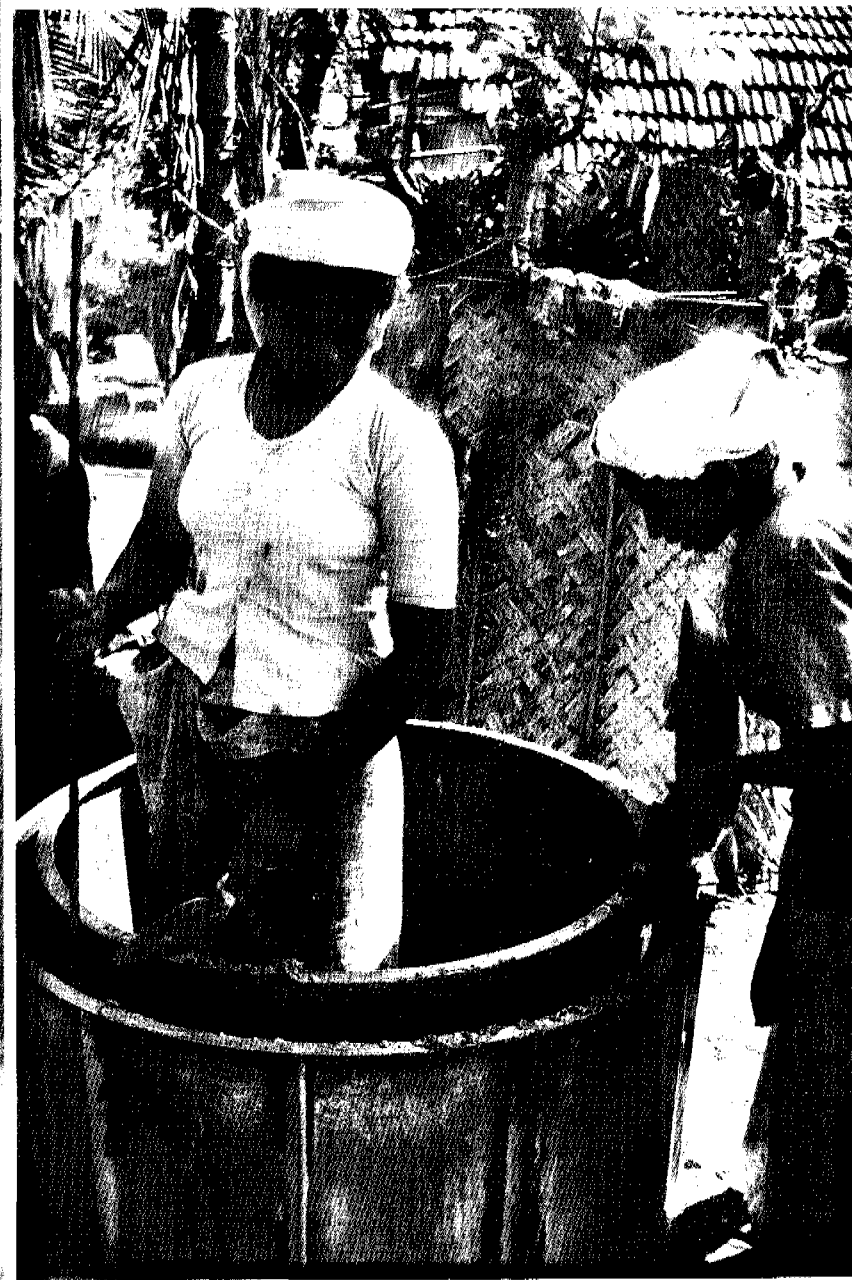


Gender Profile

Kerala



822-IN99-16706

PREFACE

First started as pure technical interventions in 1978, Indo-Dutch projects have today evolved into programmes with strong social objectives. These programmes, initiated by the Women in Development (WID) desk at the Netherlands Embassy, adhere to AVM* policy guidelines, seeking, through innovative ways, to overcome obstacles to Women's participation in the development process. They also aim at strengthening the influence of women over projects implemented in their vicinities.

With experience in projects accumulating, it is becoming exceedingly clear that the role of men and women are complementary, often even overlapping. What has also emerged is a gender awareness that is enabling the agents of change (viz. consultants, activists, WID experts and others) to shape the process of planning and methods of implementation for schemes related to poverty alleviation, health and sanitation, and primary education, in areas where the gender development index is low.

This gender profile provides information for intermediaries who wish to know about the status of women in states where Indo-Dutch programmes are being implemented. And since knowledge is power, we hope the gender specific information compiled here will prove useful in making intervention beneficial for both men and women, and towards bringing about a positive change in the community.

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Gender Profile

KERALA

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This monograph is meant to provide an overview of the position of women in Kerala. The views expressed are solely of the authors.



LOOKING BACK INTO HISTORY

"Large constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies, Breadths of tropic shade and cluster knots of paradise; Droops the heavy blossomed bower, hangs the heavy fruited tree, Summer isles of Eden lying in the purple sphere of sea."

(Pannikar, 1981)

1.1. Among the Indian states, Kerala is one of the most interesting state. Every aspect of its life and society is fascinating and puzzling at the same time. This is particularly so when we discuss the status of women. What is it that makes Kerala so fascinating and different? Why is the status of women which looks, on the superficial level, no different from women in the rest of India yet very distinct, different and difficult to comprehend? These are questions, answers to which will have to be attempted to get any meaningful understanding of the society particularly its women, their status and development.

1.2. The varied and the very unusual characteristics of the state, with its unique social and demographic indicators, and the very special status of its women, can be understood only in a historical context. For this purpose we need to take into account at least the last two hundred years to comprehend the transformation the state and its society have gone through.

1.3. To begin with a brief introduction about the state, Kerala is one of the smaller Indian states occupying only 1.2% of India's land area but accommodating 3.4 per cent of India's population. Its geographical contours can be described as an elongated strip of land, cushioned between the Western Ghats and the sandy shores of the Arabian sea. It has a long unbroken coastline of 590 kilometers, with nine out of its fourteen districts having a sea border. The flora, fauna and the ecological endowment are also unique. The state gets its name from the innumerable coconut palms that sway in the

breeze and is believed to be more than 2000 years old.

1.4. According to the 1991 population census, the current population of the state stood at 29 million. Though still predominantly rural, the pace of urbanization in recent years is the fastest among the Indian states. The rural and urban population distribution is 74% and 26%. The state also has the highest density in the country at 749 persons per square kilometer. Of its total land area, 57% is under agricultural usage and 27% under forests. Serious concerns are however, felt that forest area in the state has been fast depleting in recent years.

1.5. Kerala came into existence as a state, a decade after Indian Independence in consequence of the country's linguistic reorganisation in 1956. Two of the former princely states, Cochin and Travancore in the south and the British administered Malabar in the north were merged together into one state. All the three units inspite of their separate identities, shared broadly the same social practices and language. The system of matrilineal joint families, Malayalam language, caste and religious divisions and rules and rituals about purity and pollution bound them together. Still, as a result of their separate and distinct histories and religious composition of population, there also existed wide variations in their social and economic development.

Kerala's International Exposure

1.6. Kerala has a long historical record of its exposure to the outside world. Its Arab connection goes back to a period even before recorded history. Its contact with the Western world is at least over 2000 years old. The long list of European contacts started with the Romans, followed by Italians, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and finally ending with the British in 1947. It also has had close contacts with the Chinese and Persians.

The Venetian, Marco Polo visited Quilon at the end of the 13th Century records that "the merchants from Manzi (China) and the Levants come here with their ships and make a great deal of profit from their imports and exports."
[Sreedhara Menon, 1967]

1.7. While Kerala has had virtually continuous and successive overseas contacts because of the spice trade, its contact with the rest of India till the twentieth century was minimal. Thus throughout the 19th century large parts of the state remained virtually isolated from the rest of India, but not from the outside world (Jeffrey, 1992). The main deterrent to this contact was probably the high and dense vegetation of the mountain ranges of the Western Ghats on one side and the Arabian sea on the other. Roads were rare and it took nearly six weeks to reach Madras from Travancore in 1839. The railway did not reach Ernakulam till 1902 and Thiruvananthapuram till 1918.

1.8. The many peculiar customs, caste rules and regulations, rules of purity and pollution, organization of family and marriage customs in Kerala resulting in the relatively better status of its women, could possibly be traced to the isolation of this part from the rest of the country. Though part of the Hindu culture and society, the isolation of Kerala gave the people of this region an identity of their own.

Religious Composition and Denominations

1.9. All the world's major religions and their denominations are well represented in Kerala. Islam came early to Kerala with the Arab traders. The concentration of the Islamic population however is in the three northern districts of Malabar, with ports commonly used for trade. The Muslim population of Kerala comprises of two distinct groups, the descendants of the Arab merchants who inter-married with Kerala women following matriliney and the native converts to Islam who follow patriliney.

1.10. It is believed that around the second century A.D. Greek sailing boats brought both the Christians and Jews to Kerala. The Christian presence is very strong in two of the central districts. The Christian Catholics belong to all three main denominations, Syrian, Roman

and Latin, depending on the liturgy. Also, there are the Protestants. Virtually one-third of the Christian community in India is located in Kerala. Politically, socially and economically their influence in Kerala is considered by observers to be out of proportion to their numerical strength. The Jewish presence is a dwindling presence and is concentrated mostly in Ernakulam.

Caste in Kerala

1.11. Another distinguishing feature of the state is that among the Hindus comprising over 60 per cent of the population, caste has played a prominent role in the social fabric of the society. Detailed and elaborate rules were laid down to identify caste groups and deepen differences between them. The concept of visual and atmospheric defilement was strongly entrenched and the Hindu society was obsessed with rules of purity and pollution. In addition, there were stratified rules regarding housing, jewellery, clothing and social distances to be maintained between caste groups. Castes below Nairs were not allowed to wear even footwear or carry umbrellas and wear some types of jewellery or clothing. As Jeffrey (1992) puts it, "old Kerala was the place of boundaries and constraints, on what they might do. People lived in discrete groups, with their lives regulated by rules and restrictions." Several of these rules and restrictions impinged particularly on women. The status of women differed among the various castes. Irrespective however of whether they were matrilineal castes, upper caste or low castes, all faced various kinds of peculiar disabilities.

Matriliney

1.12. No discussion of the current status and role of women can ignore the pattern of inheritance and family system that existed in the past. Their position differed among the various categories but women of matrilineal castes, upper as well as lower castes, were subject to some disabilities, while at the same time enjoying rights not given to women of patrilineal groups.

1.13. Of all its features, matriliney most distinguished Kerala and its women from the rest of the country. It is believed that matriliney originated in the tenth or eleventh century A.D

and was well established by the time the Europeans began arriving in the sixteenth century. No one is sure about the origins of the system but what is clear is that matriliney existed from the north to the south of Kerala by the 14th century.

1.14. The matrilineal system was widespread and accepted by practically all caste groups. Variant shades of the system however, were followed by different groups. Some communities were very flexible on what they wanted to follow. At the same time, as lower castes improved their economic status they were only too anxious to follow the matrilineal customs of the upper castes.

1.15. The main features of the matrilineal system as practiced in Kerala and its implications for the status and social standing of women were as follows:

- (i) The family, called *Tarawad*, consisted of all descendants of a common ancestor in the female line.
- (ii) The children belonged to the wife and her natal family.
- (iii) The family property was administered by the *Karnavar* (eldest male member) of the *Tarawad*. Though he had absolute power of decision so far as the management of the estate was concerned, he could alienate no part of the property without the consent of all the members.

Implications for Women

1.16. As a result of this very different system of family relationship including marriage and other family practices, women in general had more influence over their lives in Kerala. It gave them a unique status and importance in their families when compared to women in the rest of the country. Marriage, called 'Sambandham', signified the relationship approved by the girl's family and lasted only as long as both the parties wanted it [Panikkar, 1918]. Whether this relationship was marriage in the conventional sense as understood in patriarchy has remained a question. It is clear however that by doing away with the conventional type marriage and replacing it with Sambandham, a host of problems Indian women elsewhere faced were done away with.

1.17. What kind of advantages did this system provide for women? Though contemporary women in Kerala are overwhelmingly complacent and do not seem to be disturbed with current changes in the system, there were very clear advantages. Firstly, there was no pre-puberty or child marriage like the rest of India and this resulted in a relatively mature age at marriage in Kerala. Secondly, the Sambandham ceremony was a simple event performed without much ostentation, dowry transfer, or crushing expenses for the girl's family. Thirdly, the traumatic experience that the rest of brides in India had of leaving the parental home and painstakingly rebuilding her status in her new home was nonexistent. Under this system, the bride never left her natal house. Fourthly, the question of legitimacy of children, the main pre-occupation in the rest of the country, was secondary because of identifying children with the mother only. Fifthly, for these women, there was no question of their abdicating their rights in the natal home and property. Sixthly, female children were not only welcome but actually desired, to keep the family line going. Seventhly, female visibility and mobility were not constrained. Purdah was unknown among these castes. Finally, the trauma of widowhood was altogether avoidable under this system and remarriage carried no stigma for women.

1.18. While frequent references are made, and perhaps quite rightly, to the oppressive uncles who controlled the *Tarawad*, it is not correct to say that women from matrilineal groups had to be totally subservient. They did enjoy a measure of autonomy and position within the family unknown for women in the rest of India. One of the most important factors contributing to women's security under the system was a lifetime right to inherit their ancestral property. Moreover, this right could only pass through them to their female descendants.

1.19. This pervasive influence of the matrilineal system was important in determining social attitudes in Kerala towards women's welfare, education and health.

The Namboodiris

1.20 All groups of Hindu women in Kerala were not as fortunate as those following matriliney. Gender relationships in Kerala assumed very

different forms across caste boundaries depending upon their rules and customs. The most prominent example is that of the social organisation among the Namboodiris.

1.21. The Namboodiris are considered the purest of the pure among the Brahmins in the country. In Kerala, the Namboodiri Brahmins were at the apex of the caste hierarchy and the whole of Hindu society was geared to protect their vastly superior position. Discussions and writings about the Namboodiris, especially women of this caste, are not that common however as about other castes in Kerala. This was probably due to (a) the Namboodiri caste being in itself patriarchal and (b) the seclusion of female members in a Namboodiri family. Infact, seclusion of women from other castes and groups was central to the organisation of the Namboodiri family life. On the other hand, Namboodiri men enjoyed not only high religious and social status but also came to acquire considerable political and economic clout.

1.22. The marriage and family system among the Namboodiris, though patriarchal, was very different from not only the other castes in Kerala but also the Brahmins in the rest of the country. Namboodiri women, by and large, lived within polygamous households with very rigid rules of female chastity. From the age of nine, girls were relegated to a life of religious rituals and seclusion. They had no right to property and were restricted to a single marriage, if at all it was possible. A junior Namboodiri man's lot was also not much better, except that he could have liaisons outside his caste without any obligation to the children born out of such a relationship. The younger Namboodiri men had no rights to family property or to establish a family life of his own. [Velayudhan, 1994].

1.23. In order to keep their vast estates and tracts of land intact, only the eldest son was allowed to marry. He could have up to four wives. It is relevant in this context to quote E.M.S Namboodiripad, (1975) the most distinguished Marxist leader, who recalls as follows:

" Striking a personal note and recalling the conditions of the women of the community I was born into, polygamous marriages were the rule and bigamy the exception half a century ago. My own father had two wives, while only one of his

five daughters who grew up to the age of marriage escaped the fate of being one of two or more wives of their husbands. My stepmother, the younger of the two wives of my father, was the daughter of the bridegroom to whom my father's younger sister was married! This was true also of every family related to ours as well as the entire community, the only modification being that, instead of two wives as in my father's case, most men had three."

1.24. The rest of the Namboodiri men were denied the right to marry and establish a Namboodiri family. While younger Namboodiri men could have sambandham with Nair women, the only choice open to Namboodiri women was to be married as one of many wives to a Namboodiri man. If this was not possible, they were to lead a cloistered life of spinsterhood in their illams (estates). Thus large numbers of Namboodiri girls were doomed to spend their lives in the strict seclusion of their homes and engaged in various elaborate ritualistic and religious practices specially designed to keep them occupied.

1.25. The lot of Namboodiri women was rather unenviable. They had to observe a sort of purdah, called 'antarjanam' or 'agothamma', which literally means belonging to indoors. Once a girl attained puberty she was rarely to be seen outside of their estates.

"When compelled to travel, they are invariably preceded by a crier in the form of a Nayar woman called 'vrshal' who warns off male travellers by a long drawn shout of 'Ahayi'"
[Sardamoni, 1983].

Since spinsterhood was imposed on them, many were doomed to remain unmarried and lead a life of religious worship and rituals.

1.26. Since, numerically, Namboodiris constituted only one percent of the region's population the problems their women faced affected a small minority. It cannot be overlooked, however, that this small minority belonged to a caste that enjoyed the highest social and religious status in the region. So it should be of interest that both Namboodiri men and women fought against this system as it affected them, and won their equal rights to marry within caste only as late as 1930.

In this struggle, the younger Namboodiri men took an active part and interest side by side with women. Their desire and justifications were disseminated through literature and theatre. The paradox of the tremendous freedom of matrilineal women and the restrictions placed upon Namboodiri women made this society enigmatic.

Other Castes

1.27. Ezhavas comprise another major caste group. In numerical strength, they are much larger than any other lower caste group. Ezhava men and women formed the majority of the agricultural and industrial workers involved in traditional industries. In the northern districts, they are called Tiyyas. While the Nadars, another low caste group with considerable strength in Tamilnadu converted in large numbers to Christianity, only a few Ezhavas did that. Ezhavas were divided between matrilineal and non-matrilineal groups and the former faced some of the same problem of other matrilineal groups in Kerala. As a caste group, Ezhavas were subject to a great many social disabilities, including those relating to worship and access to temples (Parameshwaran, 1971).

1.28. The role of Ezhavas was quite central in the social emancipation movement. Under the leadership of Shri. Narayana Guru, Ezhavas fought for not only the removal of caste barrier and access to temples for worship but also the right to government employment and education. They also fought for the reform of marriage practices and the system of succession. As a result, in 1925 in Travancore state was promulgated a law on marriage and succession among the Ezhavas.

The still Lower Caste

1.29. The position and the status of women from the lower castes of Pulayas and Parayas were far from satisfactory. Until the abolition of slavery in 1843, the Pulayas and Parayas were known as the slave castes. They together constituted approximately 10 % of the population of the state. Women as well as men of these lower castes suffered from severe civil disabilities. As Le Mercenier (1963) described their situation:

"The distances between these groups were expressed in the pollution rules and notably in the number of paces which had to be maintained between them in the prohibition against certain groups using the roads leading to the temples, and (even more) entering the temples. The distances were also expressed by variations in costume, especially in the case of women, by the covering or baring of the breast. The ensemble of these regulations was legally enforced by a series of penalties, which might go as far as death itself."

The Right of Dress

1.30. In old Kerala, since people lived in their discrete groups with their lives regulated by rules and restrictions on their movements and visibility, in order to facilitate the functioning of this system, identification of people by their modes of dress and hair styles was quite important. The rules and regulations for women's dress till the nineteenth century were different among the castes. Going by the dress restrictions imposed during that time all women had to go without an upper garment before their superiors, but the lower caste women, had to go bare breasted before every one.

1.31. During the first half of 19th century, 1813-1858, the privilege of women to cover their bodies with an upper cloth became a volatile issue in Kerala. In the drama that ensued, all castes and communities got involved. The debate symbolised great discontent with the various kinds of social humiliations heaped on the lower castes and the right of women to cover their breasts became an issue of status than of decency.

1.32. It is relevant to refer here to the role of the European missionaries who with their notions of decency were very anxious that at least women who became Christians should be "decently" covered. They could win for the women of Christian faith the right to cover their breast from the British Resident attached to the princely states of Travancore and Cochin in 1813. But it provoked violent protest from the higher caste Hindus.

"In 1822 the caste Hindu women reacted violently against this violation of taboos. They began by tearing off the blouses of the low-caste Christian women, which led to riots, arson and even murders." [Qaisar, 1968].

Some time later, Nadars, lower caste Hindus from whom a large number got converted to Christianity, suffering as they were from various indignities including those requiring women not to wear any clothing above the waist, carry an umbrella, wear footwear or gold ornaments or carry water on their hips, rose in protest. With the support of the Church and the British representatives they organised "*Maru Marakkal Samaram*", which has come to be known also as the "Upper Cloth Revolt." Ultimately, the right to cover their breasts was granted first to Christian women and then to women of all castes by 1859. Infact, the proclamation on the subject stipulated "punishment for the women who continued in uncovered freedom" [Madhavi, 1994].

1.33. Putting the 'Upper Cloth Movement' in the context of the period, one must add that even Namboodiri women went bare breasted in the privacy of their homes or before temple deities. Nair women had to uncover themselves before temple deities and upper caste superiors. Lower caste women however had to go bare breasted at all times. Bare breastedness was thus regarded as a mark of humility rather than humiliation, according to the customs prevailing in those days. As Woodcock (1967) explains,

"The real explanation is doubtless to be found in the view fostered by the Namboodiris and accepted by other Malayalis that splendour belongs only to the Gods, a view expressed most dramatically in the great annual procession when the image of Sri.Padmanabha is taken from the temple of Thiruvananthapuram to the sea coast, adorned in jewelled richness while the Maharajah accompanies it bare breasted and bare footed, clad only in a simple white mundu, the humble dress in which the devotee must always present himself to the God in a Kerala temple."

