



Education and Womens Identity: Missionary Initiatives and State Intervention in Early Twentieth Century Kerala

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Abstract

The intervention of missionaries in twentieth-century Kerala offers fascinating insights into the intricate relationship between education and the reordering of social norms in late colonial India. Comprising of the former Princely states of Travancore, Cochin, and British Malabar, the region witnessed significant strides in administrative modernization and educational advancements by the early decades of the twentieth century. Several factors including the progressive nature of the princely state and the influence of Marxist ideologies, the role of the christain missionaries and the prevalence of matrilineal practice among caste groups were attributed for the advancements made in education and health. Yet what distinguishes Travancore, was the presence of a strong indigenouse Syrian Christian group, whose presence attracted Western Protestant missionaries into Travancore. Missionary intervention extended beyond the realm of religion and shaped had an important bearing on education, including women's education in shaping individual perceptions of sanity, morality, and hygiene, leading to the reconfiguration of social and community relationships.



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Introduction

The former Princely state of Travancore, which later became part of the state of Kerala, in the south western part of the Indian subcontinent, was considered as a model state, for the advancements in education and health that it achieved in comparison to other parts of the Indian subcontinent (Franke *et al.*, 1993). London based missionary groups, primarily the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the Church Mission Society (CMS) arrived in

Travancore in the early decades of the nineteenth century with the objective of brining the local Christian groups, the Syrian Christians into the protestant fold. This was because Travancore lay on the south-western coast of the Indian subcontinent and had historically been tied to the regions across the Indian ocean. This ensured that a sizeable Christian group that bore allegiance to the eastern Orthodox Church of Syria had made their presence in Travancore. The knowledge of the Travancorean

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Christianity led Catholic friars from Rome and Lisbon in the fourteenth century and after as well as the Protestant missionaries under the British to Travancore (Cleetus, 2019). The objective of the missionaries was to bring the Syrian Christians to accept the dominant Catholic or Protestant versions of Christianity. Under British colonialism missionary intervention led to the establishment of schools and hospitals in Travancore and the adjacent Cochin territories. Missionary intervention ensured the dissemination of new morals and ethics that ensured a debate on what is meant by Christian values, and as its extension social and secular morals among the Christians in Travancore. Non-Christian communities, particularly the upper caste Nairs were also highly influenced by Western ideas about the individual and society and sought to reorder their domestic and social lives. One of the most important spheres, which was sought to be reorganized was the world of women. Under colonialism when Indian social and political reformers were striving to position the idea of India within stable foundations, women's life came to be increasingly defined through her domestic life. The new notion of women were to be disseminated by educating them of new moral norms. Thus education became a larger pedagogical act, particularly in the case of women as they were considered as the site of a society's morality. Thus the content of mission education on social and individual morality came to be accepted by the Travancore state and the upper caste Hindus. The growing influence of Christian missionaries schools and their influence in the public life of the state forced the authorities of Travancore to establish schools within the state.

"Progressive Kerala": The Emergence of an Idea

Scholars, such as Radhakrishnan and Lieten have examined the relationship between education, politics, and social change in Kerala, particularly emphasizing the influence of Marxism. (Lieten, 1981) (Radhakrishnan, 1981, p. A129-137). They argue that education was influenced heavily by the presence of Marxian thought, which played a significant role in driving social transformation. According to them, Marxism introduced a cultural framework that critically questioned prevailing social hierarchies, advocated for collective bargaining, and facilitated the adoption of modern principles of equality and societal progress. These scholars argue that Kerala's progressiveness is deeply intertwined with its political discourse, which recognizes

the agency of individuals and communities in making decisions. Within this framework, agrarian movements aimed at challenging the dominance of land-owning classes was considered indispensable for dismantling economic and social structures through forceful means. These acts of resistance were seen as pedagogical in nature, intended to strengthen the concept of social change through collective action among marginalized social groups. The role of the Marxists is often viewed as a leveling force that facilitated the spread of education among the lower castes in Kerala's caste-ridden society.

Critics of the left's perspective, however, argue that the surge in literacy rates in late 19th and early 20th century Kerala was not solely attributed to the influence of the Communist party, which was established in the 1930s. Instead, they point out that even before the Communist party's existence, regions like Travancore, Cochin, and the Malabar districts under British Presidency of Malabar had already emerged as the most literate areas in the Indian Subcontinent. Furthermore, the process of education and social change in Kerala is believed to have been influenced by a combination of factors including the active involvement of the princely rulers of Travancore and Cochin, the significant contribution of Christian missionaries, the efforts of social reformers, and the impact of the Marxists. Scholars have also explored aspects of pre-colonial Kerala society that contributed to the dissemination of modern education. Robin Jeffery highlights the significant role played by women, particularly among the Nairs in traditional Kerala contributed to the spread of education. He argues that the matrilineal system, prevalent among Nairs provided women with greater freedom, challenged patriarchal norms and facilitated the spread of education among children. Jeffery also emphasizes the emergence of a print culture and a reading public as a result of the societal emphasis on knowledge, which, in turn, contributed to the development of a public sphere, crucial for the process of modernization. (Jeffery, 1976).

