

CONCLUSION

Today, if there is an idea spreading across national limitations, it is women's claim for equal opportunity and political power. Women are creating waves in every field but the area where their participation dwindled, was the country's political life.

Man and woman are two typical terms representing two particular human forms, based on organic differences. Nature created these differences for the progress of the society. Both the sexes were made harmonizing to have a progeny and thus made equally accountable for carrying out nature's domination. But somewhere down the stream of history we started attributing a lower status to women. In an uncivilized society 'might' could have tried to prove 'right' by subjugating the disabled. Woman's lesser physical strength could have relegated her to the background. Her involvement as a partner, mother, housewife, social organizer, preserver of traditions and cultural patterns and above all as a stabilizer of society was perhaps never realized. With the passage of time, one could see in an increasing number of women a gradual sprouting of awareness about their status. Latter half of the twentieth century saw a revolution in woman's awareness of their identity, their feelings and emotions, their roles and requirements.

One of the finest ways to understand the fortitude of a civilization, to value its excellence and grasp its limitations, is to study the history of the position and status of women in it. Women and politics form one of the major research areas today. The history of women is closely interwoven with culture, society, state and lives of people.

No country or region can claim development in its real sense without the support, co-operation and involvement of women. The level of civilization of a country is best judged by the status women enjoy and their participation in the development of the country. Political empowerment of women is essential to express the full meaning to the concept of gender development.

This study considers the last half of freedom struggle which is the climax period of Indian Freedom Movement, as the frame. The root of political consciousness among women in Kerala is to be found in the structural changes taken place in the society owing to colonization. The structural changes and political struggles were historically interlinked, each acting up on the other and these provide the context of women's rising political consciousness and organized participation in struggles. Renaissance movement, socio-religious reform movements, class-caste-popular movements and Communist movement which worked parallel in Kerala history, brought about the modernization and politicization process of Kerala.

In this study an attempt is made to highlight the major factors behind the politicization of women in the princely state of Travancore. Both primary and secondary data are used in this study. The major findings of the researcher about the factors underlying the politicization of womenfolk in Travancore are the following.

The status of women in India has been subjected to many great changes over the past and has been eventful. As the concept of Mother Goddess is the legacy of Indus Valley Civilization, one of the main obligations and aims of India should be the resurrection and empowerment of its marginalized womanhood. The influence of women is marked in every page of Hindu history right from the most remote periods.

The Rig Veda presents incredible picture of Indian woman who was venerated as the queen of the family unit. The performances of Vedic rituals and ceremonies were deemed invalid without the wife joining her husband as his full partner. But in the Later Vedic Age, the role of women was restricted to wifehood and motherhood. The position of women further decayed during the Epic age. The condition further deteriorated when Manu, Kautilya and Vatsayana laid the philosophical basement for enslaving women inside the framework of a family. The Mahabharatha also presents a number of examples in this line of en chaining women. The monastic life of Jainism and Buddhism was a solace which offered women, the best opportunities for intellectual and aesthetic development. Buddha may be regarded the first Feminist who did not

heed to the existing socio-cultural practices as far as women are concerned. The Buddhist nunneries opened out to women, opportunities for education, self-culture and varied shares of social life. The nuns were provided with the knowledge of deepest intricacies of philosophy, subtle mystical experiences and intense meditative exercises. There have been numerous examples of women's valour and vigour during the Maurya and Gupta periods. During the Sangam period, a female child was welcomed and there existed a good level of gender equality. One-tenth of the Sangam writers were women. The voices of some dozen women saints are recorded in medieval history.

In the field of administration, India also produced some prominent women figures. Women's participation in the political life of present day India dates back to early twentieth century when organizations such as 'Women's Indian Association', 'The National Council of Indian Women' and the 'All India Women's Conference' were constituted. Travancore also had a history of long line of enlightened women rulers and leaders.

The matriarchal system that prevailed among some of the dominant communities in the past, the progressive social movements, government policies, and a historically conducive climate are a few of the other factors that have been identified as contributors to the success of women in Kerala. The traditional matriarchal system gave women the freedom to access several services that have not traditionally been offered to women.

By the close of nineteenth century the society of Kerala which was divided and sub divided into groups of bodies of castes and sub castes has transformed itself into a modern society of individual subjectivity through various types of discourses and practices. The Christian missionary activity which gained momentum during the British rule prepared the ground for this breakthrough.

