



Marxist Perspective Of Empowering Women In Kerala -A Comprehensive Analysis

Bindu.P.S.

Assistant Professor

Department of History

M.S.M.College, Kayamkulam

Abstract

During the period of 19th century an intellectual revolution took place in Kerala which led to the social transformation and it changed the perspective of the people. In this period several revolutionary changes took place in all the sphere of life. Social change is an inevitable factor and social consciousness developed among the people. This newly emerged social consciousness affected all the social, political, economic institutions, habits, beliefs and cultural traits. The arrival of Europeans and the role of missionaries led to the spread of western education and this created newly educated intelligentsia that brought about revolutionary changes in the pattern of our society.

The 19th century witnessed the emergence of several socio- religious movements in Kerala. All the movements stood for the cause of women and weaker section of the society and tried to uplift them. Women suffered and struggled against evil practices like child marriage, polygamy, purdah system, polyandry, domestic violence, dowry system, widow marriage etc. Lack of education was the main factor behind this backwardness of our society Education is a very important tool for the socio and economic growth of each nation. The history of educational development of Kerala is the history of the struggles for emancipation and for overcoming adverse conditions. The most prominent and significant feature of the 19th century Kerala was the revival of education on entirely new line which transformed the society of

Kerala from medievalism to modernism. The nineteenth and twentieth century witnessed the emergence of new social order in Kerala. The strong Marxist political background of Kerala provided so many high development indicators for the empowerment of women. They tried to highlight the women's issues and to make them self-sufficient to create a progressive society in Kerala. The emancipation and empowerment of women in Kerala through Marxism is a significant and relevant topic because it includes political, social and economic dimensions.

This paper is an attempt to analyse how the society of Kerala transformed through the impact of Marxism and education. This study also highlights the role of missionaries and effects of western education. Marxism had a great influence on Kerala's public sphere and it focussed on social and economic justice, equality and class struggle.. A qualitative transformation is very urgent in the cultural life of the people of Kerala. Marxism is a philosophy of revolution and a great doctrine that always stood with the oppressed section of society and against all forms of exploitation. This article analysed how Marxist doctrines and movements have contributed to the empowerment of women in Kerala.

Key word: Education, Social Change, Transformation, culture and Marxism

The unique geographical features of Kerala helped to develop an independent political social and cultural tradition. Kerala is the land of a meeting place where the cultural assimilation of traditionalism and modernism takes place and several changes are taking place in social structure, family life, education, science and technology dressing pattern, religious life and above all the attitude of the people. The socio-cultural and political forces played a dominant role in the transformation of a society and its economic development. Every society has a dualistic nature that is the existence of two systems- the indigenous and modern. All over the world transforming indigenous cultures had been an agenda central to colonial domination.

Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political social, educational, gender, or economic strength of individuals and communities. Empowerment of women is enabling them to understand their full strength and inspiring them to utilize all their capabilities. Empowerment is a process which led the forces for the development of women socially, politically and economically. Social transformation has become a common phenomenon in all parts of the world. Social change is an inevitable factor. In case of Kerala socio cultural exchanges occur in everyday life.

There have been several studies on the freedom struggle of Kerala, but the role of women in these struggles reduced only to a few name and not give much importance to their background and their political participation. The biographies of woman freedom fighters are very few. The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala by PKK Menon gives details about role of women in freedom struggle in Kerala. Their role was only supportive and they encouraged the satyagrahis. The women's movement under women's own leadership is a recent development in Kerala. These autonomous women's groups play a great role in strengthening the women's movement in Kerala. Native Life in Travancore by Rev.Samuel Mateer (1883) gives a vivid picture: of the social life of the people of Travancore (Southern part of Kerala) in the 18th and 19th centuries. In his work, The Decline of Nayar Dominance (1976) Robin Jeffrey presents a study of the social and political changes among the Nayar community. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya her work Indian women's Battle for Freedom(1983) recounts the story of the mass participation of women in the Indian national movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Balakrishnan P.M. (1983) in Jathi Vyavasthithiyum Kerala Charithravum (The Caste System and Kerala History) and Bhaskaran Unni P. (1988) in Pathonpatham Noottandile Keralam (Kerala in the 19th century) describe the caste system prevailing in the State in the 19th century and later. The editor of the book, 'Capacity Building for Effective Empowerment of Women', Ranjani K. Murthy refers empowerment as a process of 'exposing the oppressive power of the existing gender (and social) relations critically challenging them and creatively trying to shape different social relations