However, by the late 1990s, critics argued that the state's favorable statistics on women's education and health, was not effectively translated into women's social conditions. This raised questions about the gendered and restrictive nature of cultural spaces in Kerala. (Kodoth *et al*, 2005). Thus to attribute social change solely to modern education, tend to

overlook the working of patriarchy within individual and social spaces. As Bhattacharya argues the institutional framework for education was shaped through negotiations and interactions between the indigenous intelligentsia and the British Indian Government. (Bhattacharya, 2001). Underlining that society was redefined in accordance with the working of power within indigenous societies.

This highlights the fact that institutional advancements in social modernization do not necessarily translate into social wellbeing and the expansion of individual rights, rather modernisation could renegotiate individual and social position within society. Such criticisms underscore the need for revisiting social reforms, political programs, and the educational system in Kerala. This paper attempts to engage with the content of education and its role in shaping the society, including its cultural inclinations, and the renegotiation of caste, gender, and power dynamics under the influence of western rationality facilitated by colonialism.

This work therefore argues that education as an extension of social concerns, contributes to the restructuring of individual and societal norms and values. It also emphasizes the importance of situating Marxists, missionaries, and social reformers within the ideological landscape that shapes their particular visions of the future. The interests of christian missionaries in education cannot be solely attributed to religious conversion or material advancement of its converts, instead education under missionary guidance was a means to reorganize and regulate the cultural world of the indigenous population, with gendered spaces and the status of women occupying a central role in this process. As David Savage notes, by the mid-19th century, advocates from both religious and secular backgrounds argued that education was women, essential in transforming national character due to women's influence on a culture's morality. Finally, the separation between the religious and the secular is not sustainable, as there are shared concerns and preferences evident in the educational project (Savage, 1997, p. 204).

In the early years formal education spread,, in addition to government initiatives, through the extensive network of missionary schools established by the Church Mission Society (CMS),

and the London Missionary Society (LMS). For the missionaries, education was a means of introducing new cultural values and norms into the society. This perspective stemmed from a broader belief that euro-centric social values and individual morality was deemed essential for civilizational advancements. Thus, education aimed to shape families with distinct gender roles and values, seen as the foundation of ethical and moral values in modernity. Furthermore, missionary education also aimed to foster new patterns of occupation deemed necessary for the development of a modern citizenship. The missionaries recognized the importance of transforming occupational practices to align them with the evolving societal needs and expectations of a modernizing world. The integration of the indigenous population into an institutionalized educational system introduced new sensibilities and perceptions regarding individual and social norms in society. Rooted in the broader principles of western enlightenment values, missionary education in colonized societies aimed to establish an alternative world that fundamentally differed from the social order of the 19th century.

Missionary efforts in education therefore highlights that the debates initiated in India by the missionaries also presented opportunities for institutions and groups to explore new avenues of colonial modernity, even if they were suspicious of the religious element within missionary intervention. This is evident in the case of the Travancore, where the educational concerns and objectives of the Christian missionaries found expression in the policies and programs of the Travancore state. Therefore, beyond the promise of material progress, the educational project carried expectations of restructuring social norms and values, which would sustain social hierarchies. Education was thus designed for specific objectives, influenced by cultural ideals that revolved around the role of women within indigenous societies. Missionary education propagated a new ideal of women based on the notions of chastity and obedience. The goal of creating an "ideal family" led to the establishment and enforcement of defined gender roles. Women were positioned as subordinate to men and this notion permeated the very foundation of missionary pedagogy. This understanding of society, centered on prescribed gender roles, extended beyond missionary discourse and gained acceptance in the evolving cultural

landscape of twentieth-century Malayali identity. The evolving cultural taste embraced this perception, contributing to the acceptance and perpetuation of gender norms within the wider society.

