

LAND RELATIONS AND WOMEN AUTONOMY: REFLECTIONS FROM A VILLAGE STUDY IN KERALA.

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Abstract: The Performance of Kerala has been showing a high profile development compared to the other states in India. This helped the state to stand equally with other developed countries in terms of its socio-demographic parameters, and comparably much better with other states in India in the implementation of Land Reforms. These high profile development indicators have played a crucial role in the much discussed 'Kerala Model of Development' and has taken it into major discussion platforms across the countries. But how far the question of Development addressed in terms of gender equality. A closer look of prevailing system reveals a less promising picture of the status of women with a widespread discrimination in various fields including the inheritance practices on land entitlements, widespread dowry system, violence etc all undermine the status of women in Kerala. So the present paper examines some of the issues in the context of Land Reform and the pattern of Agriculture land ownership of women in the state of Kerala compared to its all India averages. For this, it examines sex disaggregated data on important variables like number of operational holdings, area operated and average size of holdings were compiled for the period 1995-96 to 2010-11 from Agricultural Census. Also the study seeks to examine the land relations in a women perspective and its anatomy. The analysis of data reveals that the agricultural land ownership pattern in Kerala compared to all India averages has undergone significant changes over time. And the findings from the grass root level interviews across various castes in the village shows that irrespective of the changes in the role of land over the decades the women across castes suffer widespread gender-based discrimination in laws, customs and practices cause severe inequalities in their ability to access, control, own and use land and hence it limit their participation in decision-making at all levels of land governance and keep them subjugated in their various spheres of life.

Keywords: Land Relations, Kerala Model of Development, Gender Inequality, Women Autonomy

1. Introduction: Kerala has made spectacular achievements in health, population and human development indices despite its lower economic growth profile. This unique development experience witnessed by Kerala has become a topic of discussion in major platforms. The three major effects this model brought out were an active space for public action, Agency for women and fighting against the caste system etc. This made a new ray of hope internationally about the state compared to its counterparts.

The 2011 census sheds light on the outstanding performance of Kerala compared to the other Indian states and the All India averages. According to the 2011 Census, the decadal growth rate of Kerala is 4.86 compared to 17.64 in India. In the case of Sex ratio Kerala's (1084) performance is much beyond India (943) and the World (984). Child Sex ratio of India is 914 whereas Kerala shows 943. And, the literacy rate of a person in All India level is only 74.04 in contrast to 93.91 in Kerala (Census, 2011). A woman living in rural Kerala had the highest life expectancy at birth across all categories at 77.2 years. Rural males also lived longest in Kerala at 71.2 years, which was 7.7 years longer than the average rural Indian male. Also Kerala does well on several other indicators such as low Infant Mortality rate, low fertility rate and low maternal mortality rate and so on compared to the All India averages (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2012). And a 'high female literacy due to higher public expenditure in education has lead to more civic society involvement in Kerala, especially in areas such as political decision making and public action (Sen, 1990). These records are prone to Kerala's 'Central tendency of Distribution' and

this success with human development indicators despite low income is called the Kerala model, experience or paradox (Venkatraman, 2009). When people allude to the 'Kerala Model' they refer to the 'average' situation. Only the central tendency of the distribution of the indicators is used to establish the point. However, as in all distributions, the 'Kerala Model' also has its 'outliers'-communities that seem to have been left out of the domain of public action for what Dreze & Sen have referred to as 'capability building' (Dreze & Sen, 1989). 'One of the important problems faced by Kerala is the persistent exclusion of the marginalised – including women – from partaking the benefits of development' (Tharakan, 2006).

But how far these indicators address the question in the context of a gender inclusive development. The existing studies show that 'the aggregate social development indicators (such as low infant mortality, high literacy and life expectancy rates) in Kerala hide several inequalities and inefficiencies (Ramanathaiyer and McPherson 2000). Non-conventional indicators on women in Kerala shows that, there exists persistent gender disparities, including segregation in economic activity, gender gaps in earnings, male-female differences in responsibility for house and care work, gaps in asset ownership, and constraints to women's agency in both the private and public spheres. The incidents of violence on women take place as they are the inevitable consequences of unplanned economic changes that are not supported by changes in social structures and attitudes' (SAKHI 2012).

