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**FAMILY PLANNING AS 'LIBERATION':  
THE AMBIGUITIES OF 'EMANCIPATION  
FROM BIOLOGY' IN KERALAM**

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## ABSTRACT

In the early debates on the desirability of artificial birth control in Malayalee society, artificial birth control was often opposed on the grounds that it undercut some of the crucial conditions for the ushering in of full-fledged modernity, which was frequently conceived of in entirely Developmentalist terms. The concern expressed was mainly that it was incompatible with the project of modern self-building, tied as it was to the attainment of a high degree of sexual self-control. However, by the 1960s, such fears had vanished or become marginal, and now the reverse appeared true, i.e., Family Planning appeared to be part and parcel of disciplined, abstemious and prudent domesticity. The paper tries to explore some aspects of this transformation of associations. Some of the conditions that made this transformation possible had been already taking shape before the full-scale arrival of the Family Planning Programme into Keralam. These included changes in key notions like the nature and social function of sexual desire and activity, modern conjugal marriage and the forces sustaining it, and so on. The Family Planning propaganda of mid 20<sup>th</sup> century was bolstered, directly or indirectly, by these ongoing elaborations. Also important was the Family Planning propaganda's active furthering of the emergent forms of power in modern Malayalee society that were already defining and guiding its modernisation, such as the newer form of patriarchy in which (modern educated) men design and oversee the process of 'Women's Liberation', the new elitism of modern knowledge that marginalises all other ways of knowing and sharply differentiates 'mental' work and 'physical' labour, the passivising power of reformism which authorises non-reciprocal relations between the reformers and the objects of reform. The overall effort of the paper is to highlight the ambiguities of 'liberation' in 20<sup>th</sup> century Keralam and to problematise the tradition/modernity binary that too often organises the writing of the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Malayalee society.

**Key words:** natural birth-control, artificial birth control, modern, liberation, modern conjugality, domesticity, sexual self-discipline

## I

### **'Modern Against Progress?'**

One of the chief reasons why the case for the Family Planning Programme could be effectively presented in Keralam was because it did not clash with the sexual morality of the modern-educated middle-class groups<sup>1</sup>, which was, by the mid-century, steadily inching towards hegemonic status in Malayalee society. Indeed one may well go beyond this claim and argue that the Family Planning Programme was an important vehicle of this process, given the fact that it carried middle-class norms, mores and aspirations to a number of social groups hitherto in relative isolation. Emergent and growing since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this sexual morality was one which relied upon self-disciplining as the major mode of regulating desire, on heterosexuality as the major mode of defining sexual desire and practice, and on patriarchy as the major sort of power organising relations between the sexes. The institution that was to house the modern sexual morality was undoubtedly the modern nuclear family provided for chiefly (though not solely) by the father, and supervised internally by the mother. In turn, this institution was to be maintained through adherence to the former. By the 1950s the nuclear family form seems to have attained considerable spread in Malayalee society<sup>2</sup>. Not that the 'battle' against the alleged sexual profligacy of the earlier order was universally declared to have ended; in the 60s, one still finds texts that defend the superiority of modern sexual morality against the decadence of an earlier order, with fairly the same self-righteous zeal as in texts much earlier<sup>3</sup>. But now, these stories only

reinforced what was spreading rapidly, appearing not just necessary but also 'natural', and hence, durable. That is, by the late 60s and early 70s, the older order was getting 'written off' all the more fast. The Family Planning Programme (henceforth, FPP) seems to mark an important moment in the cementing of the victory of the new sexual morality, as we may see in the following exploration.

However, that the FPP could serve such a purpose would not have appeared to be already given to many a couple of decades back. How it became possible to overcome such fears and misgivings- that by no means are easily dismissed as 'obscurantist' - so that the cultural ground could be cleared for the FPP, is a question that demands investigation. The arguments advanced against artificial birth-control were often clearly linked to the anxieties about realising the ideal modern self that had begun to be upheld against the older socio-economic and cultural orders ever since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Malayalee society. From these early times, the project of modern self-building was portrayed as crucially dependent on attaining a high degree of self-disciplining, particularly expressed in sexual self-restraint. This was to be a self that could regulate itself, and that was seen to be the mark of its 'freedom' and the condition of its integration in the modern institutions<sup>4</sup>. From the 1930s onwards, i.e., around the period when artificial birth-control came to be actively discussed in the Malayalee public sphere, to the late fifties at least, we find much writing that expresses deep suspicion of artificial contraception as fundamentally incompatible with the project of modern self-building. The idea that vigorous sexual desire was pathological, the conviction that sexual self-control was central to self-building and the fear that artificial birth-control would open up a Pandora's Box, leading to sexual chaos, were inevitably voiced in such writing. In contrast, natural birth control was hailed as the ideal to the sexually disciplined subject capable of disciplined labour and procreation.<sup>5</sup> As Paul Mampilli, a member of

the Cochin Legislative Council in the 1930s put it, if birth-control was to be attained, it was to be only through staying within the project of “...the control of the mind, by the exercise of will-power.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, for such persons, artificial contraception would be utterly superfluous. At the same time, making it available to the vast majority who had not attained sexual self control seemed dangerously threatening to the project of modern self-building itself –any sign that they sought or practiced it would be already evidence for their deviation from this project. Speaking in the Cochin Legislative Council in 1943, another opponent of artificial birth control, C. O. Ouseph, voiced these fears in clear terms:

“.....Some, who want to have the enjoyment of actions, want to avoid the obligations of it. Is it not immoral? You want your passions to be satisfied and yet are not ready to bear the resultant burdens.... You are given the power to control yourself. Do you want to remain a man or unman yourself? The result of this resolution is an acceptance of defeat, an admission that the human will cannot control human nature. That, Sir, is dangerously immoral and contributes to continued slavery.”<sup>7</sup>

