are not adequately captured in the scholarly works. It is in this context the study is placed as an attempt to understand and explore the nuances of operationalisation of power and how it implies on the wellbeing of professional middle-class women, who exhibit the characteristics of the new middle class.

The new middle class have access to socioeconomic resources such as English education and modern forms of professional employment (Fernandes 2006). They identify themselves as marked by a politics of distinction from both the colonial state and more marginalized social groups. They are the politically assertive sections claim to represent the general interest of the public (Fernandes 2006). The link between language and middle-class formation has been intensified by globalization as an expanding private sector, and outsourcing has consolidated the importance of English-language skills (Fernandes 2006). Segments of the middle class that have historically had access to English education have been poised to convert this capital into new forms of mobility in a liberalizing labour market (Fernandes 2006). They possessed advantages in labour as well as social fields (Fernandes 2006). The professional middle class of university teachers, lawyers and journalists are popularly perceived as the privileged section of the population who has access to a significant level of cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital. They are an aspiring social group continuously

under the pressure of maintaining a class status and upward social mobility in the globalised era.

Though professional middle-class women have access to cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital, the power operating through various social structures constrain their lives in multiple ways. The everyday life experiences and subjectivities of professional women in Kerala are constituted through the interaction of power structures in the domain of the family and kinship structures, the professional space and social structures of gender, class, caste and economy. But in the face of oppression, women negotiate, rationalise and contest these power structures. This process of bargaining with the patriarchy (Kandiyoti 1988) is for holding on their individuality and actualising their wellbeing.

The social structures of family and economy fundamentally determine the standards of wellbeing. But with the social change happened in the Kerala society through education, out-migration, and social mobility that brought changes in the culture and psychological orientation of people, particularly in their taste and preferences, perceptions and aspirations of life and lifestyle patterns. But these cultural changes did not penetrate into the underlying social structures of the family and economy, which are still guided by conventional norms and values. This conflict of interests and the social changes in the culture not corresponding to change the social structure jeopardise the wellbeing of the individual (Derné 2009).

The social change and transformations in the social structures affect the lives of professional women and their relationships in the micro and meso level structures. Conflict of traditional values and modern ideas of progressiveness and individual freedom is a peculiar feature in contemporary Kerala society. The social transformations in Kerala and the social mobility of the population through education, the transition to the neoliberal economy, and out-migration had opened avenues for the flow of values. Now it is not the conflict between local and western culture and value system; instead, the conflict is between 'glocally generated hybrids' (Devika 2019). The intersection of 'global flows', and the 'local social dynamics' constituted a definitive configuration of patriarchy and the resistance to it (Devika 2019).

The outward global migration in the post-1970s to the Gulf regions and the western regions was significant in the social and economic upward mobility in Kerala,

and it had also restructured the domestic responsibilities of women, and contributed to the constitution of patriarchy. But this social change cannot be attributed to the conflict of 'global and local', as the modern notions of gender was not exclusively a product of this conflict (Devika 2019). There is a colonial continuity which did not radically restructure the values and forms, instead allowed to mutate the indigenous structures that constituted the modern 20th-century families in Kerala (Devika2019). The social reform movements idealised the domestic identity of women as culturally superior and entrenched the patriarchal values in the Malayalee psyche.

Professional women internalise the norms that idealise the domestic identity of women and the social construction of 'respectable femininity' (Radhakrishnan 2011). They value the feminine dispositions as culturally superior, and the process of internalisation of gender norms and roles constructs their gender identity as embedded in their family and around the familial roles. This constructs a perception of a professional woman as a superwoman who is equally a career woman and a homemaker. The embodying of cultural norms and gender roles constrain them from breaking away from the patriarchal norms of femininity. The compliance with the conventional norms and the juggling between multiple roles in the family and workspace construct immense stress. The role extension and lack of support and understanding from the family produce role conflict in them.

The evolution of the modern family was a culmination of traditional norms and values, and western ideas of the nuclear family. The idea of a modern conjugal family was developed through the process of synthesising the ideas of Brahmanical values of marriage and family (Ganesh 1997), and the Victorian morality that projected the monogamous marriage as the ideal through the missionary discourses during the colonial period and the social reformers who were influenced by the western education (Jeffrey 2003). The highlight on the idea of a housewife was the outcome of the synthesising Brahmanical values of chastity and the duty of procreation and the Victorian ideas of motherhood filtered through colonialism (Devika 2019, 3). The modern family is imagined as an outcome of 'development of gendered capacities' through processes of socialisation and gender-appropriate education (Devika 2019). The ideal woman was expected to possess 'natural' and practical dispositions, socially acquired qualities to care and nurture the family and cultivate their inner selves.

These ideals and norms constructed a particular kind of motherhood where the mothers are perceived as the giver and nurturer of the family without expecting anything in return. They are socially expected to live for others (Snell-Rood 2015). Mother is also the ‘vessel of culture’ (Devika 2010), who is the carrier of culture and tradition across generations. The glorification and overemphasis on motherhood produce conflict and self-doubt in women, especially professional ones as they are made to feel that they have failed to meet the expectations, emotional and physical needs of their children. They carry the guilt of not giving adequate time to their children in their growing years, inability to give the quantity of time whenever the children need them and their physical absence producing personality deformities in their children. When they are overladen with the social expectations and norms of motherhood and the internalisation of feminine dispositions and domestic roles, it leads to an internal conflict that constructs poor inner wellbeing.

Society values education and economic independence of women in the cultural context of Kerala, which is quite unlikely in other parts of the country. But it is a part of recolonization process (Thapan 2009) to keep the hegemony of men in the society where women’s education is not encouraged for their empowerment and individuation (Devika 2007), but to produce mothers and wives who have social awareness and possessing skills to nurture children as responsible citizens. The power that operated in the familial spaces reshaped women’s responsibilities. The wife was expected to give care and pleasure to the husband and build ‘moral and affective’ bonding with him. On the other hand, with children, the mother was expected to provide affect and supervise the upbringing of children as ‘industrious subjects of the relevant modern collectivity’ (Devika 2019, 3).

Modern family is the meeting ground of nature and culture, and the breakdown of the family is considered as the breakdown of the society (Devika 2007). In this context, ‘responsible parenting’ is understood in gendered ways where they play a significant role in modernising caste-communities and nation. This was the rationale for advising women as homemakers, who were the agents of reproduction (Devika 2019). The nurturant and non-nurturant care work was associated with mothers as this care is associated with affect, when given with motherly qualities and this quality are lacking when the care worker is hired. Through the nurturant and non-nurturant care, the mother is responsible for the production of “the bodies and minds of worthy industrious citizens of the modern state” (Devika 2019, 4).

Mother's success is equated with the educational performance and success of the children (Arun 2018). This produces continuous pressure on the mothers, and when their professional roles and responsibilities constrain their performance of the role of a mother, they compromise their career roles such as relinquishing their administrative positions and taking career breaks. When their success is equated with the educational achievements of the children, they give priority to children rather than on their career aspiration or developing their professional skills. Kerala's patriarchy in the 21st century is a synthesis of local- familial phenomenon intersecting with national and global processes. The Malayalee families are gaining proximity to the global market through the affective labour of mother and parental investments in children's education and skill training to convert them from "raw labour power to saleable skilled labour" (Devika 2019, 13). The effort and energy investing in the education and upbringing of the children is part of their aspirations for upward class mobility through equipping their children with the skills to compete in the global labour market.

Women's role in the labour market

Educated women had access to the labour market. Women's role in the labour market was defined by conventional norms and traditional values intersecting with the progressive ideas of the modern educated social reformers. The first generation feminists and the social reformers who received modern education proposed home-based income-generating work for women would enhance the self-respect, psychological wellbeing, moral uprightness, good health, ensure compensation to the family for the expenses she 'causes' (including childbirth), avoidance of sexual temptation and gossip (Ammal 1927-28 cited in Devika 2019, 4). Through this participation in the labouring process, women were subjected to self-discipline and remain "industrious and self-controlled subjects" (Devika 2019, 4). The Great Depression of the 1930s, the partition of joint family properties with the legal sanctioning of the partition of joint family properties, changes in marriage practices such as an increase in dowry practices among the matrilineal families, pushed many upper-castes and educated women to enter into the labour market (Devika 2019). Women's work paid work was looked upon with a fear of corroding their 'femininity' and unmarried women exposed to the attack of sexual predators. Thus, the first-generation feminists came up with the following arguments as the solution to these vulnerabilities of women. Women's inherently feminine qualities to be exercised in the spaces they sought paid work such as schools, hospitals and reform institutions.

Women's paid work outside the home was projected to support the family, and its economic and social upward mobility (Devika 2019). Women's labour in Kerala carries a negative connotation, and the reproductive and domestic responsibilities constrain women's labour force participation (Sonia 2013 cited in Devika 2019). The Victorian-Brahmanical domestic ideologies keep women's affective labour invisible (Devika 2019, 13).

There is a conflict between conventional norms and values and career aspirations shaped by progressive values of freedom and empowerment. The gender norms that give shape to the gender division of labour within the family and workspace constrain women's aspirations of career growth. Women's career ambitions are given a negative connotation as an ambitious woman is perceived by society as the one who will be destroying their family. Women's primary identity is embedded in the family. Women's primary roles and responsibilities and priorities are tied to their domestic roles and responsibilities and the affective labour of women (Devika 2019) is culturally valued than her role in the labour market. This is an outcome the constructing gender norms and cultural values in reformist patriarchy which synthesises traditional norms and modern values which produce regressive modernity the cultural context of Kerala.

It is a process of recolonization through the imposition of hegemonic control of male counterparts. Recolonisation refers to relations of power that manifest themselves and function through different social processes at different historical moments in time and point to the continuities, discontinuities and transformations in colonial and imperial power (Thapan 2009, 14). This is hegemonic structural domination and violent suppression by men and the modern educated social reformers. This men and social reformers appropriated them as privileged commentators of the universal position of women and through invoking their hierarchical relations of power they produced or reproduced feminine identity in a particular way, which is again a process of recolonization (Thapan 2009).

When they are norm bound and under continuous pressure to perform 'respectable femininity', lack of acknowledgement and respect of the family members reflects the lack of dignity they enjoy in the family space and society. It reflects the inferior social status and position of women where her domestic roles are taken for granted. Unequal gender power relations in the domestic space makes the family function as an undemocratic institution. The emotional and physical violence they

endure in the family space also reflects the relative powerlessness and inferior position in the gender power hierarchy. Most women are victims of symbolic violence where they experience unequal power and domination on a mental and emotional level. Women grew up in families experiencing domestic violence are more subservient to power domination and endure violence in their family life (Agarwal and Panda 2007). Through intergenerational domestic violence, the gender power hierarchy is normalised. Women enduring violence and living with men who have psychological problems such as chronic doubting disorder, paranoia and schizophrenia are equally vulnerable to mental ill-health conditions. Anxiety disorder, depression, suicidal tendency are prevalent in women living with men who have psychological disorders which is an outcome of poor wellbeing. When marital discord and problems in the family relationship make the family unstable and possibilities of partners looking for fulfilment and emotional support in extramarital relationships are growing trend in recent times. The erosion of related self and alienation with the advent of media, the pressure to pretend living a happy and perfect life, hypervisibility of everydayness in social media that triggers heightened comparison with others which create a sense of discontentment with life, added with the nature of work, accessibility to more number of people are factors that create a favourable atmosphere for the increase in extramarital relations. Extramarital relationships are one of the reasons for the increase in divorce rates in Kerala.

