

ABSTRACT-

GENDER RELATIONS AND SEXUALITY –A STUDY ON THE URBAN FAMILIES IN KERALA.

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Ever since the turn of the previous century ‘*Family*’ has become the focal point for many social science disciplines. Today it has become commonplace to talk about a crisis in this institution, implying thereby that the very fabric of society is under threat. Innumerable studies are being conducted under the auspices of different disciplines, to trace out the reasons for this transition and also to depict a comprehensive picture of this change. Several methodologies are also being introduced, or at least proposed, to evolve a better understanding of these transformations. These new propositions, however, are also invariably affected by a number of anomalies. The most significant problem here is that, there is still no uniformly accepted framework to transcend this problem of ‘the family in crisis’.

Traditionally ‘family’ has been looked at as the most fundamental basis of the social structure, and, therefore, any change in this institution aroused a number of apprehensions among the analysts. For generations, we have relied on the family to provide a framework within which human beings were reproduced, children cared for and the elderly supported. The notion of family has, therefore, been invariably locked up within an altruistic, monolithic image. However, this has become a serious constraint for the present day analysts of the family who try to look into the so called inequities of this institution, which are becoming increasingly visible today. The problem is that no analyst is left with the option of looking into these anomalies as that is otherwise considered as going against the broader interest of society. While on the one hand, the emerging understanding of the functional dynamics of this institution is largely pointing to various discriminatory practices in it and the existing notions of this institution are not flexible enough to integrate such details into its mould. On the other hand, these notions are also acting as constraints in the emergence of alternate visions, in spite of the enormity of those instances. The end result is that there exists a very high level of unevenness in the theories of this

institution, especially the 'tradition versus modernity' theory, practically transforming the existing concepts, totally redundant.

It was against this background that the present study was carried out. The idea was to develop a different perspective on family, which will involve an analysis of the functioning of this institution from 'within'. The objective is basically to find out the role of family in constituting the dynamics of gender relations and sexuality notions in our society, mainly against the background of increasing discrepancies in it. The argument is that, family being the most primary agent for constructing both gender relations and sexuality, any deviancies in these two sectors are to be searched for within its structures themselves. This is not to say that there are no other outside influences on these two aspects, but to demonstrate that the prevailing analyses often ignore the role of family in all this.

This is at least the reality in countries like India or more clearly the States like Kerala, where the processes of modernization was neither a complete one, nor a totally absent reality. What is, instead, more logical is to treat both these factors as together contributing to the present situation. Therefore, it is argued here that, the problems of gender relation and practices of sexuality that exists in our society are to be considered as a result of the corresponding relationship that exist between the family as an institution and the various forces of modernity operating along with. What is more significantly put forth is the view that, the agents of modernity were predominantly operating upon the patriarchal foundations of the tradition than on whatever progressive bases that was in existence at that time.

**GENDER RELATIONS AND SEXUALITY IN THE URBAN
FAMILY OF KERALA-DEVELOPING AN INTRA- FAMILY
PERSPECTIVE**

**RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE
KERALA RESEARCH PROGRAM ON LOCAL LEVEL DEVELOPMENT [KRPLLD]
CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

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CHAPTER –1

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the turn of the previous century '*Family*' has become the focal point for many social science disciplines. Today it has become commonplace to talk about a crisis in this institution, implying thereby that the very fabric of society is under threat. Innumerable studies are being conducted under the auspices of different disciplines, to trace out the reasons for this transition and also to depict a comprehensive picture of this change. Several methodologies are also being introduced, or at least proposed, to evolve a better understanding of these transformations. These new propositions, however, are also invariably affected by a number of anomalies. The most significant problem here is that, there is still no uniformly accepted framework to transcend this problem of 'the family in crisis'.

Traditionally 'family' has been looked at as the most fundamental basis of the social structure, and, therefore, any change in this institution aroused a number of apprehensions among the analysts. For generations, we have relied on the family to provide a framework within which human beings were reproduced, children cared for and the elderly supported. The notion of family has, therefore, been invariably locked up within an altruistic, monolithic image. However, this has become a serious constraint for the present day analysts of the family who try to look into the so called inequities of this institution, which are becoming increasingly visible today. The problem is that no analyst is left with the option of looking into these anomalies as that is otherwise considered as going against the broader interest of society. While on the one hand, the emerging understanding of the functional dynamics of this institution is largely pointing to various discriminatory practices in it and the existing notions of this institution are not flexible enough to integrate such details into its mould. On the other hand, these notions are also acting as constraints in the

emergence of alternate visions, in spite of the enormity of those instances. The end result is that there exists a very high level of unevenness in the theories of this institution, practically transforming the existing concepts, totally redundant.

The only exception to this situation is the works of feminists, who have, at least partially, succeeded in problematising the mainstream theories. However, that too was not without some fallouts. One such fall out is that it resulted in earning them the status of being the ‘antisocial’, or as the, ‘violators’ of our traditions. Nevertheless, this has also earned them the credit for being the proponents of an alternate thinking on this otherwise crucial institution, which is in ‘crisis’. The most outstanding of their contribution is that they while challenging the outmoded premises of this social unit articulated a different vocabulary or a criterion of understanding for it.

FEMINISTS AND THE RE-DEFINITION OF FAMILY

The feminists have critiqued the mainstream sociological treatment of the family on several grounds. Firstly, they object to its neglect of the gender issue. Secondly, they challenge the idea of family as composed of individuals with identical rights and interests. They also argue that different members of the family experience the family life in different ways. Further, glorifying some images like the insulating character of the family has led to a failure to perceive the violent and hierarchic power relations that are inherent in this institution. Feminists have also questioned the standard boundaries and dichotomies associated with the concept of the family, such as between private and public space. While in reality, women and children are often cut off from the outside contact, this is not recognized as an issue in the public realm.

Feminists also challenge the view that the family is becoming more and more egalitarian and symmetrical. They argue, by contrast, that the family is a site of inequality. In an article, Neera Desai has rightly captured these arguments and made the following four propositions for family studies:

- A. treat gender as a primary variable in the study of family
 - B. challenge the prevailing assumption of the monolithic family
 - C. question the notion of family boundaries
 - D. recognize the prevalence of consensual and conflicting elements in the family
- [Neera Desai; 1997].

In short, the feminists have examined the history of family life and changes in the organization of families from the perspective of women. Such a perspective is indeed a lot different from the traditional notions. The feminists, however, for having challenged the prevalent notions of this primary institution, are largely outside of the mainstream family studies even now. The end result is that there is still a lot of unevenness in the ideas about this institution. It thus becomes apparent that though there are a number of visible anomalies in the existing conceptions of family, none of those issues are being addressed from an objective point of view.

In a very general sense, this institution is still not looked at as having any discrepancies in its functioning. Instead, whenever there are problems in its structure and its functioning, requiring a redefinition of it, it is done from what can be called a 'victim's perspective' rather than from an 'agency' dimension. This is the major lacuna that exists in the study of family in India today. Hence the problematic of this institution are often traced back to the influences of modernization, westernization, urbanization and such other outside factors. Similarly all deviant models of family

functioning are always explained as the product of these disturbing influences. As a result, the normativist, functional image of the family is still held out in almost all official discourses on this institution, [Patricia Uberoi; 1996] even though there is hardly any context in our society right now, where such a norm of family do actually exist.

An institution, which is largely invested with the function of coordinating gender relations and sexuality relations is not even examined objectively when there is a crisis in either of the two or in both. As a result, the emerging deviant practices of increasing gender violence and sexual crimes are unavoidably posing a series of anomalies against these normative conceptions of the family. The problem is that, either we need to move beyond the existing conceptions of this institution, or we need to neglect the so-called emerging dynamics. Ironically it is the latter option that is resorted to more often in the academic pursuits, and that is making the existing definitions of the family more and more redundant, and meaningless.

It was against this background that the present study was carried out. The idea was to develop a new perspective on family, which will involve an analysis of the functioning of this institution from 'within'. The objective is basically to find out the role of family in constituting the dynamics of gender relations and sexuality notions in our society, mainly against the background of the increasing discrepancies in it. The argument is that, family being the most primary agent for constructing both gender and sexuality, any deviances in these two sectors are to be searched for within its structures themselves. This is not to say that there are no other outside influences on these two aspects, but to demonstrate that the prevailing analyses often, ignore the

role of family in all this. It is also the understanding of this analyst that this tendency is largely because of the functionalist biases of the mainstream studies on family.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problems related to intimate, personal or social relationships have always escaped serious critical analysis in social scientific theories. Studies on the problematic of family, very much come within this framework and are therefore unavoidably caught within a number of theoretical and methodological dilemmas. Part of this problem is because of a persisting bias in the social scientific conceptions of this institution. Due to this bias, a large number of anomalies emerging in the area of gender relations and sexuality relations are becoming difficult to be comprehended. Hence, the extremely normative and continuously disciplined impressions of these two areas of the individuals' life are getting too much ambiguous and abstract from the realities of everyday life. Therefore, what is predominantly visible in the routine practices of both gender relation and sexuality is an endless list of diversity, deviance and complexity. Such developments are more often conceptualized only as a by-product of the clash of tradition versus the forces of modernity. The studies on family in India are not an exception to all these anomalies. Instead, that is more and more apparent in our social context chiefly, because of the enormous complexity and diversity of our social structure and the concomitant variety of gender and sexuality dynamics.

However, what was common among most of the analyses on family in India is their treatment of this institution as a wholly co-operative and altruistic unit. All of

them tend to treat it as a context of intimate, personal, integrative, ideal unit constantly functioning towards the maintenance and nurturance of society. As a consequence, changes in this institution were always normatively evaluated and to an extent they were also quite apprehensive about those changes. These analysts also continued to look at this institution from its formal or structural dimensions, rather than being concerned about its functional or internal dynamics. More significantly most such analyses got revolved around the concept of joint family itself. Hence size, composition, rural-urban differences, caste, class and community variations, etc. became the focus of their attention.

Subsequently it was also followed by a search for factors causing changes in those structural conditions. There are at least two different explanations in this regard and the most dominant of these two, comes out of the functionalist framework which argues that these disruptions are caused by the processes of modernization, industrialization, urbanization, etc. The factors coming within this include, the media, urbanity, alcoholism, women's education and employment and the consequent increase in their autonomy, etc. Further it was instrumental in the development of yet another notion that, there is something problematic and destabilizing, inherent in these processes and, as far as possible, the institution of family has to be defended against those influences. The other line of argument suggests that it is the absence of an egalitarian model of development, and a subsequent dominance of the hegemonic forces of tradition that really marginalises the women, forcing them to all sorts of exploitative relations. In other words, tradition versus modernity remains as the most widespread paradigm of studying this institution until now.

One very important fallout of this conception is that, such a framework is making it very difficult for the present day social scientists to look at the multitude of abusive and pathological behavior which have always been part of this otherwise sanctified institution. The instances of familial rape, child abuse, gender discrimination in terms of food intake, health and education standards and problems of the aged have all become sources of analytical confusions. And none of the existing paradigms are providing the analysts with any relevant framework for the analysis of these vexed problems at all. All these call for an altogether different conceptual framework and theoretical insight for the study of family and similar other issues of personal and intimate character. This present project is targeted towards such an objective, and it proposes to pose family as an 'agent' instead of as a 'victim', placing the family along with the agencies of modernity, like school, media, etc. in its role of constituting the identities of gender and the practices of sexuality.

Considering the fact that, gender relation and practices of sexuality has always been a discriminatory one from the point of view of women, all through history, no such separation of the roles of tradition and modernity is logically possible. This is at least the reality in countries like India or more clearly the States like Kerala, where the processes of modernization was neither a complete one, nor a totally absent reality. What is, instead, more logical is to treat both these factors as together contributing to the present situation. Therefore, it is argued here that, the problems of gender relation and practices of sexuality that exists in our society are to be considered as a result of the corresponding relationship that exist between the family as an institution and the various forces of modernity operating along with. What is more significantly put forth is the view that, the agents of modernity were

predominantly operating upon the patriarchal foundations of the tradition than on whatever progressive bases that was in existence at that time. This is where, one need to evaluate the impact of transformations invoked in the institutions of matriliney, which had at least a couple of provisions for the womenfolk.

What actually took place within the process of modernization of family in Kerala was nothing but a re-establishment of the patriarchal practices over the progressive orientations, that appeared to emerge at times. There was no other large scale transitions within the family structure in Kerala, at any stage of social development. Instead, the families in Kerala, irrespective of the caste and community structure, or the rural and urban bases, have never experienced any other significant transition at all. In other words, the modernization of the family in Kerala was in effect a movement towards the past, more significantly, a patriarchal past, characterized with all sorts of iniquitous and exploitative gender structures of the pre-modern times. It is this structure which is in tantrums now. Hence, instead of seeking for a modernist basis in the disintegration of family structure, this study proposes to hold the exploitative elements, inherent in the institution of family, right from the pre-modern times, as the basis of the emerging dynamics of gender disparities and problems of sexuality.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is conducted in the three urban cities of Kerala. Selection of the State of Kerala has a very significant theoretical and methodological relevance for various reasons. Kerala is often known as a land of contrasts. In the variegated picture

of Kerala, social elements of yesterday and today and ways of life centuries apart are found juxtaposed. Here we find behavior patterns and modern techniques clearly bearing the imprint of the West alongside with a very strong current of orthodoxy and conservatism, born of the love for the traditional. A strong social ferment questioning the values held sacred for centuries is there, as well as a love for social values handed down from generation to generation. [J. Puthenkalam; 1977]. Until well into the 20th century, the most rigid caste system had existed in Kerala and the highly placed had extracted the most extreme forms of obsequiousness from the lowly. In other words, the land of Kerala was almost a synonym for different kinds of inequities.

Modern Kerala, however, is also known for its high rate of socio-economic development, pointing to several indices of social and economic advancement of its people. As a result it is almost a taken for granted situation that the so-called categories of women, children and the aged are all well taken care of inside the boundaries of the family in Kerala. Also it is a widely existing assumption that due to the influences of the reformative and missionary activities, going on in the state of Kerala for more than 500 years or so the social structure in Kerala is existing on some sound foundations. Prevalence of a very strong family system is often seen on these lines only.

Nevertheless, there are a lot of anomalous developments in these realms of late. Increasing cases of family disruption, litigation for divorce [Lizy James; 1999], growing instances of family violence, a booming racketeering of sex, sporadic rise in the reporting of rape and other sexual crimes, an ever increasing industry of pornographic cinema and literature, all pose certain very pertinent questions against the above mentioned image of the family. The continuously regulated or disciplined

character of the institution of family in Kerala is undoubtedly challenged by these terribly uncharacteristic developments and that is in need of some redefinition.

Choice of the urban localities over the state's predominant rural background is also a deliberate one because of the all too visible conception inherent in all references of the problems of family disorganization that urbanity is the major jolt on the traditional bases of family. Hence this study wants to treat urbanity as one of the independent variables.

Kerala's geographical and social formation is known, for its extreme density and heterogeneity, across the whole State. So is the extent of the educational standards also as this State has the peculiar status of being a fully literate one. On the whole, the State of Kerala can be taken to be depicting modernity and, therefore, a truly relevant example for examining the nature of interaction between the forces of modernity and tradition and its impact on the family as a unit.. Hence the study is focussing itself on the three most urbanized localities in Kerala -- the three major city regions of the State viz, Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, and the Calicut Corporation areas.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following objectives;

1. to develop an understanding of the family from an insider's perspective
2. to understand the dynamics of changes, if any, in the perceptions of gender and sexuality in Kerala.

3. to understand the role of family in constituting the patterns of gender relation and sexuality relation in Kerala, and compare that with the role of the agencies of modernity in this process.

VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

As the study is attempting a comparison of the role of family *vis a vis* that of the agencies of modernization, in constituting the practices of gender relation and sexuality in the urban families, they are taken as the independent variables of this study. The measurement values of these variables were also decided and that include, generation differences in terms of gender on family roles, family provisions, and family attitudes, and for the agencies of modernization, it includes, the roles of school, media occupational factors, etc.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Development of a relevant and feasible methodology is one of the most difficult problems for any social science research. The intensity of this problem will become more and more prominent when we choose certain topics, which are considered more personal and intimate to our existence.