Later opponents of artificial birth control drew out other objections that seemed to follow from such arguments. The Finance Minister in the Tiru-Kochi cabinet, A.J. John did this when he pointed out in 1951 that to introduce artificial contraception to people who did not even know the rudiments of self-control and health care was to veritably invite health hazards, besides stirring up uncontrolled and excessive sexual activity.<sup>8</sup> For such people, it seemed, the only barrier to the unregulated pursuit of carnal pleasures was the social stigma attached to illegitimate births. Artificial control now seemed to offer them the possibility of evading this censor, thus removing the ‘external’

controls from those who had no ‘internal’ controls in the first place. This, then, would be a formidable threat to the actualisation of a disciplined sexual order yoked to efficient production of wealth and procreation – it can hardly be forgotten that this was found absolutely crucial to the shaping of a modern community in almost every version of community reformism that has appeared in Malayalee society<sup>9</sup>. Not everything issuing out of the West, it was often commented, would help Modernity incarnate in Malayalee society. Artificial birth control was identified by its critics as a force capable of such ‘abortive’ effect. As C.O. Ouseph put it, it seemed to perpetuate ‘slavery’,<sup>10</sup> which was certainly pre-modern. This makes sense when we consider the fact that in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century social reformist thinking in Kerala, *swatantryam* was not defined as ‘freedom from all constraint’ but as ‘self-means for survival’, and against *tantonittam* (doing as one feels)<sup>11</sup>. In a situation in which strong and well-disciplined internalities were ill formed in subjects, it seemed against the interest of social governance geared to the purpose of accelerating material production, that ‘external’ constraints be removed. Because it seemed capable of undermining the actualisation of a disciplined society capable of a high degree of material production (for which sexual self-discipline seemed a pre-requisite), artificial contraception even appeared socially regressive: ‘the modern against progress’<sup>12</sup>. It may, however be noted that this ‘regulation by Nature’ was not read as a rival or threat to the regulatory efforts of social institutions but rather as a support, even the sole support.<sup>13</sup>

A second set of related criticisms stemmed from the suspicion that artificial birth control would adversely affect the ‘sexual contract’<sup>14</sup> that was to be ideally established between Man and Woman within the modern home. This, it was feared, would upset the complementary relation between the sexes, considered the crucial support of the modern family. The seriousness with which this was perceived is hardly



surprising, given the fact that the establishment of complementary exchange between the sexes was considered to be of central importance in the project of forging the modern collectivity, be it the modern Church, Community, Nation, Family or whatever. On the one hand it was feared that artificial birth control would make women ‘Manly’: women would then no longer prefer their ‘proper domain’, the modern home, but hanker after ‘Manly’ callings. This would disrupt complementary sexual exchange and thus affect the mutual energising of procreation and production. Even those who were sufficiently convinced that ‘Womanly’ capacities had ample application in the public domain, and not in the domestic domain alone, were suspicious of the effects of artificial contraception. Speaking at a meeting of the Neyyattinkara Town *Streeramajam* in 1935, Mrs. Malloor Govinda Pillai, a prominent social worker and philanthropist of Tiruvitamkoor, sharply attacked artificial contraception as actually disadvantaging women by prompting them to abandon their socially-prestigious role of Mother. While unambiguously supporting paid employment and economic independence for women, she opposed artificial birth control as bad strategy, upsetting both body and mind. With this was expressed support for natural birth control (the extent to which this may be rightfully called ‘natural’ may be questioned, for it clearly involved ‘culturing’ the mind), recommended to women who could not afford to have children<sup>15</sup>. Other critics were harsher, identifying users of artificial contraception as parasitic, sickly, immoral and pleasure-seeking, charging women who sought artificial birth control of desiring an illegitimate gender-crossing. The *Aryakeralam*, criticising women-supporters of artificial birth control, poured scornful invective on “educated” women who were supposedly panting after a space in the public domain. They were faulted for being old maids chasing an easy and flighty life, which was then easily identified as desiring a reversal of

gender roles<sup>16</sup>. Such suspicions were still being voiced in the 1950s by highly educated, articulate and financially self-reliant Catholic women who favoured only natural birth control. However, it is not easy to simply characterise these women as somehow subservient to conservatism in thinking about gender relations. We find in their speeches the strong endorsement of associations for women, the entry of women into public life, criticism of governments and political parties for not providing women enough space in the public domain, and calls for alertness on the part of women to national and international affairs<sup>17</sup>. Besides, artificial birth control was feared to impair the reproductive capacities of women's bodies<sup>18</sup>.

On the other hand, artificial birth control was feared to hold the danger of turning the chaste wife into no more than a prostitute, of reducing wives to no more than objects of male sexual desire<sup>19</sup>. The abandonment of sexual passivity by women, whether a consequence of adopting artificial contraception or not, was in general read as a sign of decadence by the progressives and the sceptics alike<sup>20</sup>. It is no wonder, then, that many people who supported birth control limited themselves, at least initially, to support for self-control. Anna Chandy, the first Malayalee woman to earn a law degree and practice as a lawyer, and a noted women's rights activist of the 1930s in Tiruvitamkoor, initially recommended birth control through self control<sup>21</sup>, though she later supported artificial birth control at the All-India Women's Conference at Thiruvananthapuram in 1936. Lalitambika Antarjanam, one of the earliest of Malayalee women to carve out a space of her own in the nascent institution of modern Malayalam literature, used the debate over the desirability of artificial birth control for women to put forth her alternative vision of motherhood that would not participate in the project of fashioning 'hard' Individuals. In her short story *Mulappalinte Manam* (1960) artificial birth control is granted qualified support on the

condition that what she deemed to be essentially ‘Womanly’—the ability to transcend the public /private divide and heal the schisms opened up by Individualism – should not dry up out of its application.<sup>22</sup> In the 1950s, another prominent woman to gain recognition within modern Malayalam literature, K.Saraswati Amma, recommended artificial birth control to the masses<sup>23</sup> but reserved birth control through self-disciplining to those women who aspired for an internally- oriented, Individualised self<sup>24</sup>. Staunch advocates of women’s entry into public life of the 1930s like R.Easwara Pillai could go only as far as self-control<sup>25</sup>. As for the journals, some like *Kesari* and *Sahodaran* were unwaveringly pro-artificial birth control, while other progressive publications like the *Mahila* and the *M.N.Nair Masika* published both viewpoints. In the *Vanitalokam* (Women’s World) column of the *M.N.Nair Masika* of 1936, E.N.Meenakshi Amma wrote thus:

“Our women may run away scared when they hear about contraception. The best way to control the number of births is through self-control. Only that those who find this impossible may seek other means. It is essential that a mother should have children only as far as her health and financial ability allow. Each woman has the responsibility to decide the means by which this may be achieved.”<sup>26</sup>

However, in 1938 the same author was arguing against contraception in the same column. Citing a Japanese doctor, E. N. Meenakshi Amma now wrote against the idea that more pregnancies ruined a woman’s health: “In short this Japanese doctor says that more pregnancies are better for the health and longevity of the mother. We know that for women, most illnesses are cured by childbirth.... Woman’s physique has been constructed for the purpose of giving birth. Therefore the basis of women’s health lies in giving birth.”<sup>27</sup> In any case, most of

the supporters and the opponents of artificial birth control were only too ready to concede that there was a need to reduce numbers in the ‘general’ interest of society, and that ‘natural’ birth control was the most desirable and healthy means to this end. Artificial birth control did have its committed proponents—like, for instance, the prominent women’s rights activist, Mrs.C. Kuttan Nair.<sup>28</sup> The point, however, is that modern educated women who agreed otherwise on the advisability of paid employment for women, and their participation in public affairs, did not necessarily agree on the advisability of artificial contraception for women as a means of expanding women’s social space.

The third sort of fear about the effects of artificial contraception stemmed directly from the above two: the undermining of the project of modern self-building and the erosion of sexual complementarity seemed to threaten the modern family itself, and with it, affecting civilisation itself. These fears surface even in the early debates. In 1934, Joseph Pettah raised this point against K. Ayappan’s resolution requesting the Cochin government’s help for those who wished or needed to practice birth control. He argued that large families were better training grounds for children who were to enter a competitive society: “..the children of the large family are much more enterprising, much better fitted to the battle of life than those of the small family... in the large family, you get a training ground for the development of certain qualities which are essential (*to succeed*) in the competition of life.”<sup>29</sup> More or less the same argument came up in the Tiru-Kochi legislature in 1951 during the debate on family planning. Speaking on A.P.Udayabhanu’s resolution appealing for government support for family planning, A.K.George claimed that large families are more suited to a robust democracy. Citing the example of a twelve-member family, he said: “They had their own small parliament; they budgeted their own income and so on.”<sup>30</sup> The same argument appeared in several other texts<sup>31</sup>.

The fears about the destruction of the modern family occupied a prominent place in the anti-Soviet texts produced in Keralam in the 1940s and 1950s<sup>32</sup>. These often painted a lurid picture of Soviet society as a horde, which was, on the one hand, made to labour like cattle by a tyrannical state, and, on the other hand, prompted to indulge in mindless pleasure seeking, which ate into the internal capacity of Individuals to resist state tyranny and rationally judge its policies. For this, the destruction of the affective bonds that were seen to hold together the modern family, it was claimed, would be necessary<sup>33</sup>. It was further claimed that under such adverse circumstances, the family was supported by little more than a flimsy legality that rendered it highly insecure<sup>34</sup>. The reference was to pre-Stalinist Soviet society in which women had more or less free access to abortions and contraception; indeed the Stalinist curbs on such access was read as a reaction to the ‘damage’ caused by this to the fabric of Soviet society.<sup>35</sup> Communist authors and fellow-travelers fought off such charges by affirming that Soviet society, and indeed, all Socialism, was committed to the fostering of the procreative family, and denying that sexual lawlessness existed in the USSR or within Communism itself<sup>36</sup>. Indeed, even those who disagreed with the Communists in Keralam in these times were found congratulating them on the strict sexual self-discipline the Party enforced within its ranks<sup>37</sup>. Several autobiographies of leading Communist activists testify to their concern about the need to channelise sexual desire into productive purposes, and their recognition of the relevance of (a revised version of) modern familial arrangements to secure the same.<sup>38</sup>

It is too easily supposed that because a large number of sceptics in this debate were Catholic, they were somehow less modern or more ‘conservative’. This debate is too easily characterised as a confrontation between ‘progressives’ and ‘reactionaries’. It may be the case that the Catholic Church advanced such modern objections as the above as a

cover up for its conservative adherence to Biblical injunctions. But this in itself matters little. In any case, whatever be their intentions, it was very clear that by the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in order to frame a convincing case in the public sphere, it was no longer sufficient to put forward religious objections alone. The Church, even at the height of its anti-Communism and anti-rationalism never assumed an anti-Developmental posture, even in the most remote sense – one has only to see the innumerable articles and speeches endorsing modernisation of agriculture, adoption of scientific health-care, industrialisation etc. that appeared in the *Nazrani Deepika*, and in the All-Kerala Catholic Conferences.<sup>39</sup> Religious objections were abundantly voiced within the anti-artificial birth control literature produced by the Catholic Church; but they were certainly not projected as the most important ones. Indeed it may be reiterated that the objections reviewed here are in no sense ‘traditional’ in the sense of espousing the norms and values of a pre-modern order. Rather they are all concerned about the shaping of a thoroughly modern self. Indeed it must be stressed, as the Catholic Church and the *Nazrani Deepika* stressed on many occasions, that there was fundamental and general agreement that population growth in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was not to be lightly taken, and that they heartily welcomed ‘natural’ means to curb it.