1.34. Whatever the original rationale behind the practice, the fact remains that by the early 19th century it had come to be regarded as a

humiliation heaped on women, particularly of lower castes. The breast cloth controversy and the ensuing struggle were in a way the starting point of low caste assertiveness and broader reform movement in Kerala. It is also significant that the start was made with protest against rules and regulations imposing restrictions and prohibitions on women.

1.35. The Breast cloth controversy was really only the tip of the iceberg. Several other disabilities and discontents among both men and women were brewing, waiting for an outlet of expression. The period between 1850 to 1910, was a period of great revolutionary changes in Kerala. Nowhere else in the country were the reforms so profound and so all pervasive, redefining social conventions and family life beyond recognition.

1.36. Major and rapid amelioration took place in Kerala due to an interplay of factors that took place independently of each other but at the same time. The more significant ones being the development of the print medium, an awakening of political consciousness an awareness of social disabilities and reform movements. The development of the novel and prose in the context of the nationalist agitation created a climate for unprecedented upheavals in the society.

Christian Influence

1.37. It is probably not an exaggeration to attribute a major role in the initiation of social change to the Christian missionaries in Kerala. While Christian influence came to Kerala long time back (in the second century A.D) missionaries came much later. All Christian denominations, early or later, were possibly unanimous in wanting change in what they considered wrong and unethical with the social practices in Kerala. They also genuinely felt that at least those who got converted to Christianity should not be encumbered by the oppression of caste, family and kinship systems. But it was only with the coming of Christian missions and their active involvement in the field of education that social reform got a chance to spread out to the larger community.

1.38. The Jesuits were the first missionaries to come to India. In 1542 i.e within two years of

the mission's founding in Spain, St. Francis Xavier arrived in India as the first Jesuit Priest. The Jesuits established the printing press in Kerala with the purpose, no doubt, of printing Christian prayer and catechism texts in local languages. The first book in an Indian language, in Malabar Tamil, was printed as early as 1578. Alongside, the missionaries promoted literacy, and that too among the lower castes who were the major converts. It should be added that Jesuits brought with them a strong sense of social and moral concerns and that they pursued these concerns with great commitment and vigour.

1.39. The first Malayalam newspaper called *Rajya Samacharam* came out in 1847. By 1860, other Malayalam newspapers were also circulating. It was during this period that *Malayala Manorama*, a very influential vernacular paper to this day was started. While in the initial decades newspapers concentrated on missionary topics, gradually they got involved in the political and social developments. By the end of 19th century, the newspapers were taking active interest in social reform and nationalist movements. The first journal dealing with women's issues called '*Keraleeya Suguna Bodhini*' was started in 1887. Many other such journals, including *Sarada* and *Laxmibai*, followed.

Western Education

1.40. The credit for the major effort in introducing Western education goes mainly to the 19th century Christian missionaries and the local princes. The tremendous strides that the state has made in literacy and educational levels today had its seeds sown in these early beginnings.

1.41. In 1806, W.T Ringletaube, a German missionary with the London Missionary Society, was the first to start a modern school in Thiruvananthapuram. This school came into existence with a land grant from Maharani Laxmi Bai, the local queen. The school was to impart elementary instruction to poor children, irrespective of caste or creed.

1.42. Education for girls was not a totally alien concept even in the classical period. The traditional system of education was no doubt oriented towards the learning of Sanskrit and Brahmanical religious texts, imparted through a

network of village schools and schools attached to temples. These schools were open to both boys and girls. Given this respect and desire for education regardless of gender, parents in Kerala were not averse to sending away even their girls to the schools once they came into existence.

1.43. The extensive network of village schools which already existed were the ones on which primary education in Malayalam was built. These schools were modified and transformed to combine elements of classical, religious and modern education. This proved to be a very imaginative and persuasive idea. The new schools were not seen as threat to the traditional culture and were readily accepted by all strata of the population. In 1817, school attendance in Travancore was made compulsory for children between the ages of five and ten. Enforcement of compulsory attendance was perhaps not quite effective, particularly in the case of girls. By 1898, in the two princely states of Cochin and Travancore, 14 per cent and 19 per cent respectively of girls in the school age group were attending primary schools. Fifty years later, in 1950, at the time of Indian independence, 80 per cent of all girls in the primary school age group were attending schools in these two regions of Kerala.

Decline of Matriliney

1.44. The spread of modern ideas through education and other channels in combination with several other social reform movements shook the feudal system in Kerala from its very roots. Modern education inculcated new ideas, values, aspirations and liberalism in the Kerala's society. A society that had remained insulated and unchanged for hundreds of years underwent major changes in a short period of 150 years.

1.45. At the end of the 19th century, as a result of western education there already existed a sizeable group who had become members of a new elite. Among these were Nair and Ezhava men occupying posts in government administrations and inculcated with the western morality of that era. Several aspects of the prevailing matrilineal arrangements embarrassed them. Thus, a sort of alliance took place among Christian missionaries, the colonial administration and the new local elite. Here one should not

underestimate the possible consequence of a greater exposure of the region to Indians from other parts of the country, where patriliney was the dominant family arrangement.

1.46. By the turn of the century, most matrilineal men and women found their customs increasingly inappropriate and were only too anxious to re-organise their family life and inheritance on patrilineal patterns followed elsewhere. The intense ridicule and relentless attacks that the old system invoked ensured its demise. The missionaries were in the forefront of this process.

1.47. Almost all of the social ills of Kerala in the past were attributed to matriliney and its allegedly debilitating effects on the population. The following quote encompasses the attitude prevalent towards matriliney prior to its abolition. The relationship arrangements in a *Tarawad* were considered ridiculous and immoral [Jeffrey, 1992].

"The Malayalis as a class are the most idle and homesick of the whole Hindu community owing to the enervating influence exercised on their character by their peculiar system of inheritance and their obnoxious system of promiscuous marriage or rather no marriage" [Hindu, Feb. 6, 1891].

1.48. While the women were either passive or their voices were being ignored, the men were the principal protagonists of change. Junior men among the Nairs and the Namboodiris who had marginal roles in the family felt humiliated in the light 'of comparisons to men from other non-Kerala background. For the women of Kerala, the disappearance of matriliney and its replacement by patrilineal monogamous households should have represented a retrograde step. A system that, as noted above, on the whole allocated strength and advantages to Kerala's women was to be completely dismantled. Women didn't realise then what they were being asked to give up.

1.49. Concentrated and continuous efforts were made to reconstruct the social relationships and family life as new influences became more dominant. Introducing a revised concept of marriage in place of Sambandham as well as promoting monogamy and patriliney were the

major objectives.

Legislation and Matriliney

1.50. Legislative attempts to reform matriliney began in the 1890's and have continued ever since. Within a short period of 25-30 years, the three regions of Kerala had legislation recognising marriage and permitting inheritance through fathers. These legislation while recognising Sambandham as marriage also permitted a man to bequeath half (later legislation permitted all) his self acquired property (but not his share in his matrilineal joint family) to his wife and children. Previously, his own property passed automatically into the collective property of his matrilineal joint family.

1.51. Polygamy was outlawed and family branches were permitted to divide. While the first legislations covered only Nairs, subsequent legislations on the subject extended the provisions to other groups and communities. Also, the right to bequeath was extended to all self-acquired property.

1.52. Additionally, first branches of families and later individual members were given the right to demand division of joint family assets. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956, applicable to whole of India, specifically gave the right to demand per capita division to members of matrilineal families also. The final blow was struck, however, through the legislation of 1976 whereby all surviving matrilineal joint families were deemed to be divided on per capita basis. Thus, legally speaking, matriliney was finally abolished.

1.53. But has matriliney dissipated in reality? Have relational and sentimental family attachments and attitudes changed? Has patriliney really taken over in Kerala? These are questions to which definitive answers will take time to arrive at. Writing about the early 60's, Mencher (1975) noted as follows:

"While there has been a breakdown of traditional Nayar 'tarawad' into small family units... there is no indication of a shift in the direction of the traditional patrilineal, patrilocal pattern found elsewhere in India."

1.54. In regard particularly to women's affinities, Mencher observed that "matrilineal

sentiments continue to take precedence; matrilineal kin are critical for the determination of residence and the major sources of support in emergencies". Nakane (1962) writing about the same times, also observed that "the present Nayar still lives in the matrilineal atmosphere". Speculating about the next generation, she felt that "it would not shift to a patrilineal system, though it could possibly take the patrilineal system with a kind of bilateral arrangement." Writing about changes among Mappilas of Malabar, Koya (1983) says: "Matrilineal homesteads have become father controlled, but children still belong to the mother's family."

1.55. With matriliney abolished legally, the impact on the women's right among matrilineal groups was possibly the maximum. As Sardamoni puts it, "the security they enjoyed as a birth right was substituted by protection by husbands." They lost in consequence of the so-called progressive switch over from the matrilineal system, the certainty of the 'house' of which they were previously an unquestionable part and where they were entitled to live respectably all their lives. The right to divorce and the right to the ancestral home had all been a part of women's matrilineal rights. Previously, if her husband died, she merely lived on in her family home, a full member of the tarawad, instead of having to endure the humiliating treatment meted out by the husband's family to most Indian widows. [Woodcock, 1967]. Now Saradamoni (1983) notes, "it is not uncommon to find old women - especially widows, with or without children whose existence depends on the mercy of others." Tharamangalams (1994) aptly sum up the present position of Kerala's women thus: "Kerala's women appeared to have suffered loss of freedom, status and security despite still enjoying the best position accorded to women among all the states of India (itself a result of the matrilineal tradition and culture)."

1.56. The fact remains however that very few women in Kerala really look back on matriliney with nostalgia. The crushing of the self-image of the Kerala men and women was so omnipotent that even to this day, one cannot say if they have completely recovered and realized what they have lost. On the contrary women seem convinced that monogamy and the institution of patrilineal marriages give them more security. Also more importantly, they feel that these new practices conform to the norms of men and

women in the rest of India and the majority of the world cultures and that they do not want to be different.

1.57. Additionally, it cannot be overlooked that under reformed patriliney now in force in Kerala, women of the present generation feel that they have both access to their natal homes, immovable property and legal claim to their husband's property. A new synthesis is believed to have evolved of the old and new which means that women have improved their material position even further.

1.58. At the same time, what they have lost in terms of sexual freedom and security of the natal home is considered to have been amply compensated by emotional security that living with the husband is supposed to lend.

Peasant and Trade Union Movements

1.59. It was around this time that other changes in land and labour relations were also taking place in Kerala. A hundred years starting around 1830 saw the arrival of unions and their struggle for better wages and working conditions in Kerala. This was a period of agrarian disturbances in all parts of Kerala. Among several other reasons, one was the tremendous concentration of ownership of land in the hands of a small section of people or institutions the

Namboodiris, Nairs and the Devasoms i.e. temples. The second reason was the oppressive nature of the land tenure system, with a multiplicity of land tenures.

1.60. In 1838 an uprising against landlords took place as the first of what is referred to as 'The Mappila Rebellions' because of the involvement of Muslim agricultural workers of Malabar region. Only in 1882, did the British administration of Malabar, take serious notice of the unrest and institute an agrarian enquiry. As a result, some minor changes were introduced in land relations.

1.61. In Travancore region, the local princely administration showed greater sensitivity in the grant of tenurial security and other land rights to tenants. Reforms in Cochin region were somewhat tardier, but still not so tardy as in the directly British administered Malabar, where maximum eruption of unrest was witnessed for a

whole century. The rebellion of 1921 in which as many as one thousand people are believed to have died was probably the worst of the uprisings witnessed for a whole century.

1.62. It was also in Malabar that communists could establish a first strong base, which subsequently was possible to extend to other parts of Kerala. Significant in this context was the organised struggle, led by the communists, of the agricultural workers of Kuttanad area, a unique rice tract, where capitalist agriculture dominated. A numerically small number of enterprising landlords managed paddy cultivation with the help of a large number of landless labourers. The workers were entirely from low caste, and seventy percent women.

1.63. Around the early part of the twentieth century, the beginnings of the organised labour movement were made. It was around 1912 that the biography of Karl Marx appeared for the first time in an Indian language, Malayalam, with the subtitle "a great man who dedicated his life to the uplift of wage labourers." (Nair, 1994). This book had a great impact on the people and influenced the thinking of that time.

1.64. The decade from 1940 to 1950 witnessed quite a few struggles by the agricultural workers of Travancore and the participation of women in these struggles was quite significant. Jeffrey (1992) cites the report of a police official posted in Kuttanad in 1947 about "a procession of labouring women who marched on a local official to extract a promise of a wage rise and a six hour day", behaviour that would have been unthinkable ten years before."

"Stories of numerous women workers who stopped the jennis in the paddy fields and forced them to grant their demands were heard in those days. The agricultural women workers of Kuttanad had started the "gherao" [encircling] (though it was not known thus at the time) form of struggle" (George, 1975).

1.65. Every elected government in Kerala since early 1950's had to confront the question of land reform, but it took more than 20 years to achieve something substantial. Land Reform Act was passed in 1969. By 1980, significant changes had occurred in land relations, the most significant of these being the abolition of tenancy of land and the bestowal of ownership on tens of

thousands of hut dwellers. In 1983-84, an estimated 97 per cent of rural agricultural labour households owned the land on which their huts stood, a marked increase from the 1960's when the corresponding proportion was 67 per cent.

Other Organised Struggles

1.66. Outside of agriculture, two major avenues of employment (leaving out government service) have been coir and cashew industries. Some estimates put the number engaged in these two traditional low skills, low paying industries at 3.2 lakh and 1 lakh respectively.

1.67. Coir industry accounts for 85% of the total coir production in India. The raw material for this industry is the coconut husk which covers the fruit. Retting in the backwaters, called 'Kayals', is the basic process involved in the processing of raw husk. The practice of retting emits a certain foul smelling (hydrogen sulphide) gas and pollutes the stagnant 'Kayal' waters. Women constitute ninety percent of the workers engaged in this industry, concentrated though they are in the two sectors of defibring and spinning. The wage rates have been low and working conditions deplorable. Processing of retted husks which is foul smelling and in damp surroundings is a major health hazard that women who work in this occupation face.

1.68 The production of coir fibre, yarn and ropes have important uses from time immemorial. The 1931 Census of Travancore has this to say about this industry:

"The importance of coir industry can be gauged from the fact that out of 3 lakh industrial workers, 1.3 lakh or 36 per cent are employed in this industry alone, and that out of the total export trade of Rs.11.25 crores in 1930, the value of the products of coir yarn industry exported from the country amounted to more than Rs.2 crores." (Census of Travancore, 1931)

1.69. The overwhelming majority (80 per cent) of the workers in coir factories came from the socially background Ezhava community and they are mostly women. As a result of certain industrial advantages that the coir industry received in the 1850's, it got concentrated in the district of Alleppy. This concentration helped

Alleppy to become the centre of the working class movement. The coir workers organised into unions shortly after the agriculture unions were founded.

1.70. In the cashew industry also, ninety percent of the workers are women. The industry is concentrated in the district of Kollam.

"the expansion in the cashew industry took place from the mid-thirties onward. From a mere 237 workers in 1921 the number rose to more than 8000 in 1931 and continued to grow during the subsequent three decades reaching around 100,000 workers by the sixties." [Kannan, 1988].

1.71. The working conditions in the industry were deplorable. Long hours of work, unhealthy surroundings and meagre remuneration characterised the industry. To fight for better wages and working conditions, organised actions by the workers date back to 1920's and 1930's. While various struggles for improved conditions saw active participation by women, it cannot be overlooked that even in these two industries where women far outnumbered men, **leadership remained predominantly male.** Kannan (1988) has the following observations to make regarding women's participation in leadership roles in trade union movements:

"Despite their numerical strength, women agricultural labourers remained, and still remain largely absent from both local and state level organisations. Whenever they are represented it is merely symbolic. This is despite the active participation of women agricultural labourers in Kuttanad and their effectiveness in confronting land owners to concede wage demands...in varying degrees, the absence of any real participation by all women at all levels of leadership has continued to this day. While their help was actively sought and secured during the early stages of mobilization and organization, they were not incorporated into the important levels of leadership and decisionmaking though women continue to be active in rural struggles."

Women and Work

1.72. While old ideas about family and society, work and wages were giving place to new ones, not necessarily to the advantage of women, there

was one area, namely education, in which women of Kerala were to make a perceptible advance over the past hundred years. The value for education including that for women was inculcated through various channels. Novels and other literary works in Malayalam abound in extolling the desirability of education. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha*, published in 1891, celebrates women's education. Kumaran Asan's *Duravastha*, published in 1922, was built around the theme of education of low castes. These were two most influential pieces of writing of the time.

1.73. By 1930, not only were women in Kerala going in large numbers for school level education but also families were willing to send their daughters for even higher education if it was evident that it would result in salaried work. (Unemployment Enquiry Committee of Travancore, 1928). Salaried women workers were becoming increasingly common. Thus not only was there already little opposition to educating women but also the taboo against salaried employment had gone. Indeed, women who gained distinction in education were publicly acclaimed and applauded. Drawing on the life story of Mary Poonen (1886-1976) a doctor with a very distinguished academic and service career, Jeffrey (1992) notes as follows:

"Just as matriliney had provided models of behaviours in old Kerala, British practices often mediated through Syrian Christians like the Poonens provided models for the new Kerala. But under both old and new codes women had room for manoeuvre that was unique in India and most parts of the world at that time."

1.74. The number of working women in Kerala had become large enough by early 1930's, indeed so large that an enquiry into education in 1933 lamented that girls were going to schools in large numbers not because of the 'cultural value' of education "but as direct means of securing employment and competing with men in the open market." [Travancore Educational Reforms Committee, 1933]

Health Interventions

1.75. The story of health interventions is somewhat similar to that of education in Kerala. They started quite early and their impact was

widespread. The princely rulers of Travancore took an early interest not only in the spread of western education but also in western medicine, preventive as well as curative. The first modern hospital was built in 1817 in Thiruvananthapuram and by 1885 there were 31 medical institutions in Travancore. As early as 1878 all government workers, students and hospital patients in Travancore were required to get themselves vaccinated against small pox.

1.76. When the Rockefeller Foundation came to Travancore in 1927 to set up a health centre in Neyyattinkara, then a major village near Thiruvananthapuram town, its representatives reported that Travancore already had features which endowed it with tremendous potential for successful public health work. First, a sufficient number of suitable nurses and female health workers existed, unlike in the rest of India. Second, equality between men and women existed in the social, educational and political realms. Third, Travancore had the most efficient system of hospitals and dispensaries found in India. There was a medical institution within six miles of most large villages and medical aid, including drugs, was free to all. In fact, the Foundation visitors were so impressed that they went so far as to suggest Travancore as a Training Centre for malaria officers and sanitary engineers for the Far East and for training nurses for the rest of India. Though the Foundation had undertaken similar activity in both Madras and Travancore, the much greater success achieved in Travancore was due to relatively better levels of women's education and lack of inhibition to take to medical work.

1.77. The Rockefeller Foundation wound up its activity in 1937, after a decade of work. Infant mortality was recorded as 83 per 1,000 live births in Neyyattinkara where their work was based. For the corresponding census period, infant mortality rate for India as a whole was 207. That the attention paid to health care in Travancore-Cochin had its lasting impact can also be seen from the total mortality rates of the time. It is estimated that during 1957-60, crude death rate in Travancore-Cochin was about 12 per 1000 population when the corresponding rate for Malabar was 430 per 1000 population (U.N., 1963).

Health Education

1.78. Health education was given special importance in the educational programme for girls. Teachers were required to take a course in hygiene. By 1943, all government school texts included lessons in hygiene. Also a course in hygiene was made compulsory in all primary and secondary schools. Housekeeping and nursing were made compulsory subjects for girls in the final examination for high schools. Thus education was used explicitly to promote ideas relating to health and hygiene and attending schools meant a great deal more than learning the three R's (Gulati, 1991).

Training in Nursing

1.79. Formal nursing courses were started in 1920 in both Travancore and Cochin states. The intake in these courses increased however only with the expansion of health services when there was a reasonable assurance of jobs. Until 1950, around 75 nurses were graduating annually from these courses. By 1977 there were 9 government and 17 private nursing schools turning out 450 nurses a year. Today Kerala supplies nurses not only to the rest of India but also to the many parts of the world.

1.80. Women were inducted as health workers as early as 1871 when four "obstetric nurses of Nair caste" completed their training and started attending on women in child birth and other sick women [Jeffrey, 1992]. It would appear that from then onwards women were enrolled to work as health workers in maternal and child welfare centres. Efforts were made both in Cochin as well as Travancore parts of Kerala to train women as qualified midwives. Already in 1901, there were 32 licensed midwives, six nurses affiliated with the State Medical Department and eight female vaccinators attached to the Sanitary Department in Travancore (Gulati, 1991). The women and children's hospital was established in Thiruvananthapuram in 1916. It was run by women and by 1938, treated close to 150,00 patients in a year [Jeffrey, 1992].

Summing up

1.81. Given the above socio-economic background in the state in the areas of women's status, education, work and health, what one

observes is that Kerala society has shown the resilience to make and assimilate major changes and that these can be effected within a reasonable period of time. What follows now is a detailed analysis of the contemporary situation as it affects women in the various sectors.