Researches on family, gender, sexuality and similar other areas of social life reflect these paradoxes better than any thing else. The present study was also seriously constrained by this problem of choosing an appropriate methodology and tools of study. Though there is no finality about social science research, given the peculiar

nature of the problem being analyzed, the methodology adopted has helped in its own ways in overcoming a multitude of constraints, encountered during this study.

It was understood from the very beginning that the topic under study would require methods and tools absolutely different from the usual ones. Hence the first objective was to find out an opening to this otherwise delicate issue. Accordingly the researcher started the work to prepare a list of categories in the society who could provide relevant information on the theme. It included those sections of people who are having some connection with the functional issues of family, gender relations and sexuality. The family counselors, psychologists, social workers, religious counselors, schoolteachers, legal practitioners handling the family related cases, and sex educationists sex workers et. al. were identified and also interviewed. This helped in identifying a multitude of issues connected with the family functioning and based on those inputs a number of relevant variables were listed out.

AREA OF STUDY

As was mentioned earlier, the three cities in the State were selected as the location of this study. Apart from this regional consideration, the selection of the area of study was also done on the basis of an objective of giving a community-wise representation to the sample. Hence, the predominantly Muslim, Christian, and the Hindu settlements from the three regions were identified on the basis of statistics collected from the Corporation offices, and the study was conducted in those wards. No further stratification of the samples were undertaken, as it was not within the purview of this research to go for a class, or caste wise description of the topic.

The selection of the area was more significantly based on the prevalence of the characteristics of urbanity, like, the density, heterogeneity, and the nature of economic activity conducted in the region. Accordingly one or two wards each from the three cities were identified. The wards selected were, Sasthamangalam and Kawdiar from Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, Panampally Nagar, and Thevara region from Ernakulam Corporation, and Malapparamba, Mathoottam, and Nadakkavu / Easthill region from Calicut Corporation.

UNIT OF STUDY

As the study was aiming at the development of an understanding of the institution of family from an insider's perspective, it was required to raise data on all the possible varieties of opinions from the family. Hence it was decided to conduct interviews with both the heads of family. Also as the topic of sexuality contains gender specific details it was also decided to conduct those interviews using the help of both male and female investigators. Accordingly simultaneous interviews were conducted with the husband and wife, by a team of investigators, comprising one male and one female. This was in fact a very difficult enterprise as each time the team visit one household it was not necessary that both the heads of family may be present. As a result our team of investigators had to visit each household a number of times.

SAMPLING AND THE SELECTION OF SAMPLE UNITS

The sample selection was the next major hurdle. Initially a sampling frame consisting of all the target groups were prepared to make a scientific selection of sample. However, sooner than later it became very clear that this study could never proceed with such a frame. Practically, only a limited number of the families in the selected list cooperated with the research and it became almost impossible to proceed further. Subsequently it was decided to give up the attempt to stick to the selected list and instead continue the study with whoever was willing from the selected area. However, even that was not without problems. First of all due to the size of the schedule used, which was quite time consuming, most of the respondents were disinclined to cooperate with the research team. As a result, a number of interviews ended as half completed and a number of hours of work of the investigators and a number of schedules were also wasted in the process. The total number of samples finally interviewed was three hundred families, constituting a total of six hundred interviews, comprising, three hundred males and three hundred females. The collected data was coded on the basis of the variables identified in the schedule.

TOOLS OF DATA COLLECTION

The interview schedule was prepared on the basis of the variables identified. As it had to take into account a wide variety of themes regarding gender relations, and sexuality, and its relation with the independent variables mentioned above, the schedule was an exhaustive one.. This includes, the gender and generation differences in the personal data, familial and social practices and attitudes towards gender relation

and sexuality, ideas of gender, sex and personality traits, nature of gender division of labor, outside influences on the individuals in terms of the factors like religion, media, etc.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has a wide variety of limitations. First of all, the nature of the topic itself was a limiting factor. Issues like sexuality is still looked at as something very secretive and the very fact that the respondents were not very keen on taking part in this study was in itself a sufficient proof for this reservation on their part. Similarly the topic of gender relations is again a very delicate one as the respondents are always likely to show an attitude of not wanting to reveal the truth so as to protect the image of the family. Yet another serious difficulty was in conducting lengthy interviews with the respondents.

However, all these were not things that could not be overcome and as such the study has finally turned out to be a real achievement. The shortcomings and the hurdles mentioned above are therefore considered here as only indicators for future researches and not as deterrents. This has actually more to do with the nature of this topic itself and therefore all studies on these topics could have similar constraints always. What is coming out clearly is the fact that more than the methodology it is the treatment of the topic that matters. A detailed review of literature will throw more light in to that specific aspect and the following section will focus on that.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

GENDER RELATION AND SEXUALITY - A DEFINITIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Research on gender relation can be traced back to the time of the emergence of gender studies as a discipline. The gendered character of social relations, which was brought into focus by the late 1960's consciousness-raising and liberation movements became a site of sociological imagination over the years. It took totally different directions from there, and one significant turn was towards the formation of the discipline of 'Gender studies', which has been attempting to explain this process of gendering of social relations. However, this redescription of the 'social' produced by including gender dynamics within sociological analysis have also precipitated a variety of complex debates about a number of existing sociological notions on institutions like, family.

The challenge to sociology, which this provides is expressed clearly by Dorothy Smith in the following words: "Women's perspectives ...discredits sociology' claims to constitute an objective knowledge independent of the sociologists' situation. Its conceptual procedures, methods and relevances are seen to organize its subject matter from a determinate position in society." [1987] 'Smith again suggests to start the thinking from marginalised lives and take everyday life as problematic' [ibid.]. As a result, there is still an uneasy relationship between the mainstream sociological knowledge and the epistemology of feminism, making this academic pursuit permanently difficult. This has also brought into being a multitude of anomalous developments in the understanding and explanations on 'gender' as a social category. It is these problematic of redescription of the 'social' produced by a

focus on the sociology of gender relations and the subsequent developments in the sociology of social relations that is sought to be analyzed here.

CONTEXT OF GENDER ANALYSIS IN SOCIOLOGY

Since its beginnings in the nineteenth century, sociology has been centrally concerned with documenting and explaining structures of social inequality. A major focus of sociological focus has, therefore, been the stratification of societies, that is, the analysis and explanation of enduring divisions between groups. Subsequently when feminist theorization emerged, a central site of contestation for them, working within 'mainstream' sociology, has been to focus on the gendering of power relations and on the reconceptualization and redescription of the social structures in order more adequately to describe relations of inequality. This was, in fact, instrumental in the development of a wide variety of theories of 'gender' even though that has, only added to the confusions existing, than to resolve its ambiguities at that point of time.

DISCOURSES ON GENDER: THE POINTS OF DEPARTURE

The words *sex* and *gender* constitute perhaps the single most important basis for social differentiation in any society. In spite of this generality, considerable amount of controversy also surrounds these labels. Above everything else there is no uniformity in the use of these terms at all. While some researchers use these terms interchangeably, others have made certain causal assumptions. To some of them, *sex* refers to biologically based differences and *gender* to socially influenced

characteristics. Still others use the term *sex-related* to refer to comparisons between males and females that do not involve any causal inferences and *gender* is used when judgements are made about either biological or environmental causes. Other related terms are *gender stereotypes* which are widely held beliefs about characteristics deemed appropriate for males and females in that culture, *gender roles* which are the reflection of these stereotypes in everyday behavior; *gender role identity* referring to the perception of the self as relatively masculine or feminine in characteristics, abilities and behaviors; and *gender typing* which refers to the process of developing gender-linked beliefs, gender roles and a gender –role identity.[Sudha Bhogle,1999]

In a sense the multiple usage of these terms also suggest the need for a redefinition of it. Significantly what comes out here is a situation that there is not much similarity of implications for the use of the concept *gender* and therefore one need to grant a contextual basis for this concept above everything else because ‘gender relations are neither uniform across societies nor historically static’. [Bina Agarwal;1994]

However, owing to the many contradictory approaches, assumptions, and results, it also became necessary to develop a critical approach to this vast literature. All the claims made about women and men at different times, in different circumstances and with totally different implications, on the basis of different implicit ideologies about gender, therefore, began to be analyzed carefully and viewed in relation to the developments in gender studies at respective times

As Wodak suggests; “the point of departure for studies on gender is [or was] the critique of the assumption of binary sexuality, the presupposition that the differentiation between the two ‘sexes’ is a natural fact, ‘evidently’ represented in the

body. The feminist movement criticized not this assumed biological, binary concept of sex but the frequently accepted biological determination of culturally conditioned traits as 'gender typical qualities'. [Ruth Wodak; 1997] Here, above all, feminists criticized those traits employed in justifying the unequal and unjust treatment of women. On the one hand, they dismantled the myths of femininity which, from an evolutionary viewpoint, were derived from traditional stereotypes such as the myth that all women are 'caring' from birth in a biologically determined way. On the other hand, they criticized that, through its constant reiteration, the traditional division of labor between the sexes contributes towards the reinforcement and perpetuation of these myths about biologically conditioned gender traits. [Ibid.]

To avoid such a naturalization of characteristics and attributes, the category 'gender' itself has become a subject. The unending list of definitions of this concept is a reflection of this situation. British sociologist Anthony Giddens defines 'sex' as 'biological or anatomical differences between men and women', whereas 'gender' 'concerns the psychological, social, and cultural differences between males and females' [1989]. Moving a step further in social construction perspective not only gender, but even sex is seen as a socially developed status. [Lorber and Farrell, 1991]. In addition to these conceptions there are also arguments which stresses the relevance of socialization process. This definition connected the impact of societal norms and evaluations, power structures and the role of socialization remarkably well. That has also brought into being a new understanding of the processes of institutionalization of different cultural and social statuses and how they give way for making the instances of dominance and exploitation as natural to the observers of those systems. Hence the body of ideas, assumptions, values, rituals, and forms of thought and language that

constitute the ideology of different institutions of society all became the target of feminist interpretation and theorization.

GENDER AND THE FAMILY

One very important focus of the enterprise of feminist thinking was the institution of family itself. Feminists concerned with eliminating gender-based inequalities have long been concerned with the role of the family in establishing, perpetuating and legitimising women's secondary status. In the context of emerging understanding of the sociology of gender, whatever their theoretical affiliation, the chief concern of the feminists became, this family-inflicted inequalities and power imbalances. For this they started problematizing the existing relationship between the ideology of family and the real circumstances and experiences of people, especially that of women in the family. According to them, it only reflects, what is apparent, while it also mystifies reality. It serves mainly to obscure the realities and sources of oppression and to give the experienced realities of living, the appearance of naturalness and inevitability. Their understanding was that the power of patriarchal ideology lies in the fact that it remains within the consciousness of individual women as it does within the social and political structuring of political society. One source of the power of patriarchal ideology is its obvious pervasiveness, since it affects every family intimately, regardless of all other considerations. Hence family became the major site of their interpretive exercise.

GENDER AND SEXUALITY - THE UNAVOIDABLE NEXUS

Yet another major realization, that really brought about a very significant change in the conceptualization of the feminist consciousness, was the new notion of the use of sexuality within patriarchy. It was their strong conviction that there is something like a day today mechanism of enforcement through the control not only of women's sexuality but also of women by sexuality within the existing procedures of patriarchy. They even thought that, the kingpin of patriarchal formations that serves to oppress women is sexuality, which they conceptualized as heterosexual structuring of consciousness and institutions, especially family.

The interdependence between sexuality and gender and its implications on the position of women in the family and society was therefore the next major point of intervention, in this line of the history of feminist theorization. From the seventeenth century onwards a large number of constructed notions were in operation attempting to naturalize women's sexuality and temperament ignoring the elements of subjugate ideologies and exploitation in the context of its existence. Even the biological and medical sciences have provided naturalistic explanations for the sexual division of labor, which actually maintain women's subordinate position in society. [Jordanova, L; 1980] In part, through these scientific formulations, a number of stereotypic notions of the nature of women and women's sexuality also became universal assumptions.

It was the unending effort of the feminist intellectual enterprise that really resulted in a reorientation of this understanding. Sexuality, that has generally been treated as a thing, a universal given, an essence- implicitly understood, assumed by all, not requiring definition at all became a point of hot debate and analysis

subsequently. That also brought into being a new notion of sexuality as varying across cultures and individuals, gender and class, or position in a kinship or other kind of hierarchy. In other words, sexuality came to be understood as a learned relationship to the world, with an important and necessary, but not in itself determinate, biological component. It was redefined as socially constructed from individuals' histories of interaction with people and society and therefore, as something that will also continually change.

GENDER, FAMILY AND SEXUALITY: NEED FOR EVOLVING A NEW PARADIGM FOR SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

“Rethinking anything means taking risks: the risk of making mistakes, the risk of angering people, the risk of failing to have any impact.” [Renate Bridenthal; in Barry Thorne]. “Rethinking the family is more than a challenge; it is a threat” No one is neutral about a subject like ‘the family’. Therefore there is even now, an absence of ‘the family’ in family theory. [Ibid.] The preoccupation is still with looking for ‘the family’ as an institution, without capturing fully how families experience their lives.

However, though the developments in the area of gender studies did not really succeed in redefining all the parameters of the existing ideologies, it still had a great amount of relevance in problematizing the established sanctity of these ideologies. The evolving discourses on gender, family and sexuality were however, taking a totally different direction more often than not, challenging the existing paradigms. There was in fact, no other similar attempt to take on the negative roles of the ideologies of these elements, as that was not an easy enterprise, with the given notions

of legitimacy of these institutions. The feminist theorizing, therefore, remains as a major challenge to the existing paradigms of research and for that very reason itself, these feminist perspectives are still not totally integrated into the mainstream academic pursuits.

Hence, gender, sexuality, and family still remain as problematic areas of research even now in almost all-social scientific endeavors. The problem is that, on the one hand, the extent of anomalies existing in the practices of these institutions are becoming more and more visible in the present times, and on the other hand, theoretical constructions of these processes are not really capable of reflecting that. The discussions and analyses of the issues of a creaking family, an appropriated gender identity and an ever-booming objectification of the individual sexual life, therefore, still remain largely outside the framework of social scientific explorations.

There is almost a total absence of analysis of issues of the dynamics of gender and gender relations in any of the social science disciplines including sociology. This is in spite of a situation that there is an almost unprecedented growth in the multitude of gender related problems in our present day society. Also there is no relevant analysis of the issue of sexuality, at least in India, where, again there are a variety of contexts when sex has become a very serious problem. It is also the case with the study on family problematic, which has even started to create panic among all those concerned with the future of the society.

It is against this context that one needs to make an attempt to contextualize our thoughts on these primary institutions of society. What is needed is a revival of some of the above-mentioned considerations to make the existing theories more relevant and meaningful. From the above analysis, what is coming out is the absence of a

critical perspective on the functioning of family, even though the emerging problematic is in need of that. An analysis of the 'agency' of family in the constitution of prevailing problems of gender relation and sexuality is therefore imperative today. The present study assumes its epistemological and theoretical relevance from this situation.

There are, of course, already a few such attempts in the world of social science moving towards this objective. The present study is also conducted under the influence of some of those initiatives. The works of feminists like Bina Agarwal, Mary E. John and Janaki Nair, Jyothi Puri have all inspired this study. Some of their theoretical and conceptual constructions have also been used here as operational models for this study.

The concept of 'gender relation' is used here in the way Bina Agarwal has treated this concept in her ambitious work of gender and property rights in South Asia. [1994] According to her "The term gender relations refers to the relations of power between women and men which are revealed in a range of practices, ideas, and representations, including the division of labor, roles, and resources between women and men and ascribing to them of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behavior patterns, and so on"[*ibid.*]. In developing this framework, Agarwal's objective was not to find out the history of subordination of women, instead, "her concern was only to explore how gender equities are currently structured and perpetuated, and how they could be subject to change"[*ibid.*p-52]. Though this analysis was primarily looking at the role of women's property rights in determining the nature of gender relations, her conception of gender relation 'as something which is always in the process of being structured, and perpetuated simultaneously within

the household and outside', is indeed a useful insight to look into. According to her, gender relations get constituted within and by each of these. This treatment of the family and its functioning as an agency of constituting gender relation is what is actually still missing from social sciences' analysis. This issue of 'agency' of the family is not forming part of most of our discussions on the family or of our analysis of the problems of gender relations, so often. There is therefore an urgent need to reshape our perspectives on the studies on issues related to the family by reintegrating an 'agency' factor for this institution, instead of going by what can be called a 'victim's perspective.