Perhaps the divergence may be more fruitfully characterised as not so much between ‘progressives’ and ‘reactionaries’, as between different visions of the path towards a common goal, Development. If one removes the currently dominant framing of the debate (i.e. as one between ‘progressives’ and ‘reactionaries’, with all its value-loadedness), then we may be able to see a clash between two different visions of the way towards Development. One of these placed the self-regulating Individual at its heart; in the other, the desire to Develop overwhelmed the concern to shape the self-regulating Individual.<sup>40</sup> The latter matched

well Nehruvian aspirations to Development<sup>41</sup>, the democratic pronouncements of which could be easily swept aside when it came to the actual process of Development, and it was readily agreed that in order to reach this goal, a certain degree of ‘inevitable’ coercion and violence was tolerable.<sup>42</sup> Thus it would not be entirely off the mark to say that modernity in mid-twentieth century Keralam had been to a large extent Development-defined.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, such objections as mentioned above gradually lost their edge and ability to convince. What had been earlier lampooned as preposterous came to be actualised, and normal. In 1934, the journal *Rasikan* had poked fun at the advocates of artificial birth control in these terms:

“.. In the end, the government must seek to promote understanding about the excess number of children by beginning a study-centre in every taluk which would enquire about and understand procreation, its timing, number, practice and place. If necessary, the editor of *Kesari*, Balakrishna Pillai B.A.B.L. will supervise and control such schools”.<sup>43</sup>

In the late 1960s this no longer would have appeared a joke. In the vigorous campaigns for family planning, all the earlier associations made by its critics were reversed. Now, artificial birth control was no longer associated with sexual profligacy but with sexual discipline, concern about procreation and socialisation of the young, and with abstemious living; with the perpetuation of modern domestic life and not its abrogation; with procreative, not pleasure-seeking female sexuality. Indeed artificial birth control did not even appear to be a travesty of Nature, but rather an instrument that aided individuals to get in tune with Nature within themselves.

The next section of this chapter is devoted to pursuing the vicissitudes of this transformation of associations. Some of the conditions for this had already been taking shape in the pre-1950s itself, but came into fruition by the 1960s. This included transformations in key notions advanced and discussed within late 19<sup>th</sup>- early 20<sup>th</sup> century Malayalee modernity such as the nature and function of sexual desire and activity, the relation between *Premam* (Romantic Love) and *Kamam* (bodily lust), the functions of modern conjugality and the forces sustaining it, the functions of and the balance of forces within the modern nuclear family etc.

On the one hand, not only the desirability, but also the sheer necessity of artificial birth control for the sexual well being of human beings was successfully projected. On the other hand the FPP propaganda actively aided the intensive spread of the cultural and social values of the modern educated middle-classes. At the same time, it assiduously cultivated the divide between the educated elite and the 'masses'. The third section pays attention to these aspects. It tries to illustrate how an inherent progressiveness attributed to the FPP furthered the emergent forms of power in modern Malayalee society that defined and guided its modernisation. That is, to say, modern 'soft' patriarchy in which (modern educated) men design and oversee the process of 'women's liberation'; the new elitism of modern knowledge which marginalises all other ways of knowing, inserts an implacable divide between 'mental' work and 'physical' labour and legitimises all interventions in its name; the 'passivising' power of reformist 'uplifting' which authorises non-reciprocal relations of power between the reformers and those who are to be reformed. The last section draws together the arguments of the earlier sections to call for more complex and historically sensitive accounts of the generation of public consent for the FPP in Keralam. These, in turn, may help us to be more cautious about slipping



too easily into (unjustified) self-congratulation about the 'voluntary' acceptance of birth control in Keralam.

## II

### The Malayalee 'Sexual Revolution'

The need to manage the sexual activity of people so that it would be transformed into a resource for useful procreation had been articulated early in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Keralam. This was clearly visible in the early criticisms of the *Marumakkathayam* (Matriliny) system of matrimonial and familial arrangements: this system appeared repugnant not only because it clashed with Victorian sexual morality but also because it failed to produce useful, healthy and efficient progeny. Criticising matriliney in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the CMS missionary, Rev. George Mathen wrote: "Though it is seen that the progeny of unions in which men and women live together in mutual fidelity are strong and healthy, the children of parents of easy morals are weak and sickly. And besides it is clear from the condition of the prostitutes that the immoral woman does not have the *Pativrata's* capacity to bear children...."<sup>44</sup>

Later, the lack of proper management of sexual activity was often pointed out as underlying a perceived lack of productive habits among Malayalees. "The Malayalees are as a class the most idle and homesick of the whole Hindu community", wrote a "Hindu Liberal" in 1891, "owing to the enervating influence exercised on their character by their peculiar system of inheritance and their obnoxious system of promiscuous marriage or no marriage at all".<sup>45</sup> Thus in the early Malayalam novels, free flowing sexual desire is attendant to negative qualities like laziness, ignorance, social and economic parasitism etc<sup>46</sup>.

This should be set along with the over-whelming importance granted to the 'Union of Minds' as the keystone of modern marriage

within the reformist circles ever since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The theme of the triumph of romantic love over the hurdles set by ‘Tradition’ is central to most early 19<sup>th</sup> century novels in Malayalam. In these texts, *Premam* (Romantic Love) is associated with animated Womanhood personified in heroines who are generally depicted as having received the correct training that has sharpened their ‘inherent’ capacities, and made them ‘truly’ Womanly<sup>47</sup>. In most of these, sexual intimacy is disqualified in favour of mental communion as the abiding force of stable unions. Indeed, sexual union is but a by-product of *Premam*, to be reached only after the couple has gone through all the other intimacies, and is comparatively marginal as far as the stability of the union is concerned. Such unions are hailed as endowing women with active agency, enabling them to draw men into the world of emotional relationships and altruistic exchange in homely life. In contrast, it is as though in relationships drawing upon *Kamam* (bodily lust), women may figure only as passive victims or seductive objects. Thus the modern conjugal unit, it was often argued, was held together not by the force of the legal enactments in its favour, but by various ‘internal forces’, including *Premam*.<sup>48</sup> Thus it is quite understandable that women reformers like Parvati Nenminimangalam expressed dissatisfaction with the suggestion that the wife should deck herself, culture her *body*, to be sexually appealing to the husband. For Nenminimangalam, it was the mind that had to be cultured; the body was to be kept minimal, shorn of its ability to arouse erotic desire in men.<sup>49</sup> She was certainly not alone in her suspicion. Indeed, in most Malayalee reformisms, the need to prevent exposure of the female body, so that it would not arouse carnal cravings, and thwart the project of modern self-building was stressed<sup>50</sup>.