Even though professional women had access to higher education and upward social mobility, they are constrained by their domestic roles. Their education and economic independence did not completely endow the freedom and empowerment they aspire to attain. There is a constant pressure on them to make compromises in their career, such as taking career breaks, lower their career aspirations, restrict their career engagements such as participation in conferences, taking part in training programs, and involving in projects which may demand extensive fieldwork and travel for the benefit of the family. The support of the family, extended family or outsourcing the burden of domestic responsibilities is imperative for a woman to flourish in her career. Their access to social capital, the supporting network in times of needs and crisis determines their wellbeing.

Unequal Power Relations in Professional Space

Three professions experience patriarchal power in their professional space in three different ways. When university teachers are enjoying stability in their profession, the higher education and the power and positions associated with are mostly under the control and domination of male counterparts. Female intellectuals getting acceptance in the academic spaces in Kerala is very challenging, as women challenge the masculine domination in the academic space. In both social sciences and natural sciences disciplines, women face a lack of respect and acceptance to their academic work. This male domination challenges women to make an extra effort to prove their potential and gain space in academia. When family responsibilities constrain and not getting adequate support from the family to share the domestic responsibilities, it negatively implies on the professional growth and flourishing of women. The lack of cooperation of colleagues and tug of war for position and power in the academic spaces often lead to conflicting relationships in the workspace. In the workspace, there are attempts to attack women who are flourishing and establishing in their career to put them down through slandering and character assassination. These are mechanisms of oppression and operation of power to tamper their career growth. The entry of male university teachers to key positions of power is smooth and easily accessible in relation to their female counterparts. Women teachers who come to positions of power are often constrained with their domestic responsibilities. In extreme situations, they were forced to relinquish their power and position for the benefit of the family. Managing administrative positions, along with teaching and research supervising responsibilities in the workspace and domestic responsibilities in their households, imply on their efficiency as it adds on to the stress and tensions of everyday life.

Through systemic practices of caste discrimination women teachers, especially from lower caste and minority communities are denied of their due promotions at the appropriate time. Women professors from the marginalised caste coming to positions of power feel undignified when they are not duly accepted and side-lined in the group from voicing their opinions. Their gender and caste identity intersect to discriminate them in their workspace. Upper caste and privileged caste community members getting positions of power and influence through their hard work and professional credentials are accused of using their caste identity and influence to attain position and power.

Patriarchal values permeate to the workspaces in the media industry, and it sabotages women journalists in their workspace. Journalism is perceived as a masculine profession. But in the neo-liberal period with the entry of many satellite channels and the visibility and glamour of the profession attracted many women to this profession. But the entry of women to this profession did not radically transform the gendered nature of the profession. The increase in the number of channels in the visual media and publishing houses in the print media along with the burgeoning of new media transformed the media, the fifth pillar of democracy as an industry. The survival and profit making of the channels depends on the rating of the channel. This change in the nature of the media demands managerial skills along with particular professional skills needed for journalists. The shift work and heightened competition in the field are challenges for women journalists to balance both their career and family. A young woman journalist in the early phase of career nowadays looks for alternative stable job options that are convenient for them to balance their family along with their career. The dropout rate among young women journalists after they get married is very high in the industry. This trend is increasing as they find it challenging for them to flourish in their career in the midst of heightened competition and lack of opportunities to prove their potential. Their job satisfaction is minimal when the conditions to grow in their career are very less, and the nature of the work is more challenging to balance their family life.

Women in their mid-career with young children are in an adverse position. In the early phase of their career, they were fortunate enough to receive a satisfactory level of opportunities to prove their potential. This helped their career growth in the early phase. But with increasing competition in the industry and switching between the media firms made their work situations precarious. In the struggle to balance family life with career, and lack of support from workplace forced them to either opt for a career break or switch the workplace. The work culture of the industry and the support of institutions to their women employees to balance their career and family are significant in their career growth. Women's lack of access to administrative and managerial positions and male domination in the workspace construct a work culture insensitive to the needs and problems of women.

The gender perceptions of the managerial and administrative section of the media firms and the perceptions of audience work imply on women journalist's access

to opportunities. Political and hard news is perceived as the realm of male journalists and women journalists are associated with entertainment and soft news programs. There are only a handful of women journalists in the editorial board of print media as well. Thus, women journalists have less access to opportunities to cover political and investigative news and conduct political discussions on TV news channels during prime time. The channel's complete dependence on the ratings and fear of taking risk forbids the members of the editorial board to experiment with new members even if they prove their potentials. The handful of women who are established in the profession and in the key positions such as executive editor, and who conducts political discussions and debates on current social issues are women who started their career at the phase of the growth of satellite channels in Kerala. The second generation and the current generation women journalists struggle to flourish and establish in their career because the patriarchal power in the media industry marginalises women through gender stereotyping and deny their access to opportunities to prove their potential and develop their professional skills. The print media even today remains as the domain of male domination. Lack of access to opportunities construct negative job satisfaction and, poor sense of accomplishment that imply on the wellbeing of women journalists.

Objectification of women and sexual violence are an increasing trend in the media industry. This also explains the penetration of patriarchal domination in the workspace. The nature of the work and women journalist going with the male crew to cover stories during odd timings make them vulnerable to sexual objectification and symbolic violence. There is an increase in sexual violence and objectification of women in the media industry in contemporary times. More women openly discussing sexual violence against them gives more visibility to this social problem. The unequal gender power relations and changing gender relations in the workspace and its manifestation in the objectification of women create discomfort and uneasiness in women. It makes them feel conscious of their body and a lack of dignity and respect in the workspace.

Law is another profession popularly perceived as a masculine profession. Though the number of women enrolls in the law colleges outnumber the men, women establishing in their career are only a handful of women. Nature of the work and engagement with criminals and social deviants require masculine qualities of aggressiveness and fierce nature. Thus society perceives that the feminine qualities are incapable of engaging with people who are social deviants. The profession demands an

investment of time and commitment, which is challenging for women who have domestic responsibilities at the same point of time. The inconducive environment in the family created by the domestic responsibilities or non-cooperation of the family members, to make time and space for lawyer women to do the background study and needed research to present litigation in the court makes her career in jeopardy. The time span it takes to get established in the career, the income instability until one gets established in the career, the senior lawyers' exploitation of junior lawyers, vulnerability to sexual exploitation are the other factors that demotivate women lawyers to flourish in their career. Women who have a financial backup in their households can relatively survive in the profession until they establish themselves proving their potential. Women from poor and working-class families are more vulnerable to exploitation.

The experiences of unequal power in everyday life that constitute the lived realities of professional women had implications for their wellbeing. It is in the interaction with the social environment and life events that the wellbeing of professional women emerges (White 2015). White (2010) defines wellbeing as a process which is shaped through the dynamic interaction between three dimensions, i.e., (i) material (ii) subjective or human (iii) relational or social. The material dimension of wellbeing is concerned with practical welfare and standard of living. The subjective or human dimension is concerns of capabilities, attitudes to life and personal relationships. The relational or social dimension is concerned with social relations and access to public goods. Wellbeing is emergent through the processes of individuals making meaning of their everydayness and internalisation the values and norms they embody as the dispositions that guides their actions, perceptions, the capacities to manage their relationships and multiple roles in their respective social contexts.

Embodying everydayness

To understand the process of the social construction of wellbeing among professional women, it needs to look at the process of embodying their everydayness and its implications on their wellbeing. Embodiment is 'an existential condition in which the body is the subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience' (Csordas 1999a: 143 cited in Thapan 2009) and culture and experience are integral parts of embodiment (Thapan 2009, 3). The embodiment of women is experienced as *lived and communicative bodies* in their everyday life (Thapan 2009, 3).

Lived experience is the description of the process in which an individual makes sense of their situation and actions, which constitute their subjectivity (Moi 1993, 63 cited in Thapan 2009). It is in the social and historical locations the lived experience get constituted. Inner feelings, selfhood and identity, are multiple constituents of embodiment (Thapan 2009).

The mind, imagination, emotions and memory play as much a role in the construction and experience of the human body as do the social expectations and the male and female gaze. The phenomenological perspective views all human perception as embodied. And embodiment thereby becomes both experience and body, agency and physical corporeality, life and matter (Thapan 2009, 4).

Professional women in our study embody their everydayness through making sense of their position in the power hierarchy and asserting their agency or making negotiations to deal with the power structures, internalising the gender norms and cultivating the dispositions to perform accordingly to the expectations and demands of a particular context and situation, and carrying the memories of their experiences and the emotions it generates in their body which makes the mind-body connections. Their sense of gender subjectivity is a product of the social, cultural and regional factors of the context where the individual is grounded (Thapan 2009). The embodied self is constituted and understood in relation to significant others, where the individuals develop a sense of embeddedness in the social context (Thapan 2009). Thapan (2009) argues that embodied and gendered self lies at the intersection of multiple subjectivities, multiple points of political consciousness and locations. Thus embodiment is not merely being-in-the-body; it also incorporates 'experience, subjectivities, political consciousness, agency and will' (Thapan 2009, 6).

Thapan (2009) is mainly drawing from Bourdieu's concept of habitus to conceptualise embodiment. Bourdieu defines habitus as "an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 133). Embodiment is integral to Bourdieu's concept of habitus as habitus is embodied in human subject (Thapan 2009).

In the context of professional women, they embody the cultural and gender norms and social customs and practices in their everyday life, and it becomes part of their dispositions through the process of socialisation and discursive practices. The practices and actions of women are guided by the cultural norms and customs. Professional

women make sense of their gendered subjectivities through their interaction with others and their social environment. In that context, “women seek to maximise their gains through embodied strategies of negotiations and manipulations, contestations and submissions, creating desire and suggesting fulfilment” (Thapan 2009, 9).

The intersection of class and embodiment in the construction of identity is a complex process. Class shapes women’s identity and experience in everyday life in a distinct way.

Femininity, as that ‘way of being’ which bestows status, respectability and recognition, through embodied modes of appearance and self-presentation is dependent on the social class position of women in differing contexts. For a middle-class woman, it is important to be viewed, both socially and culturally, as one who has clearly articulated self-definitions about her femininity as an embodied state that gives off self-negotiated and constructed expressions about herself (Thapan 2009, 11–12).

Construction of womanhood in the context of India is an ambivalent process where modernity and tradition co-exist. In contemporary times the global culture redefines the identity of women and endows a privileged position in the ‘outer world’ through certain discursive practices. The outer world is formulated through the synthesis of norms ‘emanating from the west’ and ‘indigenized’ to adopt a new consumer culture by the Indian middle class and present and represent it through practices of modernity in everyday life. Women caught between the tradition vs modernity conflict in the context of post-colonial habitus. Through the process of recolonization, it defines the notions of femininity and positions the middle-class women with similar status and position in the colonial contexts (Thapan 2009, 22). “The process of recolonisation is significant because it reproduces the characteristics of colonialism in a redefined mode, asserting the essential value of such characteristics, in postcolonial societies thereby ensuring continuous hegemony over cultural, social and economic domains” (Thapan 2009, 23).

In this construction, the ‘new Indian woman’ is an ambivalent entity shaped by the social and public domain which simultaneously portrays her as glamorous, independent, conscious of her embodiment and of the many forms of adornment and self-presentation available to her, and yet enshrined in the world of tradition through her adherence to family and national values. The overarching trope therefore remains that of middle-class respectability within which woman is ‘free’ to pursue her career and look after the interests of her family and her body repair and maintenance (Thapan 2009, 25).