Similarly, an analysis of the nature of studies of sexuality will also further clarify this point. Though, issues of sexuality have become an alarming problem in the present day societies, and a multitude of studies, prominently within the mould of feminism, have traced out the role of family within the construction and constitution of it, there is still 'a question of silence' [Mary E. John and Janaki Nair, 1998] involved in it. "How, then, may we thematise this crucial but neglected field, in order to dislodge prevailing opinions regarding the irrelevance of sexuality as an object of investigation, barring, say, alarmed reactions to the obscenity being so assiduously nurtured by commercial cinema?" [Ibid.]. Their own proposition is that "Far from signifying biological genitality, 'sexuality' must connote a way of addressing sexual relations, their spheres of legitimacy and illegitimacy, through the institutions and practices, as well as the discourses and forms of representation, that have long been producing, framing, distributing and controlling the subject of 'sex' [ibid.p-2]. What the authors propose here is to make space for a more wide ranging approach towards the understanding of sexual politics in India, an approach characterized more by the

aspects of relations constituted in it rather than to limit ourselves to the biological contents in it. In other words, sexuality is conceived here not as an object to be retrieved, much less a coherent one, and instead it is looked at in terms of the relational contents in it. It is this notion of sexuality, sexuality as a relation and not as an objectified reality that is providing the theoretical and conceptual basis of this study as well.

The present study is however, restricted to the context of the state of Kerala only, which is quite well known for its peculiar family structures and gender relations.

MATRILINEAL PAST AND THE DIRECTION OF GENDER AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Historically, studies on the issues of family, gender and sexuality in Kerala more often revolved around the practices of matrilineal communities here. Whatever is unique and characteristic of the gender and family in Kerala is best illustrated in the different writings on Kerala by the customs and usages of the matrilineal castes. Nayar institutions of visiting husbands, hypergamous relations, token marriages, and fraternal polyandry all have attracted the scholarly attention for very long. The vast amount of literature, produced prominently by foreign scholars clearly reveals the extent of significance that is attributed to the practice of matriliney. [References can be made to the works like *Nayars Today* by C.J Fuller, (1976), and *Decline of the Nayar Dominance* by R. Jeffrey (2001) et al. This practice had not really died out significantly and even in recent times the tendency of analysts on Kerala, both foreign

and inland, is to trace back the social history of Kerala, to this tradition of matriliney itself.

The latest works of R. Jeffrey [1992], and Sarah Caldwell [1999] *et. al.* can be mentioned in this regard. However, their reference of this traditional structure in those works were mainly to explain the improved status of women in Kerala, in comparison to the other states of India linking that to this peculiar past. “ The matriliney of old Kerala still seemed to explain much about female literacy [at present]. The census recorded a larger proportion of Nayar women [34 per cent] as literate, in spite of the advantages Syrian Christians may have acquired through their association with missionaries”. [Robin. Jeffrey; 1992, p-95] Jeffrey also draws our attention to the prevalence of best nurses to people ratio existing in Kerala [ibid. p-195]. In his words this “readiness of young women to become nurses resulted from the remarkable place that women occupied in old Kerala”. Jeffrey’s explanation is indeed a reflection of the nature of literacy and employment situation in present day Kerala. Nevertheless, such an analysis cannot be considered as a gender friendly one for, he has never looked at the level of status of this profession of women in Kerala. If at all there is a visible change in the attitude of our society towards the employment of women, why is it that Jeffrey is not making a reference to other sectors of employment for which there is better social recognition.

The irony here is that, though similar large-scale transformations have already come about in the nature of social structure of Kerala from the times of matriliney, there is hardly anything advantageous to women of the present in comparison to the past. The pre-modern Kerala was characterized by a variety of special provisions granting women certain amount of autonomous existence at least among the

matrilineal communities. The modern Kerala, on the other hand, has only undermined most of those positions. As G. Arunima puts it “ Women’s right to property, authority, inheritance and residence were all affected by the vicissitudes of codified ‘matrilineal law’. [G. Arunima; 2000]. “The support that the shift to patrilineal families, with blatantly patriarchal authority structures, received from women is probably a sign of their increasing insecurity within a changing matrilineal context. [ibid.p-135]

There is very serious erosion in the position of women specifically in terms of her rights and privileges. References can be made to the legal, familial, and economic aspects of their lives. Recent studies of matrilineality by K.Saradamony [[1999]; Praveena. Kodoth; [2001] *et. al.* can be referred to here. They too have made it quite clear that, the transformations in this system more often followed the direction of blatant patriarchal structures. While these analyses were restricted mostly to the matrilineal communities, the experiences of other communities were also not much different. The case of the communities like Christians, and Muslims, who were always under strict religious patronage, is worth considering here. There are hardly any evidences on the family structure of these communities, showing any significant differences from the above patterns.

It is this aspect of our social history, which we need to reconstruct, or reconceptualize, to come to terms with the emerging structures of gender identities and relations in the present day Kerala. It is here that one can see the roots of the existing notions of gender and sexuality. A society known for its peculiar social institutions with extremely relaxed notions of gender and sexual practices during an intermittent stage, then turned itself to new system of vindicated inequalities of opportunities and rights. The notions of family, household, ‘natural’ or ‘legal’

headship, all were subjected to what can be called a total redefinition at this juncture of social development [G. Arunima; 2001]. And that did bring about a new image of natural identities, far too removed from the spontaneously evolving ones. The emerging images of family and gender largely undermined, whatever privileges and rights, earlier enjoyed by the women and also, in the process, legitimized a number of material and customary inequities imposed on them by the newly constituted patriarchal social structure.

The institution of family, therefore, became the most privatized and most personal of the social institution, with all its elements of domination and discrimination. The situation is such that, instead of moving in the direction of a more egalitarian conception of individual and human rights, matters regarding the family, gender, and sexuality have become more and more discriminatory and far more removed from the requirements of mutuality. Family was, therefore, left to itself, with all inherent values of discrepancies, like large-scale gender disparities in resource ownership and allocation, increasing rates of violence against women and children etc. The constructions of family authority, property rights, and customary and legal provisions have become largely gender biased mostly in women's disfavor.

This situation is well articulated in the following words of Prof. Saradamony: "... judging from what happened during the 1920s or later, we find that it was the dominant male view about women's lives and roles that succeeded. The subtle ways in which this happened, especially through glorifying Kerala woman's special status while denying her a rightful place in society or public life, took deep roots during the years... *that followed.*" [Saradamony; 1999.pp-26-27] The point here is that, these

developments are, in fact, visible right within the boundaries of the family itself and that is what we need to locate now.

Nonetheless, none of the studies on family are really directed to this aspect. What actually exists within the nooks and corners of family are beyond the reach of all analysts and the discourses of 'high social development' and high status of women' are looming large over all these.

PROBLEMATICS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN KERALA

The State of Kerala is one of the toppers in the records of National Crime Records Bureau (N.C.R.B). This is most specifically so in terms of violence against women especially in cases of rape and occurrence of domestic violence. The crime rate against women in Kerala is 95.76 per million women. In the case of molestation and domestic violence, Kerala rates are higher than the all India average.

The above data itself is an incomplete one. Most of these facts are based on what is reported by the press or by the agencies of law and justice. More than that, these reports are restricted to the women within the 'safe custody' of families. The situation of women, like, for example, the prostitutes, who are outside of this structure at least partially are much more complex. Sex workers are always overlooked or are treated as a separate group. The irony is that they too come from a family or they are not really totally outside of the structure and dynamics of family even in terms of the nature of their profession. The emerging themes of prostitution within gender studies also show that they are in no way a separate being and is, in fact, the support base

catering to the extra sexual needs mostly of the male gender, who are, in all senses, a part of the sacred 'family'.

In short, the constructions of 'gender' and 'sex' in Kerala, are caught within a multitude of discursive problems. The most basic issue is the continuing hold of the functionalist paradigms in analysis. An equally relevant and anomalous aspect is the use of the binary conception of tradition versus modernity to describe the framework of changes evolving in the family structures. It is against these problems that the present research formulates its stances. The most fundamental argument that this study advances is that, the disruptions that are taking place within this institution are a bi-product of the contradictions inherent in it. It is also the argument that the so-called processes of modernization in Kerala have always been going hand in hand with the concerns of traditional structures only. In other words, there are no such differences between the role of family and the institutions of modernity, in their role of giving shape to the identities of 'gender' and practices of 'sexuality'. The data that follow, collected from the three major cities of Kerala would reinforce these arguments.

DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

GENDER RELATION AND SEXUALITY – A FIELD VIEW

The preceding chapter on the theoretical developments of the concepts of gender relation and sexuality very well reveals a multitude of distinctive changes in the nature and understanding of these aspects in the history of social science analysis. The present research is conducted against such an emerging scenario of understanding, where gender relation and sexuality are no more considered as constituted in its 'natural' configuration and instead, it is maintained all through this analysis in terms of its constructed meanings.

All these have an extra-relevance in the context of this study in the urban Kerala, as the State is experiencing a large number of anomalous problems in these realms of late. Traditionally, Kerala is considered to be the land of gender equity, prominently in terms of factors like positive sex ratio, better health and educational standards for women, etc. The much-publicized matrilineal background of Kerala, and its positively projected comparisons of women's position in contrast to the womenfolk of other States of India have all earned the State much appreciation and applause. However, researches based on the innumerable studies and reports now available, are also raising contrasting views. The records like that of the official agencies like the National Crime Records Bureau, (Chandan Mukkerjee, Preet Rustagi, N. Krishnaji; 2001), State Women's Commission (B. Mohanan- 2001), etc. suggest that Kerala is one of the States with high rates of crime against women. There are also a number of other references on Kerala, which suggests that there is nothing like a position of equality of opportunity and privilege for women of Kerala so much different from their counterparts in the rest of the country (Mridul Eapen, and

Praveena Kodoth-2001). It is against this overall context that the present study was conducted and the following section attempts an interpretation of the same in line with the objective of looking into this position of ambiguity.

The study, conducted in the three major city Corporations has produced enormous data for analysis. The interview schedule used for the study was mainly divided into three sections. The first section was on the personal data of the respondents, the second one on the issue of gender relations and the third on the aspect of sexuality. These sections were further divided into different sub-sections on the basis of the distinctive variables used for the study. Therefore, it required different stages of coding and recoding and this was done primarily on the basis of the variables identified for the study.

The tabulation of the data was also a little problematic. Firstly, a number of questions were unanswered by some of the respondents stating that they did not want to answer them. Secondly, the respondents refused to answer some questions in detail. These problems were however, negligible considering the fact that the available answers were sufficient to understand the direction of the responses in general.

PERSONAL DETAILS OF THE RESPONDENTS –AN INTER-GENERATION

ANALYSIS

The first section of this chapter is on the personal data of the respondents. Here the details collected were of the gender and generation difference on topics like, the degree of education, the level of employment, the nature of property ownership etc. The result of the coding for each region is given here in separate tables.

GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN EMPLOYMENT PATTERN

TABLE- 3.1 [CALICUT]

Data is in %

Gender Difference						Generation difference			
Present Family		Former Family				Father	Son	Mother	Daughter
Husband	Wife	Husband's father	Husband's mother	Wife's father	Wife's mother				
76	20	50	7	64	5	50	76	5	20

TABLE 3.2 [ERNAKULAM]

Data is in %

Gender Difference						Generation difference			
Present Family		Former Family				Father	Son	Mother	Daughter
Husband	Wife	Husband's father	Husband's mother	Wife's father	Wife's mother				
88	11	78	5	23	1	78	88	1	7

TABLE 3.3 [TRIVANDRUM]

Data is in %

Gender Difference[data is in percentage]						Generation difference			
Present Family		Former Family				Father	Son	Mother	Daughter
Husband	Wife	Husband's father	Husband's mother	Wife's father	Wife's mother				
91	54	48	17	69	18	48	91	18	54

The tables above clearly reveal that there are a lot of discrepancies in the nature and distribution of employment pattern between both gender and generation. What is predominantly seen, is a large-scale gender difference in both the generations. In both the instances, it is highly favorable to the male, and when compared to the father and son the women's position is highly disproportionate. There is however, a significant regional difference in these terms. While in Thiruvananthapuram region there is a fairly visible presence of the womenfolk in the employed sector, both in Ernakulam and Calicut regions this ratio is highly insignificant for women. This may be due to the fact that, of the three regions selected for this study, it was Thiruvananthapuram, which has a predominantly salaried, employed population. In both the other regions it was largely preoccupied with activities of self-employment,

small business, etc. The data also suggests that, though this difference is largely persisting across generation there is still a positive change in the ratio of women's participation in all the three regions across the generation.

However, though there are changes in the level of opportunities of employment it has still not reached the position of equity of gender. And on the other hand, there is still a domination of male interest in the sector of employment in all the three areas of our research. The following diagrams will make these arguments clearer.

FIG. 3.1

FIGURE SHOWING THE GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN EMPLOYMENT PATTERN. (CALICUT)

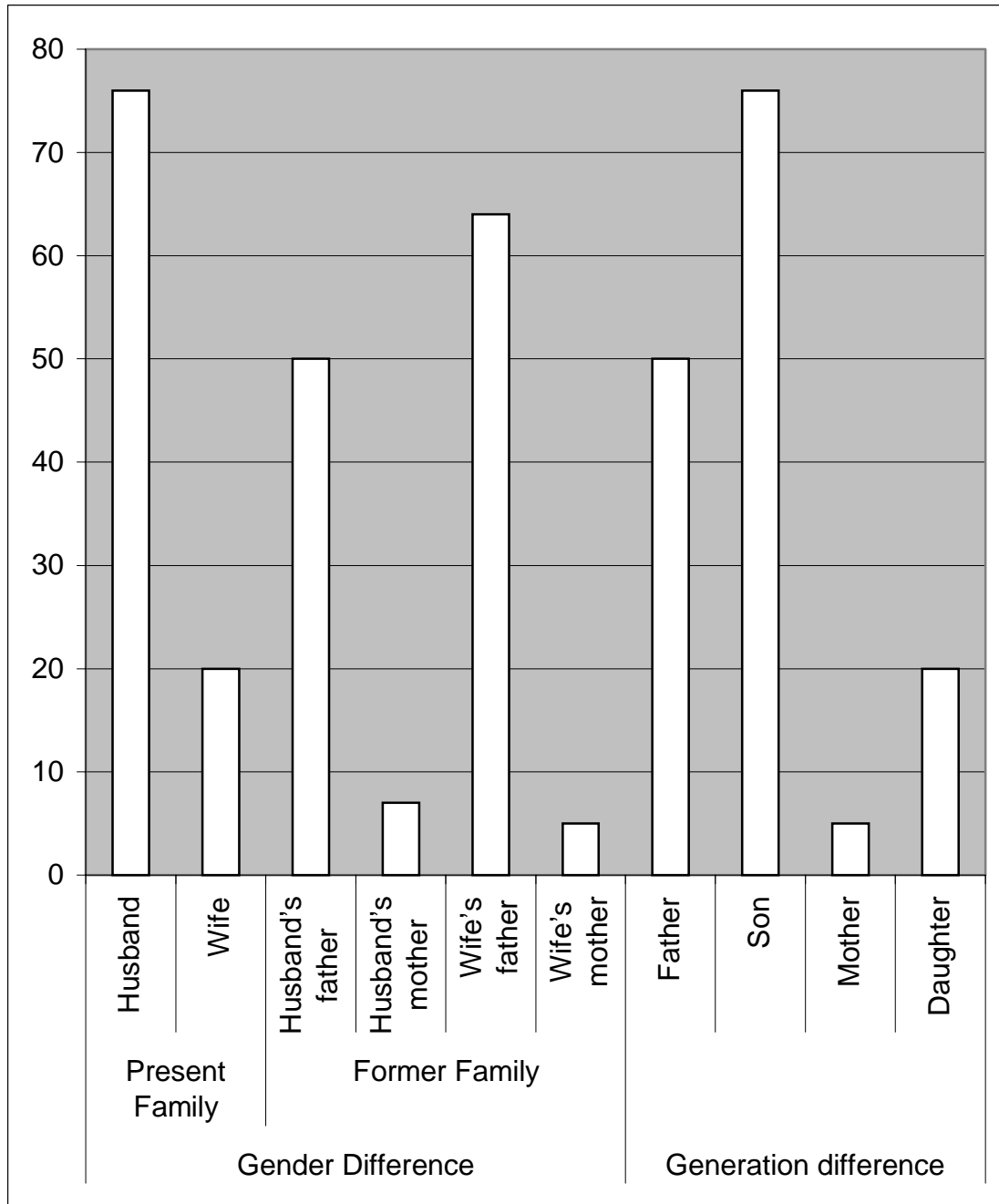


FIG. 3.2

FIGURE SHOWING THE GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN EMPLOYMENT PATTERN. (ERNAKULAM)