Kerala had become a separate geographical unit only during the period of Perumals of Mahodayapuram that is from 9th century onwards. During the early centuries of Christian era Kerala had remained as an integral part of Ancient Tamizhakam. During the Sangam period men and women enjoyed equal rights in the society. Education was universal in Kerala and there was a high level of literacy during the Sangam epoch.¹ But with the transition of society from tribal to kingship the position of women was lowered and their movements restricted. They began to withdraw from public life and the significance was given to loyalty of wife to husband. Polygamy was common but polyandry did not exist.

During the Vedic Period, women enjoyed a high status in the society. Lopamudra, Apala and Viswambara were the most enlightened women of that time. They enjoyed equal status and rights during the early Vedic period. But later the status of women began to be declined. During the Post-Vedic period women lost their political rights and independence and devotion to husband became their only duty. The

Medieval period also witnessed the degradation of women's position and they should be kept under the authority of men in all spheres of life. The purdah system, child marriage, devadasi system, polygamy, female infanticide, seclusion etc were quite common in the society during that time. This geographical isolation has, however, not prevented Kerala from making its rich contribution to the cultural heritage of the country as part of the general mainstream of Indian culture.ⁱⁱ Next to Brahmins the Devadasis got the best type of education.ⁱⁱⁱ

The society of Kerala was organized on the basis of caste system during the 16th and 17th centuries. The social and political condition of Kerala during this time was feudal in nature. There was no regular judiciary or written code of laws. Ordeal by balance was reserved for Brahmins, fire for Kshatriyas, water for Vaisyas and poison for Sudras. Brahmins stood at the top of the society and among them the Namboodiri were reckoned as highest rank. They had a privileged status and were expected to observe the caste rules most scrupulously. The punishments were very severe to the lower caste people. Dalits were prohibited within 64 feet and a Nair could approach but not touch a Namboodiri. The upper castes enjoyed all facilities to lead a life of ease and idleness and the law gave them all protection that they needed.

Position of Women in Medieval Kerala

The Namboodiri women enjoyed high status and the privilege of covering their whole body, wore gold and other ornaments depending upon their economic status. They practiced a traditional set of marriage and inheritance system. The social life and social institutions of Kerala were profoundly affected by the Namboodiri Brahmins. Education received and impetus in the hands of Aryans.^{iv} The practice of marriage among Namboodiris also implied that many Namboodiri women could never marry at all. They could not marry men from outside caste or sub caste group because of the existence of caste system. Some Namboodiri girls were married to aged men and their lives might not have been much different from unmarried one. These privileged women were leading an isolated life. They were not allowed to violate the customs. They were called antharjanam or an inside person. They observed perpetual widowhood and they suffered the worst aspects of isolation. If they mingle with the others, they could be ostracized or excommunicated for immoral conduct. The Namboodiri women led a very deplorable life during the 20th century. . The Namboodiri women practiced the purdah system that carried the marakuda to hide their faces. The duty of women was to serve her husband and be confined to the kitchen. So they became one of the favoured slaves.

V.T.Bhattathiripad in his autobiography -kaneerum Kinavum (Tears and Dreams) has presented a clear picture of the life of an average namboothiri woman. The women accused of adultery were treated very badly under the heinous custom of *Smarthavieharam*. The women accused of adultery were subjected to mental torture under this *system*. *Smarthavicharam* provided for an enquiry followed by a trial of the accused woman which lasted months.

The status of Nair women became quite different from that of other caste. They enjoyed a large degree of social freedom. They had the freedom to select either the Namboodiri or Kshatriya men as their husbands. Nairs gave silent permission to the Sambandham and they adopted Marumakkathayam system i.e. inheritance through sister's son. The women and children of Sambandham had no right in the property of their husband and in case of children in the property of their father. Women never went to their husband's house; they stayed at their own Taravad. They gave education to girls in the nearby kalaris. But girls after talikettu kalyanam ceremony did not attend the classes. The family was governed by Karanavar, the senior most male member.