However, the reformist demands that sexual activity be detached from the simple pursuit of sensual pleasure and transformed into a resource for ‘high quality’ procreation did not always mean that the two ends were to be permanently separated, or that the frequency of sexual

activity should be reduced. For instance, among the radical elements in Nambutiri reformism, the achievement of sexual discipline within the community clearly called for a more widespread and equitable distribution of sexual pleasure between the sexes<sup>51</sup>. This was, of course, firmly reigned to the project of building the modern community.<sup>52</sup> Within much reformisms there is often a clear-cut tension between two apparently conflicting roles assigned to the wife— it seemed important to project the wife not just as the agent of reproduction, but also as the Provider of pleasure. In Nambutiri reformism, we even see fervent pleas to aestheticise the bodies of Antarjanams so that they may be attractive to the younger generation of modern educated Nambutiris<sup>53</sup>. This was also the rationale for including certain accomplishments such as singing, painting, drawing, the letters, etiquette etc. in the several plans for female education that appeared in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century reformisms, which was to otherwise include useful skills like cooking, home management, childcare etc. In traditional Sanskritic representation of Womanhood, there was a strict divide between the *Kulina* and the *Veshya*— she who brought forth legitimate offspring, and she who was the vessel of culture. The ideal of modern Woman articulated in 20<sup>th</sup> century reformisms in Malayalee society is different from both these in that it combines the features of both. Woman is firmly installed within the patrilineal family and monogamous conjugality as the begetter of legitimate progeny; at the same time, she also takes over the functions of the *Veshya* in a significantly different way. This is by bringing the *Veshya*'s accomplishments into the modern home as instruments that would assure the health and longevity of the modern monogamous/monoandrous conjugal unit. Not surprisingly, many reformers found these to be conflicting, but the debate was never resolved, and even in Malayalee society of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the tension remained, almost setting the terms of most discussions on women's space and freedom.<sup>54</sup>

Thus even as mind-centered *Premam* was being hailed as the central pivot of the modern conjugal unit, the simultaneous assignment of the role of ‘provider of pleasure’ to the wife—this ‘fault-line’ at the core of the ideal of Modern Womanhood in Keralam—left open a certain space. Through this it became possible to assert that the sustenance of pleasure-generation within the family was absolutely necessary if its stability was to be ensured. As we may see, this was later advanced as a key argument to establish the necessity of artificial birth control as an important instrument in preserving the pleasurability of the monogamous conjugal union. It also helped to defeat the plea that the shift towards pleasure that artificial birth control might allow would potentially damage disciplined family life, pointing to the possibility that if the wife eschewed her role as the provider of pleasure to the husband, he might seek it elsewhere.

But besides this, a renewed rehabilitation of sexual pleasure, and the sexual instinct itself, was also necessary. This seemed to call for new ways of *managing* sexual desire; not simply ‘liberating’ it from all sorts of regulation. In avant-garde literary circles, sexual desire was beginning to be rehabilitated by the forties, often explicitly against mind-centered *Premam*.<sup>55</sup> Intellectuals began to express scepticism about now-familiar ways of regulating sexual desire, ranging from the use of discreet language and modest dress to mind-centered *Premam* as a regulatory force toning down *kamam*, and making it subservient to modern domesticity. More efficient means of regulating desire were called for. The well-known poet and intellectual of the forties, Changampuzha Krishna Pillai, argued thus at a meeting of the Progressive Writers in 1945, criticising prudery about sexual matters in literature: “Those who are interested in the morality of the future generation should not seek to childishly conceal such terms as the above (*he was referring to the word ‘mula’ which means ‘breast’ in Malayalam*) in asterisks; rather the effort should be to

impart sex-education from an early age.”<sup>56</sup> Here he was recommending a new instrument of regulating sexual desire supposedly more efficient than earlier ways. All covering and dressing of the female body, it was pointed out, was a double-edged sword; it aroused as much desire as it prevented. The Progressive writers and the leftist intellectuals were equally sceptical about *Premam*, which they sought to either discredit or redefine in their unique ways. Thus we find sexual desire partially rehabilitated as *Hridayattinte Vishappu* (The Hunger of the Heart) in Ponkunnam Varkey’s writings, challenging the exclusive identification of *Premam* and the ‘heart’<sup>57</sup>. Leftist writers either tried to discredit *Premam* as a force capable of channelising the sexual energies of individuals in a productive way and install Reason as the appropriate ‘internal force’ sealing modern conjugality<sup>58</sup> and projecting marriage as a relationship “.. for mating and making a living through labour”.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, sexual desire was acknowledged, in a scaled-down version, as a ‘physical need’ that had to be necessarily met if people were to lead ‘normal’ lives—hence the importance granted to monogamous marriage as an institution that helped to meet this need in a socially- non-disruptive manner. Indeed some of these authors even argued that this was the ‘real’ *Premam*, as opposed to ‘bourgeois’ *Premam* attacked by the Progressive writers<sup>60</sup>. Despite all the much-highlighted differences of opinion between the Progressive writers and the leftist intellectuals, the importance of sex-education as an instrument in regulating sexual desire seemed more or less agreed upon<sup>61</sup>. *Premam* also faced attack from other quarters, such as the rationalist-feminism of K.Saraswati Amma. Here too, while the possibility of a strong and resilient ‘Union of Minds’ was not entirely overruled, it was marked out to be the rarest of possibilities. *Premam* was faulted for its sentimentality, for the fact that it seemed to have lost the subversive energies once attributed to it (like, for example in the challenge it raised to the established orders