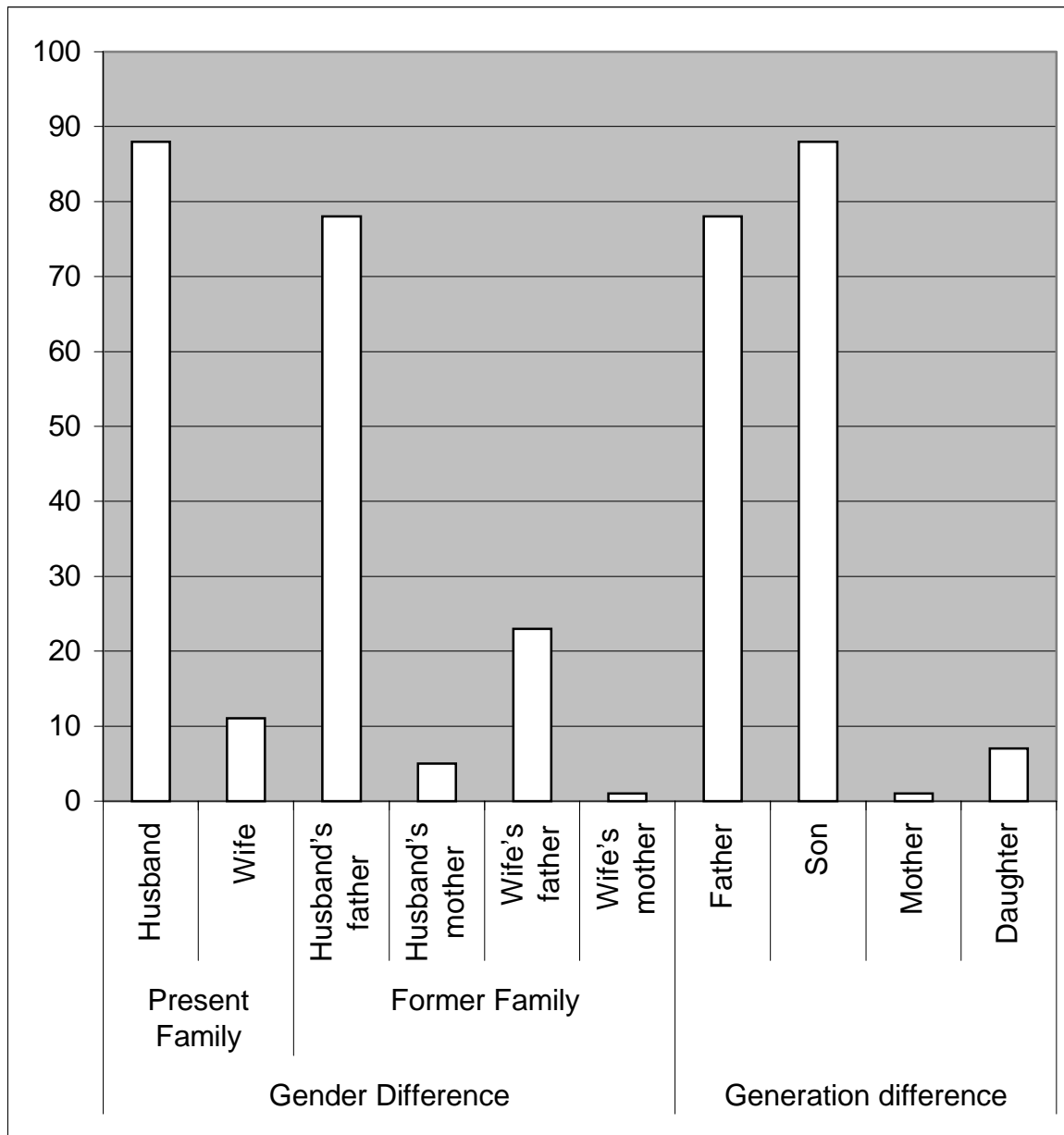
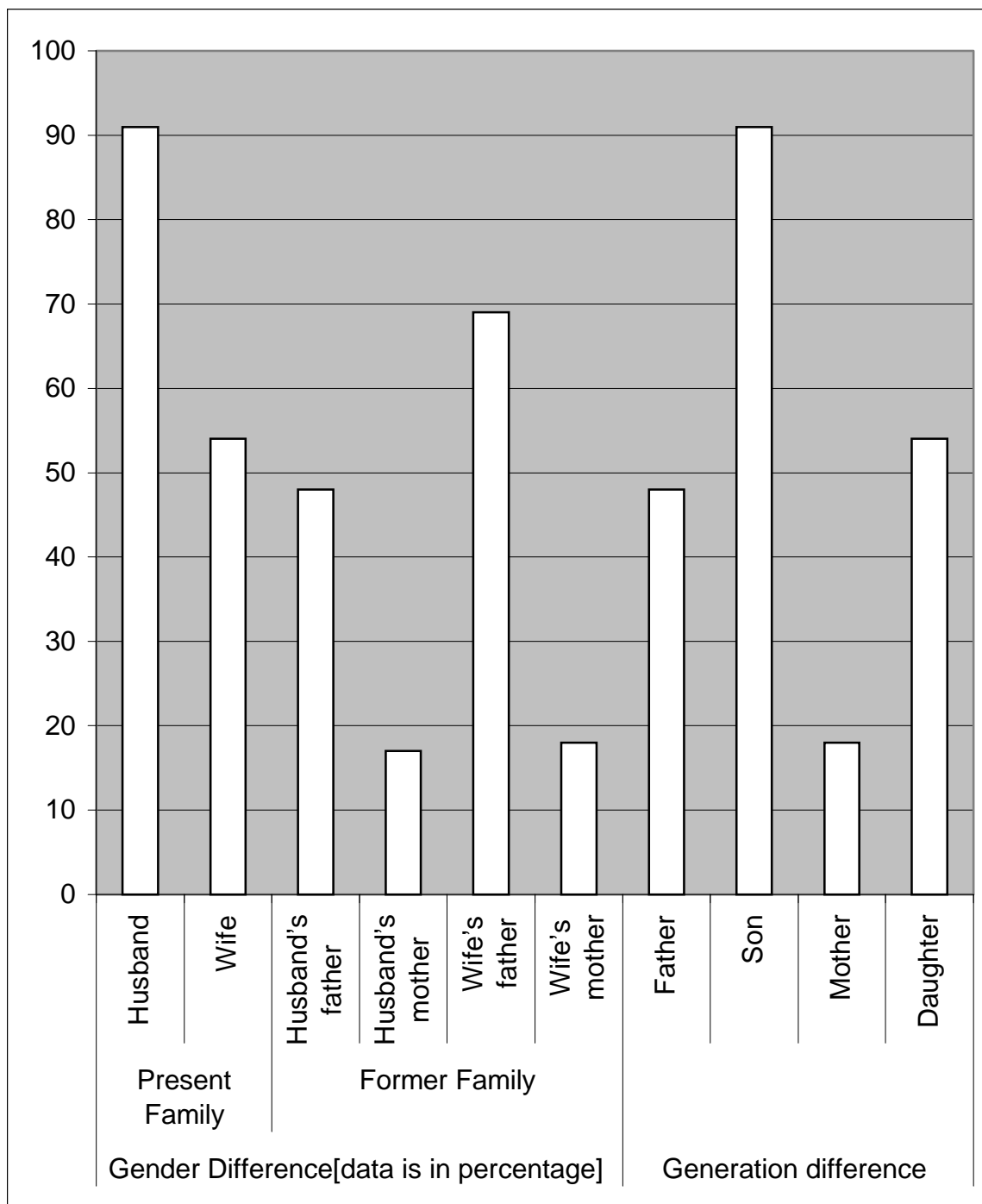


FIG. 3.3

FIGURE SHOWING THE GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN EMPLOYMENT PATTERN. (TRIVANDRUM)



GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATION

Considering the fact that the whole study was conducted in a totally urbanized context the data on education was codified in terms of the variable of college education as the basic criteria. Hence, no further division of the data was resorted to. This itself shows that, in spite of the widespread claims about the high degree of women's educational status in Kerala, there is still a very significant gender difference existing in this respect here.

EDUCATIONAL DATA OF THE RESPONDENTS

TABLE 3.4 [CALICUT]

Data is in %

Gender Difference						Generation difference			
Present Family		Former Family							
Husband	Wife	Husband's father	Husband's mother	Wife's father	Wife's mother	Father	Son	Mother	Daughter
39	12	15	6	23	7	15	39	7	12

TABLE 3.5 [ERNAKULAM]

Data is in %

Gender Difference						Generation difference			
Present Family		Former Family							
Husband	Wife	Husband's father	Husband's mother	Wife's father	Wife's mother	Father	Son	Mother	Daughter
33	20	12	3	5	0	12	33	0	20

TABLE 3.6 [TRIVANDRUM]

Data is in %

Gender Difference						Generation difference			
Present Family		Former Family							
Husband	Wife	Husband's father	Husband's mother	Wife's father	Wife's mother	Father	Son	Mother	Daughter
72	66	26	10	43	15	26	72	15	66

The data collected on education is also indicative of a huge difference in terms of gender and generation. At a very general level the data on education also follows the pattern on employment always favoring the male, the father in the former family and the husband in the present family. There is however, no major difference across the three regions selected for this study, eventhough the position in

Thiruvananthapuram region is little better for the present generation. The figures below will reflect it much better.

FIG. 3.4

FIGURE SHOWING THE GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATIONAL PATTERN. (CALICUT)

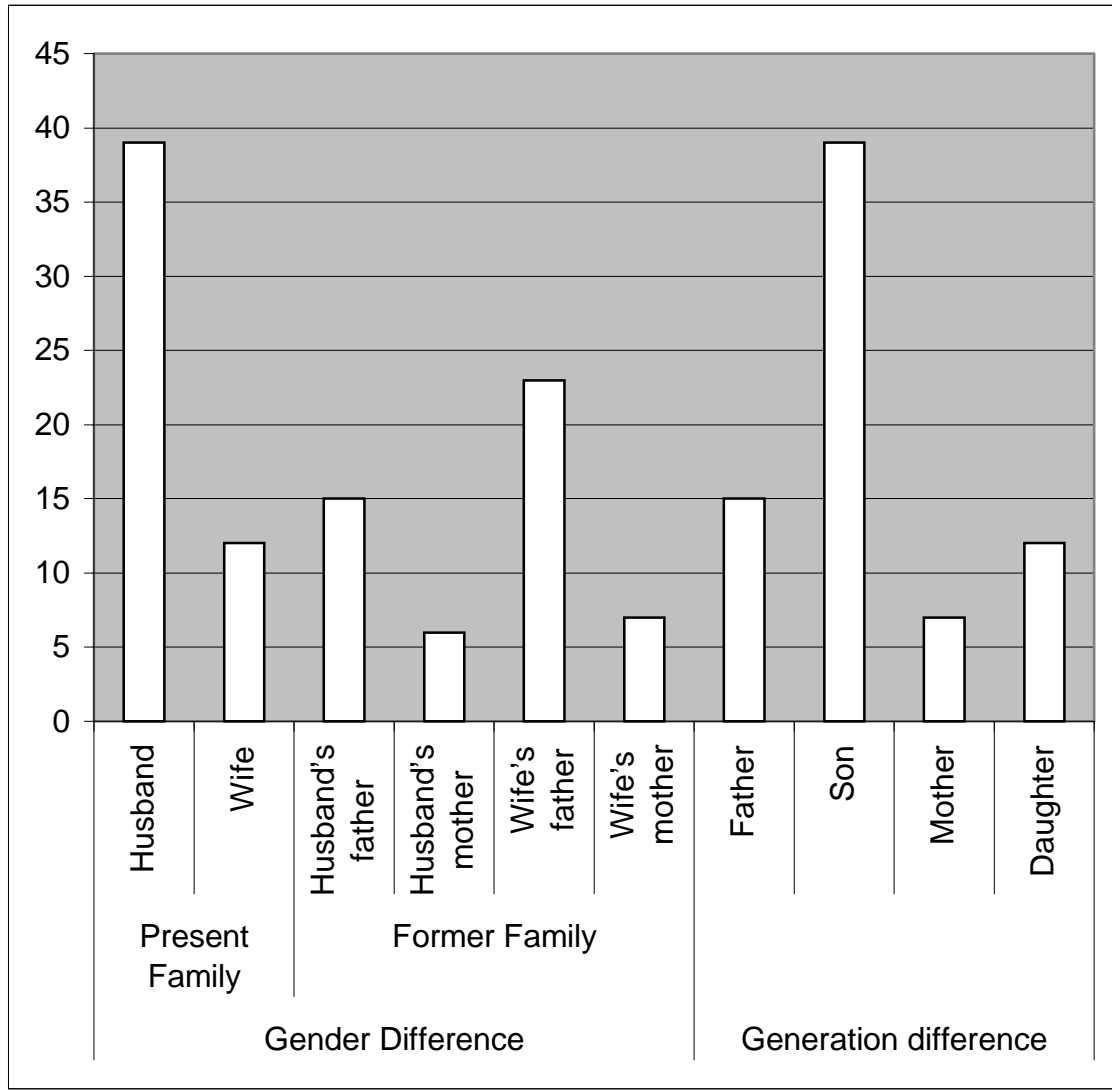


FIG. 3.5

FIGURE SHOWING THE GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATIONAL PATTERN. (ERNAKULAM)