2. Kerala 'Model' of land reforms

Among the few states that have achieved land reforms in India, Kerala has been rated very high. One of the main measures envisaged under the Kerala Land reforms was for granting land to the landless to have their homesteads (Tharakan, 2006). The other important measures were abolition of tenancy and imposition of land ceilings. The distribution of homesteads was implemented well. The gain made out of the homesteads, increased the labourers' collective bargaining power, which in turn led to obtaining high real wages and the tenants stood to gain much more, as they became actual land proprietors. It has been argued that the preoccupation of Kerala land reforms with abolition of tenancy – a legal form of land holding – which covered even bigger holdings, led to a built in bias towards middle and larger landholders [Herring, 1990], who largely came from the middle level of the social hierarchy.

However, it is equally true that Kerala did not achieve complete success in land reforms. Also the combination of relatively greater income disadvantage, social abjection, and the political consequences of the decline of the Marxist discourse perpetuates the seeds of marginalisation in women and fishermen communities this contributes to their passive attitude towards welfare (Devika, 2014). The overall effect of women of more than 100 years of 'progressive' advancement in land ownership and tenurial system has been a gradual slide back to a position of subordination to male supremacy and continuing inequality, land reforms did not bring about distributive justice. Changes in land relations in Kerala which are marked by progressive steps at every stage have affected women adversely and pushed them down to a state of dependence (Saradmoni, 1983). Historical evidences and studies has shown that the Marumakkathayam or matrilineal community in Kerala especially in the Nair societies and later in the Malabar Muslim families became unsuccessful in transferring this system into the next generation. (Logan 1951; Menon 1979; Saradmoni 1983).

Question here is how far land reforms become successful in bestowing the ownership rights to the women? Studies show that 'Women faced several disadvantages in relation to its major provisions -- abolition of tenancy, allotment of homestead sites to landless households and land ceiling and redistribution' (Saradmoni, 1983, Agarwal, 1994). Mostly, for the ceiling purpose the family is taken as the unit, where ceiling was done indirectly in the name of the male head of the household because of the then existing gender norms in the society. Also, 'The reform has reproduced female disadvantage in property rights and accentuated female seclusion linked to social mobility' (Kodoth 2005).

So here comes the need to re-visit the existing land reforms in Kerala, since it has made a category of disadvantaged section called 'marginalised/outliers'. 'Abolition of Landlordism, Conferment of homestead rights to hutment dwellers, Ceiling on Land holdings (and redistribution of surplus land). The first two were effectively implemented but the third failed in its implementation. Women

gained much less through land reforms and were affected both directly and indirectly through ceiling laws and redistribution of surplus land dearth of political will stands as barrier for equitable distribution of land So, there is a need for second generation of land reforms in Kerala' (Scaria,2016).

In this context the present study aims to contribute to the above literature by examining the argument that so called 'model' of development and land reforms in Kerala has failed to provide land to women. Even now, they remain as outliers in terms of land ownership. Existence of inequalities and exclusion of women in terms of land ownership has influence on their autonomy and welfare'. Thus the main idea of this paper is to give an account of the marginalised women folk from the mainstream development agenda of Kerala in terms of a non-conventional indicator specifically, their effective Land relations, the current situation of Land owning women in Kerala and its pattern using gender disaggregated data based on number of operational holdings, area operated and average size of holdings from Agriculture Census and finally a few insights from the grass root level interviews across women in various caste are also incorporated .

3.Land relations through a gendered lens

The Land Relations in Kerala has undergone significant change through out the development history of Kerala .From a Pre-British matrilineal society to a new era of commercialisation of agriculture and commodification of land .This can be a result of several interlinked historial factors including land reforms, migration, demographic pressure etc.

The women land rights in matrilineal Kerala particularly, in the Malabar region has its sound history on the evolution of the role and means of land in defining the life of women in Kerala. The prevalence of Marumakkathayam system, a remarkable peculiarity of Malabar, in which the woman got the sole authority and birth right overtaravad property has disappeared and her position wasreplaced by the eldest male member of taravad called Karanavan (Iyer,1912). Another study shows that 'the women of the highest landed aristocracy did not have a life of pleasure ,affluence or freedom ,they were secluded and lived in a kind of darkness .The caste superiority enjoyed by the namboothiris and the caste restriction of that period also put them on a pedestal beyond the reach of the other castes (Logan, 1951)