by enabling inter-caste marriages etc)<sup>62</sup>. Here too, sex-education, seen to rely upon the power of modern Science to generate truth about the human body, seemed crucial for the disciplining of one's bodily desires.<sup>63</sup> A point on which the different champions of sex education could agree upon was regarding the source and direction of the flow of information about sexual matters<sup>64</sup>. Ideally, all speech and writing regarding sexual matters were to be couched in objective and scientific language, and to flow from the expert to the layperson, so no lascivious feelings were aroused that could block the scientific self-gaze of the latter.

Not that sentimental *Premam* was dismissed for good. Indeed, the vast literature on sexual life and self-discipline produced by the Catholic Church in the 1960s attempted a combination of sex-education with *Premam* ( here it figured merely as an internal force cementing the conjugal unit, and not as one capable of breaking down distinctions of class or caste) in which both are deemed equally important in assuring the productive regulation of sexual desire<sup>65</sup>. However, even in this literature it seemed no more possible to treat sexual desire as easily subjugated to sentimental attachments. *Premam* no longer seemed prior to *Kamam* in importance; once its ineffectuality in regulating the latter seemed evident, other means were to be sought. More and more frequently, the sexual urge is admitted to be a fundamental structuring element of the human mind not easily socialised; a prerequisite to its socialisation seems a minimal admittance of it as a 'basic need' to be necessarily fulfilled for the normal functioning of the human mind. It was, again, increasingly admitted that the modern conjugal unit needed to be reshaped to meet this 'need'. Despite their many differences, publicists of different persuasions often converged upon sex-education as a major means of regulating carnal desires. But the agreement upon the necessity to channelise sexual energies productively ensured the retention of a sexual morality classifying sexual behaviour into 'good'

and ‘bad’ types. Bodily desires now gained an admittance, as a ‘basic need’, that simultaneously allowed an equally strict, if less conspicuous sort of regulation.

These developments detailed above by no means wiped out all other views. But the consecration of sexual desire at the heart of modern conjugal union alongside or even above *Premam*, the assignment of the further role of the Provider of Pleasure to the modern (married) Woman, besides that of child-bearer and rearer / homemaker were certainly important in making possible the effective presentation of the case for family planning in Malayalee society by the 1960s. This effectively worked to undermine the case for self-control as a birth control method. Making sexual pleasures central to the conjugal union seemed an important of assuring its stability. Under economic circumstances that made the sustenance of a large family difficult (widely perceived to be existing in Malayalee society in those times), the non-availability of reliable birth control methods would make it impossible for women to be pleasure-giving mates, and that men would seek illicit sex to satisfy their desires not being bound by anatomy, as women were. Self-control, it now seemed, could lead to the accentuation, rather than the diminution of carnal desires. Remarking on the relationship between artificial birth control and sexual self-control, an author wrote:

“It may be remembered that self-control and birth control are not solutions that may be substituted for one another. Self-control may be essential irrespective of whether one uses artificial birth control methods or not. It is dangerous to practice asceticism through abstention from sex for very long. The moral danger is that there will be the temptation to indulge in sex with someone outside. For oneself, even the mutual relation may be endangered.”<sup>66</sup>

The same text admitted that unmarried persons might ‘misuse’ artificial birth control to indulge in the pleasures of the flesh,<sup>67</sup> but this was met by its argument that self-control was necessary, irrespective of whether one used artificial birth control techniques or not. The very same fears were voiced after the Papal rejection of artificial birth control in 1968. In 1969, the Catholic Church held the Kerala Regional Seminar at Aluva in which the problems of conjugality and faith were actively raised, and the Church’s stand regarding artificial birth control came under sharp criticism. Several speakers affirmed the centrality of conjugal *Premam* to be equally important as sex-education in regulating sexual desire<sup>68</sup>, but opinions were certainly not unanimous, and differences in positions were vociferously argued out. A speaker at the public meeting that followed the seminar made this clear, forcefully arguing that sex was indeed fundamental to the stability of marital union, and to treat it as marginal would be to encourage ‘wanderings’: “In marriage, procreation is not the sole aim of sexual union. Union in marriage is a lifetime association. Sexual union is a fundamental element in a stable marital union.....sex is the link that binds the mother and the father.”<sup>69</sup>

Thus it became rather easy, by this time, to project self-control as actually harmful, as repressing one’s ‘nature’, and harming one’s mind.

In general, from the 1940s onwards, one finds a spurt of writing on the ‘secret corridors’ of the minds, which directed human activity, and were accessible only through the penetrating gaze of modern Science<sup>70</sup>. Much of this expressly voiced concern about the necessity of developing domestic life conducive to the creation of a society and Nation committed to Progress as defined in the project of Development<sup>71</sup>. These discussions revolved around the best instruments for such disciplining, and refurbishing the institution of the modern family, as it was actually emerging in Keralam in these times. Indeed, *Premam* was



found to be defective not just because of its alleged failure to induce sexual self-discipline in individuals, but also because of scepticism about its efficacy as an internal force joining together the modern conjugal unit. It may also be important to consider the fact that to some observers at least, by the mid-50s and 60s, the emergent institution of modern marriage resembled not the sublime Union of Minds, but a much more crass and materialistic financial transaction<sup>72</sup>. The possibility of *Premam* leading to marriage and sustaining it seemed increasingly bleak<sup>73</sup>; at the same time, the difficult problem of integrating two different Individuals in an altruistic exchange within the familial institution to constitute a smoothly functioning unit loomed large<sup>74</sup>. Sexual intimacy, to many, seemed a common ground, a site, if cleared of tension, could appease all other discontents. But this is not to suggest that the heightened reality granted to sexual desire was part of a conscious effort to solve the problems of the modern family increasingly becoming a space in which *Premam* could hardly inhabit.