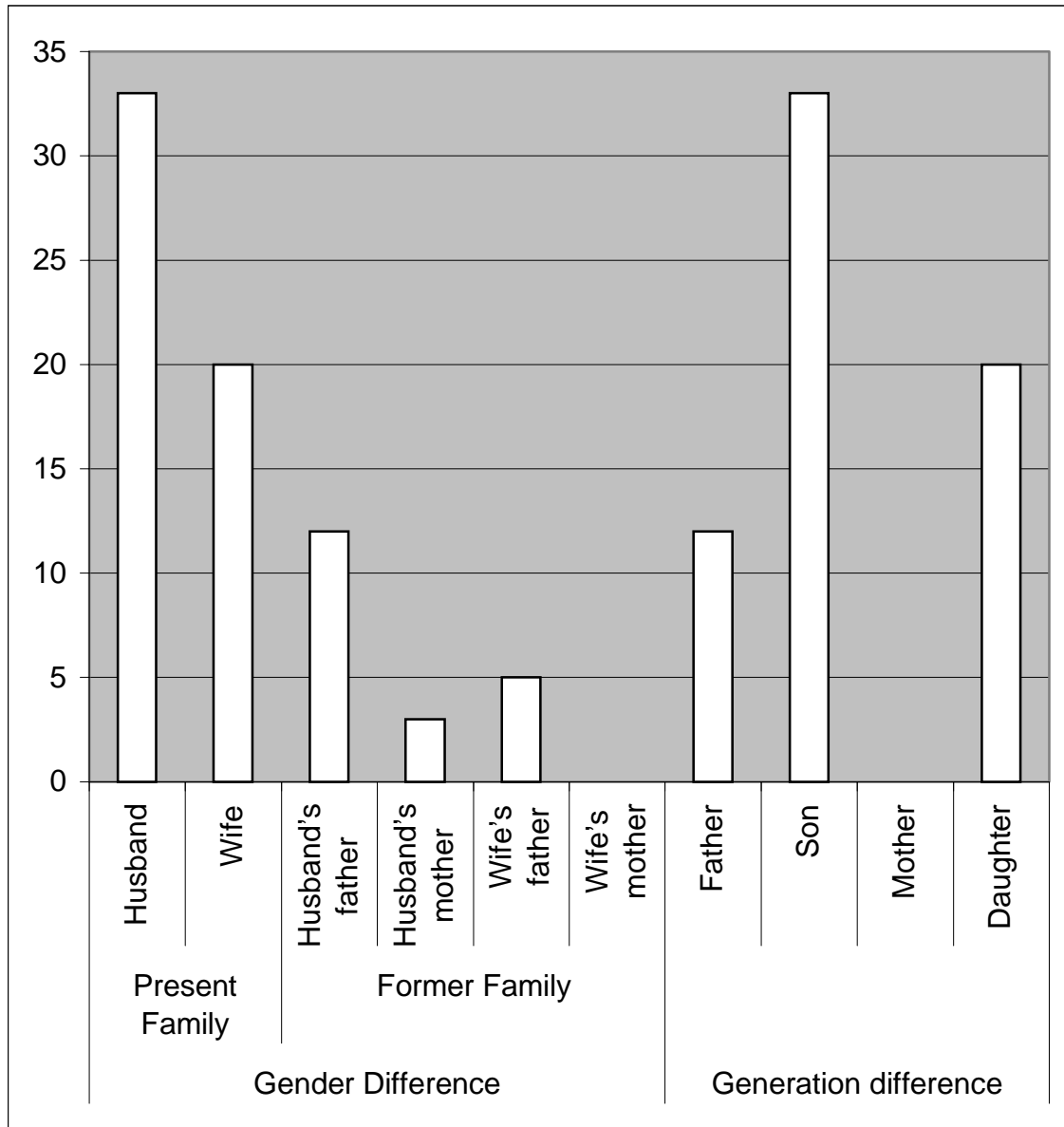
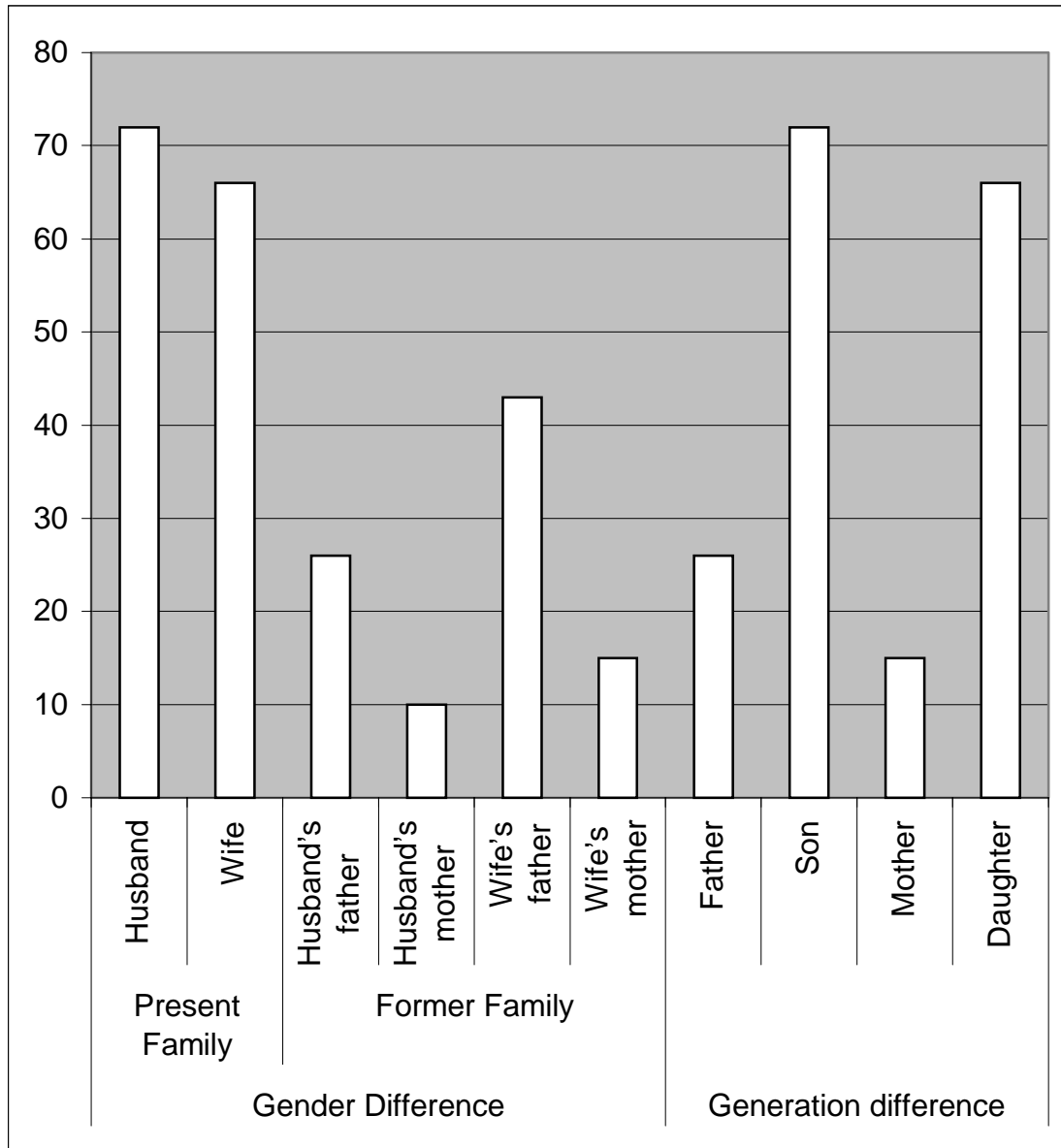


FIG. 3.6

FIGURE SHOWING THE GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN EDUCATIONAL PATTERN. (TRIVANDRUM)



GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN THE NATURE OF PROPERTY OWNERSHIP WITHIN THE FAMILY

TABLE 3.7 [CALICUT]

Gender Difference						Data is in % Generation difference			
Present Family		Former Family				Father	Son	Mother	Daughter
Husband	Wife	Husband's father	Husband's mother	Wife's father	Wife's mother				
74	26	50	41	65	34	50	74	34	26

TABLE 3.8 [ERNAKULAM]

Gender Difference						Data is in % Generation difference			
Present Family		Former Family				Father	Son	Mother	Daughter
Husband	Wife	Husband's father	Husband's mother	Wife's father	Wife's mother				
81	19	76	29	60	39	76	81	39	19

TABLE 3.9 [TRIVANDRUM]

Gender Difference						Data is in % Generation difference			
Present Family		Former Family				Father	Son	Mother	Daughter
Husband	Wife	Husband's father	Husband's mother	Wife's father	Wife's mother				
61	16	46	31	40	31	46	61	31	16

The ownership of property is one very significant aspect of transition in the functioning of family in Kerala, which was otherwise known for its history of matrilineal inheritance. What is important here is not just that there is no equality at present, more than all that the ownership system is moving more in the direction of male dominance. In all the three regions, the ratios of ownership of property by women have gone down. In other words, over the period of just one generation, women have been increasingly deprived of their property rights, where as in all the three regions the present generation of male has accumulated more privileges. May be, this could be explained in terms of the disappearance of the matrilineal practices, or by the increasing acceptability or popularity of the dowry system, where women are provided with dowry as their share in the family property.

However, the fact that this study was not restricted to the matrilineal communities, as also the fact that the urban regions are represented by all the different socio-religious categories, make it difficult to jump to a conclusion that this loss of ownership rights are because of the disappearance of matriliney. More than all that, as was stated earlier, the modernist developments in sectors of education and employment have not gone in any new direction at all. This is where we need to look for more convincing reasons and turn to the institution of family, in perpetuating these biases. Because, the primary experiential site of this differentiation is indeed the family and for that very reason family will have a role to play here. In other words, what is maintained is that, above everything else all these differentiations have to be seen as an expression of the nature of relations that exist within this crucial site of construction of gender identities or gender relation. The following diagrams manifest these aspects quite clearly.

FIG. 3.7
 FIGURE SHOWING THE GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY. (CALICUT)

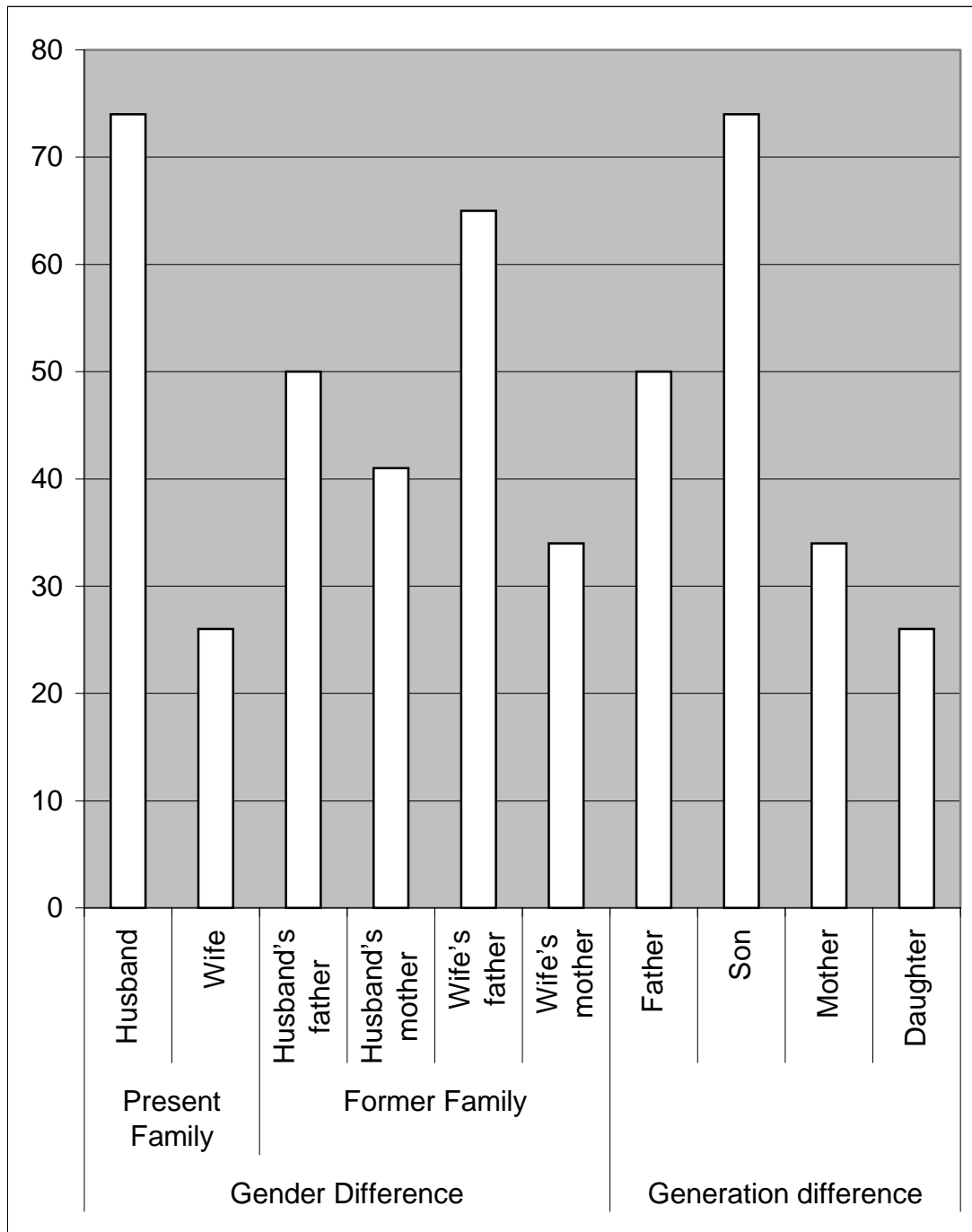


FIG. 3.8
 FIGURE SHOWING THE GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY. (ERNAKULAM)

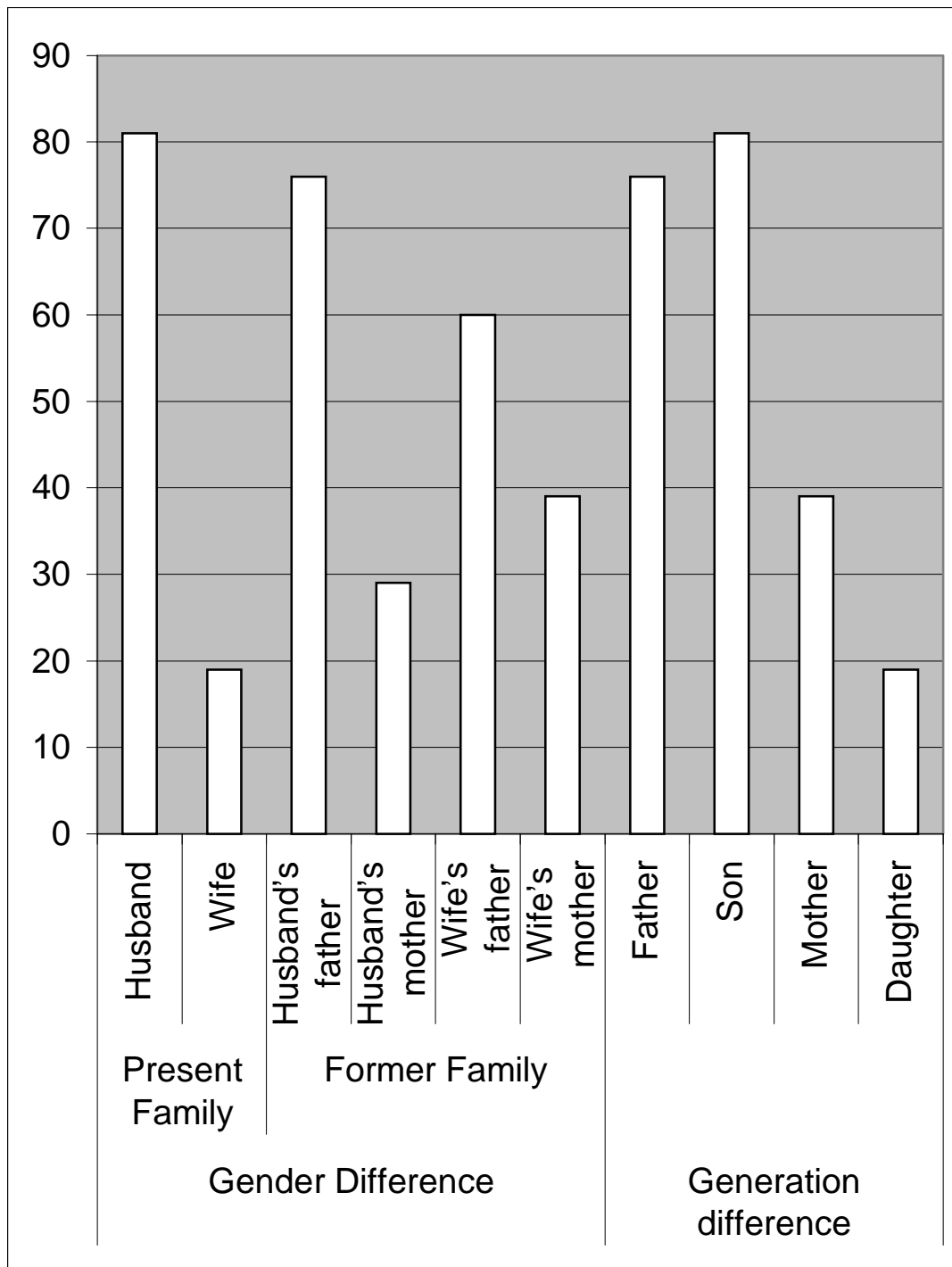
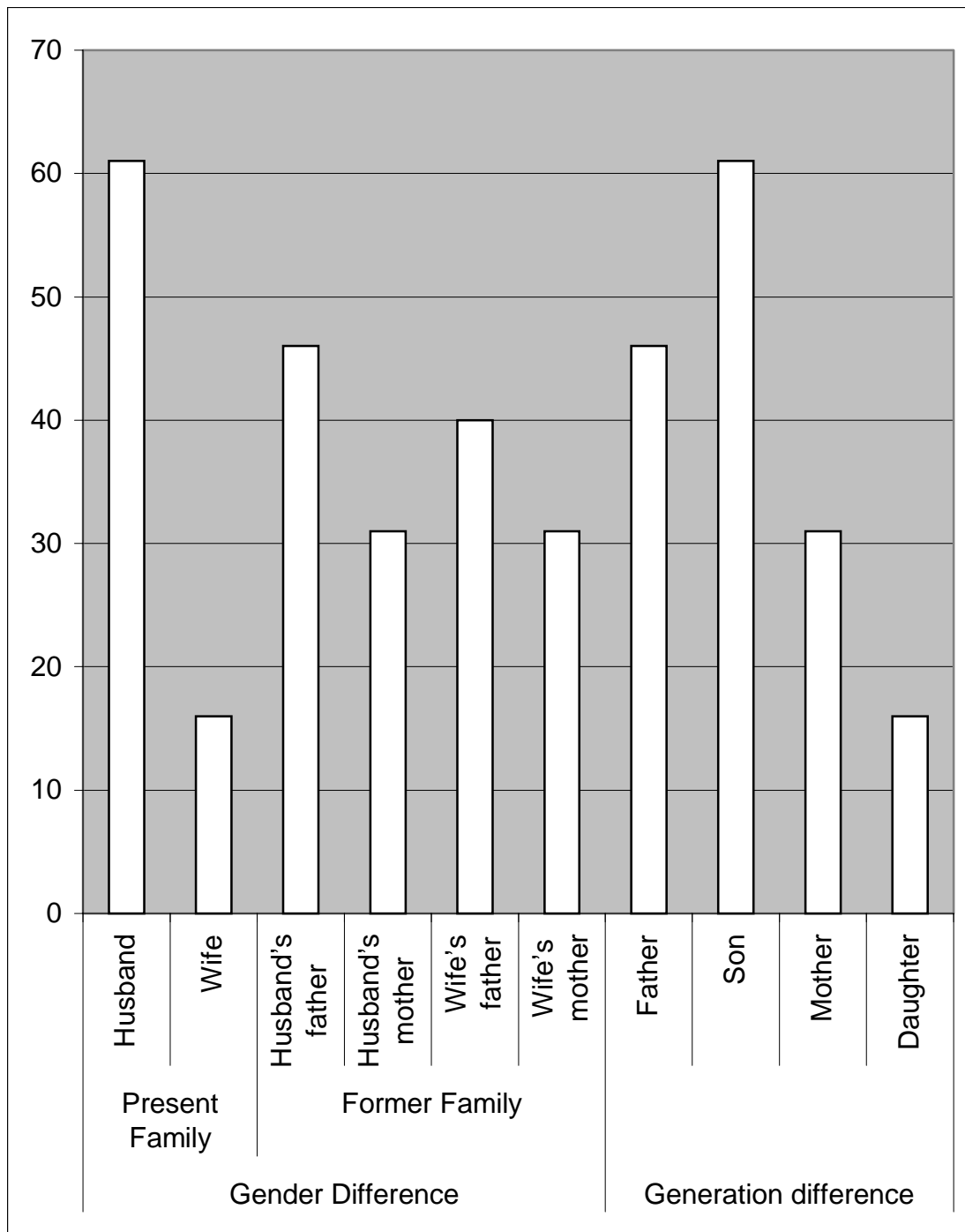