2 DEMOGRAPHY

Growth of Population

2.1 Demographic changes in a population have a direct bearing on the growth and development of the women in the population. In Kerala, rapid demographic changes have taken place within a short span of two decades. The state is now in the forefront of the demographically advanced areas because of factors like declining birth rates, low death rates, low infant mortality rates and high literacy rates especially of women. What is the impact on the growth of the state's female and male population? What is the current status of the demographic factors like birth rate, death rate, etc.? What are the important demographic features like sex ratio, marital status of females, fertility rates etc. of this population? This section deals with these issues.

2.2 Successive enumeration of the population of the state indicated an acceleration in its

growth since the beginning of this century till 1971 (see table 2.1). While the nations' population had increased by 2.3 times that of Kerala had increased by 3.34 times. The increasing trend in the rate of growth of state's population was halted by 1971. The growth record in the decade of 1961-71 can be reckoned as the demographic watershed of great significance. From 1971 to 81, the decadal growth rate fell by about 27 per cent. Though expectation was of rather slower decline in the next decade, the demographic transition in Kerala in 1980's turned out to be more dynamic than that of 1970's. During this period the growth rate registered another 26% reduction. At the national level the growth rate continued its accelerating trend during 1971-81 and a slight deceleration in 1981-91. In Kerala however since 1971 the growth rate of population has shown steady decline and has reached an annual growth rate of 1.3% by 1991.

Table 2.1: Population growth in Kerala and India.

Year	Kerala (000)				India (million)			
	Total Population	Decadal growth %	Female Population	Decadal growth % (million)	Total Population	Decadal growth %	Female Population	Decadal growth %
1901	6396	-	3205	-	238	-	117	-
1951	13549	-	6867	-	361	-	176	-
1961	16904	24.76	8542	24.39	439	21.51	213	21.02
1971	21347	26.28	10760	25.97	548	24.80	264	23.94
1981	25454	19.24	12926	20.13	685	25.00	331	25.38
1991	29099	14.32	14810	14.58	846	23.50	407	22.96

Source : Statistics for Planning, 1993, DES.

2.3 The declining trend since 1971 is noticeable in the growth rate of female population as well. The growth in female population of the state was however slightly higher than that of males throughout the 20th century. While females outnumbered males by over 13,000 in 1901, the gap had steeply increased to 520,000 by 1991. However during the period 1951-71 when the total population increased by 58%, the female population registered a slightly low rate of (57%) increase. A reversal can be noticed in the two decades that followed. As against 36.3% growth in total population, female population registered a growth of 37.6% during this period. During 1981-91, female population increased by 14.6% whereas total population showed an increase of 14.3%.

2.4 Thus, while in 1901 the female population of Kerala constituted 2.4% of the total female population of the country and this percentage had sharply increased to 3.6% in 1991.

District-wise Population Growth

2.5 Of the 14 districts listed in *Appendix 1*, the first six formed part of the former Travancore state while the succeeding two comprised the entire former Cochin State and the remaining six districts formed part of erstwhile Madras Province. It can be seen that the six districts in the Travancore region registered the lowest population growth rates during 1981-91. It varied between 5.60% (Pathanamthitta District) and 13.05% (Thiruvananthapuram District). Population growth in the two districts of former Cochin state was moderate (11.12 and 12.21). All the districts in the Malabar region registered relatively high growth rates, ranging from 16.53% to 28.87%. The highest growth was in Malappuram District (28.87%) and the lowest in Palakkad District (16.53%). Compared to the decade of 1971-81, all the districts in the state showed a clear and noticeable declining trend in their population growth rates. One can say therefore that while all the three regions underwent demographic transition during this period the pace was distinctly different. This was attributable to the fact that parameters like basic literacy and health in the three regions differed widely. When compared to Malabar region, Travancore and Cochin regions had significantly lower levels of mortality and

higher life expectations. Malabar region lagged behind not only in infrastructure but also in the changes in the institutional social and economic structures which were so important for this transformation (Kabir and Krishnan, 1992).

2.6 The female growth rate observed in 1981-91 more or less followed the same trend in the total growth rate. In all the districts except Kasargode and Thrissur, female growth rates exceeded the total growth rate. In Kasargode district while the total growth rate was 22.78%, female growth rate was slightly lower, ie 22.30% and in Thrissur against the total population growth of 12.21%, female growth rate was 11.5%. The highest growth in female population was registered (28.9%) in Malappuram district and the lowest increase of 5.88% in Pathanamthitta District. Thus the highest increase in the females was nearly Five times the lowest rate of increase.

Religion-wise Population

2.7 Table 2.2 presents the breakup of Kerala's population by major religions. It can be seen that the state's population is quite diversified. Further, during the decade 1971-81 the growth of Muslim Population was significantly higher than that of Hindus and Christians. However, as is noticed later in this chapter that difference in population growth are much more closely related to the socio-economic level of the district rather than religion. The district-wise distribution of population by religion of head of household is presented in *Appendix 2*. It shows that there are significant differences between the districts in regard to the religious composition. It may be mentioned that scheduled castes constitute 9.92% of the total population, while Scheduled Tribes 1.1%.

The term "Scheduled Castes" / "Scheduled Tribes" (SC/ST) are an expression standardised in the Constitution of India. Under the directive principles of the State policy in Article 46 of the Constitution, it is laid down that the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the people in particular of the Sc's and St's and shall protect them from social justice and all forms of exploitation. The district-wise distribution of SC/ST population is presented in *Appendix 3*.

Table 2.2: Population under different Religions in Kerala (1971-1981).

Religion	Population in million 1981	Percentage to Total 1971	Percentage to Total 1981	Decadal Growth 1971-81	Sex Ratio Females per 1000 males
Hindus	14.802	59.41	58.15	16.70	1037
Christians	5.234	21.05	20.56	16.46	1014
Muslims	5.413	19.50	21.27	29.96	1036
Others	0.005	0.03	0.02	20.44	797
Total	25.454	100.00	100.00	100.00	1034

Source : Various Census Reports, 1971 and 1981.

Density of Population

2.8 Among the states in India, Kerala ranks second in population density, of 749 persons per sq.km as against the national average of 267. The fact that Kerala's population density increased from the estimated figure of 165 for 1901 to 749 for 1991 means that the number of people occupying one sq.km of land area in Kerala increased by 584 during the last nine decades.

2.9 District-wise population density figures are presented in *Appendix 4*. It can be seen from the appendix that nine districts had a population density higher than the state average. Throughout this period while Alapuzha district continued to be most densely populated, the district of Idukki registered the lowest density. When compared to the national average of female density of 121, the state has nearly three times more women per sq.km.

2.10 As a result of these demographic trends, Kerala achieved the distinction of one of the most densely populated states in the country, a trend noticeable even at the commencement of this century.

Rural-Urban Density

2.11 One of the distinguishing features of Kerala state is the absence of strong rural-urban

distinctions. This is so in terms of the topography of its land or settlement pattern. Also the habitabtion pattern in Kerala is quite different in that the houses in this state are not clustered in one portion of the village; instead they are scattered with plenty of space in between the structures and with compound walls often separating them. Yet the urban areas are more densely populated. According to 1991 census, 26.4 per cent of the population live in urban areas and they account for 9.13 per cent of the total geographical area. The urban areas consist of 93 towns and 16 urban agglomerations (as per census definition). It is noteworthy that this state has only one city having a population exceeding one million (Cochin city - 1.14 million population). It has two cities with a population of 0.8 million and other cities or towns are having population of less than 0.5 million.

Structural Features of the Population Sex Ratio

2.12 In the population composition of India, males have consistently exceeded females in every census period. Even according to the latest population census of 1991, the sex ratio, females per 1000 males, registered a further decline from 934 in 1981 to 929 in 1991. This Indian pattern is in contrast with the position obtaining in most developed countries. Kerala, it seems, follows the pattern of the developed countries. The sex ratio of Kerala is unique in

the country. It is the only state in India having an excess of females over males.

2.13 As can be seen from the Table 2.3, this trend was there from 1901 onwards. At the national level there has been a steady decline in the sex ratio over the last nine decades. In Kerala, a steady increase in the sex ratio was noticeable till 1951, then there was a slight decline over the next two decades followed by a reversal upwards in the subsequent two decades, from 1971 to 91, when there was a steep increase in the sex ratio.

Table 2.3 Sex Ratio in Kerala and India , 1901- 1991.

Census Year	Sex Ratio (Females Per 1000 males)		
	Sex Ratio		
	Kerala	India	Gap
1901	100	972	32
1911	1008	964	44
1921	1011	955	56
1931	1022	950	72
1941	1027	945	82
1951	1028	945	83
1961	1022	941	81
1971	1016	930	86
1981	1034	934	100
1991	1036	929	107

Source : Census of India, 1981 and 1991,

2.14 The gap with the national level sex ratio kept widening all through the first fifty years of the 20th century. The gap in 1991 was more than twice as large as in 1901 between Kerala and India. Between the decades, from 1901 to 1951, sex ratio, in Kerala gained only 24 points, roughly 0.5 point per annum, as against 20 points or 1 point per annum, gained during the period of 20 years from 1971-91. As pointed out earlier, though the state had experienced the highest female growth rates during 1951-71 period it was still slightly lower than the growth rate of total population. Also, despite a significant drop in the subsequent decades in both overall population and female growth, female growth was slightly higher, see Table 2.4. What could be the factors that have contributed to the increase in sex ratio in Kerala? Among several other factors to explain this trend could be the

fast decline in the female infant mortality rates and the increase in life expectancy of women.

2.15 District-wise sex ratios are given in Appendix 5. It is noteworthy that whereas in 1951 five districts had reported sex ratios adverse to females in

1991 only two districts fell under this category. Of the former five, four belonged to the erst-while Travancore region and one belonged to Malabar region.

Table 2.4 : Population Growth in Kerala

Year	Population of Kerala (000) Decadal Growth Rate			
	Total Population	Females Population	Total Population	Females Population
1901	6396	3205	-	-
1911	7148	3588	11.76	11.95
1921	7802	3923	9.15	9.34
1931	9507	4804	21.85	22.46
1941	11032	5588	16.04	16.32
1951	13549	6867	22.81	22.89
1961	16904	8542	24.76	24.39
1971	21347	10760	26.28	25.97
1981	25454	12926	19.24	20.13
1991	29099	14810	14.32	14.58

Source : Women, Men and Development in Kerala, 1995

By 1991 three out of four districts in Travancore region could reverse the trend in sex ratio and reported increased number of females over males. Even the remaining two districts, Idukki and Wayanad can be seen to have registered significant improvement in their sex ratio between 1951 and 1991.

2.16 Rural-Urban differentials in sex ratios are also found to be significant in some of the districts, although for the state as a whole the gap is rather small. This can be seen from Appendix 6.

2.17 In 10 out of 14 districts, the urban sex ratio in 1991 was lower than the rural sex ratio. At the state level also this is so though the difference was only of 3 points. Out of the 10 districts with higher rural sex ratio, two happen

to be those with below par overall sex ratio, and in one, Wyanad, rural sex ratio is higher by 50 points. It is the district with the lowest urban sex ratio, (917) in the state. In none of the 13 districts is the rural sex ratio so low as that, even though, as pointed out above, in four districts rural sex ratio is lower than the urban sex ratio.

Birth rates

2.18 Despite the existence of the system of compulsory registration of all births and deaths in this state for a very long period, it is still grossly deficient and cannot form a dependable source of data for any meaningful analysis. However under the supervision of the Registrar General of India a sample registration survey (SRS) is conducted under which birth and death registration is being carried out in selected sample villages and towns in each state of India. This continuous survey by the Registrar General of India provides annual estimates of both crude birth and death rates for all the states. This is the most reliable source of assessment of births and deaths at the all India level. *Appendix 7* presents the crude birth and death rates estimated on the basis of inter-censal growth of population during 1951, 61, 71 and 81 census periods and those thrown up by the sample registration system for the period, 1966-93.

Decline in fertility

2.19 Fertility, it is generally believed, is closely linked with socio-economic factors. In Kerala, by 1991 these relationships seem to have become weaker in the sense that in order to see the links one has to look at the disaggregated picture by districts. It is the socio-economic situation of the district a woman lives in, which makes a great difference [Zacharia et.al, 1994]. Kerala has experienced the sharpest fertility decline in India in recent years. Despite its levels of income and nutrition being among the lowest, the state has achieved results in controlling population growth comparable to those in the most successful middle income countries. During the course of past 30 years, the fertility rate in Kerala declined from an average level of about 6 children/couple to less than 2 children, a level that could, it is feared, cause Kerala's population to decline if allowed to persist for a sufficiently long time.

2.20 In the fifties Kerala's birth rate was one of the highest in the country and by 1990 it became the lowest. From 1951-61 to 1985 the national birth rate declined by 9 points whereas the decline in Kerala's birth rate was by 20.6 points during the same period. If we consider the last two decades, the birth rate of Kerala declined by 4.3 points during 1971-90 and 6.6 points during 1981-90, showing an acceleration in the decline of birth rates in recent years. For the same period, the all-India birth rate came down by 3.2 points and 4 points respectively. During 1985-91, the fall in Kerala birth rate was by nearly 5 points as against only 3.6 points in the national birth rate, (*Appendix-7*).

Inter-district Differences.

2.21 For understanding the decline of birth rates, an analysis at the district level has to be made. *Appendix 8* gives the district wise birth rates obtained from S.R.S. It is to be noted here by way of caution, that the district-wise sample size under S.R.S is not large enough to draw strong inferences. In the absence of any other source however the data obtained from SRS for the years 1983-88 are relied upon for our analysis.

2.22 It can be seen that there is a clear regional gradient to fertility. In 1983 three districts of Malabar region (Malappuram, Wayanad and Kannur) had birth rates exceeding the state average rate of 24.9. The same trend was noticeable in 1988 also but barring Wyanad in whose place Kasargode registered a higher rate. In all the districts of Travancore and Cochin regions birth rates ranged between 18.1 to 21 in 1983 and 14.8 to 20.5 in 1988.

2.23 At the time of formation of the Kerala state, the birth rate in Malabar region was 45.6 and that for Travancore-Cochin region was 35. In spite of a rapid reduction in the overall birth rate of the state, the gap between the above two regions has persisted, though at a reduced level. A recent study shows however that the decline in fertility cuts across all classes and groups of population [Zacharia, 1994].

Total Fertility Rate

2.24 In addition to the crude birth rate, the fertility measure most commonly used is the

total fertility rate (TFR). TFR measures the average number of children a woman could expect to have before reaching the age of 50 years, given the prevailing levels of age specific fertility rates. It is an important measure because it is standardised for the population age composition. Table 2.5 presents comparative TFR estimates for Kerala and India. In the 20-year period of 1971-91 there was a decline of 2.3 children per woman in Kerala as against 1.6 in India.

2.25 Appendix 9 gives the age specific fertility rates in rural Kerala. These rates reveal that while in 1971 the maximum number of births occurred in the age group of 25-29, from 1981 onwards there has been a notable backward shift to the age group of 20-24. It also shows that child bearing in Kerala in recent years is confined more and more to a relatively short span of woman's fertile period. Nearly 80% of children in Kerala are born to women in the age group of 20-29.

Table 2.5 : TFR estimate for Kerala and India.

Year	Kerala	India
1971	4.1	5.2
1981	2.8	4.5
1982	2.9	4.5
1983	2.6	4.5
1984	2.6	4.5
1985	2.6	-
1986	2.3	3.6
1991	1.8	3.6

Source: S.R.S Bulletin Annual, 1992 & Family Welfare Programme Year Book - Government of Kerala.

2.26 The order of birth statistics presented in Appendix 10 for 1991 is also revealing. Among the births that occurred during the year 1991 nearly 80% comprised of first and second order births. The birth interval data given in Appendix 11 shows that for more than half the multiple order births the spacing was of more than 30 months.

2.27 While a woman's reproductive span in Kerala has been reduced drastically in recent

past significant differences between districts remain. In fact according to one recent study, district of birth has become a very strong indicator of a woman's fertility even when all the relevant socio-economic factors are taken into consideration. A woman born in Malappuram is likely to have a large family irrespective of her religion, level of education or work status (Zacharia, 1994).

2.28 The same study has shown that there is considerable dynamism in the demographic process even in Malappuram District (the district with the highest birth rate). During the last decade, the TFR in that district declined by 2.0 children per woman from 3.7 (compared to 1.3 in Ernakulam Dist). Likewise, the infant mortality rate (IMR), in that district declined by 48%. If the rate is maintained for another decade the IMR would be only 17, the 1990 rate for the whole of Kerala.

Marital Status

2.29 The proportion of never married women in total population is one of the measures of marital status. By this measure, there has lately been a decline in Kerala in the proportion of never married women from 51 percent in 1981 to 46 per cent in 1991. If women above 14 years of age alone are considered, the never married women accounted for 24.8% in 1991 as against 25.4% in 1981. Clearly the proportion of married women has increased in the state. Leaving out women less than 15 years of age the increase in the married females is from 58.6% in 1981 to 60% in 1991. It is relevant to note in this context that the proportion of younger female population less than 15 years of age has declined from 34.1% of total in 1981 to 28.4% in 1991. As for the category covering widowed/divorced/separated, its percentage increased from 10.5 in 1981 to 10.8 in 1991, leaving out female population less than 15 years of age.

2.30 Age-wise marital status of female and male population is presented in Appendix 12. The changes from 1981 to 1991 can be said to be in the expected, direction. The proportion of "never married" men and women between 15-39 increased during 1981-91. It is noteworthy that less than 10 per cent of women in Kerala in the age group 15-19 were married in 1991. This itself points to a significant increase in the age at marriage of females during

this period. Also, upto age 49 there was a decline in the proportion of the widowed/divorced/separated. This could be a reflection of a substantial improvement in the longevity of both men and women.

Age at Marriage

2.31 In *Appendix 13* are presented the changes in age at marriage in Kerala and India from 1901-1981. As can readily be seen, even at the commencement of this century the average age at marriage of women in Kerala was quite high, being 17.1 years as against 13.2 years in India. By 1981, the female age at marriage had risen in Kerala to 21.9 years as against 18.3 years in India. In a study of demographic transition in Kerala in 1980s which had relied mainly on the fertility changes noted in the selected 3 districts of Kerala, it has been pointed out that "with every increase of an year in the age at marriage, the total number of children ever born to a woman decreased by 0.11 to 0.22 child according to the district."

2.32 It will be recalled that between 1971 and 1981 the TFR for Kerala registered a drop, by 1.1. During the same period there was an increase of 1.1 year in the average age at marriage of women. This indicates close correspondence between the rise in female age at marriage and the decline in fertility, at least for Kerala.

Mortality

2.33 It is generally recognised that in the first stage of demographic transition, mortality rates start declining while the fertility rates would continue to remain high. The decline in fertility follows with a time lag. Kerala also experienced more or less the same pattern of change. The crude death rate in Kerala declined from 19.7 during 1951-60 to 11 in 1966, 6.6 in 1981 and 6.0 in 1991 (see *Appendix 7*). During this period IMR declined even more sharply, from 120 in 1951-60 to 66 per 1000 in 1961-70 and to 17 in 1991. Thus there can be no doubt that death rates for Kerala declined steeply in a relatively short period. By comparison, the reduction in birth rate was at a slower pace from 43.9 in 1951-60 to 37.1 in 1961-70, to 25.6 in 1981 and 18.1 in 1991.

2.34 As a consequence of the decline in mortality there has been an appreciable improvement in the expectation of life at birth in Kerala. The values of expectation of life at birth for Kerala and India are given in Table 2.6.

2.35 The gain in expectation of life at birth in Kerala for women during the period 1951-61 to 1986-88 works out to 27.7 years which is higher than the gain of 23.2 years for men. The corresponding figure of gain during the period for India works out to 21 years for both men and women. Thus the gap between the state level life expectancy and that at the country level has widened for both the sexes, especially so for women, during the period.

Infant Mortality

2.36 Reference has been made above to the fact that IMR has dropped significantly in Kerala in the last three decades. The latest figure is 13 for 1993. This steep reduction in IMR to a level comparable to some of the best in the world also contributed to a substantial fall in the crude death rate for the state.

Table 2.6 : Expectation of life at birth for Kerala and India.

Period	Kerala		India	
	M	F	M	F
From Census				
1951-61	44.3	45.3	35.5	35.7
61-71	54.1	57.4	43.2	43.5
71-81	60.6	62.6	49.8	49.3
From SRS				
71-75	60.5	63.0	49.7	48.3
76-80	63.5	67.4	51.7	51.8
81-85	65.2	71.5	54.5	54.9
86-88	67.5	73.0	56.0	56.5
87-89	67.6	73.9	-	-
88-90	67.3	74.7	-	-

Source : Demographic Transition in Kerala in the 1980s CDS-Monograph Series & Economic Review, 1994

2.37 The district-wise IMR estimates are not available from SRS. The Registrar General of India has published district wise IMR values

based on 1981 census data. The relevant estimates are presented in *Appendix 14*.

2.38 It may be mentioned that the above estimate of IMR of 52 for Kerala does not tally with the SRS estimate of 37.4 for 1981. But it clearly shows that high infant mortality conditions prevailed in certain districts like Idukki, Palakkad and Wayanad. According to the three district study, the IMR values for the period 1985-89 in the districts of Ernakulam, Palakkad and Malappuram had declined to 11, 34 and 28 respectively. This indicates that the wide variations in the IMR values among the districts even now continue.