The 'liberated women' was constructed through western liberal thought and English education. Vocational education provided employment opportunities to women and helped them to enhance their economic status. Economic independence of women was achieved through government and

private jobs and social mobility of women, was attained through employment in schools, hospitals and evangelical field.

Education acted as a silent reformer which brought Kerala women from clandestine life to public life and sowed the seeds of modernization, democracy and ‘Politicization’ which bore tremendous fruits later. Education, in the conventional sense, was elitist and restricted to the principal castes and communities.

When the missionaries universalized education and established` printing presses, knowledge reached all classes and castes of people which resulted in explosions in the social structure. The process of schooling and the propagation of ideas through the growing habit of reading, undermined the customs of old Kerala, and entrenched new notions about individual dignity and appropriate conduct. The missionary schools, journals, magazines etc. created a new culture in Travancore, where all the marginalised classes including women became self reliant, courageous and conscious to attain their rights and powers. The benefits of women education travelled across generations and triggered a new demand for change.

Political freedom could be attained only after social emancipation. The beginning of social reforms for women from the second quarter of nineteenth century had helped to make them come ahead and participate in very many ways. Social reformers of the early nineteenth century had provided leadership to the women’s movement by candidly acknowledging their besmirched position in Hindu society. They emphasized that women in ancient India had participated equally in all aspects of the family, community and political activity. Such a rationalization was used by almost all the reformers to engender public opinion in favour of social reform and to drum up women into political activity.

The daybreak of Renaissance started with the work of missionaries but the morning came with Sri Narayana Guru. The reformers of spiritual oriented social organizations undertook the herculean task of stabilizing social equality. The lower castes rose from slumber and strict caste stigmas and arranged their own schools, temples, libraries, industries and organizations. The demands for political democracy and national independence were therefore closely linked

with the attack on the rigidities of the caste and the fight for equal opportunities for all.

The linguistic, literary and cultural Renaissance in Kerala came as a result of the development of printing and political journalism. The note of national resurgence had been rumbling in Malayalam press and literature even during the first decades of twentieth century. The print media served as an imperative vehicle of popular education. Through it, the ideas of democracy and freedom began to sort out among the masses. In fact, to a large extent, the press had contributed to a great stir in the social, political and economic life of Travancore. The newspapers of either bourgeoisie or working class succeeded in influencing their followers and achieving their political goals.

Women's magazines and women's literary compositions appeared for the first time and slowly women began to put pen to paper. The deliverance of women was on track. Enjoying literary writing became an emancipation strategy to women. An insight about women's freedom came as a continuation of social reform movements and it is overt in women's magazines of early twentieth century. Women's magazines created women writers, expanded women's horizons of knowledge and made a change and development in the view of life. Some other women considered literary compositions for social transformation and support to freedom struggle. They could shatter and blow apart the fetters on women and alleviate social subjugation. They got courage to claim their rights and question its denial.

Travancore State Congress, Trade Union Movement, Marxian philosophy, Communist Party, Progressive Literary Movement etc. influenced educated women in the public life. Whole host of women participation can be seen in Travancore State Congress, Trade Union and Communist Movement in Travancore. They gave leadership to many events of paramount importance.

Appearance of Gandhiji as a political star in the showground of Indian freedom movement very effectively influenced the minds of Indian women, both urban and rural, towards political participation. The *Swadeshi* message which *Charka* and *khadi* symbolized had unique relevance and implication for ameliorating women's condition. Gandhiji worked consciously to feminize the

freedom movement. The nationalist movement had mobilized women as Congress members, *satyagrahis*, constructive programmers and executives. By taking part in public activities, women proved that they were proficient and responsible members of society and could also systematize and lead. Such a demonstration on the part of Kerala women dispelled forever, the misgivings about the skill of women to muddle through the situations outside the home.

If the Gandhian path of Mass Civil Disobedience was one part of the pre-independence legacy, there was another equally powerful heritage that defined the norms for political action by men and women in the decades to follow. The Communist Party of India during the late 1930s and 1940s mobilized men and women based on a class analysis of society and a speculation of forceful capture of State authority. The Communist Movement put forward the ideas of rationalism, anti casteism, intercaste marriage, social justice etc.