Colonial State and the Missionaries

The colonial state viewed education as a means of creating a new cultural context that would reinforce state legitimacy. They however, increasingly relied on Christian missionaries, in advancing education due to financial constraints. Yet the relationship between Protestant missionaries and the colonial state was complex and multifaceted. As the state consolidated its political authority in the late nineteenth century, the officials recognized that the religious nature of missionary education and its broader objectives were not aligned with the political and economic interests of the state. The state was also wary of the mistrust that religious intervention could generate among its Hindu subjects. The state acknowledged the significant role of religion in shaping socio-cultural imagination and intervention.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Claudius Buchanan, a Protestant Christian missionary, was sent by the Viceroy William Bentinck to work among the Syrian Christians of Travancore. Yet, over time, it also became evident that the presence of missionary interventions in education posed challenge to the colonial state. This sentiment is reflected in a letter from the Presidency of Madras to the British presidency of Bengal, which stated that the missionaries in South India had become a quasi-political organization with agents at home, advocating for missionary schools without regard for educational principles and preferring the proliferation of inefficient missionary schools over well-functioning government schools. Nevertheless, both mission schools and those managed by the state had similar pedagogical content. The curriculum in state-run schools emphasized lessons on industry, truthfulness, honesty, gentleness, modesty, respect for authority, justice, consideration for others' feelings, loyalty to convictions, and loyalty to the government. It was believed that such values would establish a paternalistic relationship, justifying the presence of the colonial government, and the newly educated class would support the agents of reform." (National Archives of India, 355/1899).

Missionaries sent reports back to Britain, highlighting the dire condition of Indian females. This was part of a well-established tradition of evaluating indigenous culture based on manners, customs, and ceremonies, with the status of females serving as a touchstone for colonial assessments. Racial differences also served to explain religious differences within a hierarchical order. Christianity was placed at a higher level of civilization, and belief systems were framed in rational terms. From the perspective of missionaries, the backwardness of civilization was attributed to the belief systems followed among the Hindus. Christian missionaries played a defining role in shaping the boundaries of Christian faith and establishing a blueprint for what constituted "religious belief." While religion was a central focus of missionary criticism, social practices, marriage forms, and sexual moralities were also key concerns. Missionary education and discourse targeted indigenous Christians, upper-caste Hindus, and the lowest sections of society.

Highlighting the importance of gendered education in state schools, it was determined that the education of girls should have a practical focus, taking into account the roles they fulfill in society. It was emphasized that girls' education should not attempt to imitate the educational path designed for boys." (National Archives of India, 1912, 72-22). Similar to the objectives of Christian missionary ideology, the notion persisted that education provided to girls and boys should differ based on their intended roles in the social life of the state. Both the colonial state and Christian missionaries shared the belief that education should be tailored to align with the specific societal expectations placed on individuals based on their gender.

The focus of missionary criticism revolved around questions of faith and their relationship with Hindu belief systems. While the primary objective of missionary education initiatives was to restructure belief systems and cultural practices, as well as to create alternative employment opportunities for economic and social change, mission schools also served as centers for vocational training. Along with formal educational institutions missionaries also established printing presses, which helped in the printing of the bible and prayer books and their

dissemination. They also published a wide range of topics relating to indigenous knowledges. Missionary intervention opened up avenues for social assertion among the lower sections of society, providing a means for social change in colonial societies.

However, the motives of missionaries were subjected to criticism as some believe that their primary interest lay in religious conversion rather than social change, with missionary education serving as a tool for conversion. Nationalists like K. M. Panikkar viewed missionary education as a colonization of the mind, arguing that submitting to conversion meant not only submitting to colonialism as a political order but also to colonialism ideologically. Amidst these debates surrounding religion, conversion, and social change, missionary education emerged as a crucial pathway to creating a modern social and individual identity and articulating social aspirations within the subcontinent.

Missionaries in Travancore were able to gain support from the rulers of Travancore state due to the significant presence and influence of the Christian community in the region. However, the impact of the church and its intervention extended beyond the institutionalized education system they offered. Indigenous Christian groups, such as the Syrian Orthodox and Catholic Churches, were also influenced by Protestant missionaries and established their own schools and colleges to strengthen and consolidate their denominations. Education played a central role in this consolidation, with moral education being a primary focus in Christian schools.

Immanuel Nidhiri, a Protestant missionary, expressed the value placed on missionary schools, stating that they were more precious than 'the gold crosses of Kuruvilangad and Athirampuzha, which could be stolen' (Jeffery, 1976). While missionary education introduced alternative values that challenged existing practices within the social system, it was the indigenous Christian groups which had to restructure their social and religious worlds. One key issue that arose was the question of the "True Christian." Although the Bible served as the central source for defining the idea of a true Christian, the notion of an "ideal Christian" was based on the ideals set by the missionaries, articulated through the educational institutions.

As the formal educational system became predominantly a missionary enterprise, indigenous Christian groups, partly in imitation and partly in opposition to the missionaries, started their own schools to consolidate their social and religious bases. The records of the Travancore and Cochin Diocesan records reflect the ideological and religious tensions that occurred between Protestant missionaries and indigenous Christians. They mention that Roman Catholics, who had been observing the progress of the mission school, became envious and attempted to dissuade people from sending their children to the mission school or supporting the mission in anyway. When this attempt failed, the Roman Catholics established their own schools of similar standards and prevented boys from the board primary school, located in a building belonging to their church, from joining the mission school." (TVC, 1905, p. 55).