The intensive FPP of the 1960s in Keralam thus took birth under a particularly felicitous configuration. It arrived at a time when artificial birth control was projected long enough as the solution to the financial difficulties that plagued families in Malayalee society, which worsened in the tumultuous sixties; the FPP took up this projection with renewed vigour. As we have seen above, the ‘Malayalee Sexual Revolution’ was steadily undermining the case for ‘natural’ birth control. Besides, it seemed to contribute to yet another set of prescriptions for the treatment of that infant-born-sickly, the modern conjugal unit. Not surprisingly, it assiduously shared the concern about the social regulation of sexual activity in the interests of the modern family and the Development-fixated modern nation. Thus its agents were all-too anxious to project themselves as fully committed to the maintenance of ‘family values’ and ‘dharma’, and to point out that the safer methods were strictly limited

to married persons<sup>75</sup>. Family Planning propagandists were never tired of exhorting the public not to put artificial contraception to 'immoral' use. The speech delivered by the Kerala State Health Minister, B. Wellington, at the inauguration of the condom factory at Thiruvananthapuram, is just one such instance. The *Kerala Kaumudi* reported the speech thus:

“ The Health Minister B. Wellington stated that a transformation in sexual life that parallels those in the socio-economic and political fields is necessary. He reminded that the instruments of Family Planning were not to be used to create unregulated sexual anarchy. He stated that the movement which was the product of the good intention of establishing the stability of society should not become a license for moral deterioration.”<sup>76</sup>

As for abortions, the family planning propagandists reminded their critics that the call to legalise abortions fully recognised the need for the social regulation of sexual activity in the interests of the family, and that it certainly did not grant women any real control over their reproductive capacities. Dr. C. O. Karunakaran, one of the foremost FP propagandists in Kerala defended legalising abortions thus:

“ No one has demanded unregulated abortions. The suggestion is that if a woman with more than two or three children demands abortion with the consent of her husband and out of economic reasons, there should be no legal barrier. Besides, she will have to consent to sterilisation in order to prevent any later pregnancies.”<sup>77</sup>

The pro-familial image of the FPP was nurtured in more ways than one. Family Planning propagandists often stressed that it was advisable for couples to go in for temporary forms of contraception only after one healthy child was born. The Preface of one of the most widely read books on family planning in Malayalam agreed with this, pointing

out that "... the use of artificial birth control devices might hamper women's reproductive capacities."<sup>78</sup> A 'positive image' was sought and the propaganda often claimed that family planning services were not reducible to sterilisation but also included treatment of sterility<sup>79</sup>. That artificial birth control was intended only for married couples was never underscored enough: at an family planning propaganda seminar at the Recreation Club of the Alind Industries, Kundara, entry was prohibited to unmarried persons below eighteen years of age.<sup>80</sup> This went along with the claim that using family planning methods would greatly increase conjugal happiness by permitting carefree intercourse, thereby ensuring its permanence. 'Openness' and 'Freedom' were sought, but within the limits of the monogamous/ monoandrous family, and strictly bound to productivist imperatives<sup>81</sup>.

Moreover the FPP shared the language of sex education in which sexual matters could be spoken of 'objectively', and thus clearly distanced itself from the charge of being prurient. Even the Catholic critics of the intensive FPP of the early 1970s found fault with it not on the grounds that it would heighten the appetite for sex, but in that it seemed to be altogether against children<sup>82</sup>. In general, early family planning propaganda tended to emphasise economic hardships and social failings of large families in explicit terms, and couched its implications for the sexual life of couples in much more veiled language<sup>83</sup>. This was, in fact, praised by commentators as one of the reasons for the success of family planning propaganda in the 1960s. Reviewing the much-staged family planning propaganda play *Sandhi*, M.P. Manmathan remarked:

"Propagating awareness of the problem on a large scale but limiting the knowledge of its solution to those of the right age and in a private manner—that is the practical and intelligent way to popularise family

planning. To deviate from this balance, and make propaganda the naked and public popularisation of birth control methods will not only prevent the realisation of desired results but also lead us to sexual anarchy.”<sup>84</sup>

*Sandhi* was praised for giving just a hint of the contraceptives while highlighting the woes of large families. But the family planning propagandists were quite willing to go further and initiate the publicisation of various methods of artificial contraception. Once dealt with ‘scientifically’, all sexual matters could be easily spoken of in public, the adoption of a ‘scientific’ posture being a necessary condition for the propagation of artificial birth control<sup>85</sup>. The prestige of the scientific language gave family planning propagandists the confidence for unleashing an all-out campaign to break through the barriers of social reticence. This by no means upset the general reluctance to discuss sex in public – for it was generally combined with door-to-door campaigns by motivators who met each person in a specified area privately, and removed whatever reluctance through private conversation. When properly implemented, this could yield rich rewards for the population controllers, as the chief organiser of the much-publicised Mass Sterilisation Camps at Ernakulam in the early 70s, S.Krishna Kumar testified about the Mass Sterilisation Camp at Ernakulam of 1970 :

“ The camp succeeded also in large measure in overcoming the resistance to adoption of vasectomy as a family planning method resulting from a feeling of embarrassment of the male born out of the fear of others knowing of the operation and in general from the prudery regarding a subject relating to sex and reproduction. The Town Hall at the very center of the town was selected as the very venue for the camp and the camp was organised in full public gaze with the aim of breaking through this barrier. Though for the first few days this resistance could

be felt it was progressively overcome.... The prospective acceptors could be seen standing in queue in front of the operation room as casually and without any self-consciousness as if they were at a cinema ticket-counter.”<sup>86</sup>