Mannathu Padmanabhan in Jeevitha Samarm (Memories) says that *no* freedom was given to bride and groom in choosing their partners. But the wife could divorce the husband at any time and the husband could discontinue visiting his wife. Women were allowed remarriage also. During the 19th century Kerala society was not based on the principles of social freedom and equality. The Nair women followed the practice of polyandry while non-fraternal polyandry prevailed in North Kerala, but fraternal polyandry existed in South Kerala. They practiced this system because of to protect their family property.

Ezhava women were treated as oppressed section of the society and often victims of exploitation by the uppercaste people. Ezhava memorial was the beginning of the upliftment of Ezhavas in Kerala. The women marry at a very early period of life and denied the right of education and lost their childhood. Among Ezhava women polyandry existed. C Kesavan in geevitha Samarm- (The struggle of *life*) says that his mother married her husband's brother after the death of the husband. Their women did not have property rights.

The two other major communities in Kerala were Christians and Muslims. Muslim women were not allowed to enter mosques and their right to property was only half of that of men. Men observed polygamy

had the right to divorce their wives very easily. Christian women enjoyed greater freedom compared with other caste women and they were given education. They followed patrilineal system.

The dreadful custom known as pulappedi or Mannappedi or Parappedi was observed during this period. These were the two best examples of for the rigidity of caste system. If an upper caste man or woman was either seen or touched by a lower caste on the evening of particular day, the uppercaste was excommunicated. Portuguese traveller Durate Barbosa has recorded this strange custom. We live in a patriarchal society, in this social set up woman was insignificant. Dowry, polygamy and other family tradition destroyed their individuality. Society was broadly divided into two groups: firstly the privileged group having power and rights and second the majority with no power and right. Women were treated as inferior to men and they lived without any connection with the world. Majority of them spent their time within the four walls of their home.

During this period society was not based on the principles of social equality and freedom.^v The nineteenth and early twentieth century was a great turning period which changed the face of Kerala far more than did the preceding thousand years. Kerala experienced an intellectual revolution or renaissance during this period which totally changed the outlook of the people.

Women and Education

Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Education has an important role in emboldening the women community and it as a cornerstone of women empowerment. Thus the education of women ought to occupy top priority among the measures adopted to improve the status of women in any society. So the education empowers women and increases women's status in the community and in the family. "Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women.

Social institutions are created historically and developed historically, but they are constantly tested by socialization when they will be taken over and legitimated by new generations. So "Education "is fully recognized as vital to social and economic growth. The western education hastened the social transformation in Kerala. Education in Kerala had been promoted during British rule in India by Catholic and other Christian missionaries who were keen on providing education to all sections of society and strengthening of women, without any kind of discrimination.

Education was universal in Kerala and there was a high level of literacy during the Sangam epoch. The Panas, Vedas, Kuravas, the Parayas and others were entitled to higher education. Education was provided to all without any discrimination of caste or sex. Special attention was given to female education too. The progress of Aryanisation brought about a decline in the standards of general education and literacy. With the spread of Aryan ideology, education became monopoly of a privileged few. Women as well as the low castes gradually lost their high status in society and right to education. Thus the concept of universal education, which existed in the early Sangam Age, got deteriorated under the impact of the caste system and education became a monopoly of the upper castes in the Hindu society. A silent revolution was taking place in the socio-religious system of Kerala during the last phase of the Sangam Age.