Under colonial circumstances, the family unit was considered the most crucial in facilitating social transformation. Christian missionaries held specific beliefs about women that compelled indigenous Christian groups and members of other religious communities to restructure their family values and norms. Therefore, missionary schools had dual objectives. Firstly, they aimed to provide vocational training to their followers in order to achieve material progress. Secondly, missionary education sought to domesticate women, enabling the formation and sustenance of families.

The Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Records provide a vivid description of the Christian missionary agenda on education, stating, "In the girls' school, we teach the children not only the three 'R's but aim at training them to live true Christian lives. We also have an industrial class where they are taught needlework and washing. They also assist in the household work of the school, cooking, sweeping, and drawing water from the well, all with the purpose of preparing them for their future roles as wives and mothers." (Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Records, 19). The close relationship between education and gender is further highlighted in a letter addressed to the Church Mission Office in London, where a Protestant missionary expressed their reliance on supplies such as dolls and workbags for girls, knives and kerchiefs for boys, and pencils and paintboxes for both genders within the Alleppey

Missionary." (Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Records, 1909, p. 55)

Women's education was a key concern for Christian missionaries, who stated that "the attempt at changing the status of women came from the missionaries." Mathew notes that the new pedagogical system brought girls to school and formulated methods to discipline and shape their character. (Mathew, 1988). The missionary discourse focused on defining the body and its representation to legitimize the presence of missionaries. Among the higher caste, exposure to missionary-influenced social norms led to changing notions of family and marriage, seen as crucial for social change and modernization.

Indigenous Christian denominations drew lessons from the missionary discourse on family and social norms and attempted to institutionalize marriage within their communities. However, it was challenging to sustain, as believers often engaged in cohabitation without religiously sanctioned marriage, limiting the church's influence over their private lives. In the reorganization of power relations according to 20th-century standards, such loose social and marital ties became a major concern. Social institutions and moral norms needed to be renegotiated based on emerging social institutions, where control over individuals was realized through new moral and individual norms, with the role and status of women becoming central to this discourse.

The subordinate status of women, viewed in terms of civilization, was explained through binary comparisons between communities and groups and the family norms and values of Europe. Christian missionaries operated on the larger ideological premise that defined differences between the colonizer and the colonized primarily along gendered lines. Civilizational advancement, according to Christian missionaries, required the reorganization of the family and the creation of a male-centered monogamous family, where women's roles were subordinate to their husbands. As Savage writes, "in seeking a rationale for their educational mission among women in India, these educational pioneers naturally drew upon ideological formulations of gender then current in Britain. But they were working in a colonial context, and the females they sought to educate were different from British females."

Emphasizing the central role of women in the emergence of the new notion of family and society, Christian missionaries realized that such a framing of society was essential to achieve their objectives of synthesizing Christian religious values with the desired societal construction. Mary, the mother of Christ, played a pivotal role in this imagination. Thus, rather than establishing a clear separation between religious and secular education, mission schools underscored the unavoidable link between religious imagination and educational objectives.

Sexuality and modesty became the primary measures for defining women's status and position within the family and society. Various social and caste groups in the state responded to missionary ideas and objectives, particularly regarding family and sexual morality. Syrian Christians were accused of adopting cultural practices similar to Hindus. Indigenous Christian denominations, such as the Syrian Catholics and Latin Catholics and the Orthodox churches, reacted to missionary criticism by establishing schools to restructure the lives of their believers. Protestant Christian missionaries confronted the indigenous Christian population and its cultural patterns, alleging that they deviated from the ideal Christian life. Indigenous Christianity's cultural practices were seen as more aligned with Hindu counterparts.

Missionaries emphasized the importance of the nuclear family as central to Christian living. The family was expected to embody Christian values, with women being chaste, ideal, and obedient, representing the figure of Mary, the mother of Christ. Husbands were expected to be industrious, hardworking, and truthful. The schools aimed to instill these desired qualities in the future Travancore society. The church recognized the significance of education in consolidating its structural base and power relations. In a curriculum letter addressed to the laity, the Bishop insisted that Catholic schools should take responsibility for the education of Catholic children. Written permission from the Bishop was required for Catholic students to attend non-Catholic schools or stay in non-Catholic boarding houses. Children studying in non-Catholic schools and their parents who did not comply with the instructions of the Parish priest or the church would

be prevented from receiving the holy sacraments." (Records of the Diocese of Quilon, 1945).

In January 1913, the Bishop of Quilon sent a confidential letter to various parishes, addressing the following matters: a) assessing the number of Catholic boys and girls attending non-Catholic schools, b) determining how many of them attend i) government schools and ii) schools with non-Christian religious affiliations, and c) identifying cases where students attended such schools without permission, along with confirmation that the Reverend Vicar had three times administered the parents of the order. The letter also emphasized that Catholic students should not solely focus on secular knowledge but should prioritize catechism or religious instruction in their studies. (Records of the Diocese of Quilon, 1945).