Age Composition

2.39 The age composition of a population is a product of the birth, death and migration rates that have operated over a period of three to four generations. A comparison of the 1981 and 1991 age distribution of Kerala's population (*Appendix 15*) shows that the proportion of population under 15 years of age declined sharply from 35 per cent in 1981 to 30 per cent in 1991. The female population under 15 declined from 34.1% to 28.5%. From the age group 20-24 years onwards the proportion has increased in all the age groups. In fact the proportion of above 20 years women increased steeply from 53.8% in 1981 to 61.4% in 1991. It is interesting to note that there were 72 females under 15 and over 60 years of age for every 100 females 15 to 60 years of age in 1981. The corresponding number of females in 1991 had come down to 59. This was because there was a significant drop in the share of the youth population in the total population in 1991. Though there had been a decline in the percentage of females below 15 years of age during 1981-91, female population above 60 years increased from 7.8% in 1981 to 8.5% in 1991. The question that has suddenly started bothering the demographers and other social scientists in the state concerns the alarming rate of growth of the elderly (60+).

Summing Up

2.40 What are the major highlights of this chapter and what are its implication for women in this state? Most importantly, fertility level in the state has already reached replacement level. The deceleration in population growth rates started during 1961-71. Inter-district differ-

ences in fertility levels are, however, important to take note of. The 'district effect' meaning thereby the whole gamut of factors like awareness, efficiency of and access to services, is very important. While the overall infant mortality rate for the state is quite low, wide inter-district variations still persist.

2.41 Family size norms have changed across districts and consequently narrowed the reproductive span to around ten years between the ages of 20-29 years. The age distribution of women is also going through a major structural change with those below fifteen years declining and those above 60 increasing. Among the aged a very high proportion are widows who are likely to be totally dependent on the family.

2.42 The major implications of these transformations are that women will be entering marriage at a later stage in their lives and will be released early from child bearing duties. Therefore they will become available for productive work for a longer number of years. So the question of generating adequate work opportunities for women assumes increasing importance. In this context one has to remember that the burden on the working age women will be higher and higher with the need to care for elderly widowed women with no income and poor health.

3

EDUCATION

3.1 Long before the attainment of the country's Independence the state of Kerala had a good record in the field of education. This, as has been noted earlier, was mainly possible because of the progressive educational policy followed by the rulers of the erstwhile Travancore-Cochin region and the educational activities of the Christian missionaries.

Literacy and Literacy Levels

3.2 Literacy rate in any country indicates the basic educational background of the population. Female literacy indicate women's comparative position in relation to men's literacy status. The position in Kerala since the beginning of this century in regard to total and female literacy is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Growth of literacy in Kerala and India, 1901-1991

Percentage of literates among the total population										
	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	
Kerala	11.14	13.31	19.02	21.34	40.47	56.85	60.42	70.42	77.96	
India	5.35	5.92	7.16	9.50	16.67	24.02	29.45	36.03	52.31	
Percentage of literates among women.										
Kerala	3.15	4.43	10.26	11.00	31.41	38.90	54.31	65.7	75.25	
India	0.60	1.05	1.81	2.93	7.93	12.95	18.68	24.73	39.29	

Source : Economic Review (1994)

3.3 It may be noted that the literacy rate of female population in Kerala in 1991 stood at 75% while the corresponding number was only 39 at the national level. Literacy level, females as well as general, was higher in Kerala than in India even at the beginning of the century but major progress has been made in the state in the

second half of this century and the progress has been particularly rapid in female literacy so that the gap between total literacy has narrowed considerably. The gap in 1991 was 2.7 percentage points in Kerala as against 13.02 for India.

3.4 It is significant also that after excluding children in the age group 0-6 years, total number of illiterates in the remaining population of the state in 1991 comprised of 1.79 million females and 0.79 million males. Thus illiterate women outnumbered illiterate men in the ratio of nine to four.

Differences in literacy levels

3.5 Interestingly, while gender difference in literacy level in the state at the aggregate level has been considerably reduced, it does exist among certain groups. The rural-urban gap in female literacy level of the state was of 4.3 percentage points in 1991, which as can be seen from Table 3.2, was almost half the gap of 7.9 percentage points in 1961. So, there was considerable narrowing of this gap within a decade. The same cannot be said of the gap in female literacy among the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of the state.

Table 3.2: Female Literacy Rates in Rural and Urban areas of Kerala, 1971-1991

Year	Rural	Urban
1971	53.1	60.6
1961	64.3	72.2
1991	74.1	78.4

Source : Economic Review - 1994.

3.6 The gap in female literacy among ST population should be a cause for real concern, even in Kerala. While female literacy in 1991 among the Scheduled Caste (SC) population was close to that of the entire state (74.31% as

against 75.25%), that among ST was only 41% and this should be a cause for concern. Also, of concern should be the inter-district differences in female literacy.

Inter-district Differences

3.7 In Appendix 16 district-wise effective literacy rates are presented. For the calculation of the effective literacy rates, population in the age group below 0-6 years has been excluded. Two districts, in the erstwhile Travancore-Cochin region and four districts in the Malabar region are having a female literacy rate below the state average of 86.17%, with Kasargod, Wayanad and Palakkad accounting for the majority of illiterate women of the state.

Educational Attainments.

3.8 It may be of interest to know the educational attainments of those women in Kerala who are literate. The National Sample Survey results for 1986-87 indicate that of the literate female population of Kerala 59% had not gone beyond primary level, 25% had acquired middle school education, and only 16% had qualified for matriculation and above. In this last category, urban areas do much better than rural areas since every second household in the former had one woman with this qualification whereas in the latter this was true of every fourth household (see Table 3.3)

Table 3.3: Distribution of literate women according to educational level (1986-87)

	Level of Education			
	Rural	Urban	State	Distribution %
Literate, including				
Primary / education	18.30	3.83	22.13	23.4
Primary/junior basic	27.92	5.74	33.66	35.5
Middle/Senior basic	18.64	4.77	23.41	24.7
Technical vocational school course	0.07	0.05	0.12	0.1
Matric/school leaving certificate and above	7.27	2.37	9.64	10.1
Higher secondary / pre university / intermediate	1.57	0.61	2.18	2.3
Above intermediate	2.40	1.18	3.58	3.8
Total literates	76.17	18.55	94.72	100.0

Source : Results of NSS 42nd Round, July, 1986-87,

Sarvekahana, April-June, 1993.

Note : Out of total estimated women of 125.49 lakh, 6.39 lakh have not reported their level of education. They have been excluded in working out the percentage distribution.

Growth of Educational Institutions

3.9 It is noteworthy that the expansion in overall literacy level (ie. of men as well as women) in Kerala has taken place alongside the expansion of educational institutions as well as the increase in government expenditure on education. At the school level, accent in expansion has been on Upper Primary Schools and High Schools. The number of Lower Primary Schools in 1993-94 was no higher than that in 1961-62 whereas the number of Upper Primary Schools and High Schools was higher by 50 per cent and 300 per cent in 1993-94 than in 1960-61. Clearly, the overall emphasis in education policy over the past 30 years or so has been to expand facilities for education above the lower primary level. Indeed, given the demographic trend, the problem now envisaged is connected to the continuing decline in student enrolment in the lower primary schools and several of the existing schools becoming uneconomic.

School Enrolment

3.10 Total school enrolment of girls in the state increased from 2.75 million in 1983-84 to 2.86 million girls in 1994-95. However, in the lower primary stage the number of girls enrolled declined from 1.22 million in 1983-84 to 1.14 million in 1994-95 i.e by 5.5%. The decline was of 5.6% for boys. It is important to note that 94% of the rural population in the state is served by a lower primary school within a distance of one kilometer and 98% within a distance of two kilometers. As much as 96% of the rural population is served by an Upper Primary school within a distance of three kilometres. The proportion of the rural population with access to a high school within a radius of 8 kilometres is 98%. It is this widespread educational infrastructure facilities, built up over the years, that has helped the state achieve one of the highest rates of school enrolment (Economic Review, 1994). It is pertinent to highlight here that girls constituted more than 52 per cent of the total

number of students who appeared for the matriculation examination in 1994. It is also relevant to note that school enrolment ratio of girls in the various districts more or less corresponds to the overall state pattern.

Disadvantaged Groups

3.11 It will be recalled that of the two disadvantaged caste groups, the one that is still lagging behind significantly in female literacy is the Scheduled Tribe. It is pertinent to ask now how this particular group is faring in regard to school enrolment of girls. As against the female school enrolment ratio of 49.2% for all communities together, that of SC's is 49.0% and that of ST's 48.7%. ST enrolment works out to 1.1% which is the same as ST population ratio for the state. Special incentives are provided to S.C./S.T families for sending their children to schools. These are in addition to the incentives like exemption from tuition fees and noon meals in primary schools available to all economically weaker sections.

Higher Education

3.12 Enrolment for higher education i.e beyond the matriculation stage, is only a fraction of those matriculating each year. What should be of interest in our context is that in Kerala the enrolment of girls at the pre-degree level was 54%, degree level 60% and post graduate level 64% in 1994. The corresponding figures in 1981-82 were 49,50 and 48 respectively. Evidently, over the years, there has been a substantial increase in the enrolment of girls at all the three levels of higher education so that the girls now outnumber boys at every level. Women's enrolment in higher education in Kerala far exceeds that in any other state of India, with Kerala accounting for 6.3% (as against its 3.9% share of female population) of the total female enrolment for higher education in the country.

Technical Education

3.13 The story of the participation of women in professional education, as distinguished from higher education, is quite different. The infrastructure of technical education in Kerala is comprised of 12 engineering colleges, 39 polytechnics and 39 technical high schools. In all the engineering colleges the proportion of

female students has come down from one-quarter to one-fifth between 1992 and 1994. In the polytechnics, out of total student strength in 1994 of 13,471 women constituted 31%.

Medical Education

3.14 In medicine and related areas, the intake of girls is much higher than that in technical education. There are five Medical Colleges in Kerala. The total intake for various courses in all these colleges together was 448 in 1988-89. Of these the number of women was 230 showing a percentage of 51%. Of course, the proportion varied from course to course, with 43% in the course in medicine proper to 88% in nursing.

Government expenditure on education

3.15 Almost one-third of the state government's revenue is currently spent on education. As a proportion of the government's expenditure on social services, it works out to 75%. In per capita terms, government expenditure has been on the increase; from Rs.85 per capita in 1980-81 it increased to Rs.334 in 1992-93. After adjusting for overall price escalations during the period, per capita government expenditure on education in the state increased by one-third. As a proportion of the state's domestic product, government's expenditure on education increased from 5.8% in 1980-81 to 7.2% in 1992-93.

3.16 The larger share of government expenditure on education in Kerala is, in a way, a legacy of the past. People used to contribute land, buildings and furniture for starting government schools and colleges and the government undertook to meet the running expenses. Later, in the era of the democratically elected governments, the salaries and allowances of teaching and non-teaching staff of aided private schools and colleges were taken over as the state government's responsibility. At present, nearly two-thirds of the schools in the state are private schools. In higher education private colleges constitute nearly three-fourth of the total. The role of directly administered government institutions in the field of technical education has also been coming down lately as new private, self-financing colleges are being sanctioned. Out of 12 engineering colleges 5 are government colleges (one of these is centrally financed) but they accounted for almost 60% of the students in 1994.

Private Expenditure

3.17 In addition to the expenditure that the government incurs on education, households also have to make their contribution. From the NSS 42nd round, information is available on expenditure incurred by the households for educating their children separately for girls in primary and secondary schooling. Household expenses on education include tuition fee, examination fee, and other fees, payments for books and stationery, appliances etc, uniforms, transport, private coaching (this item itself can be quite substantial in the Kerala context) and other incidental expenses. The results of the survey are given in Table 3.4.

3.18 The table shows that inspite of the fact that no school fee is charged upto the 10th

standard in Kerala, the households are incurring sizeable expenditure on children studying in the schools. Also, educational expenditure incurred on boys is higher than on girls and it is significantly less in government institutions. In this context, it is relevant to note that the government cost per pupil is quite high. The estimate attempted for 1986-87 showed that the cost per pupil in primary schools was Rs.563 and in the secondary schools Rs. 1043. At the higher level, expenditure per student is very much higher, particularly in the case of technical and medical education. The proportion of government annual expenditure on higher education including technical education was over 20% where as students at this level comprised only 3% of the total number of 6 million enrolled at various levels in 1993-94.

Table 3.4 : Percapita Expenditure by Households on Education 1986-87. (in Rupees)

	Rural		Urban	
	Female Children	Total	Female Children	Total
Primary				
Govt Institution	86	95	125	129
Private institution	134	130	282	321
Secondary				
Govt Institution	264	243	314	332
Private institution	297	299	424	478

Source :- NSS 42nd Round, July, 1986-87. Sarvekshana, April-June, 1993.

Summing Up

3.19 Education, no doubt, confers enormous benefits on a community, much more so, the education of women. The education of mothers results in a high degree of awareness and capability for efficient infant and child care. Educated mothers are also better equipped in the allocation of income on food and nutrition. All these factors must have contributed to creating the conditions of demographic transition of Kerala, the outcome whereof is there for any one to see. Female education is strongly associated with a rise in the female age at marriage, which, among other things, reduces the proportion of married women in total female population.

3.20 The question that however remains is to what extent the substantial participation of women in education at practically every level has translated itself into their participation in economic activity in Kerala. It is to this question that we turn in the next chapter.

4

EMPLOYMENT

4.1 Decennial census on population throws some light on the female working population, their sectoral distribution, regional distribution etc. Employment surveys conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSS) also give detailed statistics on some of the aspects of female employment and unemployment. In all these surveys a 'worker' is usually deemed to be a person engaged in 'economically productive work' including work that is remunerated and of work in family farm or enterprises for which no separate, distinct payment is made.

Definition of a worker

4.2. There is widespread criticism that the definition of 'worker' used in the population census or employment surveys, tends to underestimate women workers since many activities performed by women within the household sector do not carry monetary value and on that basis get excluded. A good part of women's work falls outside the realm of wage in the form of domestic activities or subsistence farming. Household work imposes severe and shifting constraints on the type of employment taken up by women. Women shift jobs as part of the gender roles they need to perform in their households.

4.3. In this context some of the results of the NSS 43rd round survey on employment and unemployment are revealing. The results show that among Kerala women attending to domestic duties (who have been categorised in the survey as non-workers) nearly 29% in rural areas and 22% in urban areas maintain kitchen gardens. Similarly, 36.5% in rural areas and 9.5% in urban areas work in household poultry, dairy etc. Grinding of food grains is another work attended to by 31% of rural women and 52% of urban women. Nearly 30% of rural females and 13% of urban females fetch water from outside for domestic needs. It is interesting to note that nearly three-fourth of rural women and 70% of

urban women are attending to one or other of the 14 activities listed in the table, besides attending to purely domestic work (see Appendix 17).

4.4 The survey results show that 37.61% of the total women in the state had reported attending to domestic duties. Applying this percentage to 1991 census population, 5.6 million women come under this category. But according to the census only 2.35 million women in the state are classified as workers. This is because the women engaged in the listed activities along with their domestic work are categorised not as workers but "non-workers." The exclusion of such a substantial number of women from the category of workers is a serious limitation of the available data on women workers.

4.5. According to 1991 census, out of its population of 29 million Kerala has a total work force of 9.15 million. The work participation rate works out to 31.43% which is the lowest in India. This work force comprises of 8.3 million main workers who work for at least 183 days a year and 0.85 million marginal workers who work for sometime during the year, but not for a major part. Women workers number 2.35 million reflecting a sex ratio of 345 female workers per 1000 male workers which is lower than the national level, the worker-sex ratio of 409 female workers per 1000 male workers. It may be recalled in this context that Kerala's population has a sex ratio of 1036, as per 1991 census.

Participation Level

4.6. As was noted above the overall work participation rate (WPR) for Kerala in 1991 was 31.43% taking into consideration all workers (main and marginal). If marginal workers are excluded the WPR would be 28.53%. The WPR of women (FWPR) was only 15.85% while that of men was 47.58%, i.e more than three times than that of women. Table 4.1 presents WPR for Kerala and India.

Table 4.1: WPR by Gender for Kerala and India (in %)

Year	Kerala			India*		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1971	29.79	45.22	14.60	34.17	52.75	14.22
1981	30.53	44.89	16.61	36.70	52.62	19.67
1991	31.43	47.58	15.85	37.68	51.56	22.73

Source : Census of India.

4.7. It is noteworthy that while FWPR for India registered an increase of 60% from 1971-1991, the corresponding increase for Kerala was of only 9%. There was actually a decline of 5% in the FWPR from 1981 to 1991. The FWPR of 1991 for Kerala is also far below the national average. Male WPR in Kerala fared substantially better, having risen from 44.89 to 47.58 during the period 1981-91.

Rural-Urban Differentials

4.8. The rural and urban WPR figures for Kerala and India are given in Table 4.2

Table 4.2: Work Participation Rate by Gender and Sector (in %)

Year	Kerala				India			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Rur.	Urb.	Rur.	Urb.	Rur.	Urb.	Rur.	Urb.
1971	45.53	43.64	15.25	11.20	53.78	48.88	15.92	7.18
1981	45.23	43.42	17.73	11.78	53.77	49.06	23.06	8.31
1991	47.88	46.76	16.86	13.02	52.50	48.95	27.20	9.74

Source : Census of India.

4.9. It may be seen that although WPR was lower in Kerala than in India all through for men as well as women, the disparity looks sharper for women in 1991 when FWPR in rural India was 27.20 as against Kerala's 16.86. FWPR as compared to MWPR in rural areas is nearly one-third in all the years for Kerala while it is more than half in 1991 for India. In urban areas of Kerala the ratio is even less than one-

third but is still higher than that for urban India. Between 1971 to 1991 the rural WPR increased by 70% for India as against a marginal increase of 10% for Kerala. In urban areas also there was a slight improvement in Kerala, of 16% against 36% for India.

Main Workers - Marginal Workers

4.10. The distinction between main workers and marginal workers made for the purposes of census is important to bear in mind. The latter are those who are unable to get work for more than half the year (183 days). Table 4.3 gives gender distribution between main and marginal workers for Kerala state in 1981 and 1991.

4.11 It may be observed that firstly the increase in the main workers, from 1981 to 1991 is considerably higher for male main workers than female main workers and secondly the decrease in marginal workers is distinctly lower for men than women. While the percentage of male marginal workers has come down by 18%, that of women marginal workers has fallen only by 10%. When 1.26 million men got additional employment as main workers during this period, the number of women in this category increased by only 0.25 million.

Table 4.3: Main and Marginal Workers in Kerala 1981 & 1991 (100,000)

	Main Workers (in 00,000)		Marginal Workers (in 00,000)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	1981	51.41	16.50	4.83
1991	64.04	18.96	3.95	4.51

Source : Census of India.

Sectoral Changes

4.12 Economic development is associated with shifts in the sectoral allocation of the work force which in turn is related to shifts in the production structure. It is generally accepted that with development there will be a fall in the share of the primary sector and a rise in the secondary and tertiary sector activities. To examine changes in this respect, Table 4.4 presents the sectoral distribution of workers in 1981 and 1991.

4.13 The table brings out the sectoral shifts in work force composition from 1981-91 among male and female workers. These shifts have to be viewed, however, in the light of the changes in WPR. In Kerala FWPR declined between 1981 and 1991 where as MWPR increased (see Table 4.1). The major shift was away from primary sector and towards tertiary sector for both males and females.

Table 4.4 : Sectoral Distribution of Main Workers by Gender - 1981 & 1991.

Sectors	Males			Females		
	1991	1981	Changes	1991	1981	Changes
Primary	47.84	50.51	(-) 2.67	48.61	55.25	(-) 6.64
Secondary	17.14	18.19	(-) 1.05	21.65	20.97	0.68
Tertiary	35.01	31.30	3.71	29.74	23.78	5.96
	100.00	100.00		100.00	100.00	

Source : Census of India.

The shift was greater among women. However, while there was a decline in the secondary sector of male work force, the proportion of female work force there increased marginally. The shift towards the tertiary sector was far greater for women than men. But does this shift indicate a movement towards better jobs or the opposite is the question to answer for which we need to go into some further disaggregation.

4.14 The decline in the percentage of Kerala workers engaged in the primary sector is, as can be seen from Table 4.5, accounted for almost altogether by the category of agricultural labourers i.e. those who work in agriculture on the basis of wage. Their proportion came down from 43.55% to 36.09% between 1981 and 1991. The generally accepted explanation for this decline in the employment of women as agricultural labourers is the sharp reduction of land under paddy cultivation (by 31%) during the period. It is noteworthy however that while the number of women engaged as agricultural labourers fell by 35,000 that of male agricultural labourers increased by 2,37,000 in the same decade. Clearly the burden of whatever adjustment was entailed by the change in

cropping pattern in the state fell on women (see Appendix 18).

4.15 The shift in the cropping pattern in the state from paddy to coconut and rubber was bound to reduce the demand for labour, especially female labour because it is in paddy cultivation that the number of days of employment generated for women is more than that for men. In coconut and rubber, on the other hand, practically all employment they generate is for men [Nair, 1994].