There is a gradual but evident trend in the transformation of land in Kerala from a means of production function to an asset function, 'The complexities involved in the changes in land relations cannot be captured through the lens of land reforms alone. Apart from land reforms, there are other interlocking sets of historical factors, both exogenous and endogenous, that include commercialisation, migration, the Depression of the 1930s, the Second World War, spread of modern education and salaried employment, disintegration of the joint family system and demographic pressures etc have played a major role in the transformation of landownership. The "marketisation" of land over a period of time has changed the character of land from a factor of production to a speculative commodity. Land reforms, unless they are backed by institutional mechanisms that improve the access of the poor to productive resources, would jeopardise the objective of growth with equity' (Scaria, 2010). Factors such as 'atomisation of farming(making Agriculture unviable), high and rising land prices, conversion of agriculture land to non-agricultural purposes (making neighbouring areas less suitable for agriculture) etc results in a growing contradiction between means of production and asset function of land' (Harilal&Eswaran ,2015).

The gender analysis of land has a broader dimension than merely treating it as land rights for women then only the importance of land compared to other resources can be find out.(Ceclie 2003:477 ;Walker 2003:128). If women acquires land then 'they were very much involved in the administration of their own land parcel and will further lead gender equal inheritance practices (Deere 1990; Deere and Leon 2001a, cha. 9).The following studies show that how the non-conventional gender development indicators portray the development structure of women in Kerala, 'there is a sharp decline in the average size of land holding of all categories. Education and employment were two powerful instruments of social mobility. But the strength of the caste or determination of predominant group can be done on the basis of access to resources that each group had and their relative position in social hierarchy. And the

dominance and subordination is understood in terms of access to resources, land services and occupation and public space' (Mohan, 2007). Another study unravels the puzzle of the Kerala woman i.e., co-existence of high gender development indicators with these other signals of women's powerlessness. 'The passivity of the average woman in gender related matters could be the manifestation of a deeply entrenched survival strategy that comes out of an understanding that staying on in an abusive marriage may be a far better option than walking out of it. Instrumental indicators like literacy etc fail to perform its transformative task of empowering the individual' (Mukhopadhyay, 2007). Similarly, 'The disjuncture between conventional and non-conventional indicators of women's well-being shows that access to income is necessary but not a sufficient condition for the empowerment of women. Irrespective of which strata women belong to they are governed by the patriarchal ideology according to which woman's primary duty is tied to domestic space. Her access to education and capacity to earn income outside the home does not elevate her status. Remarkable achievements measured by conventional indicators have failed to elevate women from their subordinate status within a household' (Scaria, 2014). Thus, 'Full ownership rights, including the rights to dispose of the property through sale or inheritance, are often assumed to provide the strongest incentive to maintain the resource over time (Shlager and Ostrom, 1992).

4. Land ownership and women autonomy

A women's autonomy is defined as the relative decision making power of a women to her husband in house-hold decision making settings specifically ,we consider economic decision making that leads to her well being and overall welfare of the family or the given space of her intervention. Age,employment,asset ownership etc. are few important individual indicators which can determine her autonomy. Similarly social and cultural norms of the society, religious factors can also play a critical role in it. Jejeebhoy and Satar(2001) consider women's autonomy in terms of freedom from violence, mobility, control over resources and decision making power. More recently, Eswaran, Ramaswamy and Wadhwa(2013) determined family status and caste as the most important factors in determining women's autonomy in the household in India.

The question of Autonomy comes when there exists a situation of vulnerability. Even after the so called 'development experience' in the state of Kerala, the question of vulnerability in a gender perspective remain unaddressed. The Health Department of Kerala in their recent study come up with a shocking statistics, the domestic violence is a reality in 61% of the homes in Kerala and depression and suicides among women are also high' (SAKHI women resource centre,2012).'. This shows high socio-demographic indicators in favour of women with a co-existing situation of low public participation and increasing incidence of violence etc. So, decomposing the different development indexes and including the new parameters to measure the missing aspects such as domestic violence, Poor employment profile of women, negative trends in property rights, Big fat weddings' and huge dowry etc shows a Gender Paradoxical situation in the contemporary Kerala.