When Thapan (2009) talks about the class and gender identity formation of middle-class women in India, Devika (2019) discusses the conflict between the

'glocally generated hybrid' values and norms in the construction of Malayalee feminine identity in the social context of Kerala. Through discursive practices that evolved in the particular social contexts through the synthesis of traditional values, reformative ideas and norms which is a by-product of modern education, it constructions particular notions of femininity, domesticity, gender roles and redefined female labour. Middle-class people and their lifestyles are always subject to the scrutiny of social spectators, and their lives are subject to continuous social evaluation (Dickey 2000). The pressure to maintain their class status, family status and honour and the aspirations to be successful and thriving are added pressures and stress factors to the performance of their gender identity where they are in continuous pressure to perform a particular type of femininity. The pressure to perform according to the social expectations are the outcome of embodying the norms and values. These women position themselves in their social context and connect them to their social environment by evaluating themselves and their life through the standard values and expectations of others whom they are significantly connected to in their life. This process of self-evaluation and meaning-making through 'looking-glass self' (Cooley 1983) construct their wellbeing. The perceptions of self-esteem and one's identity are constructed through the processes, as Cooley (1983) defines in his theory of looking-glass self. First, the individual imagination of their own appearance to the other person. Secondly, they imagine the judgements the other person would make of their own appearance and thirdly, their own perceptions of self-feeling (Cooley 1983, 126). This imagination of own appearance to other person and their judgements of your tastes, behaviour, manners and actions makes one act in conformation to the expectations of the other person to get recognition and acceptance. It is connecting one's self to society through significant others, and their expectations and internalising the discursive practices women conform to perform the femininity. The fear of punishment for those who transgress the norms is generated through the imagination of the other's judgement of a particular action, attitude or behaviour. The experience of middle-class of being the object of scrutiny by others and the value judgements they make about their lifestyle is an aspect that produces pressure to act and behave in in conformation to the class and gender norms and aspire and strive to maintain the class status and upward mobility. It is through this fear and pressure of societal expectations to conform to the norms, the professional middle-class women strive to become a superwoman, performing respectable femininity, and nurturing the individuals capable with the skills to compete in the global economy, and become the

carriers of traditional values and practices. This is a process where they embody their perceptions and experiences.

Professional women are economically independent and empowered individuals, influenced by the ideas of progressiveness and modernity, who are a social group with aspirations of upward mobility and career dreams. Their opinions, perceptions and positions have the power to influence society and bring social transformation. When their modern ideas conflict with the pressure of society to conform to conventional norms and practices, it produces an inner conflict within them that jeopardise their inner wellbeing. In this context, there is a range of response evolve from within these women to the internal conflict they experience, in order to cultivate their inner wellbeing. Women who believe in radical ideologies, women who were raised in a social context with opportunities to express their individuality and empower themselves openly contradict the systems of oppression. When they encounter negative response of society, the contempt to their non-compliance to normative values and the bitter experiences produced through the action of open challenge imposes pressure on them to develop alternative strategies and new spaces of action to subvert the unequal power structures and systems of oppression. The experiences they get from the society, political consciousness developed through making meaning of the experiences, the expression of their agency and will to subvert the system of oppression are different forms of embodiment.

The other range of responses to the system of oppression is enduring violence and oppression in a culture of silence and suppressed emotions. When women are norm and value bounded and conforming to the ideas of femininity, it constrains women's agency to challenge the systems of oppression. The responsibility of safeguarding the family's unity and honour is culturally endowed on women. The stereotyping of the image of *kulasthree*²¹, is primarily constructed through the Malayalam films and novels is connoting to the *savarna* conservative women, who is the 'vessel of culture' (Devika 2005), who adorns the image of superwoman who is a nurturer and light of the family, who defends and protects the family from drifting apart. The upper-middle-class women belonging to reputed families have continuous pressure to safeguard the family status and dignity. As discussed above, when middle-class lifestyles are subjected to

²¹ <https://www.womensweb.in/2018/10/kulasthree-kerala-women-protesting-sabarimala-verdict-oct18wk2sr/>

the scrutiny of society, the women in the middle-class who are culturally laden with the display of particular femininity are entrapped between their culture, social norms and family relationships. The burden of defending the honour of family and nurturing children as responsible citizens with values and skills to compete in the global market are factors that constraint them to break off from violent and oppressing family relationships.

If the husbands have high income than the wife and if they are financial decision-makers, women are more likely to accept oppression and submissive to the power of man. But women have more control and power in making decisions on matters of children, in building and nurturing the relationship with extended families and social networks, and are given space to voice their opinions during necessary decision makings of the family. The cultural and economic capital of women gives them this status and position in the family. This is a particular characteristic of modern conjugal families. Women's economic contribution is respected, but it is considered as supplementary to the household income. Here if the earnings of the man are higher, it is valued more than the economic contributions of women. Women's power is relegated to male power and confined to the domains of domestic space. This discursive practice impose the domestic identity of women as culturally superior to professional identity. The societal expectation of a working woman to balance both her domestic and professional responsibilities equally points to the cultural devaluation of their professional role to their domestic roles.

Prolonged suffering violence produces indignities in the family that has a negative impact on their mind and body. Experiencing domestic violence, marital rape, suffering the pain of infidelity of the partner constructs feelings of ripping off their dignity and selfhood. The experiences of being cheated by the partners create marital discord as it breaches their trust and constructs emotions of hatred, anger and aversion to self. This emotional breakdown is embodied, and it ended up in attempts of self-destruction, suicidal attempts. Suicidal tendencies and falling into the clinical depression are symptoms of ill-being where they had to seek clinal support through counselling sessions.

The anxiety disorder and fear of violence feels as if they are carrying a furnace or an erupting volcano within. It makes them withdraw from their social network and confine themselves to keep their sufferings a secret from the world in order to avoid causing dishonour to themselves and their family. This makes their conditions precarious as

their access to social capital in times of crisis are minimal. Troublesome marriages were a transformative event in the lives of people who were very sociable and active people in their past life to a total introvert person.

The experience of violence negatively affects their efficiency and productivity in fulfilling their professional and domestic responsibilities as they lack mindfulness, and it creates disorientation and lack of coordination with their thoughts, plans and actions in their daily activities. This constructs perceptions of poor self-esteem and self-worth, which negatively affects their self-respect. They make continuous comparison with their past life and people who are much more efficient and skilful than them in managing their everyday life to construct an image of themselves. They do a continuous evaluation of their self, their performances of everydayness and their life situations and make meaning of their everydayness. This meaning-making and self-realisation process, embodying their everydayness implies on their wellbeing. The inability to break away from the violent relations and their perception of poor decision-making skills negatively affecting other family members such as children. This situation constructs grief and regret, which, in turn, result in constructing perceptions of poor self-respect and poor self-esteem, an outcome of perceptions of poor self-actualisation and mediocrity in mastering their situations. Accumulating the experiences of violence in their body produces ill-health and ill-being conditions. Women suffering violence in their families reported suffering from arthritis, migraine, high cholesterol and depression, conditions that they relate it with their everyday stress and anxieties accumulated in their bodies.

Experiences of symbolic violence, the domination and unequal power relations that affect their emotional and mental state are part of everydayness for most of the research subjects. The experiences of blame game and being criticised by partners and extended family for the minor mistakes while fulfilling their everyday responsibilities impose the idea of superwoman on them. This experience of being blamed and criticised makes them feel their gender capital is inadequate, and their possession of capital and disposition are symbolically delegitimised. The experiences of symbolic violence, domestic violence, marital rape is an attack on the selfhood and individuality of these women. These experiences have negative implications for their wellbeing as they perceive this unequal gender power relations in the domains of the family produces a lack of respect, the experience of indignities and lack of acknowledgement which they

perceive as core of their subjective wellbeing. The poor wellbeing emerges from their interaction with their social environment, which is their field or social context.

When the system of oppression and violence makes one reach breaking point, women develop mechanisms to deal with the system of oppression. The first phase is they rationalise their experiences to move on. They endure oppression and violence mostly on the grounds of maintaining harmony and unity in the family, for the benefit of children and for the happiness and welfare of the family members. When the experiences of living in an abusive relationship are beyond the enduring capacity of women, they break away from marriages. The cultural and economic capital in this context are resources for them to assert their agency, as they act as fallback options for them. The support network of the extended family is also social capital for them in the time of crisis. But, the society through its coercive mechanism punishes the deviant women. The punitive mechanisms are labelling them as 'rebel' 'bad woman' who broke the conventional norms of femininity and prioritised personal wellbeing and selfish interests over the welfare and harmony of the family. This stigmatising and social ostracization are challenges for women to continue living a quality life in society. The support system of the social network is imperative for women in crisis conditions to lead a normal life. The lack of support from the extended family in making decisions to break away from troublesome marriages negatively affect the access to the social capital of these women. When their fall-back options are minimal, and the sufferings in the family are unbearable women go through emotional breakdown situations. Family's and society's disapproval of women's decision to break away from marriage is an act of symbolic delegitimization of their act of 'deviance', and it is a coercive mechanism to maintain order in society. When the structures of family, culture and patriarchy constrain and delegitimise their agency to claim their freedom, it is an erosion of social capital. The survival of women is in jeopardy in similar conditions with poor access to economic and social capital. In this scenario, the woman underwent a nervous breakdown, and the erosion of their relational self-led to the acting of self-destruction and even attempted suicide. In this scenario, breaking away from abusive marriages is not empowering or endowing freedom to women. Instead, their relational wellbeing is eroded. The lack of fallback options and social capital makes women vulnerable to ill-being, where it is more challenging for them to overcome the trauma of a breakup of the marriage and the trauma of social stigmatisation. The lack of access to the support system of social capital when they encounter uncertainties of future lives makes them

vulnerable to clinical depression. In this situation, women seek psychiatric support and medication to reclaim their wellbeing. Thus, embodying their experiences of power inequalities, and constraints to their agency that get reflected in poor health conditions and ill-being. These professional women associate clinical depression and mental ill-health conditions, arthritis, migraine, high cholesterol and blood pressure, asthma, body ache with the accumulation of stress, anxieties and enduring the power inequalities of their everydayness on their body. These are physical conditions that lead women to seek medical support. But they perceive that until the stress is released, the trouble of everydayness is managed amicably, the ill-health conditions are beyond the control of medical systems. Though seeking medical support gives momentary relief, when they confront a similar kind of stress and anxieties, their health conditions and wellbeing are in jeopardy.

The class status of professional women, the visibility of social life and subjected to constant evaluation and scrutiny of society, the regressiveness in the ideas of modernity practised in the social context of Kerala, the patriarchal values that condition the gender and class norms and values, the social pressure to perform ‘respectable femininity’, patriarchy permeating from domestic space to the professional space and relegate women’s status and position in both domains constitute the everydayness of professional women.

In the everydayness, the structures of family, culture, the professional institutions constrain and enable women’s life in multiple ways. Here, professional women are knowledgeable actors in their social context, and they are not merely passive victims of systems of oppression. There is a range of variation in the way professional women internalise the patriarchal values, conventional norms, ideas of femininity, customs and practices of modernity. The social context in which their self-evolved constitutes their ideas and perceptions of selfhood, individuality, freedom and empowerment. Professional women’s access to cultural capital such as education and academic and professional credentials contribute to widening the horizons and possibilities of social mobility. It also contributes to developing a sense of self, subjectivities, perceptions of life, and transforms them as knowledgeable actors and agents of social reproduction. In this context, they rationalise, cope with, negotiate and contest with the power structures.