FIG. 3.9
 FIGURE SHOWING THE GENDER AND GENERATION DIFFERENCE IN OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY. (TRIVANDRUM)



GENDER RELATIONS IN KERALA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IDENTITIES IN THE FAMILY.

The next major concern of this study was the issue of the dynamics of gender within the family. As the main objective of this study was to find out the role of family in the constitution and definition of gender, a number of variables were identified to analyze the factors available. Questions were organized around those variables like, the nature of perceptions of gender, the nature of gender role allocation and family attitudes, gender socialization and behavioral difference, gender role expectations, restrictions of gender in social interaction, etc.

PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER, ROLE ALLOCATIONS AND FAMILIAL ATTITUDES, EXPECTATIONS OF GENDER AND SOCIALISATION PATTERN, AND PRACTICES AND RESTRICTIONS OF GENDER

*TABLE 3.10 [CALICUT]
PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER.*

Question No		Choices	Data is in %	
			wife	husband
1	What do you understand by gender relation	Male/femalereletion	14	66
		Marriage relation	86	34
2	Do you think that men and women have different roles to perform in our society?	Yes	69	67
		No	31	33
3	Can you specify the type of roles your father and mother had performed at home?	housework for mother and outside activities for father	96	90
		Equal	4	10
4	Why do you think these differences existed in our society?	That is normal	72	50
		They like it that way	28	50

TABLE-3.11 [ERNAKULAM]

PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER.

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	What do you understand by gender relation	Male/female relation	33	56
		Marriage relation	57	44
2	Do you think that men and women have different roles to perform in our society?	Yes	79	67
		No	21	33
3	Can you specify the type of roles your father and mother had performed at home?	housework for mother and outside activities for father	60	70
		Equal	20	30
4	Why do you think these differences existed in our society?	That is normal	62	80
		They like it that way	38	20

TABLE - 3.12 [TRIVANDRUM]

PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER.

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	What do you understand by gender relation	Male/female relation	34	26
		Marriage relation	66	44
2	Do you think that men and women have different roles to perform in our society?	Yes	59	67
		No	41	33
3	Can you specify the type of roles your father and mother had performed at home?	housework for mother and outside activities for father	76	70
		Equal roles	14	22
4	Why do you think these differences existed in our society?	That is normal	83	50
		They like it that way	15	50

On the issue of perceptions of gender, the tables above show that there is a clear separation and demarcation of gender identities in the families in all the three regions. There is in fact, an identification of the gender relation with the institution of marriage or family itself in all the three regions without much variation between them. On the issue of the practice of gender division of labor, the present generation also appears to endorse what prevailed in the earlier generation as just what is 'normal', even though

what existed earlier was inegalitarian and discriminatory in nature. In fact, only very few respondents seem to view what existed earlier, among their parents as an equal division of labor. Still a very large majority looks at those practices as quite normal.

TABLE- 3.13 [CALICUT]

GENDER ROLE ALLOCATION AND FAMILIAL ATTITUDE -

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	What do you think are the different roles that you perform because of you gender identity in the family?	Housework for wife/outside activities for husbands	100	40
2	How do you consider that division	Normal	96	90
		discriminatory	4	10
3	In your family who taught you to take up different roles	mother	74	38
		father	0	38
4	Do you ask your son to help you in cooking?	No	52	69
		Yes	48	31
5	Have you ever taught him to cook and wash clothes?	Yes	38	18
		No	62	82
6	Do you ask your daughter to help you in cooking?	Yes	68	31
		No	32	69
7	Have you ever taught her to cook and wash clothes?	Yes	58	21
		No	42	79

TABLE-3.14 [ERNAKULAM]

GENDER ROLE ALLOCATION AND FAMILIAL ATTITUDE

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	What do you think are the different roles that you perform because of you gender identity in the family?	Housework	95	20
		Child care	100	20
		Social activities	25	85
		Shopping	45	75
2	How do you consider that division	Normal	90	90
		Discriminatory	60	10
3	In your family who taught you to take up different roles	Mother	74	58
		Father	10	42
4	Do you ask your son to help you in cooking?	No	75	79
		Yes	18	11
5	Have you ever taught him to cook and wash clothes?	Yes	25	0
		No	54	82
6	Do you ask your daughter to help you in cooking?	Yes	52	21
		No	22	69
7	Have you ever taught her to cook and wash clothes?	Yes	68	21
		No	29	79

TABLE- 3.15 [TRIVANDRUM]

GENDER ROLE ALLOCATION AND FAMILIAL ATTITUDE

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	What do you think are the different roles that you perform because of you gender identity in the family?	Housework for wife/outside activities for husbands	85	60
2	How do you consider that division	Normal	76	60
		Discriminatory	12	31
3	In your family who taught you to take up different roles	Mother	78	45
		Father	11	55
4	Do you ask your son to help you in cooking?	No	63	77
		Yes	33	12
5	Have you ever taught him to cook and wash clothes?	Yes	33	12
		No	62	82
6	Do you ask your daughter to help you in cooking?	Yes	77	22
		No	23	75
7	Have you ever taught her to cook and wash clothes?	Yes	78	9
		No	14	75

This is another very important aspect where the family can be seen as playing a crucial role in the legitimization of a number of other discriminatory constructions of gender. The problem is that even the female gender is preoccupied with the notion that what is thrust upon them are only normal things and therefore it is their task to ensure that their children are also given the required training to fit into this structured notions of the self. Hence it is seen to be beyond them to do anything to bring about any change in the nature of the dynamics of gender within the family, so as to mark a transition from the prevailing practices. As a result, neither the notions of gender nor the constructions of the identities and roles of gender are anyway subjected to a redefinition or deconstruction. In the process, not only are the women subjected to a very visible level of domestication but, ironically, they also act as the decisively determining agency for the furtherance of these age-old distinctions.

TABLE- 3.16 [CALICUT]

EXPECTATIONS OF GENDER AND SOCIALIZATION PATTERN

Data is in %

Question No	Choices	wife	husband
1	Restricted	78	60
	unrestricted	22	40
2	Restricted	44	35
	unrestricted	66	65
3	Marriage	58	51
	career	42	49
4	Marriage	38	31
	career	62	79
5	No	69	44
	Yes	31	56
6	Education	73	80
	Marriage	10	10
7	Education	33	30
	Marriage	51	50

TABLE-3.17 [ERNAKULAM]

EXPECTATIONS OF GENDER AND SOCIALIZATION PATTERN

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	What type of social interaction you prefer for your daughter	Restricted	88	65
		Unrestricted	2	34
2	What type of social interaction you prefer for your son	Restricted	33	15
		Unrestricted	60	65
3	What do you think is better for a girl child?	Marriage	66	61
		Career	30	27
4	What do you think is better for a boy child?	Marriage	17	21
		Career	71	73
5	Do you have any differential role expectation from your male and female children?	No	58	51
		Yes	25	33
6	If you have to make a choice between education and marriage for your son what will you prefer	Education	83	87
		Marriage	7	8
7	If you have to make a choice between education and marriage for your daughter, what will you prefer	Education	43	35
		Marriage	59	60

TABLE- 3.18 [TRIVANDRUM]

EXPECTATIONS OF GENDER AND SOCIALIZATION PATTERN

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	What type of social interaction you prefer for your daughter	Restricted	55	45
		Unrestricted	14	30
2	What type of social interaction you prefer for your son	Restricted	24	25
		Unrestricted	66	65
3	What do you think is better for a girl child?	Marriage	47	49
		Career	42	49
4	What do you think is better for a boy child?	Marriage	28	19
		Career	70	80
5	Do you have any differential role expectation from your male and female children?	No	45	34
		Yes	45	50
6	If you have to make a choice between education and marriage for your son what will you prefer	Education	82	80
		Marriage	8	12
7	If you have to make a choice between education and marriage for your daughter, what will you prefer	Education	33	30
		Marriage	49	58

Pattern of socialization and gender expectation, perpetuated through generations, is also affecting a process of genderization within the family. In terms of the opportunities of social interaction, or in terms of options of pursuing a secured

career and educational status, etc. the attitude of the family consistently is to pursue the patriarchal interests of ‘housewifization’ or domestication of the women. Hence, they become the targets of daily monitoring and close watch. They are not brought up to get educated or to take up any serious occupations in comparison to their male counterpart. In the tables above we can notice the difference of significance that is attributed by the majority families in all the three regions to the educational and career expectations of their male and female children. One interesting aspect here is that in comparison to both Calicut and Ernakulam regions, in Thiruvananthapuram region there is a fairly better consideration of the career interests. However, how far this is due to the concerns of gender equity is not very clear. On the other hand, the fact that this region is, in fact, more representative of a salaried class of people could perhaps explain why there is a slight variation in this regard.

*TABLE-3.19 [CALICUT]
RESTRICTIONS ON GENDER*

Question No	Choices	Data is in %		
		wife	husband	
1	When you were in school have you ever experience gender separation?	No	63	61
	Yes	37	39	
2	Do you think that women have limited time and spatial mobility compared to men?	No	47	32
	Yes	53	68	
3	Will you allow your girl child to move freely as the boys?	No	64	66
	Yes	36	34	
4	In your childhood did you ever feel that you have no freedom compared to your sibling	Yes	65	23
	No	35	77	
5	Did you take part in sports and games when you were in the school or college	Yes	15	76
	No	75	24	

*TABLE-3.20 [ERNAKULAM]
RESTRICTIONS ON GENDER*

Question No	Choices	Data is in %		
		wife	husband	
1	When you were in school have you ever experienced any gender separation?	No	43	71
	Yes	40	11	
2	Do you think that women have limited time and spatial mobility compared to men?	No	27	32
	Yes	73	68	

3	Will you allow your girl child to move freely as the boys?	No	74	60
		Yes	13	29
4	In your childhood did you ever feel that you have no freedom compared to your sibling	Yes	45	13
		No	45	87
5	Did you take part in sports and games when you were in the school or college	Yes	10	78
		No	85	21

TABLE- 3.21 [TRIVANDRUM]

RESTRICTIONS ON GENDER

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	When you were in school have you ever experienced any gender separation?	No	54	52
		Yes	41	44
2	Do you think that women have limited time and spatial mobility compared to men?	No	28	35
		Yes	70	68
3	Will you allow your girl child to move freely as the boys?	No	64	66
		Yes	36	34
4	In your childhood did you ever feel that you have no freedom compared to your sibling	Yes	59	8
		No	15	80
5	Did you take part in sports and games when you were in the school or college	Yes	7	46
		No	88	53

In terms of the ‘time’ and ‘spatial’ mobility also the attitude of the family is to put up restrictions on women. The end result is that the girls and the women in general end up with very limited social and cultural opportunities which in turn cause to restrict their personal traits and competence to the limits of family endlessly. These constraints on mobility have a multitude of secondary influences on their lives. Even the rare minimum appearances of the women in public are looked at as a matter of ridicule and sarcasm. This data is, in fact, a contestation of the views of scholars like Robin Jeffrey, who have argued that the so called model status of the state of Kerala in terms of its social development is in itself a product of the prevalence of a public politics, and that too of the high rate of participation of women in Kerala. [R. Jeffrey; 1992] Obviously there could be differences between the different States of India. However, that need not mean that the women in Kerala have crossed over all the age -

old barriers and are out there in the public to put up their claims unaffected by the tyrannical practices existing in our social formation. Family in Kerala, like their counterparts in the rest of the world, is still quite restrictive on their women even now and the data raised from all the three regions only substantiate this reality, with out much variation.

Throughout the preceding pages it is coming out quite clearly that in terms of almost all selected variables, and the available indices, the family is acting as the major constituent of gender identities and behavioral practices.

SEXUALITY

The second major objective of this research was to find out the way in which the meanings and practices of sexuality are constituted in the society of Kerala. As it was argued in the theoretical framework of this work, here again the notion of sexuality is analyzed in terms of its discursive and constructed dimensions only. The major constituents of sexuality and its dynamics within the family were identified through the focus group interviews itself.

The most significant category, who were selected as a focus group to contribute to the understanding of the problems of sexuality in Kerala, was the sex-workers. They are, in fact, the only category of people who are willing to talk about sex in the whole of Kerala. Nonetheless, their lives are not so secure and the fact that they are coming together fighting for their own security and life is itself a fact worth looking into. Of late there is even an organization of the sex workers in Kerala.