Table 4.5 : Industry-wise distribution of Female Workers- 1981 and 1991

Industrial category	Percentage of Female Workers 1991	Distribution 1981
I Primary	5.6	4.9
1. Cultivators		
2. Agri. Labourers	36.1	43.6
3. Livestock, Forestry Fishing, Hunting and Plantations, and Allied activities	6.2	6.5
4. Mining	0.7	0.3
II Secondary		
a) Household Industry	5.9	7.7
b) Manufacturing etc. Processing in other than household industry	14.8	12.5
III Tertiary		
6. Construction	0.9	0.9
7. Trade & Commerce	4.6	3.2
8. Transport, storage & Communication	1.5	1.6
9. Other services	23.7	18.9
	100.0	100.0
Total Female Workers	18.9	16.5

Note : Number of total workers (100,000)

Source : Census of India

Household Industry

4.16 In the secondary sector also, on surface, some similar situation is noticeable. The proportion of women employed in household industry in Kerala declined from 7.65% in 1981 to 5.93% in 1991. But this decline is more than made up by an increase over the decade in the proportion of women employed in non-household industry, from 12.4% in 1981 to 14.78% in 1991. An explanation offered for this change is that some of the traditional industries of Kerala such as handloom, coir, beedi etc. which once flourished as household industries are gradually changing into non-household industries with their becoming part of the large cooperative sector. In 1991 census a substantial number of these workers got categorised under non-household industries. This is noticed in all the districts. It is to be highlighted here that in household industry women workers outnumber male workers.

Non-household industry

4.17 As can be seen from Table 4.5, female employment in non-household industry accounts for 15% of female work force in 1991. In 1981 the corresponding proportion was 12.5%. In the decade of 1981 to 1991, female workers in this sub-sector registered an increase of nearly 36% from 206,000 to 280,000. Of course, relative to the number of men employed in non-household industry (also factory sector) of the state, the number of women in 1991 still worked out to a ratio of five men to two women.

4.18 It is relevant to note in the context of factory sector employment in Kerala that the two districts of Kollam and Ernakulam, account for half the employment in factory sector (see Appendix 19). Even between Kollam and Ernakulam the gap is rather large with factory employment in the former being more than twice, that of the latter, the district with the second highest number of factory employees. Kollam's predominant position in factory employment, it should be pointed out, is because of the concentration of cashew industry in the district. Cashew industry employs approximately 100,000 workers and of them 90% are women. Unfortunately, this industry has, for quite some years been facing difficult times because of several factors, external as well as

internal and it has been problematic utilising capacity and maintaining employment.

Services

4.19 In the tertiary sector, the major avenues of employment are 'trade and commerce' and 'other services', with the latter accounting for more than three quarters of the total female employment in the sector. In fact, after agricultural labour, 'other services' provide the maximum female employment in the state. Of course, unlike agricultural labour, it is not a homogeneous group. On the contrary, it is a hotch potch combination of several categories of employment ranging from government service to domestic services. The proportion of women in the 'other services' increased from 18.98% of the total female work force in 1981 to 23.65% in 1991; the increase in number was by 44%, from 313,000 to 449,000.

4.20 In this context, it is pertinent to note that women constituted over 30% of the total number (6,48,000) employed in the public sector in 1992. In Kerala's teaching profession, which comes almost entirely in the public sector, all employees of even private aided institutions being paid out of government coffers, women constituted close to two-thirds of the total 191,000 in 1992.

Educational Profile of Working Women

4.21 It is generally accepted that the education of women leads to occupational diversification. It enables them to move away from the agricultural sector to employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors. We have already seen that in 1991 the female workforce in Kerala consisted of nearly 1.9 million workers. Around 50% of them were employed in the primary sector which is significantly below the corresponding figures of 80%, for the whole country. On the other hand, tertiary sector accounted for a significantly higher proportion of female employment in Kerala (30%) than in India (10.8%).

4.22 Possibly the educational attainments of Kerala's women enabled them to move away and towards employment. Regarding higher levels of literacy, NSS 43rd round Employment Survey gives the distribution of workers, in 1987-88, by level of education. Table 4.6 presents the

educational profile of the female workers in Kerala for rural and urban separately, based on this survey.

4.23 It can be seen that while one out of five female workers was reported as not-literate, more than one-third of these had an educational qualification beyond primary school level and one out of four working women had done matriculation or gone beyond that. The fact that the proportion of women in Kerala working in government services and teaching was as noted earlier, quite substantial is very much in line with the distribution of female workers in the state by educational level.

Table 4.6 : Distribution of Female Workers in Kerala according to level of education, 1987-88.

Education	Percentage Distribution of Female Workers		
	Rural	Urban	Total
1. Not literate	22.8	11.7	21.2
2. Literate upto Primary	38.4	20.2	35.7
3. Middle	18.3	23.2	19.0
4. Secondary	16.4	30.4	18.5
5. Graduate & Above	4.1	14.5	5.6
All	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source : NSS 43rd Round Employment Survey, 1987-88, Sarvekshana, Jan-March, 1992.

Summing Up

4.24 One of the paradoxes of Kerala that comes out clearly in this chapter is that although it leads the rest of the states in India in regard to female literacy and level of education, when it comes to the engagement in economic activities, women's participation in Kerala has been as abysmally low as for the country as a whole; indeed going by the figures for 1991 only, Kerala lags badly behind. Even of those women

engaged in work, the bulk almost is accounted for by agriculture (mostly agricultural labour) and traditional industries. No doubt, of the women in Kerala engaged in services, a good proportion is accounted for by government service and teaching. Still a large proportion of women in Kerala, not just minimally literate, seem to remain outside the ambit of work participation. What could possibly be the reasons behind such gross under-use of educated women for economic engagement need to be explored.

5

UNEMPLOYMENT

5.1 One widely recognised major reason why women do not come forward to engage in economic activity is their perception with regard to availability of work opportunities not only in general but also specifically for women. Could non-availability of work opportunities in Kerala be the reason for the non-participation of women in work on such large scale as noted in the previous chapter? To answer this question, we have to examine the available information on overall unemployment as well as female unemployment levels in the state.

5.2 Unemployment in Kerala has been high and increasing among both men and women. Also the problem of unemployment in Kerala is primarily the problem of the educated unemployed among both men and women. According to one estimate, 91% of the unemployed in Kerala are literate and two-thirds here studied beyond the primary school level [DES, 1988]. This should not be surprising since the state has the highest literacy rate for both sexes, far above the other states of India.

5.3 NSS has used two concepts of unemployment in their surveys. One relates to those who are willing and available for work but have not been able to find any for the greater part of the reference period. This category of people is branded as usually unemployed and may be taken as a rough index of chronic unemployment. The other concept is that of current unemployment which gives an idea of the total number of weeks or days in an year for which persons in the labour force are unemployed. Both the concepts give an idea of the incidence of open unemployment in the economy.

5.4 From the various quinquennial rounds of the NSS, sufficient information is available to form an idea of the level of unemployment by gender and change in this level over the decade, 1977-78 to 1987-88. The latest round for which

information is available was conducted in 1987-88. Table 5.1 gives the unemployment rates for Kerala and India for 1987-88 by 'usual status'. These rates are worked out as percentages of labour force. By way of explanation, let it be added here that the term 'labour force' used includes both the unemployed as well as the employed and is therefore much wider than the term 'work force'.

5.5 It can be seen that female unemployment in rural Kerala is nearly seven times the level in rural India and four times the corresponding Indian rate in urban Kerala.

Table 5.1: Incidence of Unemployment India-Kerala 1987-88

Percentage of unemployed to the labour force (1987-88)

Rural	India	Male	2.8
	Kerala	Male	12.5
	India	Female	3.5
	Kerala	Female	25.0
Urban	India	Male	6.1
	Kerala	Male	14.2
	India	Female	8.5
	Kerala	Female	34.0

Note : Unemployed as % of labour force based on NSS definition of "usual principal status".
Source : Sarvekshana - Sep, 1990.

Comparison of latest survey results with those of earlier surveys (see Table 5.2) shows that in Kerala the incidence of unemployment has been twice, or nearly twice, as high on women as on men and that such a situation has been persisting in the economy for some time in recent years.

Table 5.2 : Changes in the Incidence of Unemployment in Kerala

Year	Rural			Urban			All areas		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1977-78	13.5	29.2	19.2	16.2	39.5	23.5	14.00	30.6	19.9
1983	10.6	17.0	12.6	11.9	25.6	15.6	10.80	18.4	13.1
1987-88	12.5	25.0	16.6	14.2	34.0	19.6	12.80	26.3	17.1

Note : Unemployed as percentage of labour force by usual principal status.

Source : (1) 1977-78 32nd round N.S.S Report No 298/10 - Kerala NSS.
 (2) 1983 - 30th round report no 341/3. Kerala-NSS.
 (3) 87-88 - Sarvekshana 43rd round -Oct-Dec 1992 and Spl. issue Kerala-Jan-1992.

5.6 It is important also to note that the incidence of male as well as female unemployment is the highest in the younger age group 15-29 (see Table 5.3) in both urban and rural Kerala. But the proportion for women is staggeringly high compared to that of men. Nearly 45% of women in this age group in rural areas and nearly 58% of the women in this group in urban areas were reported as unemployed.

Table 5.3 : Unemployed by Age Groups, 1987-88.

Age (years)	Rural			Urban		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
15-29	25.7	44.9	32.4	27.9	57.8	37.5
30-44	4.7	11.7	7.1	5.8	12.1	7.3
45-59	3.0	5.5	5.5	3.7	2.9	3.6
60+	1.4	4.9	2.3	1.3	9.4	2.7

Note : Percentage of unemployed in each age group.

Source : (1) 1977-78 32nd round N.S.S Report No 298/10 - Kerala NSS.
 (2) 1983 - 30th round report no 341/3. Kerala-NSS.
 (3) 87-88 - Sarvekshana 43rd round -Oct-Dec 1992 and Spl. issue Kerala-Jan-1992.

We have noted in an earlier chapter that the enrolment ratio in secondary schools in Kerala is as high as eighty percent for not only boys but also girls. Adding to it the finding noted above in this chapter that more than two-thirds of the unemployed in the state had studied beyond the primary school level, it is very likely that a majority of the girls in the age group of 15-29 reporting as unemployed could have completed ten years of schooling.

District-wise Trends

5.7 It is not possible to work out district wise incidence of unemployment on the basis of NSS. An idea on that can be formed on the basis of employment exchange data. The live registers maintained in the employment exchanges in the state give some idea of the magnitude and extent of unemployment in each district. There are altogether 37 employment exchanges covering all the districts of the state. Appendix 20 gives district-wise distribution of men and women on the live registers of the employment exchanges.

5.8 As can be seen, the total number of registrants with the employment exchanges added up to 3.9 million in 1993 in the state as a whole (by 31.5, 1994, this number is reported to have risen to 4.0 million). This works out to 22% of the estimated labour force. However, the proportion of female registrants to female labour force (their number has been almost the same as of male registrants) works out to 54.8%, i.e. two and a half times larger than the overall ratio of registrants to labour force. It may be added that the number of female registrants has increased from 622 thousand to 1933 thousand between 1981 and 1993, more than three fold. The number of male registrants increased from 1.28 million to 1.95 million, showing an increase 52%. In 1981 there were only 485 female registrants per 1000 males on the live registers of employment exchanges. By 1993 this number had steeply increased to 991. It is clear that in the last decade proportionately larger number of women in Kerala came forward to take up employment.

5.9 The above appendix also shows that in five out of 14 districts the number of female registrants exceeds male registrants. Also, the two districts with relatively very low female registration with employment exchanges are in North-

ern Kerala. The districts are Malappuram and Kasargode. They also have sizeable Muslim population.

5.10 By way of caution, it is necessary to add that all registrants with the employment exchanges are not necessarily unemployed. According to a study of the registrants in the employment exchanges in Kerala in 1989, a little over 30% of female registrants were either occupied as full time students (17.5%) or were having full time employment (12.65%); the latter had obviously registered their names for getting better employment [Mukerjee and Isaac, 1994].

Summing Up

5.11 To sum up, there is clearly an increasing desire among women in Kerala, to takeup gainful employment. The problem is of providing them with adequate opportunities to employ themselves gainfully. The greater such opportunities, the larger will be the number of women coming forward and feeling encouraged to join the state's labour force. Unfortunately the current unemployment situation in the state does not appear to be particularly encouraging.

6 HEALTH

6.1 The demand for health care is governed by a host of factors. Among these the most important are access to medical facilities, levels of income and education, awareness of health issue and cultural attitudes particularly when it comes to women's health. We must also add here women's own perception of their health status and their self-image to seek health care.

6.2 Kerala has an extensive network of medical care institutions practising Allopathic (modern western style of medicine), Ayurveda and Homeopathy. Ayurveda and Homeopathy are very popular among the population of Kerala. Recognising this position, government is committed to encouraging development of institutions under all the three systems, both in private as well as public sectors.

6.3 While sufficiently extensive data relating to health care institutions and manpower in the government sector are published fairly regularly, information for the private sector is not available on that scale or with that regularity. Table 6.1 gives the growth of government medical institutions, under the three systems, in Kerala since 1981.

Table 6.1 : Medical Institutions under the government sector

Year	Allopathy		Ayurveda		Homeopathy	
	No	Index	No	Index	No	Index
1981	981	100	540	100	176	100
1991	1226	125	633	117	342	194
1994	1249	127	686	127	405	230

Source : Economic Review, 1994.

6.4 It can be seen that in terms of numbers, the allopathic health care institutions exceeded by a wide margin from those catering for Ayurveda and Homeopathy in 1981. The number of Allopathic institutions was significantly larger than the combined number of

institutions under the other two systems. During the period, 1981 to 1994, Homeopathic institutions grew faster. Still, allopathic institutions dominate the government sector.

6.5 Each district is served by a district hospital located at district head quarters and having facilities for special care such as gynaecology, paediatrics, ENT, general surgery etc. Each taluk also is having a taluk Primary Health Centre (PHC) hospital. Then there are PHCs functioning in village panchayats. PHC is the core institution of the rural health services infrastructure. Appendix 21 presents the picture with regard to district-wise availability of allopathic infrastructure in the state for 1980-81 and 1990-1991.

6.6 It can be observed that in the state as a whole there were on an average 4.2 allopathic institutions per hundred thousand of population in 1991 as against 3.83 in 1981. The position of practically every district improved during the decade with regard to the availability of these institutions. Only a marginal decline was registered in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam. It is noteworthy that the two out of three districts whose position in this regard is distinctly better than for the state as a whole are Idukki and Wyanad, the districts which are located almost totally in the highland region of the state and which are not as densely populated as the state's midland and coastal regions. People in the highlands have to walk long distances to reach the medical institutions.

6.7 District-wise spread of allopathic institutions per 100 sq. km area, presented in Appendix 22 gives an idea of the accessibility of these institutions. It can be seen that a district like Thiruvananthapuram with a rather low population coverage has the highest area coverage whereas Idukki and Wyanad have the lowest. In other words, there are fewer medical institutions per square kilometre in the latter two districts than in the former.

6.8 A better index of availability of curative facilities however is the ratio of population to hospital beds. Between 1981 and 1991, the number of hospital beds in government institutions increased by 25% and by 1994 the increase was 31% in the state. In 1993-94, there were 1,249 government and government aided allopathic medical institutions in addition to five medical colleges. Together, they had a total bed strength of 49,889 beds.

6.9 Moreover, 107 ayurveda hospitals had a bed strength of 2,309 and 31 homeopathic hospitals 960 beds. The number of bed per hundred thousand population under all the systems of medicine in the government sector was 175. With the beds (65,156) available in the 6,700 private medical institutions in the state also included, the availability of beds would go up to 399 per hundred thousand population.

6.10 As for inter-district availability of hospital beds, for which information is available only for government allopathic institutions, the position is presented in Appendix 23. It may be seen that inter-district divergence is far greater in the matter of beds than institutions. While Kottayam and Thiruvananthapuram districts has the highest bed availability (of over 200 beds per 100,000 population) Kasargod, Malappuram, Idukki, Pathanamthitta and Palakkad have rather low bed availability (of below 100 beds per 100,000 population). These figures relate only to government allopathic institutions without taking into account beds in five medical colleges.

6.11 As regards facilities specially meant for women and children, it ought to be added that there are nine hospitals exclusively for women and children with a bed strength of 2,693. In addition, the number of beds reserved exclusively for women and children in other government hospitals is 2,747, making a total of 5,440.

6.12 It was noted above that the number of private medical institutions and hospital beds in the state exceeds the number of government medical institutions and beds. It was noted also that the inter-district availability of hospital beds in government institutions varies consider-

ably. On the basis of the available information, it is possible to have an idea also of the intersectoral distribution of the facilities in the state not only for government but also for private medical institutions. Table 6.2 presents a rural-urban break up, at the state level, for the available medical facilities, including personnel attached to them, under the three systems of medicine referred to at the outset.

6.13 It is clear that under allopathy the facilities as well as personnel in the government sector are concentrated more in urban areas, while in the private sector the distribution is more even between rural and urban areas. Under the other two systems of medicine, private sector facilities in rural areas are even more significant. Commenting upon this 'Urban Bias' in government health care facilities, the authors of a recent well-known study note that such a bias is pronounced in the case of governmental health care facilities and has implications for the government's policy and planning' (Kannan et al, 1991).

Table 6.2 : Rural / Urban availability of medical facilities by system of medicine.

Category	% of share			
	Government		Private	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
A. Allopathy				
Institutions	86	14	16	34
Doctors	33	67	49	51
Beds	25	75	53	47
Para Medical				
Staff	39	61	51	49
B. Ayurveda				
Institutions	88	12	79	21
Doctors	60	40	77	23
Beds	12	88	79	21
Para Medical				
Staff	54	46	68	32
C. Homeopathy				
Institutions	80	20	80	20
Doctors	66	44	79	21
Beds	26	74	83	17
Para Medical				
Staff	60	40	75	25

Source : Kannan, et al, 1991.

Women and Utilisation of Health System

6.14 While note was taken above of the health infrastructure specially reserved for women and children, it will be wrong to convey the impression that the women's access to or use of unreserved facility is less. Indeed, as can be seen from Table 6.3, women's use of facilities in government hospitals dispensing allopathic medicine is significantly higher than that of men. The table gives the number of inpatients and outpatients treated in government allopathic hospitals.

Table 6.3: Number of patients at government hospitals (allopathic) in Kerala

Year	In patients (100,000)				Out patient (100,000)			
	M	F	Ch	T	M	F	Ch	T
1988-89	4.72	6.58	3.18	14.48	82.10	119.36	80.70	282.16
1989-90	4.81	6.35	3.01	14.17	74.49	119.87	75.10	269.46
1990-91	4.58	6.53	3.16	14.27	74.75	111.17	73.52	259.44
1991-92	4.86	6.66	2.91	14.43	79.32	118.65	76.95	274.92
1992-93	3.98	5.57	2.87	12.47	70.57	91.96	81.16	243.69

Source: Directorate of Health Service, Kerala
M=Male, F=Female, Ch=Children, T=Total.

6.15 Excluding children, for every 1000 male inpatients in the government allopathy hospitals, there were 1400 female inpatients and for every 1000 male outpatients there were 1303 female outpatients in 1992-93, the year in which overall patients' use of government hospital facilities appeared to have registered some decline. It is noteworthy that the use by women of these facilities has significantly exceeded that by men during the five-year period covered in the table.

6.16 As part of 42nd NSS round (July, 86 - June 87), a study was undertaken on the utilisation of medical services and on morbidity. The results of the survey confirmed that the female use of hospital facilities in rural Kerala exceeded the male use (763 thousand men and 784 thousand women were reported as hospitalised during the period). The same survey shows that for the country as a whole male use of hospital facilities far exceeded female use (8427 thousand men as against 6498 thousand women were hospital-

ised). Going by the survey, both male and female use of hospital facilities in Kerala was far in excess of the population ratio of 3.4% to the country. The female use of hospitals, in rural Kerala works out to 12.07%, while male use was 9.05%.

6.17 Does this greater use of hospital facilities in Kerala indicate higher morbidity or greater awareness of and access to these facilities is a question that is currently being discussed. It cannot be overlooked however that Kerala is much better equipped with medical facilities than the rest of the country and these facilities are reasonably well distributed (despite inter-district and inter-sectoral disparities noted above). At the same time, Kerala's population is far more literate than elsewhere in the country and could therefore be considered to be far more sensitive to any abnormalities in health and the need to have them attended to. In this context it is also relevant to bear in mind that the gap in female literacy between Kerala and India is far greater than in male literacy. Of course, one has at the same time to bear in mind that in a state where the proportion of the aged in the population is significantly higher and that too of women, than in the country, the incidence of morbidity, and that too female morbidity, could be high. The link between aging and morbidity is now widely accepted.

6.18 While for the state as a whole female use of hospital facilities is high, there are significant inter-district differences in the female use of the hospital facilities. This comes out from Appendix 24 which gives the number of female hospital patients (both outpatient and inpatient).

6.19 Inter-district differences, as can be seen, in female use of government hospital facilities come out quite sharply when the number of female hospital patients is related to the female population of the concerned district. While for the state as a whole the number of female patients per 1000 population works out to 846 for 1991-92, the number varies between 336 for Wayanad and 359 for Kasargode to 1239 for Kottayam and 1233 for Thiruvananthapuram. In this context, it is necessary to recall that the availability of hospitals in terms of bed-population ratio, is extremely low in districts like Wayanad and Kasargode and quite high in Kottayam and Thiruvananthapuram. So, when one speaks of the role of perception factor in

hospital use one has to remember that this factor is perhaps influenced a lot by the availability of medical facilities.

6.20 A notable achievement in the matter of women's health care in Kerala has been that over 90 per cent of the deliveries take place under institutional care whereas at the country level "even 60 per cent of the deliveries could not be institutionalised so far" (SPB, 1995). With such a high rate of institutional deliveries in Kerala, it should not be surprising that maternal mortality in the state has come down sharply. For every 3000 deliveries, the reported maternal mortality rate is below one (SPB, 1995). Such marked achievement notwithstanding, there still are an inter-district differences that need to be addressed. In Malappuram district as many as 23% of the deliveries are taking place at home; in Wayanad the proportion is 17%.