Making choices in everyday life is a practice where the access and flow of cultural, social, economic and symbolic capital determine women's level of empowerment and autonomy. When the undignified treatment and symbolic violence leads to marital discord, these professional women develop mechanisms to avoid situations that put their wellbeing in jeopardy. In certain other cases 'silence' is developed as a weapon to contest the indignities they experience in the family. Through their silence, they invoke the attention of their oppressors, normally husbands or other family members. The prolonged silence and withdrawing from their affective labour are mechanisms of contesting the oppression. These are also mechanisms to invite an open conversation and resolution of marital discord within the family space. Open bargaining as demanding their 'freedom' and 'dignity', through initiating peacemaking conversations, open arguments are other mechanisms to hold on to their individuality and cultivate their wellbeing.

Finding solace and comfort in spirituality and prayer is a coping mechanism they evolve to cultivate wellbeing in an adverse situation. Visiting a temple in the early morning and lighting a lamp at home in the evening, they perceive as brightening their life when they walk in the darkness gives them inner peace. Meditation during temple visits and remembering the teachers and role models of life and recollecting the life lessons they taught is perceived as giving them the inner strength to fight the difficult situations in life. Attributing every success as the mercy of God and in times of sufferings putting trust in God with a hope to receive supernatural strength to endure it are mechanism, they adopt to cultivate inner wellbeing through spiritual wellbeing. Seeking the spiritual support of prayers groups which act as social capital are another mechanism to evolve their relational wellbeing. Religious scriptures such as Bhagavad-Gita and Bible are relied on in times of crisis and emotional breakdown to revive their spirit, seek an answer to the problems and find meaning and purpose in life. The consolation and inner peace they attain through meditating on the scriptures are mechanisms to cultivate inner wellbeing, mental peace and emotional strength to fight the adverse situations of life.

Professional Women's Wellbeing, Dimensions and Determinants

In the social context of professional women in the study, wellbeing is a social process which is dynamic and emergent in the individual's interaction with the hierarchy of

power structures of their social and cultural context in which the individual's self is embedded. The element of power relations and the embodying of the unequal power relations are an integral part of wellbeing. The everyday life experiences, the phenomenological understanding and the perceptions of everydayness, the internalisation of norms and values through discursive practices, the expression of agency and will, the strategies developed to contest, negotiate and transform the power relations become the part of the embodied self.

Drawing from the framework of Sarah White (White 2009) there are three dimensions of wellbeing, material, social, human dimensions of wellbeing which are interdependent on each other. The professional middle-class women perceived as having access to cultural and economic capital is expected to have better standard and quality of living with access to a good income, financial independence, assets and wealth. The aspirational middle-class and the rising expectations of their standard of living are conditioned by class norms and their wants and needs, which are culturally conditioned (Appadurai 2004 cited in White 2009). In that context, the instability of income, especially for the lawyers who are in their mid-career or early-career phase, the journalists who are working on a contract basis without other labour protection measures and allowances perceive their economic stability as a determinant of their wellbeing which they point to the material dimension of wellbeing. In a society where professional women enjoy a certain level of status and power, their aspirations for upward social mobility conditioned through class norms and cultural necessity, and to fulfil their needs and wants requires material stability. The financial insecurity and inability to meet the material needs of self and dependent members produce poor wellbeing as it produces dissatisfaction with their economic conditions. The satisfaction with the standard of living evolves in a context where the needs and wants are culturally conditioned, and the normative standards²² determine what is valuable. The access to material wealth, a better standard of living and luxuries of life produces better life satisfaction.

The social dimensions of their wellbeing are constituted through social relations and access to public goods and opportunities. The unequal gender power relations and inferior social positioning of women and the patriarchal values that constitute gendered

²² The normative standards such as the spiritual principles of contentment with what you possess determine what is valuable in the respective context.

norms permeate the private and public domain. The denial of access to opportunities to develop professional skills and flourish in the career, the experiences of slandering and character assassination to curb the women's professional growth, experiences of symbolic and violence in the domestic space, unsafe public space and threat to safety and security of women at home and in the public space produce poor wellbeing. Perceptions of indignities, lack of acknowledgement and respect in both the private and public space contribute to poor wellbeing in women.

The human or relational dimension of wellbeing is constituted through human capabilities, attitudes to life and personal relationships. Professional women's access to cultural and social capital produce perceptions of self-worth and self-esteem. Performance of their professional skills and job satisfaction it gives, meeting the expectations of self and others in the performance of their roles produce perceptions of self-esteem. The love and affection of children, the good relationship with family members and their dependency on them makes them feel valued and needed, increase their perceptions of self-worth and self-esteem, which has a favourable implication for their wellbeing. It is to cultivate inner-wellbeing women create dependencies through their affection and love. The self-evaluation and negative perceptions of own capacities and skills produce discontentment and poor self-esteem. The poor accessibility to social capital and support network in times of crisis and needs, stigmatisation and ostracization of transgressing the conventional standards of femininity and sanctity of the family, produce poor wellbeing in professional women.

Power relations that operate through social structures of family, culture, gender, caste and class structures through discursive practices constitute the lived experiences of professional women. Even though they are educated, empowered and independent, and have access to social mobility, their agency and autonomy are constrained through the operationalisation of power relation in their everydayness in both private and public domain. The changes in gender power relations, the oppression of women in both domestic and professional space and an increase in crimes and violence against women expose the inferior social position of women constructed through reformist patriarchy. The project of Kerala modernity through the renaissance and social transformation failed to address the undercurrents of casteism and conservatism and transform the social and gender inequalities. The violent and atrocious attack on women who challenge conventional standards through cyberbullying and public violence points to

the unresolved psychiatric and emotional problems of people who are misogynistic in their attitudes. Professional women embedded in this social and cultural context embody the experiences of gender inequalities and oppression operated through unequal power relations. When their agency and autonomy are constrained, they contest, negotiate and rationalise oppression and power inequalities to cultivate their wellbeing emergent in their social interactions and to claim their individuality and selfhood.

Way Forward

The unresolved emotional and psychological problem of men in Kerala needs to be explored further to understand how they contribute to unequal gender power relations that shape the cultural and social context of women's role. It would further explain the reasons for the increase in violence and crimes against women. The process of construction of Malayalee masculinity would inform the increasing intolerance towards women who react and challenge male domination and misogyny. The growth of Hindutva nationalism, the outburst of the undercurrent casteism, the idealising and valorising of machoism and hero worship of film actors are all expressions of the deeply entrenched patriarchy and misogyny in the social context of Kerala. The reasons why resistance of feminist movements for gender injustice and challenging patriarchy fail to influence vast majority population and transform the unequal power relations needs exploration.

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Appendix I

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI

Title of the Study: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WELLBEING AMONG PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM CITY

Researcher's Name: Caroline C. Netto

Dept: Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health

School: School of Social Sciences

Ph: 08860111323

Introduction

- You are being invited to participate in the research study on the perception of the wellbeing of professional women.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you are a professional woman belonging to the profession of (Journalist, Lawyer, University teacher) and working and residing in Thiruvananthapuram city .
- I ask you to kindly read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of the Study

- The purpose of the research is to study the perception of the wellbeing of professional women and how they manage to balance their professional and family life.
- Ultimately, this research will be published as a PhD thesis and *may be* published as journal articles or book in the future.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:
 - i. Participate in the interview processes and will be asked to share your everyday life experiences in your family and workplace and your perceptions on various matters.
 - ii. The researcher may need to meet you multiple times according to both of your availability.
 - iii. Depending on your comfort with the research process and free time available to talk, every meeting may get extended to 30 minutes and more.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- The study has the following risks. First, you may likely have to face questions that may remind you of certain bitter experiences in your personal and professional life. Second, it is likely that you may have to face questions that you never want to reveal it to anyone in your life.
- There may be unexpected and unforeseeable risks as well.

Benefits of Being in the Study

- There will be no monetary or any other benefits to the participant to participate in the study.

Complications

- It is likely to the participant to encounter questions that may remind them of any bitter or bad past experiences. This may create some emotional disturbances to the participant.

Compensations

- No monetary compensations can be given.
- If the participant is willing and it is necessary for the participant, the researcher will help them to take help and support from a trained counsellor.

Confidentiality

- Your identity will always remain anonymous. I will not mention any information about your identity in my PhD thesis.
- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. Only the researcher will have access to the audio recordings of the interviews and they will be deleted once the PhD thesis submission is done. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to your willingness. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the researcher of this study. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right *not* to answer any single question, as well as to *withdraw* completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

Right to Ask Questions and Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Caroline C. Netto at nettocaroline89@gmail.com or by telephone at 08860111323. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you.

Researcher's Statement:

- I, the undersigned have explained to the participant in a language she understands the procedures to be followed in the study and risks and benefits. The participant will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the researcher.

Signature of the researcher

Date:

Name of the Researcher:

Consent of the Participant

- My signature below indicates that I have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that I have read and understood the information provided above.

Research participant's name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix II

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Title: Social Construction of Wellbeing Among Professional Women in Thiruvananthapuram City.

Socio-demographic information

Name:

Age:

Place:

Native place:

Profession:

Religion & caste:

Marital status: unmarried/married/separated/widow

Type of family organisation: nuclear/extended/joint

No. of siblings:

Number of children:

Age of children:

Husband's occupation & workplace:

Parent's occupation:

Parents' in-law's occupation:

If children working their occupation and workplace:

If children studying their course of study:

EVOLVING SELF

1. Can you share few memories of your childhood, your parents and family, schooling, your native place, neighbourhood?
2. Memories of college days, friends, freedom and restrictions of that period?
3. Significant memory of your school & college days?
4. How did your friends used to describe you during those days?
5. How would you like to describe yourself of those days?
6. What is the biggest transformative event(s) in your life?
7. What are the major transformations you experienced after that event(s)?
8. In your perception what does your 'self' means to you?
9. In your experience or perception what gives you an identity as person? What is the most important/ key identity of yours? Why do you think that as the most important identity?
10. Do you get time for yourself? Do you feel it is important to have a personal time in a day?
11. What is your idea of leisure time? What are your leisure time activities?
12. Do you go for day outs, trips or go out for dinner or lunch as a family or with colleagues?

13. Do you go to religious places or pray quiet often? When do you pray or go to religious places generally? Which place you visit most of the times?
14. What is your concept of prayer and spirituality? Do you think your spirituality and personal life has a connection?
15. What does your religion means to you? How important is your religion and faith to you? How does your faith and religion influence or implies on your personal life?

WELLBEING

1. How do you define your well-being? What comes to your mind when you hear the word well-being?
2. What are the key elements that constitute your well-being? (peace of mind, good health, good relationships, financial security)
3. In your perception what are the various factors that determine your wellbeing? (My productivity in work, nature of relationships, family atmosphere)
4. What are the various factors or things that give you satisfaction and happiness in your everyday life?
5. If you compare different phases of your life course which were the most happiest or satisfied phase? What made you feel more satisfied and happy at each phase? (Determinants of wellbeing at each phase)
6. What are the various factors in your perception that give meaning and purpose to your life?
7. What are the goals you are looking up to be accomplished in future, that you may expect will give your life satisfaction or wellbeing?

PROFESSION & WORK

1. What does your profession mean to you?
2. Can you share your experiences that motivated you to choose this profession and about people who guided you to take a decision?
3. Can you share about the nature of your profession & work such as timings, flexibility, structural and organisational hierarchy as you experienced?
4. What all changes has been brought in you as a person through this profession? Do you think this profession helped in your self-development and given you a sense of identity?
5. Do you think your profession helps you to build your confidence? In what all aspects it boost you confidence? (economic/relationship building/ self)
6. What are the challenges you face in growing in this profession?
7. How did you deal with those challenges?
8. How much demanding is your professions? How have this demand challenged and changed you? (improving/declining your competence and self-worth)
9. What gives you most satisfied in your work?
10. How would you evaluate your professional performance? What are your strengths and weaknesses?