The education of women was not in a process of development at the dawn of 19th century. The society had general prejudice against female education. The prohibition against women learning to read was probably due to various causes. It was believed that education was considered rather profane and immoral by aristocratic ladies. There was a very strong social prejudice against the education of women. But there was a small section of women who had received education. Next to Brahmins the Devadasis got the best type of education. Courtesans whose business in life is to dance in the temples and public ceremonies and prostitutes are the only women who are allowed to learn to read, sing or dance. They enjoyed a high social status. They were allowed to take seats even in the company of royal women. The next group of the girls who received education was the girl children in Nair and Syrian families'. In these girls were admitted along with boys in the indigenous institution called "Ezhuthupallies." The indigenous schools were freely attended by girls. The aim of girl's education in these institutions was to give training in elementary, moral instruction and some basic lessons in music. The introduction of Western education acted as a catalytic agent. Period of learning was from five to seven years of age and some girls of this age group attended school. Formal higher education as denied to them. The main defect of this indigenous system of elementary schools was the exclusion of girls except some Nair and Syrian children. Another defect was that the children of both sexes of the low castes who formed the vast majority of population were denied admission in these schools. In the 18th century women had no rights. They were the property of their husbands or fathers. The social life and social institutions of Kerala were profoundly affected by the Namboodiri Brahmins. Education received and impetus in the hands of Aryans.

Western Education and the role of Christian Missionaries

The beginning of Western Education in Kerala may be associated with the work of Christian missionaries. They used education, not as an end in itself, but as a means to evangelization. The introduction of Western education acted as a catalytic agent.^{vi} As most of the early converts to Christianity came from the lowest strata of Hindu society, and were illiterate, it became necessary for missionaries to establish schools for teaching them to read and write. They used education to render a service to the deprived sections of Indian society and wanted to create a more favorable attitude to the Christianity. LMS, CMS, and BEMS made continuous efforts to popularize women's education and empowerment. The missionaries imparted education to boys and girls. The missionaries provided education to all castes and they gave a new status and resource to the lower and neglected castes in Kerala for the first time.^{vii}

The history of western-style education in Kerala can be traced to the establishment of numerous schools and colleges by Christian missionaries. The contributions of Catholic priests and nuns are very crucial and have played a major role in educating women and people belonging to lower strata of society surpassing many social hurdles. Between the passings of laws which intend to improve the position of women and their translation into practice there is a gulf which needs to be bridged. During the initial phase of colonial rule in India, the indigenous system of knowledge and local cultural practices came under severe strain.^{viii} The objective of these organizations was of course to evangelize the people of Kerala. But in practice their activity took on the character of movements in educational and social reform.

Effects of Education on the society

Education refers to any act or experience that has a formative effect on the personality of an individual. The history of educational development of Kerala is the history of the struggles for emancipation and for overcoming adverse conditions. These struggles paved the way for universalization of education in Kerala society. The most prominent and significant feature of the 19th century Kerala was the revival of education on entirely new line which transformed the society of Kerala from medievalism to modernism. The nineteenth and twentieth century's witnessed the emergence of new social order in Kerala. Education liberates man from the state of inaction that is imposed by the prevailing malpractices and superstitions. The progress of English education and dissemination of liberal ideas and rapid expansion of the means of communication, the progress of industrialization, the rise of trade union movement, the introduction of universal adult franchise have also contributed to the breakup of caste

barriers in Kerala.^{ix} The importance and antiquity of education in Kerala is underscored by the state's ranking as among the most literate in the country. The local dynastic precursors of modern-day Kerala made significant contributions to the progress on education in Kerala.

The most important impact of education was that the women became aware of their rights and they wanted to improve their miserable condition. Through education certain social evils like sati, smartha, pulappedi, devadasi system etc. disappeared from the society of Kerala. While women in Kerala have been endowed with the benefits of an education—literacy, autonomy, and a sense of pride but they also live in a society that has been characterized by divisions of caste and gender for thousands of years. The development of critical consciousness in Kerala was as much a reformation as it was a renaissance. It was a process that absorbed new elements adapted itself to new needs and restated itself in new terms. The new spirit of self-criticism, and growing social consciousness demanded changes in the caste based ascribed status system in Kerala. Education is fully recognized as vital to social and economic growth. They pointed out that education was a must to enlighten and awaken the masses against oppression and exploitation. The spread of education became essential for overcoming their economic and social backwardness.

The spread of modern education has helped the Kerala society to become a dynamic one. Through the modern education the Kerala society had awakened from its age-long slumber and the society started showing the symptoms of social renaissances. There existed three methods of transferring the *slaves Janmum* or sale, *Kanam* or mortgage and *Pattom* or lease.^x The most important of the social reform movements of Kerala was the agitation for removal of untouchability.