4.1. Crime against women: 'Crime against women is the by-product of gender imbalance which has been a part of the culture of society for centuries'. (Thara 2013) The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) states that "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men." The National Crime Records Bureau reported that by 2020, growth in the rate of crimes against women would exceed the population growth rate. Figures compiled on a yearly basis till 2010 show that Kerala has a crime rate of 424.1, more than double the national average of 187.6.

4.2. Ageing with dignity: The improved life expectancy of women in Kerala has resulted in feminization of ageing, this indirectly has increased their probability of getting neglected and discriminated which have often exacerbated by widowhood and their dependency. Studies show that 'There are significant gender differentials in longevity ,loss of spouse, income and asset ownership, living

arrangements and healthcare giving responsibilities are largely expected to be borne by women both young and old'(UNFPA Report ,2017). Infact, the older people prefer to remain in their own homes and communities in rural regions all these situations together will increase their vulnerability .Also, traditional gender roles often restrict women within their home without much decision making power..According to the 2011 census report, In Kerala, about 52.4 % population aged 60 and above living in rural regions . The proportion of working women in Kerala is only 21.3% in 2011-12. Thus the majority of the non-working women without any savings during their lifespan remain as a vulnerable section .Here the concept of Ageing with dignity need a to be addressed in policy formulations which should primarily focus on providing secure titles to women in their old age .

Table .1:Marital Status of elderly(60+) in India,2011(in percentage)

Marital Status	Male	Female	Total
Currently married	82.1	49.6	65.6
Widowed	14.6	47.8	31.5
others	3.3	2.6	2.9

Source :Census 2011

Table .2:Statewise life expectancy at age 60 by gender 2010-14

	Male	Female
Kerala	18.1	21.8
India	17	19

Source :Census 2011

Studies shows that, the education and employment status of women doesn't have much impact on her decision making power within the household. (Swaminathan et.al, 2011; Panda and Agarwal, 2007). Though, land reforms are given a definite space in addressing the equity problem prevailed in Kerala, it failed to consider the gender dimension in practice .Here comes the important but unidentified role of women in Kerala in the access and control over the land, she owns. Findings from different studies highlight the importance of 'effective independent land rights' to women (Agarwal, 1994). Women are vulnerable because their land rights may be obtained through kinship relationships with men or marriage. If those links are severed, women can lose their rights' (IFAD, 2015). Also, 'Declining inheritance rights, Dominance of Dowry and agrarian reform etc has reproduced female disadvantage in property rights and limited their social mobility. Thus top records in education, health and employment mask the poor status of women in the state' (Kodoth 2004, 2005; Panda & Agarwal 2007). Sen has noted that female Land Ownership can increase a women's contribution to the common good of the household giving her a stronger voice' (AmarthyaSen, 1990). Also studies show that, 'The women in the marginal and land owning households though perhaps to a lesser degree when the women themselves have land legally in their own names. If a woman owns land her degree of autonomy in terms of decision making power is high (Mencher 1993). 'Impact of a particular form of property rights, namely inheritance rights, increased the autonomy status of women in her marital families. So increased bargaining power in HH decision making'. (Sanchari Roy, 2008). 'Greater access to property empowers her directly and indirectly .It can deter violence, improves her position in the family through bargaining power, helps her to be gain financial independence with a say on household decision making with regard to children's health and educational status, to take decisions about loans on their own, and also enhances many other capabilities hidden in her till then (Kodoth, 2005; Roy, 2008; Rosenblum, 2013).

The major obstacles to women's land access come from legal, social and administrative biases. The 9th Schedule of the Indian Constitution provides an uncoded picture of rights which are commonly called as 'personal laws 'Different religion follows different personal laws. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 and the Muslim Personal Law Shariat (Application) Act of 1937 substantially enhanced women's property rights compared to the customary law prevailed in both religions. But in both communities'

notable inequalities lies in the inclusion of agricultural land, in the differential inheritance shares among men and women etc. Also there exists regional contrasts within the community. The extent of women's disinheritance however cannot be explained by unequal laws alone. Resistance also roots from social and administrative biases. Social practices such as marriage choices, post marital residence, voluntarily sacrifice of parental land in favour of brothers etc. Also, 'The territorial gendering of space reduces a women's mobility and participation in activities outside the home' (Agarwal, 2002), which results in lesser labour force participation, work mobility, unsound economic status and finally limited exposure to the social world.