11. How is your relationship with your colleagues (formal/informal)? Do you have many friends in your workspace? Do you have people in your workspace to share when your heart/mind is troubled /heavy?
12. How important are personal relations to you?
13. Can you share a bit about the kind of general discussions you have in your office and friend circle? Do you often participate in them and share your views and opinions?
14. Is there a competition between colleagues in your office on professional and personal matters? If yes, for what do you compete for?
15. Work culture and work environment?
16. Is there any relationship between your work place environment and your work performance?
17. Do you have any association or union in your workplace? If so are you part of any of such groups? What role do you play?
18. What meaning do you attribute to your profession? (social commitment/ moral responsibility/nurturing a generation)
19. Do you feel work stress and tension? When do you get more stressed out? How would you deal with these work pressures?
20. What are your major professional achievements?
21. Have you faced any setbacks or bitter experiences in your career? If so, what was it & how did you deal that situation?
22. Have you ever experienced any role of patriarchy in your profession?
23. In your experience/perception how easy or difficult is it for women to prove their potentials in your profession?
24. In your perception what are the challenges and hurdles for women in grow in their career?

PATRIARCHY AND POWER RELATIONS

How do they understand patriarchy? [In their understanding how do power relations of patriarchy shape their gender identity, class and caste identity and familial relations, work relations?]

1. In your understanding what is patriarchy?
2. Do you think patriarchy has a role in everyday life? (conditioning roles and life experiences)
3. In what ways can you identify patriarchy shaping your life experiences? In which all domains of your life you think patriarchy influences your life?
4. In your understanding how do patriarchal values influence the family relations? How do you experience patriarchy in your familial domains?
5. Have you ever experienced patriarchy dominates your work space as well?
6. Do you think that patriarchy has a role in shaping your gender identity?
7. In your perception what are the various privileges you are deprived of being a woman in your profession, family and society?

8. In your perception what are the various privileges you are enjoying being a woman in your profession, family and society?
9. What does empowerment mean to you?
10. In the context of empowerment how do you understand power? Have you ever felt powerless and exploited?
11. How is the power equations in your family? In your family who has more power? Is it you or your partner/ parents/ siblings? Which all domains in your family you feel you have more power? Which all domains your partner/family members has more power? How unequal power relations do implies on your wellbeing?
12. In your work space and in society in general do you ever experienced changes in the power relations between genders as time progressed? When you compare your childhood or early career life how would you reflect to this change? (Women collective in film industry/ increase in gender violence)
13. What is freedom in your perception? In your perception how important or how much you value personal freedom?
14. Do you feel that you had been restricted or curtailed your freedom due to multiple responsibilities or because of your gender identity?
15. What is caste in your opinion? In your life do you think your religious or caste identity plays any role?
16. Do you think that being born in this particular religious or caste community has ensured or denied you any privileges or opportunities in life?
17. Have you faced any caste discrimination in life? What is your opinion and understanding of politicizing caste ? In your understanding what creates this whole concept of caste oppression?
18. Usually society have a perception that you professionals belong to middle class. In Kerala we usually say 'we are middle class'. So in your perception to which class category do you belong to? What gives you this particular class identity ?(What makes you a middle class)
19. Do you think that this middle class identity always put pressures on you to maintain class status in the society? (Aspirations of social mobility through education/ accessing health care facilities/ using branded things) What is your opinion and understanding of similar class pressures?
20. Do you think that obliging to similar class pressures force you to compromise your individuality and present yourself in the way society shapes our personhood and identity?

FAMILY LIFE, CAREER & MULTIPLE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Can you share about your family?
2. What does family means to you?
3. (For married and living together) How did you meet your life partner? Can you share about your marriage/ decision to living together?

4. How did your life changed after your marriage? (positive and negative change/ providing for family, managing the troubles in family). How have these changes affected you as a person?
5. How helpful and supportive is your husband in sharing your daily work and responsibilities in the family?
6. (Mothers) What are the changes that happened in you after your child birth?
7. What does your care giving role do to you? (feel happy/ satisfied/ valued/ exhausted/ reaction or response to other family members when you feel exhausted)
8. Can you share about your family's role in supporting your professional life?
9. Is your family really happy with your profession and responsibilities? How their attitudes and behaviour does imply on your performance of professional responsibilities?
10. What are the various responsibilities and roles you undertake in your life? (as a woman, as a professional, as a social person)
11. Were there been any instances you felt that burdened up with all these responsibilities in the family and workplace? If yes, can you share any instances?
12. Do you think others have much expectations from you (in family and in workplace)? Do you often feel comfortable you are with their expectations? How would you feel when they keep expectations from you (Happy, stressful, angry, anxiety, happy, satisfied)?
13. In your perception what creates work-family conflict in the lives of a professional woman?
14. Have you ever experienced any kind of work-family conflict? If yes, can you share those instances? How did you manage those situations?
15. (Mothers) Can you share your life with your children? How have they changed your life and you as a person?
16. (Mothers) What are your expectations of yourself as a mother and your expectations from your children? Are there any struggles and challenges in meeting these expectations?
17. (Married) What are your expectations from your life partner? Expectations of yourself as a wife?
18. Have you ever felt burdened up and struggling in satisfying others expectations of you? Can you share some instances or events where you really had to struggle to make others happy and satisfied?
19. How do you feel in those instances when you can't completely satisfy others?
20. Do you think that others expectation has an implication on your wellbeing? How? (Can't make independent choices, give up lot of personal desires)
21. Within the domain of your family how much unity you have? (Especially in matters of taking decisions in day to day life situations/ making savings or spending)
22. What do you do when misunderstandings and difference of opinion pop up in your familial relations? If any difference of opinion or problems occur in the

family, how often/ how easily are you able to discuss and sort them out?
Whenever friction happens in your family who gets ready to compromise first?

23. We say 'chatteem kalavumokke aakumbol thatteem muttem okke irikkumnu'. Do you get into silly fights or heated arguments and verbal fights at home? How would these arguments and silly fights affect you as a person? (becomes guarded/ fear/ stress and tension/ lacks confidence)
24. Have you ever experienced any sort of violence within your family (partner/ children/ extended family)?
 - a. If yes, what kind of violence? (verbal, physical, sexual, emotional & mental)
 - b. Who were the perpetrators?
 - c. If yes, reasons for those frictions?
 - d. Have you ever been a victim of sexual violence in your marriage? Are you really happy and satisfied in your sexual relation?
 - e. Can you narrate the kind of emotional and mental state whenever you had undergone violence?
 - f. How have you dealt with similar situations?
25. We face lot of contradictions in day to day life. We believe in something at the same time forced to do something else. Do you have similar experiences? How often your family requires you to do things that you don't want to do? (Tension and conflict between personal priorities or values and family demands)
26. Are you a person who prioritise career over family? Or trying to balance both as equal? What are the things you give priority in your life?
27. Were there been instances of compromising your career growth or achievements for your family? If yes, do you feel any resentment for holding up things for the family?
28. What are the various personal desires you deny for your family?
29. What is the biggest compromise you had done in your life?
30. How much do people in your family care for you? How are you been treated in your family? How much do you feel you are valued, respected in the family? Have you ever felt you deserve little more dignity and respect in the family?
31. If you ever felt not adequately received the kind of respect, dignity and love, how did you feel? How have to dealt with/ rationalised that kind of thoughts, feelings and situations?
32. In this context what does dignity means to you? What is your perception of a dignified life?
33. Have you ever experienced any kind of indignities in your familial and professional life? If yes, how did you feel at those moments? How have you dealt with those experiences (How do you negotiate with indignities)?
34. What is your opinion about the Indian normative value of complete self-giving and doing selfless service to one's own family?

35. What is the idea of self-giving to you? In this context if we think how do you give yourself to your family (process of self-giving, the kind of compromises, sacrifices, adjustments and accommodation)?
36. Can we really become selfless without expecting anything to be reciprocated from family?
37. Some people say we make these compromises because it is our responsibility to maintain peace and harmony in the family. Even if my efforts are not rewarded here, I will get the reward in my life after death. Do you believe in such moral and spiritual self? For you, do you find any meaning or relationship between your moral or spiritual self and this selfless giving without any expectations from your family?
38. Which role or responsibility you had enjoyed the most? Why?
39. Which role or responsibility that had burdened you the most? Why?
40. What makes you most worried and anxious in life?
41. How the various conflicts and contradictions/ worries and anxieties in your everyday life do implies on your mind, body and soul?
42. How do you negotiate with or cope with various anxieties and struggles in your life?
43. Do you think that your health and wellbeing has a relationship? In your experience how did this health wellbeing nexus interacted?
44. Are you suffering from any illness or chronic ailments? If yes, what do you think are the reasons for it?
45. How do these ailments impact your everyday life activities?
46. How these ailments do impacted the quality of your life and wellbeing?

Appendix III

സാമൂഹ്യ-ജനസംഖ്യാപരമായ വിവരങ്ങൾ:

പേര്:

പ്രായം:

സ്ഥലം:

ജനന സ്ഥലം:

തൊഴിൽ:

മതം/ ജാതി:

വൈവാഹിക അവസ്ഥ: വിവാഹിതർ/ അവിവാഹിതർ / വിവാഹം
വേർപെടുത്തിയവർ / വിധവ

കുടുംബം സംഘടന: അണു കുടുംബം / കൂട്ടു കുടുംബം/ വിസ്തൃതമായ
കുടുംബം

സഹോദരങ്ങളും എണ്ണം:

കുട്ടികളുടെ എണ്ണം:

കുട്ടികളുടെ പ്രായം:

ഭർത്താവിന്റെ തൊഴിൽ / ജോലി സ്ഥലം:

മാതാപിതാക്കളുടെ തൊഴിൽ:

ഭർതൃമാതാപിതാക്കളുടെ തൊഴിൽ:

മക്കൾ ജോലിക്കാരെങ്കിൽ അവരുടെ തൊഴിലും ജോലിസ്ഥലവും:

മക്കൾ വിദ്യാർത്ഥികൾ എങ്കിൽ അവർ പഠിക്കുന്ന കോഴ്സും വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ
സ്ഥാപനവും:

വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം & തൊഴിൽ

1. നിങ്ങളുടെ സ്കൂൾ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം എവിടെ ആയിരുന്നു ? ഏതു വർഷം ആണ് മടിക്കുലേഷൻ പാസ് ആയതു ?
2. നിങ്ങളുടെ ബാല്യകാലത്തെ കുറച്ചു ഓർമ്മകൾ പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ ? (കുടുംബം, വിദ്യാലയം, സ്വന്തം നാട്, അയല്പക്കം, സഹോദരങ്ങളും മാതാപിതാക്കളുമായി നിങ്ങൾക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്ന അടുപ്പം)
3. നിങ്ങളുടെ കോളേജ് വിദ്യാഭ്യാസം എവിടെനിന്നായിരുന്നു ?