It was further stated that "the church and the Catholic parents have the right and duty to see the catholic education of children and youth and no power on earth may deprive the church or the parents, of their inalienable and essential right and duty. Therefore, that even at a great sacrifice on your part and our own, our parish schools are opened, conducted and maintained. It is not for the vain prestige of having schools under catholic management that we struggle so hard to have our own schools wherever possible, but our children from their early infancy may be taught catechism and be brought up as far as it is allowed to us, under catholic influence and atmosphere." (Records of the Diocese of Quilon, 1941). Highlighting the role of the family and privileging the significance of a patriarchal family values and norms the All Kerala Catholic Congress in its annual meeting held that "A wife is supposed to voice her husband's opinion at all times and it is a sure sign of strength of the conjugal bond, a woman argues to strengthen her husband's sentiments even under dispute." (Malayala Manorama, 1948). They further argued that "Higher education for women is futile, they are unable to study alike men based on fixed syllabi. Hence there is a need to bring changes in the syllabi of the high schools...schools should be opened that gives importance to family values... though a woman is unable to do hard jobs, like participating in the political process, etc., she can do lighter jobs such as weaving and other household jobs. Above all women can guide her husband in his daily affairs." (Malayala Manorama, 1948).

Regulating the role of women found visible representation in the dress that they wore, the Catholic Bishop of Quilon in a circular addressed to the Laity argued that "amongst the great scandals of our age that causes great harm to the souls redeemed the precious blood of Jesus Christ, immodesty in feminine dress certainly holds a prominent place. Though Christian virtues of modesty is an ornament for both men and women, yet in a special manner it is a characteristic feature of the womanhood." (*Circular addressed by the Bishop of Quilon to the Parishes, 5th December 1958 Mary Like fashions or Christian Modesty in Feminine Dress. "A dress cannot be called decent, which is cut deeper than two fingers beneath under the pit of the throat; which does not cover the arms atleast to the elbows and scarcely reaches a bit beyond the knees"*). Giving a detailed description of the kind of dress that women should wear the circular further argued that "A dress cannot be called decent, which is cut deeper than two fingers beneath under the pit of the throat; which does not cover the arms atleast to the elbows and scarcely reaches a bit beyond the knees."

Missionary intervention brought about a transformation in the understanding of the family, reinforcing the assertion of masculinity within different religious and caste groups. The broader society willingly embraced these new concepts of gender and family norms. The Latin Catholic and Syrian Catholic institutions frequently issued curriculum orders, urging their followers to refrain from love and instead seek marriage with the consent of the church. This reorganization extended beyond the family and household; even the church itself underwent restructuring to align with the newly familiarized norms of gender and family prevalent in society.

The reformulation of religious practices was essential in the construction of the ideal family. Christianity sought to create an ideal family structure with Mary, the mother of God, as the central figure of morality. The Christian church emerged as a significant institution that increasingly sought to regulate and intervene in the personal lives of its followers. The church assumed the role of a regulatory authority and began intervening with punishments. Catholic groups, such as the Latin Catholics and Syrian Catholics, regularly issued curriculum orders urging

their members to abstain from love and follow arranged marriages. This restructuring extended beyond the family and household, as even the church itself underwent a transformation to align with the new norms of gender and family that had become familiarized in society.

Emergence of the Hindu Moral Order

In pre-modern Kerala, a marital arrangement called Sambandham existed among the upper caste Hindus. Accordingly it was only the elder male members of the Brahmins would marry within their own caste, while the younger members engaged in sexual relationships with Nair women, who were lower to the Brahmins in the caste hierarchy. However, with the advent of colonialism, new notions of the family emerged, and such sexual liaisons became the target of criticism. Christian missionaries viewed these marital relations as indicative of a degenerate civilization, advocating for a monogamous marital life as essential for advanced forms of civilization. This critique primarily targeted the Hindu social life which in essence was an attack on upper caste Hindu masculinity, which compelled them to realign themselves with changing conceptions of family and social norms.

Augusta M. Blandford described the customs of their caste regarding marriage as extremely disturbing. Rev. A. F. Painter referred to the system as so horrible that even its defenders are ashamed of it. Nagam Aiya, in his 1875 census report, felt compelled to offer a brief apology for the looseness of prevailing morals and the impermanent nature of the marriage bond. William Logan noted that "the theory suggests that the women they live with are not wives; they part at will and form new connections. However, in recent years, conjugal fidelity has been widely observed. Nowhere is the marriage bond more strictly adhered to or respected, and nowhere is its neglect more fiercely avenged." (Census of India, 1911) In the new context of the Nayar community, the focus shifted towards formulating marriage practices. Sarada, a journal initiated by upper caste Nayar women, addressed this issue by stating, "The reason why others insult us is because we do not have a proper marriage system. If women are not given the right to choose their husbands, then it is a great injustice." (Sarada, 1905, p. 162) By the 1850s, the marriage practice known as Sambandham had lost its significance, but missionaries like Samuel Mateer

and others emphasized this practice as a reflection of a morally and ethically degraded society.