Child Health Care

6.21 It is necessary to recall here that already the infant mortality rate (IMR) in Kerala has come down sharply along with the decline in the overall mortality rate. The latest IMR for Kerala is 13 per 1000 compared to 79 per 1000 for the country as a whole. Even child mortality rate of 4.6 in Kerala is distinctly below the Indian rate of 26.3 (these figures are for 1990). This achievement would not have been possible but for the attention given to not only prenatal and postnatal care but also child care. One major instrument of covering infants and children against sickness with high incidence of mortality is immunisation. According to an immunization coverage evaluation survey conducted during November-December 1993, while coverage of pregnant women for T.T was 95.6% in the state, the full immunization coverage of children had not been achieved. The overall figures for the state was 76.7%. Also, the coverage in some districts was rather low. In Malappuram the coverage was only 40.49 and in Palakkad and Thrissur 52.89 and 58.45 respectively. The proportion of those not immunized at all for the state was found to be 3.4, with proportion being as high as 15.76 for Malappuram district (see Appendix 25).

Summing Up

6.22 Major highlights of this chapter are that both access and utilization of health care particularly among women is quite high. It is high compared to men in the state and also when compared with women in the rest of the country. The problem that is still rather crucial is really the backward districts, both in terms of births that are not under institutional care, like, for example, in Malappuram and Wayanad, and in infant and childcare. The proportion of children fully immunized in some districts is also apallingly low compared to the state average; Malappuram with 40.4% and Palakkad with 53% immunization coverage are the laggards.

7 HOUSING

7.1 Needless to say, conditions of housing are extremely important for both the physical and mental well being of the family. It is now widely accepted that the poor health status of low income countries is the product of inadequate nutrition, lack of water supply, overcrowded and insanitary housing conditions. These conditions are conducive to the prevalence of deficiency diseases, airborne diseases, faecally related and water-borne diseases which dominate the morbidity pattern in less developed countries [Panickar & Soman, 1984]. The incidence of these diseases can be particularly high among women and children, both the categories being far more homebound than adult men.

7.2 In this chapter we discuss various aspects related to housing. (a) What is the housing scenario like in Kerala? (b) What are the basic amenities available to households in Kerala in terms of potable drinking water, sanitation facilities and clean environment?

7.3 The housing sector in Kerala has witnessed an unprecedented growth in the last three decades. During the three decades, 1960 to 1990, the housing stock in the state increased from 2.8 million to 5.5 million, virtually doubling itself in this period [Augusty, 1995]. The growth in housing outpaced population growth by a wide margin. A combination of factors, most importantly, grant of ownership of land to hutment dwellers, the migration of workers to the Gulf and their remittances, and the changing notion of family and organisation of domestic space contributed to this substantial increase in housing stock in the state. It was as a result of this increase in housing stock that the housing shortage in the state was reduced sharply.

Table 7.1 : Housing available in Kerala by nature of construction

Type of Structures	Percentage of dwelling (rural)	
	Kerala	India
Pucca (permanent)	53.43	37.72
Semi-Pucca	22.06	29.77
Kutchha (thatched)	24.51	32.51
All	100.00	100.00

Source : Sarvekshana, Jan-Mar, 1992.

The estimated numerical shortage that stood at 1,56,000 in 1981 was brought down to 54,000 by 1991, [SPB, 1995]. The resulting improvement is somewhat misleading however because it does not take into account the quality of housing stock.

Quality of Housing

7.4 As we have seen in table 7.1 of the stock of houses in Kerala, 46% are thatched (Kutchha) or of semi-permanent nature. This proportion is significantly below the corresponding figures of 63% for India. However, out of the thatched huts in the state 50 percent are considered substandard and unfit for safe human living. In addition about five per cent of the other existing houses need to be reconstructed or undergo major repairs. If the number of substandard

huts and other houses that need to undergo reconstruction or major repairs are also added to the estimated numerical shortage, the total additional demand for housing in Kerala works out to 0.87 million in 1991 (see Table 7.2).

Table 7.2 : Housing shortage in Kerala, 1991.

	in thousand
1. Numerical Shortage (no. of households minus no of houses)	54
2. Substandard huts needing reconstruction	550
3. Houses requiring major repair-cum- reconstruction	<u>270</u>
	874

Source : Economic Review, 1994.

7.5 As can be seen close to one-quarter of the houses in Kerala belong to the category of what are called 'Kutchas' dwellings, built out of mud, reeds, bamboos, grass etc. For the country as a whole, one-third of the shelters are of this type. In urban Kerala around four percent of the households live in slums, while the percentage for urban India is 15. It is important to bear in mind that shelters of this type require reconstruction at fairly frequent intervals.

7.6 One of the major drawbacks of the Kutchas houses is the roofing material used, which, in Kerala, is made of thatched coconut palms. They need to be constantly replaced, and are thereby a recurring source of expense for a poor family. They allow for many leaks in the rainy weather, get eaten up by vermin and even get infested by snakes. Also, they catch fire easily. Until as recently as 1970 roofing was a major problem since only a very small proportion of houses in Kerala had tiled roofs. A major change however has taken place since then. By 1980, 35 per cent of the houses of even rural labourers had tiled roofs [DES, 1985].

7.7 In terms of space, the average number of "living rooms" per dwelling unit in Kerala is reported to be 2.73 and 2.79 in rural and urban areas respectively. The corresponding figures for India are 1.80 and 1.77 respectively. Presumably, in Kerala housing provides scope for greater privacy than in India and this is so in spite of the

fact that Kerala is far more densely populated and consequently far more land-short than the rest of the country.

Availability of Drinking Water

7.8 It is estimated that almost 80% of the diseases in the world are water borne or water related [Murugan, 1994]. The availability of, and access to, protected drinking water is very important if the morbidity level within a community is to be brought down. Also, easy access to safe water reduces the demand on women's time and energy. For households not having the facility of piped water for drinking and other purposes, fetching water becomes a major task for women. If water is available in the vicinity of the house then the women are relieved of a great burden.

7.9 There are conflicting claims, however, with respect to the latest position with regard to the availability of drinking water in Kerala. Going by latest official claims, access to protected drinking water has been provided to 44% of the rural population and 65% of the urban population. At the same time, it is conceded that only 0.46 million out of 5.5 million houses in the state (i.e less than 10%) were connected with piped water supply by October, 1994. Consequently the vast majority of the households have to depend upon public taps, called stand posts, to meet their requirement of water.

7.10 A recent independent study of rural water supply in the state shows that 17.2% of the rural population in the state is not covered by any drinking water supply programme, 69% are partially covered and only 13.8% are fully covered. Also out of the 82.8% (69% + 13.8%) of the rural population provided with at least one public source of potable water, only 32% can be considered as covered, going by the norm of 250 persons per stand post. Further, out of the 32% only 19% of the rural population actually uses this public source. According to this study Kerala has the lowest user rate among states. The reasons given for the low user rate are longer travel distances as a result of settlement pattern in the state, low per capita daily availability with uncertainty in supply and pattern and extent of urbanisation. The study concludes that at the current rate of coverage 21 more years would be required to attain the norm-based full coverage of the state's rural population [Pushpangadan, 1995].

7.11 The demand for drinking water in rural Kerala is thus largely met by open wells. According to a recent health survey in rural Kerala, for 60 percent of the households, water is available within their premises as a result of large number of private wells, for another 40 per cent it is available within a radius of one kilometre.

7.12 In spite of the large number of wells and their easy accessibility, in many of the wells, the water table lowers considerably during the summer season. This problem is faced by virtually 60% of the wells in the laterite regions of the state [Varma, 1994]. Another problem faced by the people in the coastal belt is salinity intrusion into the rivers [Namboodiripad, 1994]. It is also reported that the supply from this source, especially in the northern districts, is not perennial and they go dry for two to three months during summer season. Since a substantial proportion of the households still resort to open defecation, the soil gets contaminated heavily with faecally transmitted organism and parasite ova. This poses a great danger of water contamination of not only water streams and ponds, but also of unprotected wells during raining periods. Even wells in loose sandy terrain are not safe on account of seepage through subsoil.

7.13 Leaving out those rural households with access to water from public taps, for a small proportion, the source of water is none other than rivers, tanks and ponds, a source which is usually considered unsafe drinking water. In urban Kerala, although the situation is better than in rural Kerala, still roughly 45% of the population do not have access to tap water and depend on wells and their problems are almost the same as of the people in rural Kerala who rely on wells for water. Even those with access to piped water in urban areas have started facing shortages, especially during summer months, because urban water supply systems have not been expanding fast enough, to cope with the growth of urban population.

7.14 The present overall situation with regard to the inadequate availability of water, particularly in rural Kerala, has implications for not only the demand on women's time and energy but also the health of the population directly affected. During 1990-91 there were 905,000 cases of cholera, acute diarrhoea etc. and 224

deaths due to such water-borne diseases in the state. With only 19% of the state's rural population actually using public sources of protected drinking water, it should not be surprising that the incidence of water-borne diseases in the state is rather high.

7.15 Appendix 26 presents the picture of district-wise availability of protected water and incidence of water-borne diseases. It can be seen that districts inadequately served with water supply are generally the ones with high incidence of water-borne diseases. Malappuram district in the north typifies this situation.

Waste Disposal

7.16 Those who do not have sanitation facility use open space in their own compounds or outside for defecation. In rural Kerala the proportion of such households is 56% and in urban areas 43%. These are rather high proportions.

7.17 Nearly half the households in the state do not have any arrangement for disposal of waste water and there is generally no conscious effort in the proper disposal of solid waste. Seventy per cent of the households simply throw away their solid waste. Around one-fifth of the households either burn it or convert it into manure [Kannan, et.al, 1991].

7.18 The question of disposal of sewage is a major problem facing the state. It is estimated that around 3500 MLD of domestic sewage is generated by its inhabitants. The nutrient break of value is 700 tonnes of organic carbon, 175 tones of nitrogen and 35 tones of phosphorus. Less than one per cent of this sewage is treated in sewage treatment plants. Thiruvananthapuram and Cochin are the only cities having sewage treatment plants where the sewage is partially treated and discharged into the ocean or backwater. Ninety percent of the sewage generated by the community reach the surface or ground water either directly or through land. It is reported that the Kerala coast is the worst polluted area along the Indian coast.

Electricity and Fuel

7.19 Twenty seven percent of the houses in rural India and 75% in urban India have access

to electricity. In Kerala the position is better since households are residing in electrified dwellings account for 42%. In urban Kerala however, the position is some what worse than for urban India, as a whole, with 70% of the state's urban houses having access to electricity.

7.20 In Indian homes, particularly those in rural areas, electricity if available, is mainly used for lighting. For cooking, the use of electricity is very minimal, in rural areas at least. There, even "a large number of economically better off households still use cooking devices which are primitive using firewood and other agricultural wastes and the heat and smoke emitted by such devices are a hazard to the household members, especially women." [Kannan, et al., 1991]. According to the 1991 survey, the type of fuel used for cooking in the rural houses is overwhelmingly (96%) firewood and that too in traditional wood burning stoves. The use of modern heat efficient, smoke reducing, wood burning stove is very marginal. Percentage of urban households resorting to this type of fuel in Kerala is reported to be 40.

Summing Up

7.21 Clearly, in the field of housing and related facilities the scope for improvement is enormous in Kerala, starting with housing itself. Given the fact that women of Kerala are very much home-bound and continue to engage primarily in traditional household activities, reproductive and productive, improvement of housing and housing facilities has to be high on the agenda for women's amelioration.



8 POVERTY

8.1 In this chapter we discuss the major antipoverty schemes under implementation from the point of view of the benefits accruing to poor women. Estimates of households living in poverty in the state differ considerably. All the same, the problem of poverty and its female dimension are far too important to be sidelined on that score.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

8.2 IRDP is one of the major anti-poverty schemes currently being implemented. This is a centrally sponsored scheme, funded by the centre and states on 50:50 basis and is intended to assist families identified as poor. The programme has been given a prominent place in successive five year plans. The objective being to assist identified poor families in the rural areas to cross poverty line by taking up self-employment ventures, the programme aims at providing income generating assets, including working capital wherever necessary, to the target group families through package of assistance comprising subsidy and institutional credit. So, identification of target families is a major first task to be undertaken for the implementation of this programme. For this purpose, a cut off point of household income was necessary to work out.

Poverty Line

8.3 The poverty line is defined by the Planning Commission on the basis of a per capita norm of 2400 calories per day in rural areas as the average requirement. The consumption expenditure level at which the average calories intake meets this norm is defined as poverty line. The N.S.S. household consumption expenditure surveys were used, with a cut off point of Rs.6000 income, to identify the poor households. However poverty programmes had to first aim at the poorest of the poor who would be identified by an annual household income of

Rs.4800 which was substantially lower than the cut off point of Rs.6000.

8.4 Going by this norm, at 1991-92 prices a family with an annual income of Rs.11000 or less was considered to be below the poverty line. In order to ensure timely assistance to the poorest of the poor families, the next cut off line suggested is Rs.8500.

8.5 For the purposes of identification of families eligible for assistance under the programme a comprehensive household survey was conducted in 1990. This list of identified families falling below the poverty line has been published in each block.

8.6 The survey revealed that out of four million rural households in Kerala 1.8 million rural families were below the poverty line. In proportionate terms, 44.6% of the families in rural Kerala could thus be considered as living below the poverty line in 1990. This is, however, considerably higher than the estimate of the Expert Group of the National Planning Commission for households below poverty line in rural Kerala.

8.7 According to state-wise estimates of population below the poverty line worked out by the Expert Group appointed by the National Planning Commission, the proportion for rural Kerala in 1987-88 was 29.10% as against 39.06% for India. The Expert Group adopted a standardised commodity basket at the national level that would meet the normal calorie requirement of 2400 calories per person per day and then valued it at prices prevailing in different states to work out state specific poverty lines.

8.8 The two estimates of the proportion of rural households below the poverty line, that of the survey by state authorities and that attempted by the Planning Commission's Expert Group diverge considerably. The latter's estimate of 29.14% is lower than the former's 44.6% by a big margin of 15.5%.

District-wise Poverty Level

8.9 In Appendix 27 is presented district-wise distribution of the rural households below the poverty line separately for SCs, STs and the rest of the population. As can easily be seen, the overall proportion varies between 3.0% in Wynad to 11.4% in Thiruvananthapuram and 10.4% in Kollam. Trichur (9.8%), Malappuram (9.6%), Kozhikode (9.3%) and Palakkad (8.5%) are other districts with high proportion of the state total. Six districts account for almost 60% of the rural families identified in the state as below the poverty line. One has to remember, however that the concentration varies between districts when one considers the poor among SCs and STs, particularly the latter. Thus Wynad with the lowest proportion of the state's poor has the largest proportion of the tribal poor, followed by Idikki and Palakkad.

Women Beneficiaries

8.10 While no separate information is available of the breakup of the families below the poverty line by gender of head of family, it should be reasonably safe to assume that the bulk of the female headed families would have fallen in this category of those below the poverty line. It is therefore pertinent to ask to what extent major anti-poverty programmes address the problems of women in poverty.

8.11 As already stated, the rural families identified as falling below the poverty line constitute the target group of the IRDP. The group consists of small farmers, marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans and others whose annual income is below the cut off line. Under this programme 50% of the beneficiaries should be from among SC and ST families, atleast 40% of the total beneficiaries should be women and 3% physically handicapped. Priority is to be given to female headed households.

8.12 IRDP assistance consists of subsidy towards financial loans from the banks. The assistance by way of subsidy under the scheme is fixed for each family according to certain norms. The maximum subsidy allowed under the scheme to a family is Rs.4,000. For SC/ST and physically handicapped families the amount of subsidy could go up to Rs.6000.

8.13 Between 1980-81 and 1993-94 a total of 1.2 million families in the state have been assisted under this scheme. In 1992-93, out of the total of 50,517 families assisted 23,770 (47%) were reported to be women beneficiaries. However, the average financial assistance (bank loan plus subsidy) extended per female beneficiary works out to 81% of that extended to a male beneficiary.

Consequently, the proportion of financial assistance to women works out to 42% of the total.

Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)

8.14 This particular programme is a sub-scheme of IRDP. The emphasis under this programme is specifically to encourage and organise groups of women to take up income generating activities. In Kerala the scheme was launched in 1983-84 in Palakkad and Wyanad districts. Six more districts were added subsequently. The scheme is being implemented at present in 8 districts viz Thiruvananthapuram, Alapuzha, Idukki, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wyanad, and Kannur.

8.15 To attain the objectives of the programme the following strategies are adopted:

- a) Creating of employment opportunities of rural women below the poverty line by providing skills, vocational training, which enhances productivity in their existing vocations or enable them to take up new activities so far not undertaken.
- b) Organising women beneficiaries in groups.
- c) Providing facilities for the children of working women by improved environment, care and food by establishing creches, balawadis etc.

8.16 Ten to fifteen women could join together for an economic activity of mutual interest to all and form a group. In addition to the IRDP financial assistance of subsidy - cum - bank loan, the assistance available to the group is Rs.15,000 as one time grant contributed equally by the central government, state government, and UNICEF. The amount should be used as (i)

revolving fund for purchase of raw materials and marketing (ii) honorarium to the group organiser which may not exceed Rs.50 per month for one year (iii) infrastructure support for income generating activities and (iv) one time expenditure in child care facilities.

8.17 From the inception of the scheme in 1983-84 till 1992-93 a total number of 1,510 groups consisting of 20,461 women have been provided with assistance under this scheme. However the proportion of SC and ST women among the beneficiaries has been only 38 %, which is considerably lower than the 50% targeting of these groups prescribed under IRDP. Questions have also been raised in evaluation studies of the DWCRA projects about their viability and sustainability due to lack of infrastructure and market support on the one hand and lack of adequate skills and motivation by participant women on the other (Haque, 1994).

Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment. (TRYSEM)

8.18 This scheme was started in 1979 to complement IRDP. Its aim is to provide technical skills to rural youth from families below poverty line so that they can take up self employment ventures. The target group comprises rural youth between the ages of 13-35. A minimum of 50% of those trained have to be SC/ST and a minimum of 40% women. Also, there is a minimum target of 3% for physically handicapped persons. The strategy followed is that the identified youths will be helped to undergo a period of training, of six months either with a training institution or under a master craftsman, for acquiring necessary technical skills. Trainees are eligible for stipends and a free tool kit after completion of training. The duration of the training depends on the nature of the trade. On successful completion of training, the trainee is entitled for getting assistance from IRDP, for the acquisition of an income generating asset.

8.19 The number trained, in the state under TRYSEM during four years, 1990-91 to 1993-94 adds up to 26,251, of whom the proportion of women was 51.3%, i.e higher than the target of 40% although the proportion of SC/ST trainees was only 38.6% which is far below the target of 50%. The official documents also give informa-

tion of the proportion of trainees helped to settle down in self-employment or wage employment. For the four-year period the proportion thus settled works out to 66.6%. Unfortunately no gender or caste breakup is provided of those settled. It is not possible to say therefore whether or not the women trained under the scheme could be helped in sufficient proportion to settle down in self-employment or wage employment.

Women's Industries Programme

8.20 With a view to promoting small scale industries in the state, the state government offers several incentives. Industrial units with investment of upto Rs.6 million on machinery and equipments are treated as small scale industries. In order to encourage women entrepreneurs to start small scale industries, the state government is implementing a special scheme known as "Women's Industries Programme." A small scale unit registered in the name of a woman and employing workers, 80% of whom are women, is eligible for assistance under this scheme. Some of the special incentives available for women's industrial units:

- (i) Grant of 50% for the construction of the building for the unit with a ceiling of Rs 25,000.
- (ii) If setup in a rented building, a cent percent grant up to a ceiling of Rs.500 towards rent.
- (iii) Grant of 50%, towards investment on machinery with a ceiling of Rs. 25,000.
- (iv) Managerial grant.

In addition, incentives like exemption from sales tax for the first 7 years and training at government expense for six months to women managers and entrepreneurs are also available.

8.21 According to the latest available information, of the 110,384 registered small scale industries units in the state, 14,742 (13.3%) were women's units. Lately, it appears that the proportion of newly registered women's units is on the increase. In 1993-94 out of 14,533 units newly registered, 3,742 (25.7%) were units run by women.

8.22 As was noted above a women's industrial unit has to have 80 % of its workers as women. On the basis of average number of workers per industrial unit, it can be said that, on an average, five women should have got employment in a women's industrial unit. On that basis, more than 73,000 women should have been employed in all the women industrial units together, currently registered in the state.

Summing Up

8.23 Going by the state's estimates of families below the poverty line, the problem of poverty is serious in Kerala. Equally important is to note that there is a clear regional dimension to this problem with the incidence of poverty higher in some districts than other. While discussing the major poverty alleviation schemes, currently under implementation in the state, it comes out that though targets are set for women, they are often not fully reached.

9

HOUSEHOLDS

9.1 The population of Kerala is distributed over 5.5 million households, with an average household size of 5.28. While, as can be seen from the *Appendix 28*, there are inter-district variations, the household size seems to be distinctly large in the northern districts of Malappuram, Kannur and Kasargode. This could be due, among other things, to the persistence of joint families, and the overseas migration of men in large numbers, especially to the Gulf.