Women who assumed community leadership gradually rose to political leadership. Women personalities who captured the attention of Travancore, such as freedom fighters, Trade Union activists, Communist activists, educated elites, literary persons and social workers include leaders like Akkamma Cherian, Annie Mascrene, Lakshmi N. Menon, Saundaram Ramachandran, Elizabeth Kuruvilla, Mrs. Pandalam K.P.Raman Pillai, K.R. Gowri Amma, Rosamma Punnoose, Koothattukulam Mary, Suseela Gopalan, K. Devayani, Thankamma Krishna Pillai, P.K. Medini, A.K. Anasoooya, K. Meenakshi, Devaki Panicker, Dr. Mary Punnen Lukose, Anna Chandy, Anna Mani, B.Kalyani Amma, Thottackattu Madhavi Amma, Rani Setu Parvathi Bai, Parvathi Ayyappan, K.Chinnamma, T.V. Narayani Amma, K.Gowrikkutty Amma, Mundakappadam Leyamma, Mannathu Parvathi Amma, Muthukulam Parvathi Amma, Kandamma Varghese, Lalithambika Antarjanam and a lot of others.

Women empowerment is a precondition for any society's development. It is less easy to attain and maintain. Without placing women in an equal status with men, a country cannot make progress. Empowerment begins when women change their ideas about the causes of their powerlessness, when they recognize the forces that oppress them and when they act to change the conditions of their lives.

Empowerment implies political participation which includes right to vote, contest, campaign, party membership, and representations in political offices at all levels and effectively influence decisions thereby leading to political empowerment. Political participation is a fundamental part of human development. Politics has always remained the “men’s domain”. The participation of women and other under privileged groups in the political process will strengthen democracy and leads to social transformation.

The ‘Kerala Model of Development’ owes its attributed success to the achievements in the areas of health and education where the contribution of women is particularly significant. Although the ‘Kerala Model of Development’ has a positive effect on the social status of women, it did not transform into a political empowerment. Due to gender based division of labour, “Women’s place is in home syndrome” rules the society.

The most conspicuous feature of the term ‘empowerment’ is that it contains in it, the word ‘Power’. To use the Indian expression, it is ‘Shakti’ or a ‘powerful force from inside’ which challenge and transform the structures, institutions and ideology of Patriarchy. The Feminist slogan “All issues are women’s issues” has an equally important reverse side. Women’s issues are every one’s issues.

In the last fifty years, Women’s movement has matured and has progressively deepened its relationship with other movements like Trade Unions, environmental movements and other progressive movements which fight against all forms of oppression, exploitation, injustice and degradation. Whether combating for literacy, water, electricity, saving environment or resisting sexual harassment, thousands of women are vibrantly participating in it.

Women’s pace towards empowerment and politicization should be encouraged through different ways. Women have to be politicized and empowered because it is the best means to solve the problems they confront, which cannot be resolved through legal procedures alone. Policy makers and planners can accomplish a lot in making the marginalized, unseen, population, visible.

The main suggestions to improve the political status of women can be summed up as follows:

- Better education to women.
- Land rights and right of inheritance.
- Proper implementation of laws for protection of women.
- Change in traditional concepts.
- Re-defining the roles of women in within and outside the home.
- Re-reading scriptures.
- Giving ideological and psychological support.
- Positive support by the media.
- Proper educational programmes.
- Providing responsible range of employment.
- Making women conscious of their rights and power to vote.
- Power to participate in political process and decision making process.
- Motivation to think, discuss and act to solve problems.
- Giving political power to the hands of women and promote politics as a career among women.

Truely, emancipation of women is not easy. Will, awareness and determination should come from within the women community. Society should be alarmed and prepared for a change. The hindrances in the path of politicization of women should be eliminated and their role and contribution towards politics should be fully tapped for the progress of our nation. Emancipation of womanhood should be viewed as the total emancipation of human race itself.

All nations attain their pinnacle of glory only when women have been free, cultured and pure; because they were the transmitters of culture in all societies. The notion that women are unfit for political leadership is an attitude which existed all over India. The conservative attitude of society could not

produce an appropriate environment for women's development and performance in the political field. The conventional 'glass ceiling' still impede the upward social and professional mobility of women. To realize the dream of women's empowerment in rural India, women have to undertake a long journey of struggle which is full of obstacles. The road is rough and rocky. The 73rd amendment of the constitution is only one step in that direction. Its significance has to be 'banked and cashed' so that women of posterity would 'harvest rich dividends'.