The literacy rate was very high in the state of Kerala and female literacy rate was higher than other states in India. The Marxist government gave more importance to education because it is the key factor for empowering women and makes them economically self-sufficient.

As per the 2010 Economic review, Kerala's female literacy is 92 percent while the corresponding figure at the national level is only 65 percent. The female life expectancy in Kerala as per the latest available secondary source is 76.3 years when the same for women at the national level is only 64.2 years (Economic Review, 2010).

“If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered”.

Marxism and Empowerment of Women

Marxism is a great doctrine for the development of a new society based upon classless and a spirit of equality. Women's liberation is the main motive of this theory and they always stood for the upliftment of oppressed women and against all the forms of exploitation. Marx did not say much on family and gender and he provided only scattered observations. But he contributed much to the development of feminist theory. In the capitalist society women have been subjected to severe exploitation and oppression. Marx was the great exponent of women's emancipation through their participation in social production. Marxist feminists viewed "the patriarchal family as integral to capitalism and thus a site of oppression that must be destroyed." The primitive communist society of Kerala was replaced by a system which divided the society into castes. First in to three or four then it became dozens and scores.^{xi}

In Kerala individual feminists who dared to protest against violence and exploitation towards women in the patriarchal society. They applied their own perspectives and changed the conventional way of history writing. Marxist feminist also contributed in the field of political economy. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx argued that women's position in society could be used as a measure of the development of society as a whole. Marx always showed sympathy to those women who were oppressed either in their family or in their working places. Marx, states "That the emancipation of the productive class is that of all human beings without distinction of sex or race."

Marxist Historians pointed out many women issues in the contemporary capitalist society. Marx's dialectical method was one of the important aspect for analyzing family and gender. Marx did not develop a systematic theory about family and gender but he stood for women's equality and give importance to the role of women in family, workplace and other important events. Gender is not a static subject and it viewed as matter to change and development. Marxist progressive revolutionary ideas inspired the women to fight against injustice, racial discrimination, oppression and humiliation. Kerala has a long history of communist influence that influenced in shaping the policies of state. Several communist movements brought about radical changes in the society of Kerala. Implementation of land reforms was one of the major achievements of communist government in Kerala. This is a revolutionary reform because it abolished the age long feudal system, and the land was redistributed to the landless people and many women were benefited because they were a part of agricultural families. They were oppressed by landlords due to their

socio-economic status and gender. The communist party in Kerala addressed all the inequalities existed in the society and they organized peasants, workers, tenants many of whom were women. They organized workers, mobilized peasants and protested for land rights and fair wages. The first Communist government led by E.M.S Namboodiripad formed government in Kerala in 1957 and this marked a beginning of new era of progressive legislations. Their main aim was to reduce the poverty, unemployment, inequality and to uplift the marginalized communities especially women. The split in the Communist Party of India led to the formation of CPI (M), and they became the champion of Marxist principles in Kerala. They played a pivotal role in ensuring the economic equality and social justice especially in rural areas.

K.Damodaran one of the founding leaders of communist party in Kerala also played a great role in the empowerment of women with the great social ideas of justice and equality. He always worked for marginalized groups including women and emphasized gender equality. He firmly believed in the power of education and recognized the role of educated women in the public life. He advocated women's rights and supported legislation to protect women from domestic violence and other atrocities in the public sphere. He provided an opportunity for women to express their political views and this led to great social transformation. He was a great social reformer and laid the foundation for a more equitable and classless society.

Effects of Land Reforms on Women

Through the land reforms in 1960s and 70s, they applied Marxist principles directly to promote egalitarianism. This provided economic security to many women and they gained land ownership. This led to the empowerment of women in Kerala and they became economically self-sufficient and they were actively participated in the agricultural production. They also earned money which enhanced their social status, identity and social consciousness. They gave more importance to education, health and other essential needs of society. Women can actively participate in social, political and economic activities.