4. സ്കൂൾ-കോളേജ് കാലഘട്ടത്തിലെ നിങ്ങളുടെ വ്യക്തിത്വത്തെ നിങ്ങൾ എങ്ങനെ ആണു വർണിക്കാൻ ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നത്?
5. സ്കൂൾ-കോളേജ് കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ പര്യേതര കാര്യപരിപാടികളിൽ നിങ്ങൾ പങ്കെടുക്കാറുണ്ടായിരുന്നോ ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അവ എന്തെല്ലാം ആയിരുന്നു?
6. ആ കാലഘട്ടങ്ങളിൽ പ്രധാനമായ നിങ്ങളുടെ ഹോബിയും താല്പര്യങ്ങളും എന്തായിരുന്നു ?
7. 7. അന്നത്തെ കാലത്തു നിങ്ങൾ സുഹൃത്തുക്കളുമായി പുറത്തു പോകാറുണ്ടായിരുന്നോ? എങ്കിൽ, കാരണങ്ങൾ എന്തായിരുന്നു?
8. 8. നിങ്ങളുടെ ഇളയ സഹോദരങ്ങളോ / മക്കളോ സുഹൃത്തുക്കളുമായി പുറത്തൊക്കെ ഒഴിവുവേളകൾ ചിലവഴിക്കാൻ പോകാറുണ്ടായിരുന്നോ?
9. നിങ്ങളുടെ സ്കൂൾ-കോളേജ് കാലഘട്ടങ്ങളിൽ ആൺകുട്ടികൾ സുഹൃത്തുക്കൾ ആയിട്ടുണ്ടായിരുന്നോ ?
 - 9.1 നിങ്ങളുടെ സ്കൂളിലോ കോളേജിലോ ആൺ -പെൺ സൗഹൃദങ്ങൾക്ക് നിയന്ത്രണങ്ങളോ വിളക്കുകളോ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നോ?
 - 9.2. ഒരു പെൺകുട്ടി ആൺകുട്ടികളുമായി കൂടുതൽ സൗഹൃദം സ്ഥാപിച്ചാൽ അവരെ എങ്ങനെയായിരുന്നു മറ്റുള്ളവർ വിലയിരുത്തിയിരുന്നത് ?
 - 9.3. ഇങ്ങനെയുള്ളവരെപ്പറ്റി ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള ഗോസിപ്പുകൾ ആണ് പ്രചരിച്ചിരുന്നത് ?
 - 9.4. ഒരു ആൺകുട്ടി ആണ് പെൺകുട്ടികളുമായി കൂടുതൽ അടുത്ത് ഇടപഴകിയിരുന്നതെങ്കിൽ അവരെ എങ്ങനെയാണ് വിലയിരുത്തിയിരുന്നത് ?
10. ആ കാലഘട്ടങ്ങളിൽ നിങ്ങളുടെ സുഹൃത്തുക്കൾക്ക് നിങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള അഭിപ്രായം എന്തായിരുന്നു ? അവരുടെ വിലയിരുത്തലുകളിൽ നിങ്ങൾ സംതൃപ്ത ആയിരുന്നോ ?
11. ഇന്നത്തെ യുവതലമുറക്ക് നിങ്ങളുടെ കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ ഉണ്ടായിരുന്നതിനേക്കാൾ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം ഉണ്ടെന്നു പൊതുവിൽ പറയാറുണ്ട് . നിങ്ങളുടെ സ്കൂൾ-കോളേജ് ജീവിതകാലത്തു കുടുംബത്തിൽനിന്നും സ്കൂൾ-കോളേജ് അധികാരികളിൽനിന്നും നിങ്ങൾക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്ന നിയന്ത്രണങ്ങളും വിലക്കുകകലും എപ്രകാരം ഉള്ളവയായിരുന്നു?

12. ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള വിലക്കുകൾ/ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ മറ്റുള്ളവർക്ക് ലഭിക്കുന്നതിനേക്കാൾ കൂടുതൽ സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യം ലഭിച്ചിരുന്നപ്പോൾ നിങ്ങളുക്ക് എങ്ങനെ ആണ് അത് അനുഭവപ്പെട്ടത്? അത്തരം സന്ദർഭങ്ങളിൽ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് ഉണ്ടായിരുന്ന വികാരങ്ങൾ, ചിന്തകൾ ഓർത്തെടുക്കാൻ കഴിയുമോ?
13. സ്വാതന്ത്ര്യത്തെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടുകൾ പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ ?
14. നിങ്ങൾ നിങ്ങളെ എങ്ങനെ വർണിക്കാൻ ആണ് ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നത്? നിങ്ങൾക്ക് നിങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് ഉള്ള കാഴ്ചപ്പാട് എന്താണ്?
15. സ്കൂൾ-കോളേജ് കാലഘട്ടത്തിൽ നിന്നും ഇത്രയും വർഷങ്ങൾക്കിടയിൽ നിങ്ങൾക്കു ഒരുപാട് മാറ്റം വന്നിട്ടുണ്ട് എന്ന് തോന്നിയിട്ടുണ്ടോ? അങ്ങനെയെങ്കിൽ എന്തെല്ലാം മാറ്റങ്ങൾ ആണ് വന്നിട്ടുള്ളത് ? അതിനുള്ള കാരണങ്ങൾ എന്തെല്ലാം ആണെന്നാണ് നിങ്ങൾ കരുതുന്നത്?
16. നിങ്ങളുടെ പ്രൊഫഷണൽ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസത്തിനു നിങ്ങളിൽ കാര്യമായ മാറ്റങ്ങൾ വരുത്തുന്നതിൽ ഒരു പങ്കുണ്ട് എന്ന് നിങ്ങളുക്ക് തോന്നുന്നുണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ എന്തെല്ലാമാണ് ആ മാറ്റങ്ങൾ?
17. നിങ്ങൾ ഈ തൊഴിൽ സ്വീകരിക്കുന്നതിന് പ്രചോദനമേകിയ സാഹചര്യങ്ങളോ വ്യക്തികളെയോ കുറിച്ച് ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ ?
18. ഈ തൊഴിലിലേക്കു പ്രവേശിക്കുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങളുക്ക് എന്തെങ്കിലും വെല്ലുവിളികൾ നേരിട്ടിട്ടുണ്ടോ (കുടുംബം, സുഹൃത്തുക്കൾ, വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ സ്ഥാപനങ്ങൾ) ?
 - 18.1 ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ എന്തൊക്കെയായിരുന്നു ആ വെല്ലുവിളികൾ?
 - 18.2 അതുപോലെ തന്നെ ഇന്നും ഈ തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയിൽ നിലനിന്നു പോകുന്നതിനു എന്തെങ്കിലും തരത്തിലുള്ള തടസങ്ങളോ വെല്ലുവിളികളോ ഉണ്ടോ?
19. നിങ്ങളുടെ ഈ ജോലിയുടെ സ്വഭാവം, രീതികൾ ഇവയെ കുറിച്ചൊക്കെ ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ (ജോലിയുടെ സമയഘടന, അധികാര ശ്രേണിയുടെ ഘടന) ?

- 20 . നൈറ്റ് ഷിഫ്റ്റ് ജോലി ചെയ്യുന്നതോ, ഓഫീസിൽ നിന്നും വൈകി തിരികെ പോകുന്നതോ സുരക്ഷിതമല്ല എന്ന് എപ്പോഴെങ്കിലും തോന്നിയിട്ടുണ്ടോ? വൈകിയുള്ള ജോലി ഷിഫ്റ്റുകളോട് നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ സമീപനം എന്താണ്?
- 21 നിങ്ങളുടെ സമയവും, സമർപ്പണവും എത്രമാത്രം ആവശ്യപ്പെടുന്ന ഒരു ജോലി ആണ് ഇത്?
22. ഈ ജോലിയിൽ നിങ്ങൾ സന്തോഷവതിയും സംതൃപ്തയും ആണോ?
23. നിങ്ങളുടെ ഏതെങ്കിലും ജോലി സംബന്ധമായ ഉത്തരവാദിത്വം നിർവഹിക്കുന്നതിൽ ഒത്തിരി സന്തോഷവും സംതൃപ്തിയും തോന്നിയിട്ടുള്ള നിമിഷങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അവ ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?
24. നല്ല പ്രകടനം കാഴ്ചവയ്ക്കുന്നതിൽ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് അവർദ്ധ്യകളോ ബഹുമതികളോ ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ടോ?
25. നിങ്ങളുടെ ജോലിസ്ഥലത്തു പുരുഷന്മാരുടെ സാന്നിധ്യം ഇത്തരത്തിലെങ്കിലും ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുകൾ സൃഷ്ടിക്കുകയോ വെല്ലുവിളികൾ ഉയർത്തുകയോ ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ടോ?
26. പുരുഷന്മാരുടെ സാന്നിധ്യം ആണോ അതോ സ്ത്രീകളുടെ സാന്നിധ്യമാണോ നിങ്ങളുടെ ജോലി സ്ഥലത്തു നിങ്ങളെ കൂടുതൽ കംപോർട്ടബിളി ആക്കുന്നത്?
27. നിങ്ങളുടെ അനുഭവത്തിലോ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടനുസരിച്ചു ഒരു സ്ത്രീക്കു നിങ്ങളുടെ തൊഴിൽ മേഖലയിൽ അവരുടെ കഴിവ് തെളിയിക്കുക എന്നത് എത്ര ശ്രമകരവും അനിവാര്യവുമാണ്?
28. നിങ്ങളുടെ കരിയറിൽ എത്തരത്തിലെങ്കിലും ഉള്ള തിരിച്ചടികൾ നേരിടേണ്ടി വന്നിട്ടുണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ എന്തായിരുന്നു ആ സാഹചര്യം? ആ സാഹചര്യത്തെ നിങ്ങൾ എപ്രകാരം ആണ് നേരിട്ടത്?
- 29 നിങ്ങളുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ സ്ത്രീകൾക്ക് അവരുടെ കരിയറിൽ ഉയരാൻ എന്തെല്ലാം തടസങ്ങളും വെല്ലുവിളികളും ആണ് ഉള്ളത്? നിങ്ങൾ ഇതിനോട്

യോചിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ അതോ മാറ്റങ്ങൾ വരുത്തണം എന്ന് ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്നുണ്ടോ?

30. നിങ്ങളുടെ മേലധികാരികളുമായുള്ള ബന്ധം എപ്രകാരമാണ്?

അതേക്കുറിച്ച് കുറച്ചൊന്നു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?

31. നിങ്ങളുടെ തൊഴിൽ ജീവിതവും ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥ ജീവിതവും ഒരു സന്തുലിത അവസ്ഥയിൽ കൊണ്ടുപോകുന്നതിൽ വെല്ലുവിളികളെ കുറിച്ച് കുറച്ചൊന്നു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ ?

32. എപ്പോഴെങ്കിലും ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥ ജീവിതവും തൊഴിൽ ജീവിതവും ഒന്നിച്ചു കൊണ്ടുപോകുന്നതിൽ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടു അനുഭവപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുണ്ടോ ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അത്തരം അനുഭവങ്ങൾ ഒന്നു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ ?

കുടുംബജീവിതവും, ഉത്തരവാദിത്വങ്ങളും

1 നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബത്തെക്കുറിച്ച് ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?

2 (വിവാഹിതരും ലിവിങ് സുഗെതർ ആയവരോട്) എങ്ങനെ ആണ് നിങ്ങൾ നിങ്ങളുടെ പങ്കാളിയെ കണ്ടുമുട്ടിയത്? നിങ്ങൾ ഒന്നിച്ചു ജീവിക്കാൻ തഹീരുമാനം എടുത്ത സാഹചര്യങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?

3 (അവിവാഹിതരായവരോടു) നിങ്ങൾക്കു വിവാഹം കഴിക്കാൻ പദ്ധതിയുണ്ടോ ? കാരണം?