Missionaries realized that it was through the introduction of education that the missionaries were able to enter the administrative structures of the State. the Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Records notes, that "The zenana mission started by Blandford of the CMS was a way to reach the upper strata of the Hindu society. Here the mission ladies entered the houses of high caste Hindus as tutors. They taught sewing, drawing and singing apart from English language...blandford writes that the progress was very slow. Mrs. Blandford began with only four pupils on 1904. They were the daughter and niece of the dewan and two little malayali girls of the Nayar caste". (Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Records, 1905, p. 95). This underlines the relationship between education and its use as a medium of religious conversion, the Diocesan records of the CMS states that, A CMS high school in its infancy so far, for it is but two years old, has already proved a light in the dark place. The bible is taught daily in schools. The number of bible which has been purchased by Hindus of the place speaks volumes. A flow of light has now been let into one of the darkest and strongest citadels of Hinduism on this coast. It is impossible to say how beneficial and far reaching the results may be." (Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Records, 1907, p. 4). Yet, though sensitive to missionary education offered to upper caste Hindu women, they were critical of the religious content in education. In 1819 Mrs Mead, the wife of an LMS mission school for girl children at Nagercoil in South Travancore stated that caste hindus viewed missionary initiatives with suspicion and it was difficult to sustain the children who were enrolled in education.

Though the missionary agenda of religious conversion was not accepted by the upper caste hindus, they accepted the missionary project of education as a means of social and cultural change as a means of repositioning themselves within the changing social dynamics within Kerala. Deeply influenced by the missionary understanding on women and her status within family, the upper caste Hindu Women too argued that "though women are unable to undertake professions alike men, education is certainly necessary for them to perform their functions as proper wives and 'good mothers'(Vidyavinodhini,

1897, p. 2). It was also imagined that the social and marital role of individuals and both man and women should undertake their responsibilities in accordance with that sanctioned by the scriptures. The adherence to the text as a guiding principles for social life emerged, in the same way as Bible became the point of reference for a modern Christian living. Domestic life and behavior came to be reorganized and defined. It was desired that 'Freedom for women does not mean that they enjoy the right to do whatever they please, but the ability to do things rationally according to the scriptures'. (Vidyavinodhini, 1897, p. 2). Education for women, according to the reformers were primarily, "to bring up her child properly, to utilize the money rationally that her husband brings earns and to engage herself in the household activities in the right manner (Vidyavinodhini, 1897, p. 298). It was also desired that "for a women her husband is equivalent to god and she who does her responsibilities in the right earnest does not need anything else for moksha." (Sarada, 1906, p. 258).

It was also argued that "women need not engage herself in economic activity along with her husband, instead she should stay at home look after her husband and become proper wives." (Lakshmbai, 1922, p. 109) It was also argued that "Whatever be the type of education that be imparted to women in schools, the real education of the child starts at home." (Mahila, 1925, p. 136) Women need not go out of their homes to do jobs alike men or like their counterparts of the west. They are to stay home and hence need not be educated. The major argument was that "woman are unable to engage themselves in professions like agriculture and trade and that she has to engage herself with the domestic services at home and hence does no need education. (Vidyavinodhini, 1897, p. 2). Lack of marital tie, with organised marriage centering the dominant position acquired by the husband as the head of the family was desired and demanded by the modern notion of social reorganization. As missionary set in motion a new understanding of the family the emerging masculine assertion within each religious and caste groups and the society in general willingly accepted new notions of gender and family norms within them.

Education and the State in Travancore

In the process of establishing power relations, both structural and social, state institutions often

embraced the educational agenda of Christian missionaries. However, they also sought to limit the religious content and develop a new educational model for the state. This modern educational program reshaped power dynamics, both within society and institutions, by redefining geographical and ideological boundaries and reconfiguring gender and caste relations. These changes created new centers of power in the state, influenced by the experiences of "colonial modernity." The Travancore State, introduced by missionaries, recognized the importance of these values in cultivating an urban elite and establishing a governance structure. While striving to provide educational opportunities to all people regardless of caste, the state faced challenges in addressing caste boundaries. In this context, missionary education played a crucial role as it often transcended caste divisions, making Christian missionaries valuable allies in the state's efforts to extend modern education.