The interviews with them categorically stated that, though their services are much sought after by almost all sections of people in Kerala, they are at the same time an object of State repression and exploitation. What was most striking was their observation that, it is the police who exploit them the most. Commenting on the clients who visit them quite often, they say it is the men from the so-called sacred families who really approach them. In this context it is also worth considering the nature of sex rackets and trafficking of young women that were reported in the media, in recent years. In most instances the clients involved people belonging to all walks of life. The issue here is not really the nature of clients or their identities. Instead, the objective of this description is only to show the existence of a very strong sex industry in the State of Kerala. If this is the case, how far the practices of sexuality are restricted to the boundaries of family. Or else, what then is the nature of sexuality within the family. This is where, this research could make certain relevant interventions. One such important input is the chosen silence of the institution of family on the issue of sexuality and its consequent construction of a commercialized and objectified image of sexuality. This could also bring to light the complimentary existence of the institution of family and the other agencies of sexual socialization.

Hence, along with family, other modernist agencies like school, and even the religious institutions also came under the purview of this inquiry for their roles in defining the values of and conceptions of sexuality. The following part look at those different aspects and the tables below will provide us with an account of the data collected on these issues. The major focus of this section was to collect the views and opinions of people on the different discourses on sexuality that came to the forefront,

through the focus group consultations. The later part of this chapter seeks to analyze the basis of those images of sexuality to find out its implications on gender.

DISCOURSES OF SEX.

TABLE 3.22 [CALICUT – FEMALE]

Data is in %

	Agree	Disagree
Sex is biologically based	76	18
Sex is sacred	71	20
Sex is sin	10	64
Sex is reproduction	52	32
Sex is recreational	56	35
Sex is cultural	52	38
Sex has to be controlled	76	19
Sex should be family based	85	11
Sex should be only after marriage	80	11
Men have strong sexual urges	61	21
Women are more responsible for controlling sex	55	35
Women should not reveal their sexuality	59	25
Children should not be exposed to sex	74	19
Women are very often the victims of sexual abuse	80	10
Women who are sexually abused are often women who are morally weak	44	50
Sex should be treated as private affair	84	7
Sex should not be discussed in public	55	35
Controlling reproduction is more a responsibility of the wife than husband	30	43

TABLE 3.23 [CALICUT – MALE]

Data is in %

	Agree	Disagree
Sex is biologically based	78	16
Sex is sacred	62	20
Sex is sin	12	72
Sex is reproduction	42	43
Sex is recreational	51	41
Sex is cultural	43	30
Sex has to be controlled	72	19
Sex should be family based	66	23
Sex should be only after marriage	63	30
Men have strong sexual urges	58	32
Women are more responsible for controlling sex	45	25
Women should not reveal their sexuality	63	17
Children should not be exposed to sex	68	16
Women are very often the victims of sexual abuse	58	17
Women who are sexually abused are often women who are morally weak	52	30
Sex should be treated as private affair	76	19
Sex should not be discussed in public	25	55
Controlling reproduction is more a responsibility of the wife than husband	36	38

TABLE 3.24 [ERNAKULAM – FEMALE]

Data is in %

	Agree	Disagree
Sex is biologically based	53	25
Sex is sacred	57	25
Sex is sin	5	70
Sex is reproduction	44	30
Sex is recreational	33	40
Sex is cultural	62	13
Sex has to be controlled	63	10
Sex should be family based	75	0
Sex should be only after marriage	76	2
Men have strong sexual urges	64	9
Women are more responsible for controlling sex	56	19
Women should not reveal their sexuality	53	20
Children should not be exposed to sex	65	5
Women are very often the victims of sexual abuse	66	7
Women who are sexually abused are often women who are morally weak	24	41
Sex should be treated as private affair	62	15
Sex should not be discussed in public	52	27
Controlling reproduction is more a responsibility of the wife than husband	39	22

TABLE 3.25 [ERNAKULAM – MALE]

Data is in %

	Agree	Disagree
Sex is biologically based	53	24
Sex is sacred	55	28
Sex is sin	2	77
Sex is reproduction	39	39
Sex is recreational	33	48
Sex is cultural	55	13
Sex has to be controlled	64	10
Sex should be family based	71	5
Sex should be only after marriage	70	4
Men have strong sexual urges	41	34
Women are more responsible for controlling sex	34	32
Women should not reveal their sexuality	51	13
Children should not be exposed to sex	62	12
Women are very often the victims of sexual abuse	49	25
Women who are sexually abused are often women who are morally weak	13	61
Sex should be treated as private affair	56	20
Sex should not be discussed in public	28	49
Controlling reproduction is more a responsibility of the wife than husband	9	49

TABLE 3.26 [TRIVANDRUM – FEMALE]

Data is in %

	Agree	Disagree
Sex is biologically based	94	2
Sex is sacred	79	11
Sex is sin	1	92
Sex is reproduction	68	22
Sex is recreational	55	30
Sex is cultural	70	15
Sex has to be controlled	87	8
Sex should be family based	91	3
Sex should be only after marriage	67	9
Men have strong sexual urges	58	18
Women are more responsible for controlling sex	40	47
Women should not reveal their sexuality	66	24
Children should not be exposed to sex	86	6
Women are very often the victims of sexual abuse	87	7
Women who are sexually abused are often women who are morally weak	28	67
Sex should be treated as private affair	77	7
Sex should not be discussed in public	57	36
Controlling reproduction is more a responsibility of the wife than husband	16	70

TABLE 3.27 [TRIVANDRUM – MALE]

Data is in %

	Agree	Disagree
Sex is biologically based	90	3
Sex is sacred	49	41
Sex is sin	4	88
Sex is reproduction	57	32
Sex is recreational	58	30
Sex is cultural	65	23
Sex has to be controlled	76	16
Sex should be family based	79	11
Sex should be only after marriage	79	9
Men have strong sexual urges	62	29
Women are more responsible for controlling sex	53	36
Women should not reveal their sexuality	44	42
Children should not be exposed to sex	54	37
Women are very often the victims of sexual abuse	64	31
Women who are sexually abused are often women who are morally weak	45	46
Sex should be treated as private affair	79	16
Sex should not be discussed in public	44	44
Controlling reproduction is more a responsibility of the wife than husband	22	66

An analysis of these discourses on sexuality amply manifests a wide variety of interesting facts. In a sense, this is suggestive of a predominantly ambivalent nature of the conception of sexuality in the society of Kerala. The highly, moralistic, privatized and controlled character of the image of sexuality can at the same time be seen as

reflecting a wide variety of gender discriminatory or restrictive elements in it. The people, who stand by the image of sexuality as something that should be strictly family based and restricted to the context of marriage is however, severely biased on issues of sexual abuses predominantly against women. The very category who are often the victims of sexual crimes and abuses i.e., the women, are told to take care of themselves because men's sexual urges are something uncontrollable. The authentic agency of sexuality, i.e., the family, suddenly turns helpless in issues of constraining the sexual advances of the male. To the contrary, it is with this anomaly that 'the normal' sex is defined within the family. Not only is this 'normal sex' a problem in itself, this is also instrumental in giving shape to many more discrepancies in the practices of gender relation and sexuality, both within the family and the society as a whole.

In spite of these contradictory roles, the existing interpretations on the relation between family and sexuality is only looking at family only as a 'victim' of outside factors. An analysis of this role of family is, therefore, considered to be a matter of utmost significance what follows is an attempt in that direction. This would include the role of family in providing the notions of sex and sexuality to its members, the nature of this influence, the generation difference, if any, the attitude of the parents to the issues of children's sexual behavior, etc. In this enterprise the researcher has also included a comparative evaluation of the role of other agencies, like the school, media, peer groups, etc, to see the differences in the nature of this influence.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY; ROLE OF THE FAMILY, SCHOOL, PEER GROUPS AND RELIGION

SEXUALITY AND FAMILY

SOURCES OF IDEAS OF SEX

TABLE 3.28 [CALICUT]

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	Level of sex education from parents	Insufficient	76	74
2	Have you ever discussed sex with your friends?	Yes	50	76
3	Have you discussed sex with your teachers?	No	90	91
4	Have you ever attended any sex education classes	Yes	68	73
5	Who usually conducts such programs	Religious authorities	68	73
6	Do you encourage your children to attend such programs?	Yes	80	90

SOURCES OF IDEAS OF SEX

TABLE 3.29 [ERNAKULAM]

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	Level of sex education from parents	Insufficient	70	74
2	Have you ever discussed sex with your friends?	Yes	47	87
3	Have you discussed sex with your teachers?	No	100	94
4	Have you ever attended any sex education classes	Yes	63	59
5	Who usually conducts such programs	Religious authorities	73	88
6	Do you encourage your children to attend such programmes?	Yes	79	88

SOURCES OF IDEAS OF SEX

TABLE 3.30 [TRIVANDRUM]

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	Level of sex education from parents	Insufficient	70	65
2	Have you ever discussed sex with your friends?	Yes	75	74
3	Have you discussed sex with your teachers?	No	98	91
4	Have you ever attended any sex education classes	Yes	73	64
5	Who usually conducts such programs	Religious authorities	85	80
6	Do you encourage your children to attend such programmes?	Yes	49	47

The data above indicate that the practices of sexuality defined as revolving around the images of family are actually a lot alienated from it. The family does not appear to be, in fact, playing any effective role in inculcating a positive meaning of sexuality. The respondents from all the three regions express the view that family is

not providing with any relevant notion of sex. The majority, on the other hand, also opines that whatever they learn about sex that actually are from their friends and peer-groups. The problem here is that, even these roles of the friends are again not a recognized one by the family and therefore even that end up as illegitimate or negative. The issue then is that the family is neither providing the individual with any specific notion of sexuality nor is it acting to facilitate any other agency for this function, except by subscribing to the so-called sex-education classes, which are usually provided by the religious educationists.

TABLE 3.31 [CALICUT]

NATURE OF INFLUENCE OF PARENTS IN PROVIDING IDEAS OF SEX

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	Have you anytime taken the initiative to discuss any aspect of sex with your children?	No	85	65
2	Have you ever ridiculed your children for their interaction with their friends of the opposite sex?	Yes	55	40
3	Have you ever taught your children to how to behave themselves in matters of sex	Yes	60	18
		No	30	60
4	Have they at any time discussed sexual matters with you?	No	80	95

TABLE 3.32 [ERNAKULAM]

NATURE OF INFLUENCE OF PARENTS IN PROVIDING IDEAS OF SEX

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	Have you anytime taken the initiative to discuss any aspect of sex with your children?	No	69	75
2	Have you ever ridiculed your children for their interaction with their friends of the opposite sex?	Yes	57	50
3	Have you ever taught your children to how to behave themselves in matters of sex	Yes	60	10
		No	33	77
4	Have they at any time discussed sexual matters with you?	No	53	94

TABLE 3.33 [TRIVANDRUM]

NATURE OF INFLUENCE OF PARENTS IN PROVIDING IDEAS OF SEX]

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	Have you anytime taken the initiative to discuss any aspect of sex with your children?	No	95	87
2	Have you ever ridiculed your children for their interaction with their friends of the opposite sex?	Yes	62	42
3	Have you ever taught your children to how to behave	Yes	55	25

	themselves in matters of sex	No	35	73
4	Have they at any time discussed sexual matters with you?	No	89	90

The data show that sex has become a highly silenced, suppressed or ridiculed subject within the family. The seriousness of the situation is that the role of family is largely amounting to constitute only an approach of ambivalence to the issues of sex and sexuality. On the one hand, they are encouraged to keep a complete silence on the issue and, on the other, they are taught to consider family as the only legitimate context of sexual behavior. These approaches are also passed from generation to generation, as the data suggests no variation across the practices of the present and previous generations. One important aspect to be noted here is that regarding the approach of giving training for inter-gender interaction. Majority of the female respondents admitted that they engage themselves in that endeavor on their own initiatives. One very specific development here is that while there are no established framework of training of the male children at home, there is still a sort of socialization of the girl child. This therefore, becomes yet another instance of genderisation and perpetuation of sexualized images of the patriarchal conceptions of sex and gender.

TABLE 3.34 [CALICUT]

SEXUAL PARTNERSHIP IN THE FAMILY

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	Have you anytime hugged your partner in front of your children?	No	89	68
2	Have you ever felt that you did not possess the required knowledge about sex before marriage?	Yes	76	20
		No	24	80
3	Have you ever thought your partner had more knowledge about sex after the time of your marriage?	Yes	54	25
4	Have you ever felt that your partner had no sufficient knowledge about sex and sexuality?	No	38	73

TABLE 3.35 [ERNAKULAM]

SEXUAL PARTNERSHIP IN THE FAMILY

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
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1	Have you anytime hugged your partner in front of your children?	No	76	63
2	Have you ever felt that you did not possess the required knowledge about sex before marriage?	Yes	66	14
		No	34	86
3	Have you ever thought your partner had more knowledge about sex after the time of your marriage?	Yes	70	11
4	Have you ever felt that your partner had no sufficient knowledge about sex and sexuality?	No	30	65

*TABLE 3.36 [TRIVANDRUM]
SEXUAL PARTNERSHIP IN THE FAMILY*

Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	Have you anytime hugged your partner in front of your children?	No	80	58
2	Have you ever felt that you did not possess the required knowledge about sex before marriage?	Yes	59	21
		No	41	79
3	Have you ever thought your partner had more knowledge about sex at the time of marriage?	Yes	48	8
4	Have you ever thought your partner had more knowledge about sex after the time of your marriage?	No	45	55

The attitude of family towards sex and sexuality can also be understood by looking at the nature of understanding that the partners have about each other's ideas of sex. An interesting revelation here is that it is the male partners who often express the view that their partners are less aware about the ideas of sex. This is in straight contrast to the previous explanation on the question of sex education within the family, where it was the girls who are getting some kind of sex education from their mothers. None of the respondents also seem to have the confidence to even hug each other in front of their children. The female respondents, in particular, maintain a high degree of reservation regarding it. All this may be indicative of the prevailing character of the practices of sexuality within the families in Kerala.

In the end, what comes out predominantly from the above details is that the much publicized image of family as an agent of legitimate sexuality is just a belief, and, in effect, it is only a functionally redundant agency. The dynamics of sexual behavior within the family is, in fact, characterized by various constrains and there is no amount of openness about it. Sex is defined in an ambivalent manner and the practices of sexuality are more often put under innumerable apprehensive views. In fact, the role of family is not yet over here, and instead, it also carry its weight into the so-called modernist institutions as well, as it can be seen that in none of the instances

does the school or any other institution, for that matter, can function to transform these concerns of family. An exploration in to the functioning of those agencies will further clarify these aspects.

SEXUALITY AND SCHOOL

TABLE 3.37 [CALICUT]

NATURE & INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL IN IMPARTING IDEAS ABOUT SEX Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	Did your school influence you in developing your ideas of sex?	No	85	72
2	Could you freely interact with the opposite sex in your school?	No	51	3
3	Were you strictly separated on gender basis in your school?	Yes	74	32
4	What do you think of the approach of the school to issues of sexuality or discussions on sexuality?	Silencing	69	41
5	Was sex education a part of your school curriculum?	No	100	81
6	Have you ever discussed sex with your teachers?	No	90	91
7	Did your teacher encourage free interaction of boys and girls?	No	82	82
8	Have you ever taken part in any extra curricular activities with members of other sex?	No	74	65

TABLE 3.38 [ERNAKULAM]

NATURE & INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL IN IMPARTING IDEAS ABOUT SEX Data is in %

Question No		Choices	wife	husband
1	Did your school influence you in developing your ideas of sex?	No	62	83
2	Could you freely interact with the opposite sex in your school?	No	38	33
3	Were you strictly separated on gender basis in your school?	Yes	19	24
4	What do you think of the approach of the school to issues of sexuality or discussions on sexuality?	Silencing	70	71
5	Was sex education a part of your school curriculum?	No	66	79
6	Have you ever discussed sex with your teachers?	No	75	89
7	Did your teacher encourage free interaction of boys and girls?	No	77	88
8	Have you ever taken part in any extra curricular activities with members of other sex?	No	45	39

TABLE 3.39 [TRIVANDRUM]

NATURE & INFLUENCE OF SCHOOL IN IMPARTING IDEAS ABOUT SEX Data is in %

Question No		Choices	Wife	husband
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1	Did your school influence you in developing your ideas of sex?	No	69	84
2	Could you freely interact with the opposite sex in your school?	No	62	63
3	Were you strictly separated on gender basis in your school?	Yes	54	49
4	What do you think of the approach of the school to issues of sexuality or discussions on sexuality?	Silencing	43	55
5	Was sex education a part of your school curriculum?	No	64	70
6	Have you ever-discussed sex with your teachers?	No	72	81
7	Did your teacher encourage free interaction of boys and girls?	No	84	73
8	Have you ever taken part in any extra curricular activities with members of other sex?	No	68	45

An important aspect of this inquiry was to find out if there is any reformulation of the notion of sex and sexuality outside the structure of the institution of family. Hence, the study also looked into the role of schools to find out the contribution they make to the definition of sexual behavior of people.