Family type

9.2 From the distribution of households by family type in Kerala, it would appear that the nuclear family of husband, wife and unmarried children accounts for 45% of the families. Only 13% of the households in Kerala live in joint families. Only 3.2% of the households belong to the category of women who live as single members. This is a category which too comes under the broader category of female headed families but most female headed families are not single member families. In Kerala 19.4% of the households, (i.e every fifth household) were headed by a woman in 1981 and the trend seems to be that slowly but steadily the proportion is increasing from one census period to the next. Between 1961 and 1981, this proportion had increased from 16.45% to 19.37%.

Female Headed Households

9.3 The Indian census has been collecting data regarding the households headed by males and females since 1961. The census defines the head of the household as basically a person on whom falls the chief responsibility for the economic maintenance of the family.

9.4 Households become female headed for a variety of reasons. Female headedness can be temporary or permanent and the implications

for the family are quite different in the two cases. While some households become temporarily female headed due to migration, the reasons for a household becoming permanently female headed are largely death, desertion or divorce of the male member of the household.

9.5 Houses headed by women who may be widows, divorced, or deserted (or even unmarried mothers) shoulder the main earning responsibility for the family. These are usually women who are forced by their particular circumstance to take on this role and are neither trained nor experienced in the economic activity they take to. The greater the responsibility a woman in these circumstances has to shoulder, the more exposed she is to exploitation. Such female headed families are generally the poorest of the poor. On the other hand, temporarily femaleheaded households, where women are not strictly single parents, they may have the migrant husband contributing partially or fully to the running of the family. No doubt, they still have to face problems of managing the family affairs almost on their own. But there is a qualitative as well as quantitative difference between the two types of female headedness.

9.6 The extent of female headedness in Kerala (19.37%) is much higher than what it is for the country as a whole (8.0%). There could be several factors contributing towards this. Most important among these are perhaps the persistence of matrilineal tradition, higher female literacy rates, greater access of women to property and regular work, and larger incidence of ageing and widowhood in Kerala. In recent years, male migration has also become an important factor.

9.7 An important aspect of female headedness in Kerala is that urban areas have a relatively much higher concentration of female headed families when compared with rural areas. This can be seen from Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 : Incidence of Female Headed Households in Kerala, 1961-81.

Type of area	Percentage		
	1961	1971	1981
Rural	16.23	17.09	19.13
Urban	17.87	18.49	20.46
Total	16.44	17.37	19.36

Source : Census of Kerala, 1961, 1971, 1981 - Kerala Series

9.8 The districts of Kerala vary quite widely in the incidence of female headed households (see Appendix 29). The district of Kannur has the highest proportion of households headed by women followed by Palakkad, Kollam, Malappuram and Kozhikode. In other districts the incidence of female headedness was below 20% in 1981. It is noteworthy that three out of these four districts are in the north. It is believed that a large number of families in northern districts still follow matrilineal tradition and also face a high incidence of male out-migration.

Female headedness by occupation and religion

9.9 A study based on data collected in 1987-88 for a project on cost of cultivation confirms the 1981 census finding of high incidence of female headedness in the state. This study reports that a very substantial proportion of female heads of households belong to the occupational categories associated with low income. It found that 49% female heads studied were engaged as agricultural or daily wage labourer, 27.8% were cultivators, 14.14% were engaged in retail trade and 8.4% were in government service [Varghese, 1994].

9.10 According to the same study, the proportion of female headed households in Kerala was the highest among Muslims (27.82%) followed by Hindus (24.15%) and Christians (14.6%). A survey conducted in the two regions of Neyyattinkara taluk of Thiruvananthapuram district also showed that Muslim households had more female heads.

9.11 It is necessary to take note here of the view point that the census figures tend to report only de jure female heads, i.e those who are widowed, deserted / divorced or separated and do not fully take cognisance of the fact that in several other households also, the household is maintained and supported principally out of female earnings. But do women in these households exercise much control in decision making and family management is the question. According to the survey in Neyyattinkara, around 65% of the sample households were found to survive on female earnings. However, in only 32% of the households did the women "possess the power of financial management and decision making."

Summing Up

9.12 All in all, note has to be taken that in Kerala this phenomenon of female headedness, however narrowly defined, is considerably more pronounced than in the country. Also, it has a clear regional-cum-religious dimension. At the same time, a distinction will have to be drawn, for policy purposes, between those households which are permanently female headed and those whose female headedness is only temporary, caused principally by male emigration. The former category of households would require the creation of special support mechanisms very different than the latter category.

10

WOMEN'S ROLE IN MOVEMENTS AND POLITICS

10.1 Historically, women's issues did figure on the agenda of the several reform movements in Kerala. The contents and focus of these movements were defined by the agitating group or community, given their separate rules and regulations. Most of these movements focussed however on the reform of laws relating to marriage and property. Also, in the major organised actions for better working conditions and wages, industries which employed women in large numbers figured prominently.

10.2 The leadership, be it in social reform movements or in organised industrial actions, remained predominantly male. While women's participation at the point of organised action was, *"actively sought and secured, women were not incorporated into the important levels of leadership and decision making."* [Kannan, 1988].

10.3 The question we would like to raise here is how active women are in the movements and politics of today. On a little reflection, this simple question raises a whole gamut of questions. Are women in Kerala still active participants in organised actions and what is their access to positions of leadership and authority? How active is women's participation in politics? Do they take part actively in elections and campaigns? Do they stand for elections and elected offices? Or do they still remain largely in the background? What are women's issues at present and what sort of organisations have come up to take the issues up and with what priorities?

Participation in Politics

10.4 Women's participation in politics in Kerala is low and no different from the rest of the country. A common explanation offered to explain this relatively low participation by women is that their family responsibilities come in their way. Is this purely a male defence

offered in rationalising the phenomenon, and to cover the pervasive male dominance? Whatever the answer, the fact remains that when opportunities in the world outside have come their way, women have not been found wanting in taking them up. In taking to education and professional work in Kerala women have not been far behind men.

10.5 In politics too, going by their participation in the elections to local bodies, state assembly and parliament, it cannot be said that women of Kerala prefer to be mute witnesses to the political processes. On the contrary, going by the numbers in which they turn out for electioneering and to cast vote in various elections, women's participation can quite justifiably be described as active. In practically every recent election in the state, the proportion of votes cast by women has been around 50 per cent. Still, the proportion of women among those contesting the elections and getting elected, has tended to be extremely small.

10.6 In the present state assembly, elections to which were held in 1991, the number of women is a mere eight in a house of 141. In 1957, their number was seven in a house of 121. Of the twenty elected representatives from the state to parliament's lower house, Lok Sabha, only two are women.

10.7 The women's representation in the state cabinet has also remained rather nominal. In the present cabinet of twenty there is only one woman minister. Important portfolios have often gone to men. The exception has been the Left in that whenever it was in power in the state, one of its major portfolios was held by a woman, K.R.Gowri, who also held an important position in the party hierarchy. She was even spoken of as a likely nominee of her party as the state's Chief Minister, should the Left win the elections, which it did not.

10.8 While a handful of women in Kerala have reached the top it has been possible only by their sheer grit and determination. These have been isolated cases without reflecting any easing of women's entry into the higher echelons of political leadership in parties or government. That women have held high positions in the State's judiciary and bureaucracy and in larger proportions, goes to show only that wherever opportunity is available women of the state tend to take its full advantage. In politics, the doors to higher positions have so far been virtually closed to them. Some openings have lately surfaced however, thanks to the recent amendments to the Indian Constitution requiring minimum one-third representation to women in local bodies, and among their elected office holders.

District Councils

10.9 It is worth recalling that the Kerala State Assembly enacted a legislation in 1989 providing for 30% reservation for women in the District Councils. In the elections to these councils in 1990, the number of actually elected women members constituted 34% of the total.

10.10 According to the major findings of a survey of these elected women, while all were literate, 51% were graduates and 13% had post graduate qualifications. It is noteworthy that practically all these elected women read one newspaper or more daily (94% read two or more newspapers). Thus all the women members of District Councils felt obliged to keep themselves fully informed of the events, political, social or economic, in the state and did not permit their family responsibilities to come in their way, at least not in this regard.

10.11 Very soon, after elections due in September 1995, new Panchayati Raj institutions, including District Panchayats, will start functioning in the state. Women will be represented at all the three levels, and will also have due numbers among elected office holders. This will give them an opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness and participation in governance. It will also then demonstrate the difference in the quality of governance with the participation of women. One thing is certain that if the earlier experience with the elections to District Councils is any guide, the political parties should have little difficulty in picking up

educated women as their candidates to various local bodies in Kerala.

Organisations and Movements

10.12 As was stated at the outset, women have, in the past been drawn into various movements in the State. Their participation however had been more as followers and less as leaders. They played a marginal role in decision making, with leadership almost exclusively in male hands. Even the present situation is not very different. Table 10.1 gives the membership of women in four major trade unions in the state and their representation in the state executives.

10.13 It is clear that the representation of women at the state level is far below what their number in these organisations would warrant. This, as can be seen, is no less true of the unions representing teachers as of those representing workers. The membership of women in KSTA, the major union representing teachers, is more than that of men. Still in the state level executive, there are only eight women out of a total of 75. Here, it should be added that the bye laws of the organisations require atleast 10% of the total members of the apex body should be women.

10.14 There is no dearth of organisations of women functioning in Kerala. Statistics collected in 1987 reportedly showed that almost 50,000 Mahila Samajams (women's associations) were participating in the various government schemes. These associations come up with a view to tapping funds which become available under different government schemes. Their number is impressive indeed but it is not certain that all of these are genuinely involved in the advancement of women's causes. The leadership of these groups, its competence or motivation is not always above suspicion and their viability is uncertain. When government funds become unavailable for some reason these associations become defunct in no time.

10.15 In addition, there are other non-governmental organisations which, though not exclusively devoted to women's issues, are known to have taken up women's issues in the state. One such organisation is Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), also known as People's Science Movement, which organised health camps for women in different parts of the state. The same

organisation successfully led the Total Literacy Campaign in the state in the late 1980's and could mobilize volunteers, mostly women, to work untiringly for the purpose so that by early 1991 Kerala became the first state in India to achieve formally total literacy.

10.16 While KSSP's reach extends to practically the whole of the state there are organisations whose geographical reach is not that extensive but who too are attending to women's issues and concerns within their limited resources and restricted reach.

10.17 People's Community Organisation, PCO, focusses on fishermen and women. Abhaya, an organisation set up in 1985, and born out of a deep concern for mental patients, runs a short stay and rehabilitation home for women in distress. SEWA, an organisation of self employed women functioning in Thiruvananthapuram since 1983, helps women members become more self supporting through training, loans, legal aid etc.

10.18 Lately, the anti-liquor campaign by local rural women in Kerala has attracted wide notice. Vypeen island achieved notoriety in 1982, when 70 persons died and 24 lost eye sight after consuming adulterated alcohol. In 1994, women of the island got together and started agitating against liquor and toddy shop complex located close to a temple and primary school. They picketed the complex to prevent menfolk from going in and the picketing has continued for several months, achieving reasonable success. In a few other villages of the state also similar agitations by local women have produced positive results.

Summing UP

10.19 While such local level agitations spring up from time to time under the leadership of local women in different parts of the state to fight against local injustices, it is probably still true that no major movement has taken shape at the state level to voice the specific concerns of women. Although the immediate concerns of Kerala's women may not be quite the same as in the rest of India (for example, dowry deaths and *sati* or immolation of widows are two major issues in the northern parts of the country but not in Kerala), the fact remains that even for

Kerala's women concerns about violence, rape, gender discrimination in wages and employment are as serious as in the other parts of the country. Women's organisations and movements will be needed therefore as much in Kerala as elsewhere in India and they will need to be supported. It will not be enough to have many more women participating hereafter in local bodies as elected members and office holders. Indeed, active socially motivated women's non-government organisations could become a source of great strength to the elected women members of the local bodies in their pursuit of women's causes.

11 APPENDIX

11.1 It is generally recognised that the performance of Kerala in respect of various socio-demographic indicators has been exemplary despite its income level being quite low. In terms of percapita income Kerala ranks in the lower half of the Indian states. Also, Kerala has lagged behind in terms of economic growth. Between 1980-81 and 1990-91 Kerala's growth rate was almost half the national growth rate.

11.2 Within the state however, all the districts have not fared equally well even in socio-demographic indicators, particularly those relating to women. For meaningful interventions, it is necessary to isolate the backward districts and identify the gaps in their performance.

11.3 With this objective in mind we have identified a few major indicators, for which

disaggregated data with respect to women, are available, under four broad areas, of reproductive health, health care, education and employment. Strictly speaking, employment would be considered as a major index for economic activity but we thought it necessary to include it as an indicator because of its close implications for socio-demographic progress. The districts are ranked according to their performance in respect of different indicators.

11.4 Under reproductive health, the indicators chosen are birth rate and couple protection rate. Under health, we have chosen the ratio of hospital beds to population and the utilization of hospital facilities by women patients. Under education, level of female literacy is the only indicator we have chosen to rank districts. Under employment, the indicator chosen is that of female work participation in conjunction with per capita income.

Table 11.1 Inter-District differences in Reproductive Health and Health Care.

District	Birth rate per 1000 population (1988)	Couple Protection Rate % 1994	Hosp. beds per 100,000 persons 1992-93	Female patients treated per 1000 women (1992-93)				
	rank	rank	rank	rank				
TVM	20.5	11	75.4	1	224	2	1233	2
KLM	16.1	3	71.7	3	88	11	882	5
PTA	17.3	5	58.6	8	143	7	737	9
ALP	14.8	1	68.4	4	226	1	1012	3
KTM	16.8	4	73.5	2	217	3	1239	1
IDK	17.9	6	51.2	10	79	12	718	10
EKM	15.8	2	68.4	5	159	5	938	4
THR	18.7	7	67.7	6	152	6	808	7
PKD	18.9	8	44.0	13	94	10	824	6
MLP	28.4	14	43.3	14	67	13	638	12
KZD	20.0	10	63.6	7	162	4	769	8
WYD	19.4	9	50.8	11	114	8	336	14
KNN	25.2	12	58.6	9	102	9	670	11
KGD	26.8	13	45.4	12	60	14	359	13
STATE	20.3	60.9	140	846				

Reproductive Health

11.5 Table 10.1 rank the districts according to their performance in the areas of reproductive health and health care. The major point that emerges in regard to reproductive health is that districts differ rather sharply in their birth rates. Three districts of Malappuram, Kasargod and Kannur have birth rates that are way above the state average. The couple protection rate is rather low in the districts of Malappuram, Palakkad and Kasargode. It is well below the state average. The inter-district differences in the IMR are particularly large in Wyanad, Palakkad and Idukki. A combination of factors like high neo-natal death, low coverage of immunization and lack of institutional help during child births probably contribute to their differences.

Health Care

11.6 Access to health facilities seems to be quite low in districts where IMR and birth rates are high. The district of Malappuram, which ranked worst in terms of high birth rate, and low couple protection rate is also the district with very low bed-population rate and the lowest female hospital utilisation rate. Very nearly the same is the case of Kasargode. The connection between the reproductive health performance and the accessibility of medical services cannot be missed in the case of those two districts. In terms of utilization, the state average of 846 women patients per 1000 female population is itself quite high by any standard but some districts like Kottayam, Thiruvananthapuram and Allapuzha seem to do even better in the use made by women of the facilities but Kasargode and Malappuram are distinctly behind in the matter of both access and utilization of health care facilities by women.

Table 11.2 : Inter-district differences in Illiteracy, Work participation and per capita income.

Districts	Female illiteracy rate (%) [*] (1991)		Female work participation rate (1993) %		Female Registrants As percentage of female population (1993)		Per capita income (1991-92) (Rs)	
	rank	rate	rank	rate	rank	rate	rank	rate
TVM	14.2	6	15.5	7	24.7	1	4567	10
KLM	13.0	9	17.0	6	16.8	3	4613	8
PTA	6.7	13	12.4	11	15.8	5	4782	4
MLP	8.9	12	21.9	3	16.8	4	4725	6
KTM	6.0	14	5.1	14	18.2	2	4775	5
IDK	17.0	4	23.8	1	10.8	8	6122	2
EKM	10.7	11	15.3	8	15.3	6	7212	1
THR	13.1	8	17.9	6	11.9	7	4660	7
PKD	24.3	1	23.1	4	8.9	10	3663	13
MLP	15.9	5	8.7	13	4.8	14	2688	14
KZD	13.2	7	9.0	12	10.2	9	4609	9
WYD	22.3	3	23.7	2	8.7	11	4841	3
KNN	12.3	10	13.8	9	8.7	12	4239	12
KGD	23.7	2	20.9	5	5.2	13	4273	11
KERALA	13.8	15.85	13.1					

* figures relate to population of women aged six years and above.

Literacy

11.7 The backward districts of Kerala have also a lot of catching up to do in regard to female literacy also. It can be seen from table 11.2 that in Palakkad, Kasargode and Wayanad female illiteracy is almost twice as high as in the state as a whole. Wayanad, it has to be noted, ranks high in terms of per capita income. Also, in three other districts, including surprisingly Thiruvananthapuram and Idukki both with per capita income higher than for the state, illiteracy is greater than the state average. With some of the districts with relatively high per capita income also showing rather high level of female illiteracy, the question does arise about the possibility of pockets within such districts that have not benefited adequately from the facilities or have not had easy access to them and therefore requiring special attention. This could be true, in particular, of the tribal communities in Wayanad and Idukki.

Employment

11.8 Female work participation no doubt is low for the state as a whole, still there are significant inter-district differences. One known explanation for higher female work participation in some districts is their cropping pattern. Idukki

and Wayanad are the two districts with concentration of plantation crops for which female labour is employed in a large proportion. In Palakkad and Alappuzha districts, paddy cultivation dominates and there again female labour plays a major role. However, even in districts where female work participation is low, the desire to participate in work is high. Kottayam is the district with the lowest female work participation but is also the district where female registration ratio is close to the highest. It is also the district with the lowest level of female illiteracy. Districts like Malappuram and Kasargode, with quite high female work participation rates have rather low registration ratios but high illiteracy rates. These are the sort of connections that one has to bear in mind whatever the focus of an intervention.

Summing Up

Whichever be the area of policy intervention, the fact of substantial inter-district differences in Kerala in regard to women's health, literacy or employment will have to be borne in mind in order to ensure that districts (and even pockets within districts) which have, for some reason, fallen behind are helped to catch up with those that have gone ahead.

Appendix 1 : District-wise population growth

	District Population 1991 (lakhs)			Decadal (1971-81) 1981-91 growth rate			
	Males	Females	Total	Total Popul- ation	Females	Total	Females
1. TVM	14.48	14.99	29.47	18.06	18.35	13.50	13.82
2. KLM	11.83	12.25	24.08	18.27	18.30	10.69	11.36
3. PTH	5.76	6.12	11.88	9.45	10.00	5.60	5.88
4. ALP	9.76	10.25	20.01	11.62	12.11	7.28	7.78
5. KTM	9.13	9.15	18.28	10.29	10.83	7.71	7.77
6. IDK	5.46	5.32	10.78	26.64	26.81	11.23	11.53
7. EKM	14.09	14.08	28.17	17.18	17.76	11.12	11.22
8. THR	13.12	14.25	27.37	14.60	15.54	12.21	11.50
9. PKD	11.56	12.26	23.82	21.30	21.27	16.53	16.76
10. MLP	15.08	15.88	30.96	29.43	30.08	28.87	28.90
11. KZD	12.93	13.27	26.20	23.25	23.50	16.69	17.02
12. WYD	3.42	3.30	6.72	33.87	32.90	21.32	22.22
13. KNN	10.99	11.53	22.52	24.34	25.50	16.63	17.53
14. KGD	5.29	5.43	10.72	27.78	28.00	22.78	22.30
15. STATE	142.89	148.10	290.99	19.24	20.13	14.32	14.58

Source: Census of India - Paper 2, Kerala & Women in Kerala - DES

Appendix.2 : District-wise population by religion of head of households

District	(1981 Census) (000)				(Percentage)					
	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Others	Total	H	M	C	O	T
TVM	1812	325	459	-	2596	69.80	12.52	17.68	-	100.00
KLM	1425	362	406	-	2193	64.98	16.51	18.51	-	100.00
PTH	610	53	445	-	1108	55.06	4.78	40.16	-	100.00
ALP	1286	157	423	-	1866	68.92	8.41	22.67	-	100.00
KTM	807	84	806	-	1697	47.55	4.95	47.50	-	100.00
IDK	488	63	418	-	969	50.36	6.50	43.14	-	100.00
EKM	1173	340	1019	3	2535	46.27	13.41	40.20	0.12	100.00
THR	1464	363	613	-	2440	60.00	14.88	25.12	-	100.00
PKD	1495	473	76	-	2044	73.14	23.14	3.72	-	100.00
MLP	772	1574	57	-	2403	32.13	65.50	2.37	-	100.00
KZD	1375	762	108	-	2245	61.25	33.94	4.81	-	100.00
WYD	280	136	136	2	554	50.54	24.55	24.55	0.36	100.00
KNN	1256	464	211	-	1931	65.04	24.03	10.93	-	100.00
KGD	559	257	57	-	873	64.03	29.44	6.53	-	100.00
STATE	14802	5413	5234	5	25454	58.15	21.27	20.56	0.02	100.00

Source : Statistics for Planning, 1988 - DES

Note : Article 341 / Article 342 of the Indian Constitution declare that the President of India may with respect to any state or union territory and where it is a state after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification specify the castes, races or Tribes which shall for the purpose of the constitution be deemed to be SC/ST in relation to that state or union territory as the case may be. Thus SC/ST may be defined as those groups which are named in the SC/ST order of the Government of India, in force from time to time.