4 നിങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിത പങ്കാളിയെക്കുറിച്ച് നിങ്ങൾക്കുണ്ടായിരുന്ന/ നിങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള സങ്കല്പങ്ങളും പ്രതീക്ഷകളും എന്തെല്ലാം ആയിരുന്നു?

5 നിങ്ങളുടെ ഒരു ദിവസം ആരംഭിക്കുന്നത്? ഒരു ദിവസം നിങ്ങൾ ജോലിസ്ഥലങ്ങളിലുമായി ചെയ്യുന്ന കാര്യങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ച് ഒന്ന് വിവരിക്കാമോ?

6 (മാതാപിതാക്കളും ഭർത്തൃ-മാതാപിതാക്കളും വേറെ താമസിക്കുന്നവരാണെങ്കിൽ) നിങ്ങൾ എപ്പോഴെല്ലാമാണ് മാതാപിതാക്കളെ സന്ദർശിക്കാൻ പോകാറുള്ളത്? അവർ നിങ്ങളോടൊപ്പം വന്നു താമസിക്കാറുണ്ടോ?

7 (അമ്മമാരാണെങ്കിൽ) നിങ്ങൾ ഗർഭിണിയായിരുന്ന സമയത്തു നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബത്തിൽ നിന്നും ലഭിച്ച പിന്തുണയെക്കുറിച്ചൊക്കെ ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?

8 നിങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിത പങ്കാളി വീട്ടുകാര്യങ്ങളിലും അടുക്കളയിലുമൊക്കെ നിങ്ങളെ സഹായിക്കാറുണ്ടോ ?

- 10 ആരാണ് വീട്ടിലെ വൈദ്യുതി ബില്ലിന് , വെള്ളത്തിന്റെ ബിൽ , കുട്ടികളുടെ സ്കൂൾ ട്യൂഷൻ ഫീസുകൾ കെട്ടാനുള്ളത്?
- 11 നിങ്ങളുടെ ജോയിന്റ് ബാങ്ക് അക്കൗണ്ട് ഉണ്ടോ? നിങ്ങളുടെ സാമ്പത്തിക ഇടപാടുകളുടെ മാനേജ്മെന്റ് കാര്യങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചു നിങ്ങളുടെ പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാൻ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടില്ലെങ്കിൽ ഒന്ന് അതേക്കുറിച്ചു വിവരിക്കാമോ? കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ സാമ്പത്തിക അവശ്യങ്ങൾ എങ്ങനെയാണ് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കുക?
- 12 നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ സാമ്പത്തിക ആവശ്യങ്ങളിലേക്കു നിങ്ങളുടേതായ ഒരു സംഭാവന നൽകുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങളുടെ എങ്ങനെ ആണ് അനുഭവപ്പെടാറു?
- 13 നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബത്തിലെ നിർണായക തീരുമാനങ്ങൾ എടുക്കുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങളുടെ മാതാപിതാക്കളുടെയോ അടുത്ത ബന്ധുമിത്രാദികളുടെയോ അഭിപ്രായം ചോദിക്കാറുണ്ടോ? അതോ അവരുടെ ചോദിക്കുന്നതിൽ നിങ്ങൾക്കോ ഭർത്താവിനോ വിമുഖത തോന്നാറുണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ കാരണം എന്ത്?
- 14 നിങ്ങളുടെ തൊഴിലിലും , ഉത്തരവാദിത്വങ്ങളിലും നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബം സന്തുഷ്ടവും സംതൃപ്തരും ആണോ? അവരുടെ സമീപനങ്ങളും പെരുമാറ്റങ്ങളും നിങ്ങളുടെ ജോലിസ്ഥലത്തെ പ്രകടനത്തെ ബാധിക്കാറുണ്ടോ?
- 15 എപ്പോഴെങ്കിലും കുടുംബത്തിലെ ഉത്തരവാദിത്തങ്ങളും ജോലിയും ഒരുമിച്ചു കൊണ്ടുപോകാൻ കഴിയില്ലാ എന്നുതോന്നിയിട്ടുണ്ടോ?
- 16 കുടുംബത്തിലെ ഉത്തരവാദിത്തങ്ങളും ജോലിയും ഒരുമിച്ചു കൊണ്ടുപോകാൻ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടു തോന്നിയ സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിലെ അനുഭവവും, ആ സമയങ്ങളിൽ നിങ്ങളുടെ മെയ്സലേക്കു വന്നിട്ടുള്ള ചിന്തകളും, വികാരങ്ങളും ഒക്കെ ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ? അത്തരം സാഹചര്യങ്ങളെ എങ്ങനെ ആണ് തരണം ചെയ്തിരുന്നത്?
- 17 മറ്റുള്ളവർക്ക് നിങ്ങൾ ഒരു ഭാര്യ, കുടുംബിനി എന്നുള്ളനിലയിൽ നിങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള പ്രതികരണങ്ങൾ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എങ്ങനെയാണ് അനുഭവപ്പെടാറു ?
- 18 മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ പ്രാതീക്ഷകൊത്തു ജീവിക്കാൻ നിങ്ങൾ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുന്നുണ്ടോ? അവരോടുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ പ്രതികരണം എപ്രകാരമാണ്? അത്തരം ഏതെങ്കിലും സാഹചര്യമോ അനുഭവമോ വിവരിക്കാമോ?

- 19 മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ പ്രതീക്ഷക്കൊത്തു ഉയരാൻ കഴിയാത്തതിൽ കുടുംബത്തിൽ അസ്വസ്ഥതകളോ ഉരസലുകളോ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ടോ? എപ്പോഴെങ്കിലും ജീവിതപങ്കാളിയുമായോ ബന്ധുമിത്രാതികളുമായോ വാക്കുതർക്കത്തിൽ ഏർപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ വരികയോ വഴക്കുണ്ടാവുകയോ ഉണ്ടായ സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?
- 20 നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബത്തിൽ തീരുമാനങ്ങൾ എടുക്കുന്നത് എപ്രകാരമാണ്? അതിൽ നിങ്ങളുടെ പങ്ക് എത്രമാത്രമുണ്ട് ?
- 21 തൊഴിൽസ്ഥലത്തെയും കുടുംബത്തിലെയും പീഡനത്തെ നിങ്ങൾ എങ്ങനെയാണ് മനസ്സിലാക്കുന്നതും വിവരിക്കുന്നതും?
- 22 നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബാന്തരീക്ഷത്തിൽ ഏതെങ്കിലും തരത്തിലുള്ള പീഡനത്തിനു നിങ്ങൾ ഇരയായിട്ടുണ്ടോ?
- 22 .1 ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള പീഡനം ? (മാനസികമായി, വാക്കുകളാൽ, ശാരീരികമായി, വൈകാരികമായി, ലൈംഗികമായി)
- 22 .2 ആരിൽനിന്നാണ് നിങ്ങളുടേക്ക് പീഡനം ഏൽക്കേണ്ടി വന്നത്?
- 22 .3 എന്തായിരുന്നു പീഡിപ്പിക്കപ്പെടാനുള്ള കാരണവും സാഹചര്യവും?
23. അത്തരം പീഡനങ്ങൾ നിങ്ങൾക്ക് എങ്ങനെയാണ് അനുഭവപ്പെട്ടത്? നിങ്ങളുടെ മാനസികവ്യഥ കുറച്ചു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?
- 23 .1 അത്തരം സാഹചര്യങ്ങളെ നിങ്ങൾ എങ്ങനെയാണ് തരണം ചെയ്തത്?
23. 2 കുടുംബത്തിൽ വഴക്കും പ്രശ്നങ്ങളും ഉണ്ടാകുമ്പോൾ ആരാണ് വിട്ടുവീഴ്ചയ്ക്ക് ആദ്യം തയ്യാറാകുന്നത്?
- 24 ആരോഗ്യകരമായ ലൈംഗികബന്ധത്തെക്കുറിച്ചു നിങ്ങൾക്കുള്ള കാഴ്ചപ്പാട് എന്താണ്?
- 25 നിങ്ങളുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ ഒരു മാതൃകാകുടുംബം എപ്രകാരമായിരിക്കണം ?
- 25 .1 വിവാഹേതര ബന്ധങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചും പ്രീ-മാറിറ്റൽ ലൈംഗിക ബന്ധങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചും നിങ്ങളുടെ നിലപാട്/കാഴ്ചപ്പാട് എന്താണ്?
- 25 .2 നിങ്ങളുടെ ജോലിസ്ഥലത്തോ, കലാലയങ്ങളിലോ, കുടുംബങ്ങളിലോ ഇത്തരം ബന്ധങ്ങൾ കണ്ടിട്ടുണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അവരോടുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ സമീപനം എപ്രകാരമായിരുന്നു?
- 26 പ്രണയബന്ധങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ നിലപാടെന്താണ്?

26.1 നിങ്ങളുടെ സഹോദരങ്ങളോ മക്കളോ പ്രണയബന്ധത്തിൽ ആണ് എന്ന് ഭാവിയിൽ നിങ്ങൾ അറിയാൻ ഇടവരുകയാണെങ്കിൽ അവരോടുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ നിലപാട് എപ്രകാരമായിരിക്കും?

27 (അമ്മമാരോട്) നിങ്ങളുടെ മക്കളുമായുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ അനുഭവങ്ങൾ കുറച്ചു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ? നിങ്ങളുടേ മകളെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള പ്രതീക്ഷകൾ, ഒരു അമ്മയെന്ന നിലയിൽ നിങ്ങളുടേ നിങ്ങളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള സങ്കല്പങ്ങളും പ്രതീക്ഷകളും പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?

28 അവരുടെ പഠനത്തിനുള്ള പ്രകടനവും മികവും എപ്രകാരമാണ്? അത് നിങ്ങളെ എപ്രകാരം സ്വാധീനിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു?

29 (വിവാഹിതരോട്) നിങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിത പങ്കാളിയെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ സങ്കല്പങ്ങളും ഒരു ഭാര്യയെന്ന നിലയിൽ നിങ്ങളുടേ നിങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള പ്രതീക്ഷകളും ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?

30. മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ പ്രതീക്ഷക്കൊത്തുയരാൻ നിങ്ങൾ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടുന്നുണ്ടോ? മറ്റുവർക്ക് നിങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള പ്രതീക്ഷകൾ പൂർത്തീകരിക്കാൻ കഴിയാത്തപ്പോൾ നിങ്ങളുടേ അത് എപ്രകാരമാണ് അനുഭവപ്പെടുന്നത്?

31 മറ്റുള്ളവരെ സന്തോഷിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനേക്കാളും നിങ്ങളുടേ നിങ്ങളുടെ വ്യക്തിത്വവും അഭിമാനവും എത്ര പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ടതാണ്? നിങ്ങളുടേ നിങ്ങളെ നഷ്ടപ്പെടാതെ മറ്റുള്ളവരെ സന്തോഷിപ്പിക്കാൻ ബുദ്ധിമുട്ടേണ്ടി വന്ന സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ എപ്പോഴെങ്കിലും ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ടോ?

32 നിങ്ങളെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ ഏറ്റവും സന്തോഷിപ്പിക്കുന്ന ഒരു കാര്യം എന്തായിരിക്കാം?

33 നിങ്ങൾക്ക് വ്യക്തിപരമായി നിങ്ങളുടേ വേണ്ടി മാത്രം ചിലവഴിക്കാൻ സമയം കണ്ടെത്താൻ കഴിയാറുണ്ടോ ? നിങ്ങളുടേ മാത്രമായി സമയം കണ്ടെത്തുക എന്നത് നിങ്ങളുടേ എത്ര പ്രധാനപ്പെട്ട ഒരു കാര്യമാണ് ?