The communist government in Kerala applied Marxist doctrines of collective action and mobilization of masses to eradicate illiteracy and focused on education with special emphasis on women. They organised campaigns and educated women played a great role in these campaigns. The government also gave priority to vocational education, skill enhancement, higher education and these factors led to the overall development of society. Women in Kerala acquired knowledge in various fields like science, art, health and technology. Marxist doctrines made a significant impact on healthcare system in Kerala. The state

emphasized public health programmes, maternal and child care, family planning and it improved the health conditions of women. This health programme of government led to low population growth rate which contributed too much socio- economic benefits. These health education empowered women to enhance their independence and maintained a quality of life.

Women in the public sphere

The socio-religious reform movements brought about radical changes in the position of women in our society. Another important factor was the national movement especially the mass movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. The khadi movement of Gandhi opened an important stage for the participation of women in the freedom struggle. The national movement in Kerala reached its highest peak during the 1920 onwards. But it never reached women. Travancore was blessed with enlightened women rulers like Gouri Parvathi Bai, Sethulakshmi Bai and they took interest in improving the economic conditions of the state and introduced various welfare programmes.

The social reforms paved way for the growth of the social consciousness among the people against the evil practices in the society. Channar Rebellion or Melmundu Kalapam of Travancore was the best example for this new awakening during the 19th century. This rebellion was started by Nadar community for the right of their women to cover their upper part of the body with cloth like that of higher caste women. During the beginning of the 20th century, the educated women raised the issues of women and this led to their participation in the social movements. Women in Kerala played a significant role in the socio-reform movements, trade union activities and in political parties. The progressive social reform movements championed the cause of women and initiated a more positive approach towards the status and role of women in the society. Women played an important role in the development of the state.

Kallumala agitation was the other great event showed the upliftment of lower caste women. A public meeting was convened under the leadership of Ayyankali at Perinad in Kollam in 1915 and he asked the pulaya women to throw away their ornaments made of iron and glass pieces which were considered as the symbol of slavery. Hundreds of pulaya women threw away their ornaments in public.

Through the influence of Marxist ideas women were actively participated in the struggles of Karshaka sangham. The peasant struggles changed the method of national movement. These movements became an integral part of national movement. Naturally women also joined the national movement. Through Mahila

sanghams and Mahila samajams they came into public sphere. V.K.Thankam, Kamala Nambisan, Devayani, , Lakshmikutty Amma etc belong to the peasantry and agricultural laborers and they struggled for their survival and existence. During the 20th century women involved in public affairs and in 1919 women in Travancore obtained partial voting rights. In 1930 they occupied position in legislatures. T.Narayini Amma, Thottakkattu Madhavi Amma, Annachandi, Smt. K.K. Kuruvila, Gouri Pavithran, etc. were the important personalities who acted as members of Legislative Assembly. During this period women also attained high position in law, medicine, journalism and education. Anna Chandi was the first women who obtained degree in law and Mary Punnan who obtained degree in medicine. During this time the society gave much encouragement to women who got higher education. There were women owned and administered schools such as Mrs.Baker School in Kottayam and Agasta Blan Ford in Trivandrum. These schools also provide better education and training to girls. Mudukulam Parvathy Amma, Arya Pallam, Parvathy Nenmini Mangalam were some of the famous women who actively participated for the emancipation of women.

The first women labor union was coir making laborers union, Ambalapuzha whose secretary was Smt. K. Devayani. There were number of women leaders in the communist party which include Smt.Suseela Gopalan, Smt.K.R.Gouri Amma who assumed leading role in the party. Accamma Cherian is one of the great freedom fighter of Kerala. She was named as the Jhansi Rani of Travancore by Mahatma Gandhi. Until her death she worked for the nation. A V Kuttimalu Amma is another great freedom fighter of Kerala. She united many women together and raised flag against the Portuguese. Ammu Swaminadhan is one of the eminent freedom fighter of Kerala. She followed principles of Mahatma Gandhi and participated in freedom struggle without violence. In Kerala, the political empowerment of women was first attempted when 30 percent of *seats* of District council were reserved for women in 1990.