Appendix.4 : Density of population of Kerala 1951 - 1991

District	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
TVM	606	796	1003	1184	1344
KLM	446	587	738	873	967
ALP	272	336	389	426	450
PTH	825	993	1182	1319	1415
KTM	514	596	699	771	830
IDK	66	115	152	193	215
EKM	579	706	899	1053	1170
THR	463	557	702	805	903
PKD	271	306	376	456	532
MLP	324	391	523	677	872
KZH	476	599	777	958	1118
WYD	79	129	194	260	315
KNN	305	397	524	651	759
KGD	206	257	343	438	538
STATE	349	435	549	655	749

Source : Economic Review, 1993 and Census of India.

**Appendix 5 : Sex ratio, 1951-1991
(Females per 1000 males)**

District	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
TVM	1010	1005	1008	1030	1036
KLM	997	996	1000	1022	1035
PTH	996	1011	1019	1056	1062
ALP	1022	1026	1025	1043	1051
KTM	987	988	991	1001	1003
IDK	909	915	937	963	975
EKM	1008	999	988	998	1000
THR	1105	1093	1081	1100	1085
PKD	1085	1077	1056	1056	1061
MLP	1055	1057	1041	1052	1053
KZD	1019	1007	1004	1020	1027
WYD	838	903	922	949	966
KNN	1074	1048	1033	1040	1049
KGD	1046	1026	998	1020	1026
STATE	1028	1022	1016	1032	1036

Appendix 6 : Rural-urban sex ratios in districts, 1991.

District-wise Rural-Urban Sex Ratio - 1991 Census

District	Sex Ratio		
	Rural (no. of females per 1000 males)	Urban	Rural urban Gap
TVM	1040	1028	12
KLM	1038	1018	20
ALP	1062	1067	-05
PTH	1055	1040	15
KTM	1004	994	10
IDK	975	962	13
EKM	997	1001	-04
THR	1091	1069	22
PKD	1062	1049	13
MLP	1055	1036	19
KZD	1029	1024	05
WYD	967	917	50
KNN	1027	1071	-44
KGD	1023	1047	-24
STATE	1037	1034	.03

Source: Census of India - Paper 2 of 1991-Kerala
Note : Abbreviations used for the districts are as follows;

Appendix 7 : Birth Rate and Death Rate & Infant Mortality Rate in Kerala & India.

Year	Kerala			India		
	BR	DR	IMR	BR	DR	IMR
Based on Census						
1951-51	43.9	19.7	120	41.7	23.0	140
1961-71	37.1	12.2	66	-	18.0	114
Based on SRS						
1966-70	34.7	10.4	74	39.0	16.8	122
1971	31.1	9.0	61	36.9	14.9	129
1975	28.0	8.4	-	35.2	15.9	140
1980	26.8	7.0	40	33.7	12.6	114
1981	25.6	6.6	37.4	33.9	12.5	110
1983	24.9	6.7	33	33.6	11.9	105
1984	24.9	6.2	-	-	-	-
1985	23.3	6.5	32	32.9	11.7	95
1988	20.3	6.4	27	31.5	11.0	94
1990	19.0	6.1	17	29.9	10.3	80
1991	18.1	5.9	17	29.3	10.2	79
1992	17.7	6.0	16	29.0	10.0	79
1993	17.3	6.0	13	-	-	-

Source : Demographic transition in Kerala in the 1980's [Zacharia & Economic Review, 1993].

Appendix 8 : Birth Rates by Districts

District	1983	1988
TVM	20.8	20.5
KLM	20.2	16.1
PTH	-	17.3
ALP	18.1	14.8
KTM	18.1	16.8
IDK	24.5	17.9
EKM	21.0	15.8
THR	17.9	18.7
PKD	22.0	18.9
MLP	33.8	28.4
KZD	24.3	20.0
WYD	31.8	19.4
KNN	31.4	25.2
KGD	-	26.8
STATE	24.9	20.3

Source : Demographic Transition in Kerala in the 1980's K.C.Zacharia.

Appendix 12 : Percentage distribution of population by marital status - KERALA

FEMALES						
Age Group	1991 (Sample Registration)			1981 Census		
	Never Married	Married	Widowed / Divorced/ Separated	Never Married	Married	Widowed / Divorced/ Separated
15-19	90.2	9.7	0.1	85.4	14.1	0.5
20-24	47.2	51.9	0.9	40.2	57.9	2.0
25-29	18.0	79.4	2.6	12.5	83.6	3.9
30-34	7.3	87.6	5.1	5.8	87.6	6.6
35-39	4.2	87.4	8.4	3.5	86.9	9.7
40-44	3.4	84.4	12.3	3.4	81.7	14.9
45-49	2.8	77.3	20.0	3.0	76.6	20.4
50-54	2.5	70.0	27.4	3.1	68.0	28.9
55-59	2.1	61.2	36.7	2.8	59.9	37.3
60 & above	2.6	34.8	50.3	2.4	30.1	67.6
All ages	46.2	42.9	10.8	50.8	38.7	10.5

Source : S.R.S Bulletin - Annual, 1992 and Census of India, 1981.

Appendix.13 : Mean age at marriage for men & women, 1901-81.

Year	KERALA			INDIA		
	Men	Women	Difference	Men	Women	Difference
1901	23.2	17.1	7.3	20.2	13.2	6.1
1911	23.8	17.3	6.9	20.5	13.6	6.5
1921	23.3	17.8	5.8	18.4	12.6	5.5
1931	25.6	19.6	5.2	20.2	15.0	6.0
1941	25.6	19.3	4.4	19.8	15.4	6.3
1951	26.3	19.8	5.3	21.4	16.1	6.5
1961	23.8	20.0	4.6	21.3	16.7	6.8
1971	26.3	20.8	5.5	22.7	17.2	5.5
1981	27.2	21.9	5.0	23.3	18.3	5.3

Source : Women, Men and Development in Kerala - 1994-
Dr.S.Radha, IMG TVM.

Appendix 12 : Percentage distribution of population by marital status - KERALA

FEMALES						
Age Group	1991 (Sample Registration)			1981 Census		
	Never Married	Married	Widowed / Divorced/ Separated	Never Married	Married	Widowed / Divorced/ Separated
15-19	90.2	9.7	0.1	85.4	14.1	0.5
20-24	47.2	51.9	0.9	40.2	57.9	2.0
25-29	18.0	79.4	2.6	12.5	83.6	3.9
30-34	7.3	87.6	5.1	5.8	87.6	6.6
35-39	4.2	87.4	8.4	3.5	86.9	9.7
40-44	3.4	84.4	12.3	3.4	81.7	14.9
45-49	2.8	77.3	20.0	3.0	76.6	20.4
50-54	2.5	70.0	27.4	3.1	68.0	28.9
55-59	2.1	61.2	36.7	2.8	59.9	37.3
60 & above	2.6	34.8	50.3	2.4	30.1	67.6
All ages	46.2	42.9	10.8	50.8	38.7	10.5

Source : S.R.S Bulletin - Annual, 1992 and Census of India, 1981.

Appendix.13 : Mean age at marriage for men & women, 1901-81.

Year	KERALA			INDIA		
	Men	Women	Difference	Men	Women	Difference
1901	23.2	17.1	7.3	20.2	13.2	6.1
1911	23.8	17.3	6.9	20.5	13.6	6.5
1921	23.3	17.8	5.8	18.4	12.6	5.5
1931	25.6	19.6	5.2	20.2	15.0	6.0
1941	25.6	19.3	4.4	19.8	15.4	6.3
1951	26.3	19.8	5.3	21.4	16.1	6.5
1961	23.8	20.0	4.6	21.3	16.7	6.8
1971	26.3	20.8	5.5	22.7	17.2	5.5
1981	27.2	21.9	5.0	23.3	18.3	5.3

Source : Women, Men and Development in Kerala - 1994-
Dr.S.Radha, IMG TVM.

Appendix 9 : Age Specific Fertility Rates in Kerala - Rural

Age group	1971	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1991
15-19	49.1	39.3	31.8	35.0	34.5	33.7	36.7	25.5
20-24	213.9	175.5	176.5	172.7	179.2	177.0	166.1	142.1
25-29	226.6	166.2	168.0	161.0	168.0	155.4	147.1	122.0
30-34	175.8	98.6	95.4	87.5	74.6	73.0	67.5	46.9
35-39	118.4	53.9	53.8	42.5	35.8	29.6	27.4	15.0
40-44	43.6	19.4	18.1	13.6	14.1	14.2	11.2	4.4
45-49	7.0	4.9	3.8	3.1	4.0	1.8	2.9	0.7
GFR	125.4	94.7	97.0	91.9	83.6	-	-	64.4

Source : Statistics for Planning-DES, 1993 and SRS Annual Bulletin-1992.

Appendix 10: Percentage distribution of live birth by order of birth 1991 (Sample Registration) Kerala.

Order of birth	Percentage distribution		
	Persons	Males	Females
1	44.9	46.2	43.5
2	34.4	33.2	35.7
3	13.3	13.2	13.4
4	3.8	3.8	3.9
5	1.5	1.6	1.3
6	0.9	0.9	0.9
7	0.6	0.5	0.7
8	0.4	0.4	0.4
9	0.1	0.1	0.1
10 & above	0.2	0.2	0.1
All	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: S.R.S Bulletin, Annual, 1992.

Appendix 11: Percentage distribution of current live births by birth interval 1991 (Sample Registration) Kerala.

Birth interval in months	Percentage distribution
10-12	2.6
12-18	8.9
18-24	22.0
24-30	13.3
30-36	16.6
36 & above	36.6
All	100.0

Source : S.R.S Bulletin-Annual, 1992.

Appendix 14 : IMR estimates
from 1981 census.

District	Infant Mortality Rate
TVM	44
KLM	45
ALP	38
PTH	-
KTM	36
IDK	62
EKM	33
THR	44
PKD	64
MLP	49
KZD	54
WYD	73
KNN	45
KGD	-
STATE	52

Source : Census of India, 1981.

Appendix 15 : Age-wise distribution of
population in Kerala, 1981 (census), 1991
(Sample Registration)

Age group (years)	Percentage of distribution			
	Females		Total Population	
	1981	1991	1981	1991
0-4	10.4	9.6	10.7	10.0
5-9	11.2	9.4	11.5	9.7
10-14	12.5	9.5	12.8	10.0
15-19	12.1	10.0	11.8	10.3
20-24	10.6	11.5	10.3	10.8
25-29	8.4	9.7	8.2	9.4
30-34	6.1	7.8	6.2	7.9
35-39	5.6	6.5	5.5	6.5
40-44	4.4	5.4	4.5	5.4
45-49	4.6	4.4	4.6	4.4
50-54	3.4	4.0	3.5	3.9
55-59	2.9	3.6	2.9	3.5
60-64	2.7	2.8	2.7	2.8
65-69	2.1	2.3	2.0	2.2
70 & above	3.0	3.4	2.8	3.2
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source : S.R.S Bulletin-Annual, 1992 and
Census of India, 1981.

Appendix-16 : Effective literacy rate
(percent).

District	Total	Male	Female
TVM	89.2	92.8	85.8
KLM	90.5	94.1	87.0
PTH	94.9	96.6	93.3
ALP	93.9	96.8	91.1
KTM	95.7	97.5	94.0
IDK	86.9	90.8	83.0
EKM	92.4	95.5	89.3
THR	90.1	93.8	86.9
PKD	81.3	87.2	75.7
MLP	87.9	92.1	84.1
KZD	91.1	95.6	86.8
WYD	82.7	87.6	77.7
KNN	91.5	95.6	87.7
KGD	82.5	89.0	76.3
STATE	89.8	93.6	86.2

Note : Effective Literacy Rate excludes
0-6 population. Source : Economic
Review, 1994.

Appendix 17 : Number of females usually engaged in (principal States) Domestic duties and carrying out specified activities performed by females engaged in domestic duties

Specified additional activities Number of females per 1000 female engaged

	Rural	Urban
1 Maintenance of Kitchen garden etc.	286	222
2 Work in HH Poultry, Dairy etc.	365	95
3 Free collection of fish etc.	57	-
4 Free collection of firewood etc.	290	68
5 Husking of Paddy	122	378
6 Grinding of food grains	310	522
7 Preparation of gur	45	-
8 Preservation of Meat	57	62
9 Making Baskets	52	-
10 Preparation of cowdung cakes	10	-
11 Servicing, Tailoring etc	45	254
12 Tutoring of own children	69	192
13 Bringing water from outside HH premises	298	130
14 Bringing water from outside vil-premises	11	-
(A) Distance upto 1Km	11	-
(B) Distance 2-5 Km	1	-
15 Any of item 1 to 14	747	730

Source : NSS 43rd Round, July, 1987-June 1988 published in Sarvekshana, Jan, 1992

Appendix 18 : Industry-wise distribution of main workers - 1981 and 1991

Industrial category	Male			Females		
	1991	1981	Difference	1991	1981	Differences
I Primary						
1. Cultivators	9.11	8.06	1.05	1.05	0.82	0.26
2. Agri. Labourers	14.36	11.99	2.37	6.84	7.19	(-) 0.35
3. Livestock, Forestry Fishing, Hunting and Plantations, and Allied activities	6.49	5.42	1.07	1.18	1.07	0.11
II Secondary						
4. Mining	0.69	0.50	0.19	0.14	0.04	0.1
a) Household Industry						
b) Manufacturing etc. Processing in other than household industry	6.82	6.22	0.60	2.80	2.06	0.74
III Tertiary						
6. Construction	3.15	1.89	1.26	0.18	0.14	0.04
7. Trade & Commerce	9.62	6.97	2.65	0.87	0.53	0.34
8. Transport, storage & Communication	4.69	3.16	1.53	0.28	0.26	0.02
9. Other services	8.11	5.96	2.15	4.49	3.13	1.36
Total Main workers	64.04	51.41	12.63	18.97	6.50	2.47

Note : Number of total workers (100,000)

Source : Census of India

Appendix.19: District-wise number of factories and employment (1993).

District	No. of factories	Employment (nos)
TVM	745	27976
KLM	1402	141699
PTH	344	9796
ALP	867	21797
KTM	1136	17819
IDK	285	7196
EKM	2217	65543
THR	1895	29464
PKD	1504	22794
MLP	765	9507
KZD	1562	29960
WYD	123	2059
KNN	1348	24310
KGD	106	2851
STATE	14399	412971

Source : Economic Review-SPB-1994.

Appendix.21 : District-wise population coverage of allopathic infrastructure 1981 and 1991.

District	No of Institution per hundred thousand of population	
	1980-81	1990-91
TVM	3.74	3.6
KLM	3.45	3.4
ALP	-	4.7
PTH	3.84	4.1
KTM	3.83	4.2
IDK	4.73	5.8
EKM	3.83	4.0
THR	3.85	4.1
PKD	3.96	4.3
MLP	3.58	3.6
KZD	2.81	3.3
WYD	4.64	4.2
KNN	5.23	6.1
KGD	-	5.5
STATE	3.83	4.2

Source : 1. Women in Kerala, 1984, DES
2. Indicators of Regional Development - DES
3. Economic Review, 1988.

Appendix.20 : Registrants at employment exchanges by district and gender, 1993.

District	Registrants		Total	No. of females per 1000 males
	Male	Female		
TVM	372107	370068	752175	995
KLM	184340	205320	389660	1114
PTH	74577	96692	171269	1297
ALP	157887	171823	329710	1088
KTM	143879	166230	310109	1155
IDK	59165	57704	116869	975
EKM	217836	215633	433469	990
THR	137167	170267	307434	1241
PKD	137782	109252	247034	796
MLP	118202	76696	194898	649
KZD	148986	135570	284556	910
WYD	33086	28831	61916	871
KNN	122525	100715	223240	822
KGD	42567	28054	70621	659
STATE	1950105	1932855	3882960	991

Source : Economic Review, 1993.

Appendix.22: District-wise area coverage of allopathic institutions 1991.

TVM	4.9
KLM	3.3
PTH	3.1
ALP	4.0
KTM	3.4
IDK	1.2
EKM	4.7
THR	3.7
PKD	2.3
MLP	3.2
KZD	3.7
WYD	1.9
KNN	3.2
KGD	3.0
STATE	3.1

Source : Economic Review, 1993.

Appendix.23 : Inter district variations in beds per population in government allopathic hospitals.

Districts	Beds per 100,000 population
TVM	219
KLM	85
PTH	86
ALP	199
KTM	223
IDK	80
EKM	133
THR	148
PKD	89
MLP	69
KZD	164
WYD	116
KNN	104
KDG	61
STATE	129

Source : Economic Review, 1994
State Planning Board (SPB, 1995)

Appendix.24 : Inter district differences in female hospital patients, 1992.

District	Total no of female patients (1000)	No of female patients per 1000 female population
TVM	18.49	1233
KLM	10.81	882
PTH	4.51	737
ALP	10.37	1012
KTM	11.34	1239
IDK	3.82	718
EKM	13.22	938
THR	11.52	808
PKD	10.10	824
MLP	10.13	638
KZD	10.20	769
WYD	1.11	336
KNN	7.73	670
KGD	1.95	359
STATE	125.30	846

Appendix.25 : Inter district coverage by immunization, 1993.

District	Proportion Fully Immunized	Proportion not Immunized
TVM	81.7	4.4
KLM	79.9	2.8
ALP	80.6	0.5
PTH	83.1	0.2
KTM	78.1	0.0
IDK	73.9	1.1
EKM	85.5	0.3
THR	58.4	5.2
PKD	52.8	2.4
MLP	40.4	15.7
KZD	79.4	3.0
WYD	79.7	3.0
KNN	82.5	4.7
KGD	88.8	3.6
STATE	76.7	3.4

Note : Vaccinated proportion which has undergone all prescribed vaccination.

Source : State Plan of Action for the Child in Kerala, GOK, 1995.

Appendix.26 : District wise coverage under the drinking water supply schemes

District	Percentage of Population covered		Incidence of water-borne diseases Attack	
	Rural	Urban	No	%
TVM	49	73	147,248	16.3
KLM	43	70	60,729	6.7
PTH	32	55	25,194	2.8
ALP	61	81	82,770	9.1
KTM	47	77	47,787	5.3
IDK	32	76	29,551	3.3
EKM	52	66	86,877	9.6
THR	57	75	73,509	8.1
PKD	57	62	66,984	7.4
MLP	22	63	152,772	16.9
KZD	14	56	59,037	6.5
WYD	29	50	23,911	2.6
KNN	21	43	33,241	3.7
KGD	32	100	15,110	1.7
STATE	41	65	904,720	100.0

Source : Administration Report of Health Services Department for the year, 1990-91, Kerala, Economic Review, 1994.

Appendix. 27: Inter-district distribution of households below poverty line in rural Kerala.

District	No of families below the poverty line							
	Percentage SC within district	SC No	SC %	ST No.	ST %	Others No	Total No	%
1.TVM	49.1	34280	17.5	2161	6.1	166818	203259	11.4
2.KLM	45.9	24458	12.5	95	0.3	161115	185668	10.4
3.PTH	30.5	13895	7.1	722	2.0	54710	69320	3.9
4.ALP	47.1	7871	4.0	47	0.1	126604	134522	7.5
5.KTM	36.5	4454	2.3	749	2.1	104073	109276	6.1
6.IDK	34.1	10319	5.2	6422	18.0	59464	76205	4.3
7.EKM	42.2	4208	2.1	118	0.3	116364	120690	6.7
8.THR	45.5	27265	13.9	430	1.2	148321	176016	9.8
9.MLP	39.3	13470	6.9	1247	3.5	156209	170926	9.6
10.PKD	40.6	36614	18.6	4571	12.8	111526	152711	8.5
11.WYD	41.3	2023	1.0	16063	45.0	35673	53759	3.0
12.KZD	56.8	9316	4.7	288	0.8	156933	166537	9.3
13.KNN	55.0	1142	0.6	196	0.5	104897	106235	5.9
14.KGD	41.9	7223	3.7	2555	7.2	53965	63743	3.6
STATE	43.5	196538	100.0	33664	100.0	1556672	1786874	100.0

Based on 1990 state survey.

Source : Economic Review, 1993, SPB, 1994.

Appendix.28 : Average household size.

District	No.of house-holds (1991 census)	Average household size (1991 census)	Average no.of women per household
TVM	619	4.96	2.42
KLM	490	4.92	2.50
PTH	259	4.58	2.36
ALP	405	4.94	2.53
KTM	362	5.05	2.53
IDK	233	4.63	2.28
EKM	556	5.07	2.53
THR	522	5.24	2.73
PKD	445	5.35	2.76
MLP	477	6.49	3.33
KZD	457	5.74	2.90
WYD	135	4.99	2.44
KNN	371	6.07	3.11
KGD	182	5.90	2.98
STATE	5513	5.28	2.69

Source : Census of India.

Appendix.29 : Inter-district differences in female headedness.

District	1961 %	1971 %	1981 %
TVM	20.67	21.32	10.61
KLM	13.51	14.81	22.50
ALP	13.66	15.79	17.20
KTM	7.47	8.06	17.82
EKM	9.64	10.87	10.45
TRS	18.99	20.14	10.27
PKD	22.94	21.62	23.09
MLP	-	18.90	22.27
KZH	15.75	16.86	21.83
WYD	-	-	17.27
IDK	-	-	10.48
KNN	25.23	25.80	29.55

Source: Census of India, 1961, 1971 and 1981 - Kerala Series.

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