In all analysis of the socialization processes, it is often maintained that apart from the family, the schools also have a determining role in the formation of an individual's self. However, the data above suggests that there is no major shift in the nature of this influence and instead the schools also function within the dynamics of a silencing, secretive and constraining image of sex and sexuality. In a sense the schools are also contributing to the construction of an ambivalent idea of sex, containing within which a multitude of ambiguous meanings.

Not only is it that there are no provision of sex education for the children, the majority of respondents even alleged that they were strictly separated from the members of the opposite sex both in the curricular and extra-curricular events. As is the case within the family, the teachers also maintain a strict silence on issues of sexuality and that only result in the furtherance of the multitude of confusions and anxieties with which a student comes out of the family.

The issue here is that, instead of moving out of the conservative image of sex and sexuality, the role of even the institutions of modernity is to help fit into the silencing or constraining notions of sexual behavior. As a result, there are absolutely no space of articulation and expression of sexual behavior. Neither the family nor the institution of school is working to facilitate a better conception of an idea of sexuality. At the same time they are becoming instrumental in constituting an extremely restricted definition of sexual behavior, characterized by a variety of gender biased, exploitative and ridiculous conceptions in it. Hence, whatever problems that coexist in the realm of sexual behavior are to be traced back to this passivity of family in redefining the notion of sexuality into a broader egalitarian, and gender-neutral context and meaning.

The study also looked into the role of media and the peer groups, in the process of giving shape to the ideas of sex in the social context. While a large majority of the respondents admit the role of all these agencies, none of them seem to present those ideas as having any basic difference with the ideas of sex and sexuality derived from the family. What is significant in this context is that, even in the selection of friends and peer groups the parents do have a very direct role. They don't even agree with the idea of allowing their girl children freely mingling with their friends, and also express serious concerns about the children in doing so. One important basis of this reservation is related to the issue of sexuality. In fact, they also put up restrictions on them, visiting even the relative's houses due to this very reason. At the same time, there is no such strict restriction on the male children.

The height of irony in the whole analysis came out visible on the issue of the role of religious agencies in imparting sex education. Unlike in the case of all other

agencies including the family, there exists no difference of opinion in entrusting the religious authorities with the task of sex education. This is an aspect where there was no difference of opinion across the two genders. In a sense, this would make us think that, it is the agencies of religion that really shape up the definitions of sexuality in our society. However, the question still remains, as to why this role of the religious agencies is accepted unconditionally? Or why is it that there are no gender differences on this issue of the role of religious agencies? And finally what is it that the religious agencies teach on the question of sexuality? Again, if the religious training on sexuality is that much a healthy concept and are based on the principles of religious faith, why is it that there are cases of allegations of abuse by these agencies?

CONCLUSION

UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER, SEXUALITY AND FAMILY IN KERALA - THE NEED FOR REDEFINITION AND REFORMULATION

These questions can only take us back to the institution of family and its approach to sexuality. While there is a very serious concern on all other influences on the constitution of ideas about sexuality, the respondents do not appear to be having any problem with the influence of religious ideas in it, which will in all possibility be a moralistic one. This is, no doubt, an anomaly created by the family, and it continues to enjoy a large amount of public acceptance, as without this, the institution of family as such may face a crisis of existence. Hence, in order to save the family from crisis, sex is converted into a question of morality, in the process, also imposing on it a number of constraint and controls. Sex then becomes, as what Michel Foucault wrote in his famous thesis on sexuality, 'difficult to speak on the subject *of sex* without striking a different pose. We are conscious of defying established power, our tone of voice shows that we know we are being subversive' (italics added) (Foucault- 1976).

The preceding interpretation of the practices of gender and sexuality in Kerala, is indeed pointing to a number of interesting conclusions. Unlike the prevailing literature on modern Kerala which often portray its status as a 'model' State the analysis here suggests that there are a lot of paradoxical problems inherent in its social structure. The practices of gender relation and sexual behavior looked at in detail in this analysis within the family and society is indeed manifesting various inequities.

The society in Kerala, has taken a turn towards conservatism and restriction over the last several decades. Whatever vestiges of choice, and distinction that this social system once bestowed upon its individuals had dwindled. As Saradamony has

observed, over the last two or three decades, women are losing their spirit of independence and becoming more and more subservient. [Saradamony; 1999.p-24]]

The widespread changes in the traditional foundations of the Kerala society have not really taken the direction to a more democratic or egalitarian social or familial structure. This inquiry into the nature of social evolution in Kerala in terms of the implications of this transition on gender and generation very well reveal that there is still a very serious disparity on both these terms. This study has brought out certain very serious anomalies in both these spheres.

In short, the study shows that, in order for us to understand the practices of gender relation and sexuality, what we need is a new framework where the institution of family will be looked at from this agency perspective and not simply from a victim's framework alone. Such a shift in conceptualization will definitely help us to move more closely to the issue of increasing crimes against women in our family, and also to come to terms with the growing problems of sexuality in our society. The institution of family, which constitutes an ideology of gender relation and sexuality always with serious disparities in terms of gender, is bound to give rise to problems like this. The objectification of the female body is one such consequence, unavoidably rooted in the dynamics of everyday life which teaches the girl child to be at home, beyond the reach of an all too strong male attack. The outgoing male child is at the same time taught by the family that they can afford to be anywhere as they are not the target or object of a sexual gaze of the female gender.

. The ways in which power and privileges are distributed within the family, the ways in which the opportunities of education and employment are offered to the men and women in the family, the nature of socialization of gender within the family, and

the nature of division of labor within it, to point to such a conclusion. The perceptions of gender identity, the conception of sex and sexuality, and the articulation of sexual behavior as totally based on a religious value, can be seen as reinforcing this emerging dynamics of gender inequality. The most revealing dimension here is the role that family plays in all this as an agent of determining influence. In other words family is functioning here as the most crucial site of genderization or the construction of an iniquitous structure of gender relation. This is an aspect all too often undermined in any analysis of the functioning of family. This research had the primary objective of looking into this very role of the family and its conclusions vindicate this position of family as so very crucial to these dynamics also.

Within the changed context of the structure and function of family, this institution has only become more and more restrictive of the patterns of social and familial interaction. Womanhood came to be identified along the lines of reproductive functions where as the male gender is conceived in line with the patriarchal authority structures. The world of women became the quite world of confident mothers or the obedient wives. Economic, sexual, educational, and other social decisions lay predominantly with the male head of the household. Along with the so-called virtues of development also came increasing standards of modesty, and restricted social interactions. The irony here is that, even the female gender is preoccupied with the notion that the disparities of opportunities thrust upon them are only normal things. As a result, women are not only subjected to a consistent process of domestication, they are also manipulatively used in this process of perpetuation of this gender dynamics. Obviously it is the institution of family and the unquestionable legitimacy that it enjoys, which make this really possible.

With regard to sex and sexuality practices also, this study has revealed the various anomalous conceptions associated with it, that are prevailing in the Kerala society. Sex has almost become a matter of ridicule and silence within the family. Hence the much talked about role of family as an agent of articulating the sexual behavior of the people have only turned out to be one of over repressive and restraining. It is almost a functionally redundant agency in this regard. The end result is that anything linked to sex and sexuality has become rooted in a framework of misplaced moralities, secretive and a matter of either privacy or ignorance. Even the so-called modernist agencies like the school are therefore not functioning to alter this frame of conception. With little or no sex education within the family, and no such deliberate intervention on the part of agencies like the school, either the moralistic discourses of religious preachers or the commercialized propositions of media are largely shaping the notion of sex. The question here is not what the agencies like the church and the media are doing, but the role that family plays to perpetuate an approach of silence and restraint about sex. The fact that, no significant regional variation is visible, on any of the variables identified for this study, is also indicative of this ambivalence that family shows towards the issues of sexual behavior across the state.. The social history of Kerala, on the contrary, was quite well known for its multiple social structures, characterized by totally distinct varieties of family forms, gender and sexuality relations.

All these distinctions have taken the back seat in present day Kerala. Or as this study shows there is of late a transition of these dynamics towards what can be called homogenization on the lines of certain 'naturalized' models. One inherent problem here is that, these attempts are unavoidably becoming quite discriminatory in nature,

as otherwise there can never be a single evolutionary model of family and sexuality as 'the dominant form'. The attempts for homogenization have also resulted in a large-scale displacement of the distinctive foundations of our social history, which was characteristically known for a much more relaxed and autonomous notions of family, gender, and practices of sexuality. Hence the definitions of the family in Kerala, the rules of gender and sexuality dynamics are all becoming abstracted from the realities of everyday life. This is the basis of the so-called problems of increasing discrepancies of gender relation and sexuality in Kerala.

Therefore, the argument here is that, the problematic of both gender relation and sexuality in modern Kerala have to be looked at from the perspective of the dynamics of the structure and function of family. And such an attempt should also be guided by a different conception of family and sexuality, different from the one that is prevailing today. What is proposed here is the redefinition of the 'official' discourses of family, gender relation and sexuality, in the line of a pluralist framework, a pluralism not based on the community/caste variations, instead that which acknowledges the multiplicity of family norms, gender identities, and also of multiple sexuality. Unless, we come to terms with such kinds of notions of family, gender and sexuality there can never be a context of a genuinely democratic social life in our State or within the family itself.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. PERSONAL DATA

1.1 Name:

1.2 Age:

Sex:

1.3 Religion:

1.4 Occupation:

1.5 Monthly income of the family:

1.6 Monthly income of the respondent:

1.7 Educational qualifications:

Table 1

Educational data of the Natal and Present Family						
Natal Family			Present Family			
	Relation	Grd	Ugrd	Relation	Grd	Ugrd
1				1		
2				2		
3				3		
4				4		
5				5		
6				6		
7				7		
8				8		
9				9		
10				10		

(Grd –Graduate, Ugrd-Undergraduate.)

Table 2

Occupational data of the Natal and Present Family						
Natal Family			Present Family			
	Relation	Em	Uem	Relation	Em	Uem
1				1		
2				2		
3				3		
4				4		
5				5		
6				6		
7				7		
8				8		
9				9		
10				10		

(Em –Employed, Uem-Unemployed.)

Table 3

Parents			Self		
1			1		
2			2		
3			3		
4			4		

2. GENDER RELATIONS

2.1 Perceptions of gender

- 2.1.1 What do you understand by gender relation?
- 2.1.2 Do you think that men and women have different roles to perform in our society?
- 2.1.3 Can you specify the type of roles your father and mother had performed at home?
- 2.1.4 Why do you think these differences existed in our society?

2.2 Gender role allocation and familial attitude

- 2.2.1 What do you think are the different roles that you perform because of your gender identity in the family?
- 2.2.2 How do you consider that division?
- 2.2.3 In your family who taught you to take up different roles
- 2.2.4 Do you ask your son to help you in cooking?
- 2.2.5 Have you ever taught him to cook and wash clothes?
- 2.2.6 Do you ask your daughter to help you in cooking?
- 2.2.7 Have you ever taught her to cook and wash clothes?

2.3 Expectations of gender and socialization pattern

- 2.3.1 What type of social interaction you prefer for your daughter
- 2.3.2 What type of social interaction you prefer for your son
- 2.3.3 What do you think is better for a girl child?
- 2.3.4 What do you think is better for a boy child?
- 2.3.5 Do you have any differential role expectation from your male and female children?
- 2.3.6 If you have to make a choice between education and marriage for your son what will you prefer?
- 2.3.7 If you have to make a choice between education and marriage for your daughter what will you prefer?

2.4 Restrictions on gender

- 2.4.1 When you were in school have you ever experience gender separation?
- 2.4.2 Do you think that women have limited time and spatial mobility compared to men?
- 2.4.3 Will you allow your child to move freely as the boys?
- 2.4.4 In your childhood did you feel that you have no freedom compared to your sibling?
- 2.4.5 Did you take part in sports and games when you were in the school or college?

3. SEXUALITY

3.1 Discourse on sex

- 3.1.1 Sex is biologically based.
- 3.1.2 Sex is sacred.
- 3.1.3 Sex is sin.
- 3.1.4 Sex is reproduction.

- 3.1.5 Sex is recreational.
- 3.1.6 Sex is cultural.
- 3.1.7 Sex has to be controlled.
- 3.1.8 Sex has to be family based.
- 3.1.9 Sex should be only after marriage.
- 3.1.10 Men have strong sexual urges.
- 3.1.11 Women are more responsible for controlling sex.
- 3.1.12 Women should not reveal their sexuality.
- 3.1.13 Children should not be exposed to sex.
- 3.1.14 Women are often the victims of sexual abuse.
- 3.1.15 Women who are sexually abused are often women who are morally weak.
- 3.1.16 Sex should be treated as private affair.
- 3.1.17 Sex should not be discussed in public.
- 3.1.18 Controlling reproduction is more a responsibility of the wife than husband.

3.2 Sources of ideas of sex

- 3.2.1 Level of sex education from parents.
- 3.2.2 Have you ever discussed sex with your friends?
- 3.2.3 Have you ever discussed sex with your teachers?
- 3.2.4 Have you ever attended any sex education classes?
- 3.2.5 Who usually conducts such programs?
- 3.2.6 Do you encourage your children to attend such programs?

3.3 Nature of influence of parents in providing ideas of sex

- 3.3.1 Hve you anytime taken the initiative to discuss any aspect of sex with your children?
- 3.3.2 Have you ever ridiculed your children for their interaction with their friends of the opposite sex?
- 3.3.3 Have you ever taught your children to how to behave themselves in matters of sex?
- 3.3.4 Have they at any time discussed sexual matters with you?

3.4 Sexual partnership in the family

- 3.4.1 Have you anytime hugged your partner in front of your children?
- 3.4.2 Have you ever felt that you did not possess the required knowledge about sex before marriage?
- 3.4.3 Have you ever thought your partner had more knowledge about sex after the time of your marriage?
- 3.4.4 Have you ever felt that your partner had no sufficient knowledge about sex and sexuality?
- 3.4.5 How did your school influence you in developing your ideas of sex?
- 3.4.6 Could you freely interact with the opposite sex in your school?

3.5 Nature & influence of school in imparting ideas about sex

- 3.5.1 where you strictly separated on gender basis in your school?
- 3.5.2 What do you think the approach of the school to issues of sexuality or discussions on sexuality?
- 3.5.3 Was sex education a part of your school curriculum?
- 3.5.4 Have ever discussed sex with your teacher?
- 3.5.5 Did your teacher encourage free interaction of boys and girls?
- 3.5.6 Have you ever taken part in any extra curricular activities with members of other sex?

3.6 Media & Sex

- 3.6.1 Name the media which have influenced you?
- 3.6.2 Would you consider media as the most powerful agency of sex education in the modern world?
- 3.6.3 How come the media has become so much powerful in matters of sexuality?
- 3.6.4 Do you approve of the media as a source of sexual education?
- 3.6.5 Do you think that media was the main source of sex education for you?
- 3.6.6 Do you think that your children are also using the same media?

3.7 Sex & peer groups

- 3.7.1 Have you ever discussed sex with your friends?
- 3.7.2 Do you ever discuss sex with members of other sex other than your parents?
- 3.7.3 How do you assess the nature and influence of the friends in formulating the ideas of sex for your children?
- 3.7.4 Do you allow your children to interact freely with their friends?
- 3.7.5 Will you allow your son to have girls as friends?
- 3.7.6 Will you allow your daughters to have boys as friends?
- 3.7.7 Do you encourage your children to interact with the members of opposite sex?
- 3.7.8 If so reasons.