As the State system strengthened in the course of the nineteenth century, it invested itself in the educational systems of the State. The official policy of the Travancore State meant that "In 1813 the Rani of Travancore in her Royal rescript stated that "the State would defray the entire cost of the education of its people, that there might not be any backwardness in the spread of enlightenment among them be better subjects and better public servants and that the reputation of the State might be advanced thereby." (Travancore Administrative Report, 1940). Until the Travancore became an active participant within the educational system of the State, such caste groups depended primarily on the Christian mission schools as means of new economic and social avenues of changes. The state too accepted the moral order as it realised the significance of defining social morality in an age of redefining its power structures in accordance with the new social norm. Thus there seems little in the form of contestation between western interests as well as those of the state in representing itself within Indian contexts. The state while accepting the missionary agenda on education also underlined the significance of a moral, individual and social order in the creation of a state system. The active intervention of missionaries in education compelled the Travancore State in investing and engaging with the missionaries in introducing schools and colleges in the princely States of Travancore and Cochin.

Creation of a network of educational institutions in the State was seen by the state as the means through which it presented itself as a model State.

For the Travancore State its interests lay deep in education. The state found in education a means of figuring out its territory, and history as a form of garnering legitimacy. New family norms were also necessary for the state, as it was the moral value system of the upper caste hindus which were forcefully critiqued by the missionaries, as the educated elite and social reformers gathered around the question of women's identity the state realized that it was its responsibility to formulate new gender notions in accordance with western ideas of modernity. The emerging nationalist discourse also argued for sexual discipline and stressed the need for the formulation of a society based on masculinity. Thus in the creation of a new agenda for education both the missionaries and the state and the indigenous social elites shared common values. In an age of engagement with the ideas and value system brought about by the west, new gender notions and social structures were to be renegotiated. This found reflection in the new curriculum that was envisaged.

Though the Travancore state had to depend increasingly on the Christian missionaries for modernization of its administrative machinery, yet was aware of the intense criticism that the missionaries had launched against Hinduism. The State therefore tried to curtail missionary influence as it believed that missionary intervention undermined the hegemony that the Travancore State had sought to create. In the consolidation of the state on nineteenth and twentieth century standards of sovereignty, the Travancore state realised the potential of education as a means towards garnering sovereignty. This consolidation rested on centralised value systems and norms. The strengthening of the educational agencies was considered as the first condition for the realisation of His Highness' hopes in amplifying the public life of the country and inspiring the people with patriotic hopes' (Velupilla, 1940)

Beyond being allies in the objective of educational advancement in the State, missionary education was significant in the creation and extension of a cultural paradigm, which was considered fundamental in the formulation of a society, where the State,

society and its people were interlinked in a larger cultural framework familiarized by colonialism. Yet the State often came in conflict with the Christian missionaries. This was primarily because missionary intervention and its critique of the traditional belief systems and the existence of Caste system often came in confrontation with the interests of the State which defined itself in a Hindu religious idiom. The educational agenda set forth by the missionaries were taken over by the Travancore State. The report submitted by the Travancore education Reorganisation committee it recommended among other things "that primary schools should be taught by women. It stated that women are more suited to the handling and teaching of young children than men. The recruitment of women teachers would also result in all schools being able to provide instruction in sewing, elementary homecraft, music and singing for girl pupils, hitherto the large majority of girls in schools have had no separate special subjects of study (Papworth, 1946, p. 18).

While christian missionary education agenda centered primarily on providing moral values based on a christian ethic, State centered education started with geography both of Europe and the world and India. The study of geography was of particular significance as it was a way of conceptualizing the world around through geo- category. By 1867-68 in the central vernacular school, the subjects taught included elementary Mathematics, geometry, basics of moral and social duties and geography of Europe, Asia, America and India. By the early decades of the twentieth century the curriculum of the indigenous schools consisted of Astronomy, lessons in casting horoscopes and compiling a calendar, the chief precepts of daily conduct, known as NeethiShastram, the thousand names of Vishnu, a section of the Sanskrit dictionary, a few lessons on medicine, general poetry and the three R's. (Kawashima, p. 83). This was also accompanied by lessons in Sanskrit. In the revised syllabi of 1875 for aided schools, the Travancore government suggested that the geography of Travancore be included. History as a discipline was included in the revised curricula of 1875. History though mainly centered around the chronology of the ruling dynasty, gave a measurable time. The onus on geography and history situated Travancore as a concrete socio-political entity in space and time. Thus the kind of education imparted through the State schools,

though shared missionary concerns deviated as far its objective in building up a society that was attached to the State. Given the conflict of interests between the missionaries as well as the State was concerned, the enthusiastic support provided by the Travancore State broke the missionary monopoly and prevented the possibility of the high castes being forced to attend mission schools in large numbers. (Jefferey, 1976, p. 82).