34 ഒഴിവുവേള സമയം കണ്ടെത്താൻ കഴിയാതെ വരുമ്പോൾ നിങ്ങളുടേ എപ്രകാരമാണ് അനുഭവപ്പെടുക?

36 നിങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിതത്തിൽ നിങ്ങൾ മുൻഗണന കൊടുക്കുന്നത് ഏതെല്ലാം കാര്യങ്ങൾക്കാണ്? നിങ്ങളുടെ ഒരു ദിവസത്തെ സിംഹഭാഗവും സമയവും ഏതെല്ലാം കാര്യങ്ങൾ ചെയ്യാൻ വേണ്ടിയാണ് വിനിയോഗിക്കപ്പെടുന്നത്?

36 നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബത്തിൽ നിന്നും നിങ്ങളുടേ അർഹിക്കുന്ന ബഹുമാനവും, പരിഗണനയും, സ്നേഹവും ലഭിക്കുന്നില്ല എന്ന് എപ്പോഴെങ്കിലും തോന്നിയിട്ടുണ്ടോ?

- 36 .1 ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അത്തരം സന്ദർഭങ്ങൾ ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ? ഇത്തരം സാഹചര്യങ്ങളിലൂടെ കടന്നു പോയപ്പോൾ നിങ്ങളുടേക്ക് എങ്ങനെയാണ് അനുഭവപ്പെട്ടത്?
- 36 .2 ഇല്ലായെങ്കിൽ നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബത്തിൽ നിന്നും നിങ്ങളുടേക്ക് സ്നേഹവും പരിഗണയും ലഭിച്ചപ്പോഴെല്ലാം നിങ്ങളുടേക്ക് എങ്ങനെ ആണ് അത് അനുഭവപ്പെട്ടത്?
- 37 നിങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിതപങ്കാളിയും, മക്കളും, കുടുംബാംഗങ്ങളും എത്രമാത്രം നിങ്ങളുടെ വികാരങ്ങളെയും, താല്പര്യങ്ങളെയും മനസ്സിലാക്കുകയും അതിനോട് സഹകരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നവരാണ്?
- 38 . സ്ത്രീശാക്തീകരണത്തെക്കുറിച്ചു എന്താണ് നിങ്ങൾ മനസ്സിലാക്കിയിരിക്കുന്നത്?
- 39 . നിങ്ങൾ ശാക്തീകരിക്കപ്പെട്ട വ്യക്തി ആണ് എന്ന് തോന്നുന്നുണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അങ്ങനെ തോന്നാനുള്ള കാരണം?
40. നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബജീവിതത്തിലെയും ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥജീവിതത്തിലെയും ഉത്തരവാദിത്വങ്ങൾക്കു എങ്ങനെയാണ് മുൻഗണന കൊടുക്കുന്നത് എന്നാണ് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ? ഈ ഉത്തരവാദിത്വങ്ങൾക്കിടയിൽ എങ്ങനെയാണ് നിങ്ങൾ തീരുമാനങ്ങൾ എടുക്കാറുള്ളത്?
- 41 ജീവിതത്തിൽ നിർണായക തീരുമാനങ്ങൾ എടുക്കുന്നതിൽ തെറ്റുപറ്റിപ്പോയി അല്ലെങ്കിൽ കുടുംബജീവിതത്തിലെയും ഉദ്യോഗജീവിതത്തിലെയും ഉത്തരവാദിത്വങ്ങൾക്കു മുൻഗണന കൊടുക്കുന്നതിൽ വീഴ്ച വന്നു എന്ന് നിരാശ തോന്നിയിട്ടുള്ള സന്ദർഭമോ സാഹചര്യമോ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ടോ?
- 42 എപ്പോഴെങ്കിലും കുടുംബത്തിനുവേണ്ടി നിങ്ങളുടെ ക്യാരീരിൽ ലഭിക്കാമായിരുന്ന സ്ഥാനക്കയറ്റങ്ങൾ വേണ്ട എന്ന് വെച്ച സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ അതേക്കുറിച്ചൊന്നു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?
- 43 നിങ്ങളുടെ ഉദ്യോഗജീവിതത്തിലെ ഉയർച്ചയ്ക്ക് നിങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബം കാരണമായിട്ടുണ്ടോ ? അങ്ങനെയെങ്കിൽ നിനങ്ങളുടെ കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ പങ്കിനെ കുറിച്ചൊന്നും വിവരിക്കാമോ?

കുടുംബവും, ഉദ്യോഗവും, സമൂഹവും

- 1 നിങ്ങൾക്ക് കുടുംബ കൂട്ടായ്മകൾക്കും പരിപാടികൾക്കും ഒക്കെ പോകാൻ ഇഷ്ടമാണോ? നിങ്ങൾ സാധാരണ ഗതിയിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാറുള്ള പരിപാടികളെ കുറിച്ച് കുറച്ചൊന്നു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?
- 2 നിങ്ങളുടേത് ഇത്തരത്തിലുള്ള പൊതുപരിപാടികളിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുമ്പോൾ സന്തോഷവും ആത്മവിശ്വാസവും തോന്നാറുണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ എന്താണ് കാരണം?
- 3 നിങ്ങളുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാടിൽ ഇത്തരം പരിപാടികളിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുമ്പോൾ നമ്മളുടെ വ്യക്തിത്വവും വേഷവിധാനങ്ങളും എപ്രകാരം ആയിരിക്കണം എന്നതാണ്?
- 4 നിങ്ങളുടെ സഹപ്രവർത്തകരുമായി ഇത്തരം കൂട്ടായ്മകളും പൊതുപരിപാടികളിലും ഉണ്ടാകാറുണ്ടോ? അത്തരം പരിപാടികളിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാറുണ്ടോ?
- 5 നിങ്ങളുടെ സ്കൂൾ കോളേജ് കാലഘട്ടങ്ങളിലെ സുഹൃത്തുക്കളുമായി നിങ്ങൾക്കു ഇപ്പോഴും ബന്ധമുണ്ടോ? ഇവരുമായി സോഷ്യൽ മീഡിയകളിലൂടെ സുഹൃദം കാത്തുസൂക്ഷിക്കാൻ ശ്രമിക്കാറുണ്ടോ?
- 6 (അമ്മമാരെക്കുറിച്ച്) എവിടെയാണ് നിങ്ങളുടെ മക്കൾ പഠിക്കുന്നത്/പഠിച്ചത്? അവരുടെ വിദ്യാഭ്യാസ സംബന്ധമായ തീരുമാനം എടുക്കുമ്പോൾ എന്തെല്ലാമായിരുന്നു നിങ്ങളുടെ പ്രതീക്ഷകളും താല്പര്യങ്ങളും?
- 7 നിങ്ങൾ സ്ഥിരമായി ആരാധനാലയങ്ങളിൽ പോകാറുണ്ടോ? എപ്പോഴും പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കാറുണ്ടോ? എപ്പോഴെല്ലാമാണ് കൂടുതലായി പ്രാർത്ഥിക്കുന്നതും, ആരാധനാലയങ്ങൾ സന്ദർശിക്കുന്നതും? നിങ്ങൾ ഏതു ആരാധന സ്ഥലമാണ് കൂടുതലായും സന്ദർശിക്കാറുള്ളത്?
- 8 (വിശ്വാസി ആണെങ്കിൽ) നിങ്ങളുടെ ആത്മീയ ജീവിതത്തെക്കുറിച്ചു കുറച്ചൊന്നു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?
- 9 (വിശ്വാസി അല്ലെങ്കിൽ) വിശ്വാസികളായിട്ടുള്ള ആളുകളെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാട് എന്താണ്? എന്തുകൊണ്ടാണ് നിങ്ങൾ വിശ്വാസിയാകുന്നതിൽനിന്നും അകന്നു നിൽക്കുന്നത്?
- 10 ആത്മീയതയെക്കുറിച്ചും ദൈവവിശ്വാസത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുമുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാട് എന്താണ്?

- 11 നിങ്ങൾ സ്ഥിരമായി ഷോപ്പിംഗിനു പോകാറുള്ള കൂട്ടത്തിൽ ആണോ?നിങ്ങളു്ക്ക് ഏറ്റവും താല്പര്യം ഉള്ള ഷോപ്പിംഗ് സ്ഥലങ്ങൾ ഏതൊക്കെയാണ്?
- 12 നിങ്ങൾ കുടുംബമായി യാത്രകൾക്ക് പോവുകയോ പുറത്തു പോയി ഭക്ഷണം കഴിക്കുകയോ ചെയ്യുന്ന പതിവുണ്ടോ?കുടുംബത്തോടൊപ്പം ചിലവഴിക്കാറുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ ഒഴിവു വേളകളെക്കുറിച്ചു ഒന്ന് പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?
- 13 നിങ്ങളു്ക്ക് പൊതുവെ ഒഴിവുസമയങ്ങൾ ലഭിക്കാറുണ്ടോ ? അതുപോലെ തന്നെ നിങ്ങളുടേതായ ഹോബികൾ എന്തെങ്കിലുമുണ്ടോ?
- 14 നിങ്ങളുടെ ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥജീവിതത്തിൽ നിങ്ങൾ പൊതുവെ സഹകരിക്കുന്ന ആൾക്കാരെക്കുറിച്ചു കുറച്ചൊന്നു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ? അവർക്കു നിങ്ങളെ കുറിച്ചുള്ള പ്രതീക്ഷകളും അവരുടെ നിങ്ങൾ കുറിച്ച് കുറച്ചൊന്നു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?
- 15 നിങ്ങളുടെ കുറിച്ചൊന്നും പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?
- 16 നിങ്ങളുടെ ജോലിസ്ഥലത്തു സഹപ്രവർത്തകർക്കിടയിൽ നടക്കാറുള്ള ചർച്ചകൾ എന്തിനെക്കുറിച്ചെല്ലാം ആണ്? നിങ്ങൾ അത്തരം ചർച്ചകളിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുകയും നിങ്ങളുടെ അഭിപ്രായങ്ങൾ പങ്കുവെക്കുകയും ചെയ്യാറുണ്ടോ?
- 17 സഹപ്രവർത്തകർക്കിടയിൽ ജോലിസംബന്ധമോ മറ്റുവ്യക്തിപരമായതോആയ മത്സരങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകാറുണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ ഇത്തരം കാര്യങ്ങൾക്കു വേണ്ടിയാണ് മത്സരം നടക്കാറുള്ളത്?
- 18 നിങ്ങളുടെ ജീവിതത്തിലെ പ്രശ്നങ്ങളും തുറന്നു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാൻ പറ്റിയ നല്ല സുഹൃത്തുക്കൾ നിങ്ങൾക്കുണ്ടോ? ഉണ്ടെങ്കിൽ ആ സുഹൃത്തിനെയും നിങ്ങളുടെ സൗഹൃദത്തെയുംകുറിച്ചു കുറച്ചൊന്നു പങ്കുവയ്ക്കാമോ?
- 19 കേരളത്തിൽ വർദ്ധിച്ചുവരുന്ന വിവാഹമോചനകളെയും വിവാഹേതരബന്ധങ്ങളെയും കുറിച്ചുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ നിലപാട് എന്താണ്?
- 20 നമ്മുടെ കേരളം സമൂഹത്തെക്കുറിച്ചുള്ള നിങ്ങളുടെ കാഴ്ചപ്പാട് എന്താണ്?