The government has provided so many economic opportunities for women and they adopted policies based on Marxism. This led to the economic empowerment of women and they participated in the various fields. Marxist doctrines of self-reliance and collective action make them economically self-sufficient and independent. Self-help groups and cooperative societies helped them to improve their social and economic status. The state policies helped the some women to pursue professional careers and others were involved in agriculture, fisheries and other small scale activities.

Political empowerment is also very necessary for women and communist government in Kerala promoted their leadership roles. Women leaders championed various socio-economic issues of women in Kerala and contributed to their empowerment. They advocated social justice and gender equality. During the post-Independence period K.R Gowri Amma, P.K. Sreemathy, Susheela Gopalan et.al played a crucial role in socio-political life of Kerala. Women's participation in the Panchayats also helped them to empower as decision makers and political consciousness developed among them and this led to revolutionary social change. The trade unions and other Marxist organizations created a social awareness about women's rights and conducted movements to support the oppressed women. They challenged the existing traditional norms of society and promoted a culture of emancipation of women. Women's organizations played a great role in creating awareness about the social evils and advocated women's rights and socio economic justice. They promoted gender equality and provided a platform for women to address their issues.

In spite of all these significant progresses, women in Kerala faced so many challenges related to gender bias and patriarchy. This also affected their career, opportunities and restricted their socio-economic mobility. They also faced many employment issues like job insecurity, wage disparities and other worse working conditions. Socio- Cultural norms created so many barriers to women in Kerala and limited their professional career and opportunities. The state in Kerala implemented various policy measures for the welfare and protection of the women still many women suffered domestic violence, abuses and sexual harassment. The effective implementations of laws are very necessary for the empowerment of women.

Conclusion

The present condition of women in Kerala is that they obtained high educational gain and better status in society. The attitude and outlook of the society towards the problem of women has changed. The economic and political empowerment is the two key components which can liberate women from the clutches of subordination. But in a practical sense they are in a relatively backward position. Our state is bestowed with women scientists, politicians, doctors, educationalists, writers, women liberation activist, poetesses and administrators. . For the empowerment of women many schemes were introduced by the government. The society can attain development only when it accepts women's role and to utilize her ability. Empowerment begins when women change their ideas and recognize the forces that oppress them. Women have to be politicized and empowered because it is the best means to solve the problems they faced. For

the progress of the country, it was necessary to motivate and giving political power to the hands of women and to make them conscious of their rights and to provide psychological support. Women were the transmitters of culture in every society .So it is the duty of the society to produce an appropriate environment for women's all round development and performance especially in the political field.

So we have to analyses the main problems faced in achieving women empowerment through education. Development of education is considered as the most important means to empower women with the knowledge skill and confidence. Employment plays a vital role in improving women status in society. The relevance of women empowerment is that the half of the population is women. As a result, woman reached a level of human dignity and honor from a stage of dependency, insecurity and slavery. The Marxist doctrines of social justice and equality provided opportunities for women and the state adopted progressive policies for the empowerment of women in Kerala. These efforts led to the women's active participation in social and political life. Kerala acted as a model for the social transformation and empowerment of women through Marxist principles like collective action, social justice, progressive polices and equality.

Notes and References

1. Elamkulam P.N.Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, Trivandrum, 1970, p.267.
2. A .Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala History and its Makers*, Kottayam, 1987, pp.3-4.
3. Elamkulam KunjanPillai, op.cit. p.277.
4. P.S.Velayudhan,(ed.),*History on the March*, Ernakulum, 1965, p.146.
5. A.Sreedhara Menon,*A Survey of Kerala History*, Madras, 1967, p.390.
6. Ibid., p.396.
7. T.K.Gangadharan, *Evolution of Kerala History and Culture*, Calicut, 1997, p-.281.
8. K.M.Panikkar, *A History of Kerala 1498-1801 A.D* ,Annamalainagar, 1959, P.267.
9. Sreedhara Menon,opcit.,p.293.
10. Francis Buchanan,*A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore,Canara and Malabar* ,London,1807 ,p.492.
11. Nambootiripad,E.M.S., *Kerala-Yesterday,Today,Tomorrow* (Calcutta,1967),p.28.