5.Land Ownership pattern in Kerala

In the given tables below, the Current Individual Agricultural Land holders in Kerala compared to its All India averages has shown. This analysis is limited to Individual land holdings because individual entitlement only makes some sense in terms of its ownership.

Table 3: Number of operational holdings, Area operated and Average size for India and Kerala for All Social Groups, SC's and ST's.

Social Groups	Number of operational holdings('000)		Area of operational holdings('000 Hectares)		Average size/ hectare	
	Kerala	India	Kerala	India	Kerala	India
All	6831 m-5835; f-1340	(138348) (m-120427; f-17683)	1511 m-1187; f-210	(159529) (m-141540; f-16510)	0.22 m-0.20; f-0.15	(1.15) (m-1.18; f-0.93)
SC	5320 m-3958; f-1362	(17099) (m-15000 ; f-2099)	352 m-276; f-76	(13721) (m-12291; f-1430)	0.06 m-0.06; f-0.05	(0.8) (m-0.82; f-0.68)
ST	952 m-740; f-211	(12005) (m-10646 ; f-1359)	344 m-287; f-57	(18221) (m-16395; f-1826)	0.36 m-0.38; f-0.27	(1.52) (m-1.54; f-1.34)
Total	100		100		100	

Note:fig in the bracket shows All India gender-wise composition.Total holding include individual, institutional and joint holdings.

Source: All India report on Agriculture census 2010-11

The gender composition data from the Population Census of 2011 to get a clear picture for the gender-wise comparison .As per the final census data 2011, the total population of Kerala as per 2011 census is 33,406,061 of which the percentage of male and female are 47.98 and 52.02 respectively. The percentage of SC's and ST's in the total population of Kerala are 9.099 and 1.451 respectively. In the total number of operational holdings and operated area for all social groups in Kerala women holds only 19% and 13.89% respectively. The SC women in Kerala holds only 25.60 % and 21.59% but in a better position compared to their counterparts in India i.e.,12.27% and 10.42% respectively. Though there is an excessive dependence of STs on agriculture(54.79%) for their livelihood the share of operational holdings and operated area among ST women in Kerala holds only 22.16% and 16.56 %of the total land given to ST's. But the average size of land holdings with SC and ST women in Kerala is 0.05 and 0.27 which is lesser than the average of all India counterparts i.e.,0.68 and 1.34 respectively.

Table.4 : Percentage distribution by sex of operational holdings,
Area operated and Average size for India and Kerala for All Social Groups, SC's and ST's

All Social Groups									
Year	No of operational holdings (in %)			Area Operated(in %)			Average size/ holding		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1995-96	76.59 (89.84)	23.41 (10.14)	100	82.06 (92.32)	17.99 (7.67)	100	0.28 (1.38)	0.2 (1.02)	0.26 (1.35)
2010-11	80.22 (86.52)	19.77 (13.47)	100	85.04 (89.06)	14.95 (10.93)	100	0.22 (1.14)	0.16 (0.9)	0.21 (1.1)
SC									
1995-96	74.13 (90.63)	26.56 (9.36)	100	77.08 (92.51)	20.83 (7.48)	100	0.09 (0.89)	0.07 (0.7)	0.08 (0.87)
2010-11	74.43 (87.07)	25.56 (12.92)	100	80 (88.92)	22.85 (11.07)	100	0.07 (0.8)	0.06 (0.67)	0.07 (0.78)
ST									
1995-96	82.19 (92.75)	17.8 (7.24)	100	87.5 (93.6)	12.5 (6.4)	100	0.47 (1.76)	0.34 (1.54)	0.44 (1.74)
2010-11	77.89 (88.66)	22.1 (11.32)	100	82.35 (89.94)	17.64 (10.05)	100	0.38 (1.46)	0.27 (1.28)	0.36 (1.44)

Note: fig in the bracket show All India gender-wise composition

Source: Computed from Agriculture Census

A comparison of Sex disaggregated data on operational holdings ,area operated and average size of holdings are drawn from Agricultural Census for the period of 1995-96 and 2010-11 for Kerala, highlight the fact that the case of females show a common pattern of unequal land holding status irrespective of the social groups and state or national averages. Unlike the increasing trend in the all India percentage share of number of operational holdings and operated area of female category ,there is a declining trend in the share of female operational holdings under Kerala all social groups and SC's whereas the share of ST women in Kerala shows an increasing trend while the share of area operated of female category for both SC's and ST's has increased unlike its decline in the Kerala all social groups .Also, the female category hold very meager shares of both operational holdings and operated area compared to their male counterparts. Though Kerala is showing much better performance compared to the All India averages of female shares, a shocking fact is that unlike the All India averages , the female share in Kerala has shown a decline over the years in the share of number of operational holdings, area operated and average size. Also, the average size of land holdings for both male and female irrespective of the categories show a declining. These are the effects of increasing demographic pressure and fragmented holdings which make land non-viable.