By the end of the nineteenth century the pedagogical content in the schools had underwent fundamental transformation. It was decided that the "the instruction thus imparted is entirely superficial and defective and ill adapted towards improving the mind"(Kawashima, 1889-90, p. 94). Similarly as the Travancore State increasingly intervened in the domain of education it also attempted to curtail missionary influence in education. In the new Grant in aid code introduced in 1894 it was specified that "pupils could receive religious instruction only with the consent of their parents." (Jefferey, 1976, p. 195). Further Government intervention increasingly curtailed the functioning of the Unaided Private schools in the State. The education code of 1909-10 was aimed primarily at controlling the unaided schools. In 1910 there were 1491 unrecognised schools in Travancore but the number was down to 933 in 1920-21 and 376 in 1926-27.(Kerala State Archives, 1923).

While the Travancore State intervened to create an education system which was aimed at creating an educated class, unconnected to missionary objective of creating a workforce, rather to create an educated class of people necessary for the bureaucracy. The primary objective of State run educational institutions came in conflict with that of the objectives of the Christian missionaries, whose interests were primarily aimed at imparting vocational education that would train them in occupations for the future. As the content of the state run educational institutions came in conflict with missionary interests they critiqued it on the argument that "education in schools and colleges should not be exclusively literary. It has now for a long time been universally recognized..that the future hand workers and brain workers have a right to that education which will best fit them for their work in life. Each unit of the community ought to be so moulded during the plastic period that he will later fall readily into his proper place in the social organism where he can work with

the greatest advantage for himself. (Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Records, 1907, p. 4) this conflict of interests as far as education was concerned was further reflected in the Educational policy of 1923, where it was argued that the revised curriculum was based on the "the development of the child's intelligence and natural ability and the adaptation of the child to its natural environment, human and material". (Kerala State Archives, 1923) Christain missionary who was part of the committee opposed the revised curricula and the idea of replacing subjects those specially suitable for girls with that of literary subjects" (Kerala State Archives, 1923 They argued that "Hitherto the various stages of education have had little relation to life, and consequently there is an aimless procession from the primary schools to the university and no realization that at every stage of the educational ladder man and women must be equipped for vocations in life." (Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Records, 1907, p. 22). The Travancore state started schools particularly meant for girls near mission aided schools and this had a direct bearing on the functioning of the mission schools. Girls were seen particularly vulnerable to missionary influence, unlike those of boys as missionaries considered girls education as centres of extending their agenda of intervention. (*missionaries complained "we are surprised to hear that the government, in its zeal for female education, is proposing to open schools so near to the existing private schools as probably to affect the strength (and so the grants) of those private schools.*) (Travancore and Cochin Diocesan Records, 1911, p. 69). as 'a process of maintaining the homeostasis as an instrument of the ideologisation and of transmitting and controlling knowledge in a manner consistent with the maintenance and preservation of the socio-political order.' (Bhattacharya, 2001)

The content of education seems hardly ever questioned. The basic difference was the struggle for legitimacy and the sustenance of institutions. The government of India report on education notes, the education imparted for girls should not in any way imitate the one imparted in boys schools. And the whole idea was that women had an important social responsibility to undertake. Thus as Bordieu argues education acts as a medium in ensuring the transmission of cultural capital across generations and to stamp pre-existing differences in inherited cultural capital with a meritocratic seal of academic.

schools help to make and impose the legitimate exclusions and inclusions which form the basis of the social order.”(Boudieu *et al*, 1970, p. 9). The ideological apparatus of the state therefore played a crucial role by actively intervening to reorder the intellectual and cultural domain of the natives.” (Panikkar, 1995). By the middle of the nineteenth century education of women was considered essential for national character, because women was considered as the source of a culture’s morality to religious and secular advocates alike.

Conclusion

Western Christian missionaries, established their presence by criticizing the religious and social practices of the dominant caste Hindus. Yet, their criticism was also directed against the indigenous Christians, accusing them of compromising on the Bible and adopting indigenous beliefs and practices influenced by Hinduism. This ensured a dialogue between the Christian missionaries and the indigenous Christian group known as the Syrian Christians, which enabled local Christian groups to aggressively pursue the establishment of schools in Travancore. The agenda for Indian education emerged through a consensus between Westerners and the indigenous elite. The significance of missionary education lay in its efforts to redefine family norms and gender relations based on European experiences, aligning with the expectations of societal restructuring. As nationalism arose in India as a representation of spiritual revival, individuals and society sought to consider sexual

promiscuity as against the basic foundations of the moral order. This emphasis on masculinity often marginalized women's position within the family and, subsequently, within society. Women experienced restricted mobility and limitations on their occupational and social freedoms. Early marriage, previously prevalent among the Brahmins, began to spread to lower castes as well. Notions of obedience and chastity became deeply intertwined with gender relations and norms. Indigenous society, in its pursuit of strong gender ideals, embraced a logic that perpetuated women's subordinate position to men. Thus, education offered possibilities for social mobility but also served as a powerful channel through which gender relations and power structures were renegotiated in a society influenced by colonial-induced forms of modernity in India.

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Conflict of Interest

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