6. The field experience –a gender mismatch

Unavailability of gender disaggregated macro level data demands the need for micro level studies on land ownership and gender –land relations. Thus helps to get an in-depth information regarding the gender identities within the Household, within and across different communities in the selected village and among the women in village self help groups. The important social and economic status of the women in the village, including their population, agricultural practices, social class composition, and caste composition etc can be captured through the survey. Particularly, class and caste would serve as important characteristics in the analysis. A Restudy of naduvannur village shows that the social movements and social changes transformed/effected the hierarchical structure of the village society by changing the land ownership pattern among major caste and community groups in the village over a time period. And the strength of the caste / the determination of pre-dominant group can be done on the basis of access to resources that each group had and their relative position in social hierarchy (Mohan,2007).

The field experience has revealed certain insights about the land –women relations through a gendered lens .The existing social harmony in the village under study masks certain implicit caste hierarchical attitudes in the society. for instance, the so called upper caste are highly critical about the changes that occurred in society during the past decades .because these changes had made them the then janmis under suffrage and landlessness. They lost almost all titles, both given for pattom and vaaram (pattom land for rupee, vaaram land for certain rice measure) .Several women in the community explained that the collapse of the matrilineal system did not make any change in their land –relations. They continued as just the owners in the legal papers .Unlike women in the lower caste, they were not allowed to do work even in the land the family hold. And consider them as ‘akathamma’(one who sits inside). If she claims her right, then she will be categorised as selfish one who failed to satisfy her responsibilities towards her family. The major way of land acquisition here is through inheritance .limited purchase of land will be done only if there is a need for house plot.

Nair caste who were managers to the uppermost caste people comes later in the hierarchical structure .there exists a purity concept within them .so they call themselves pure nairs or use the term *g16* to show their purity with respect to other nair caste categories. they also claim an equal status in the property ownership to both men and women . But Interviews with women in Nair caste revealed that either their husbands control the property of the women after marriage if it is near marital home or her natal family members or kins if the property is near to her natal home. In short, they never gets any outcome from her property even if they have an individual title on it. Joint title with husband also has a similar impact .Most of built a house in that property but later the full ownership of the house will be in the name of husband and thus the right of the women has indirectly taken away. Mostly they acquire land through inheritance .

Interviews with a woman in Kulala Nair caste ,who are basically potters by profession illustrated a different dimension regarding land ownership ,though she agrees with the security land provides at times of unexpected shocks and emergencies ,she has a different opinion about the equal division of land among son and daughter on the grounds that daughter after her marriage become part of the marital home whereas son will stay and take care of the parents was frequently connected to the restructuring of power in marital relationships that allowed women greater freedom from violence. Similar to the practice of Kulalas, the women in Shaliya community who are basically a community of weavers also demonstrated that the life of daughter after marriage , forces her not to claim any right on her parents property. Even if the natal family shares the land, a relatively bad quality will be given to the daughter on the preassumption it is less convenient to her to look after it. Also, In such cases the natal family members especially her brother will take care of the land given to her.

Apart from all the disadvantages faced by property less women, legislative vacuum on matrimonial property has devastating consequences on women and children in the eventuality of divorce, widowhood and desertion(Kodoth 2005)For instance a widow under thiyya caste explained her helpless situation .she had only a couple of years of married life .during this time period the couple purchased 10 cents of land in the interior village using the jewellery and money she got from her natal home during their marriage. Her husband has 2 brothers ,they have taken away his property after his death, now for her daughter’s marriage she has to either sell the property or take loan out of it .suppose she sell it ,then she doesnot have any place to stay.

The Pulaya community under Scheduled Castes got their land recently, through a government transfer programme, it is only about 3 to 5 cents .so they basically use the land to build their houses and live as clusters. Thus there is no question of inheritance and purchase .they were the real tillers of the soil and still are. They have more or less a gender equal approach onwards land and work rights.

The Karimbalan community in the village comes under Scheduled Tribe, they have a pattern of settlement which is usually called as a ‘tribal colony’(Aadivaasi Ooru).They follows their customs and practice their customary laws with respect to land relations for that any decisions related are made by a group sitting including the leader of the group called mooppan and the representative from the

panchayath. They get land from mainly two ways either through government or through inheritance. Irrespective of who owns the land, the women in the household have a say in decisions related to land. Apart from all the disadvantages faced by property less women, legislative vacuum on matrimonial property has devastating consequences on women and children in the eventuality of divorce, widowhood and desertion(Kodoth 2005)For instance a widow under thiyya caste explained her helpless situation .she had only a couple of years of married life .during this time period the couple purchased 10 cents of land in the interior village using the jewellery and money she got from her natal home during their marriage. Her husband has 2 brothers ,they have taken away his property after his death, now for her daughter's marriage she has to either sell the property or take loan out of it .suppose she sell it ,then she doesnot have any place to stay.

7. Conclusion

In general the social development trend in Kerala has an impact on all castes, the standard of living of them has increased, old matriarchical traditions in Kerala has undergone extinction , but the equality aspect in land ownership has not become gender progressive. The intergenerational transfers in most cases favor men in the household due to the existence of a patriarchal conjugal framework, also existing system of caste hierarchy widened the gender gap. The religion, traditions and customs make the personal laws comparatively static and biased against women by making them bearers of these age old customs and Patriarchal notions. This restrict them from claiming their rights and work as a forced tradeoff between an emotional over financial security .Thus to bring the marginalised into the bigger space need to focus on gender equal strategies from the grass root level. This should equally deal with both policy and execution levels.

Personal laws on succession rights with its recent amendments is a major stepping stone towards the gender equal land rights .But there is a wide gap exists between the law and practice .This is due to several reasons :

Mostly women receive their dowry in terms of liquid or near liquid assets. Except bargaining for the dowry, though it is prohibited, there is hardly any discussion on how this amount or property is used and whose name it is legally titled. The absence of strong legislation with respect to marital property will have its repercussions if she met with an unexpected shock in her marriage life such as widowhood, divorce, separation etc. Suppose, she gets any land from her natal family, then mostly the kind of land is comparatively of lower quality if she has brothers. This is because of a pre-conceived notion among men that women cannot look after the land as they do, though the evidences show the contrary.

In the perspective of a liberal thinking man, 'Women are supposed to get equal title, but its not happening, because they are not claiming it.'

I:Do you claim

Respondent: Why should I? it is understood

Also, Attitude of old women on women land rights is surprisingly gender biased on the ground that daughters go out ,son stays'

There is a wide gender gap in the land holdings within the household .Higher the caste position in the hierarchy more is this gap. If both men and women are working then the women spend majority of their income for the daily consumption purpose of the family whereas men save it and further use it for investment in his name .

Claiming land from the state is considered very much different from claiming it from marital or natal family because latter become a complex and difficult procedure for women compared to the former one. But, land reforms gave title to the household head ,usually men in the household thus women remains marginalized .Even after accepting this failure , the present government land transfer programmes are repeating this mistake by providing title in the name of men.

Very few women have legal ownership right on land even few of them has right to control /use it. Landlessness accompanied by the insecurities in her marital relations such as aging and early widow hood, Increase in Dowry culture, Increasing Alcoholism especially in the rural areas, Institutional aspects of marriage, Cultural logic of land for sons and dowry for daughters etc are few major problems that contribute to the vulnerability of women. The landlessness increase this vulnerability. Thus there is a need to draw a dividing line of equality between the rightful inheritors of land and undeserved section. Perspective of a women about the transfer of land she owns reflects her understanding towards empowerment .Because property divides women among themselves for instance women as mother in law may have a conflicting interests from women as mothers. More than the awareness and knowledge on the land related legal aspects, a gender progressive change in attitude of women is need of the hour. Finally to conclude, Land relations are social relations which calls forth a social change,these social change can further make a change in the existing gender identities in relation to land both within the household and further in the society .Considering this we don't need passing emotions but a permanent solution, for that the attitude of each individual has to go under a transformation process. The change should start from within.

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