As to be expected, the public slogans stressed the importance of family limitation to the progress of the Nation, family planning as the duty of the patriotic citizen<sup>87</sup> and so on, while ‘private’ and ‘personal’ objections were dealt with inside their sheltered domains. About the door-to-door campaign of the Camp of 1971, he says: “Each prospective promotee had personal and complicated reasons for his attitude to family planning and this type of field organisation and work ensured the personalised attention that was necessary to take him to a decision-making stage.” Such work, he said, “...delves deeply into the psychological barriers” that stood in the way of FP adoption.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, sustained efforts were made to allay any doubts about the alleged foreignness of family planning to ‘Indian Culture’.<sup>89</sup>

The Malayalee ‘Sexual Revolution’, therefore, seems to have been crucial in making it possible to make a credible case for the FPP in Malayalee society of the 1960s. That it produced some radical critique of bourgeois sexual morality is readily acknowledged, but there was more to it than a simple freeing of sex and its pleasures. Its rehabilitation of sexual pleasure, its endorsement of sex education as the preferable means of inducing the self-regulation of sexual activity by individuals, its commitment to the harnessing of sexual activity to the project of building the Development- defined society and Nation –it is clear that the FPP thrived on these. It is hardly a coincidence that the ‘Sexual Revolution’ and the FPP were incapable of changing the discursive underpinnings of such constructs as ‘freedom’ or ‘choice’ in Malayalee society. The ‘openness’ remains, at best, ambiguous. Jubilant claims were made during the Mass Sterilisation Camps of the 1970s that

sterilisation was now out in the open, no more a closeted affair<sup>90</sup>. KAP studies made by demographers from the 1950s to the early 70s have shown a spread of the circle of conversation as far as contraceptive practices are concerned.<sup>91</sup> But the divide between the ‘scientific’ language of managing sex, and the ‘ordinary’ language of expressing forbidden pleasures, offering a choice between equally objectifying alternatives, is very much alive. Too much cannot be read into the exultation about the arrival of ‘openness’ either. A survey conducted in ten villages in Keralam in 1983-84 revealed overwhelming support for family planning, to the rather disturbing extent that “...people are really frightened of the prospect of a large family”<sup>92</sup>. This, however, does not seem to have driven the people into ‘openness’: “However villagers do not like it to be known that they use contraceptives and so they buy it in other villages or towns where they are not known...”<sup>93</sup>. In any case, there is some evidence to suggest that often where ‘openness’ seems to have incarnated, it has come in the form of a subtle form of coercion, a norm that forces people to submit even when they do not feel the need for it. The anthropologist Marion den Uyl, working in the Sachivottampuram Harijan Colony in the 80s, notes that the decision to accept family planning by any member of that community is almost always preceded by an open discussion; however she also notes that it has become “a generally accepted norm”,<sup>94</sup> so strong that there is social pressure on those who did not immediately endorse it.

### III

#### **The New Missionaries**

The previous section has drawn attention to how the Malayalee ‘Sexual Revolution’, which permitted a certain sort of qualified openness regarding sexual matters ( in the language of Science, in the interests of the productivist society and Nation, enabling governmental intervention

and unambiguously committed to social regulation of individual sexuality through the monogamous, patrilineal, ‘soft’ patriarchal modern family) was important for the successful justification of the FPP in Malayalee society. But population management certainly involved more than this: it touched upon important social axes of power such as class and gender. The FPP rhetoric certainly did not attempt any radical upset of existent power equations. Indeed, as will be seen, it reinforced the division between the ‘educated’ and the ‘respectable’ who were seen to be worthy subjects of Development, voluntarily committing themselves to it, and the ‘masses’, seen to be lagging behind. At the same time, the FPP appeared to be the apolitical solution to political questions apparent in Malayalee society of those times. In doing so it made it appear as though such questions may be resolved from within the family, or at least assert that a beginning was to be made necessarily from within the family.

Neo-Malthusianism has been widely criticised for excessively and unjustifiably whipping up a veritable hysteria over the centrality of the increase in human numbers in the survival of life on earth, effectively obscuring the highly uneven consumption and distribution of resources and global geo-politics<sup>95</sup>. The sceptics of various political persuasions—catholics (who were arguing in this vein from the 1930s onwards)<sup>96</sup>, communists and others, voiced this critique in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Malayalee public. In the debate over family planning in the Tiru-Kochi legislature of 1951, the communist member E.Gopalakrishna Menon strongly expressed such objections<sup>97</sup>. Later in 1957, E.M.S. Nambudiripad intervened in a hostile exchange in the Kerala Legislative Assembly between P.T.Chacko and V. R Krishna Aiyer, (sceptic and defender of FP respectively), to clarify that the Communist Party “... welcomed Family Planning for health reasons. The Party does not consider Family Planning to be a solution to the problems that confront

us today”<sup>98</sup>. While agreeing with some of the rationales made for family planning by the population control establishment, leftists were loath to concede too much to the effectiveness of family planning as an instrument of Development<sup>99</sup>. In a speech in support of the FPP in 1967, E.M.S went further enough to agree with the then- fashionable claim that a reduction in numbers would lower the social welfare burdens of the state and thereby help capital accumulation, but the centrality of population as the key factor inducing underdevelopment was never conceded<sup>100</sup>. Thus when family planning propagandists complained that the support offered by the communists was not whole-hearted<sup>101</sup>, it was the concern over the uneven distribution of wealth and resources that was being criticised as idle nit-picking.

In instances too numerous to be cited, the propagandists of the family planning aggressively pushed the idea that family planning was the panacea for poverty, a fundamental condition to be met to make any noteworthy strides towards Development. An apolitical explanation of poverty and want and an apolitical solution to these dovetailed neatly within the family planning propaganda. C.O.Karunakaran’s downright apolitical understanding of the poverty and misery of the Tamil people being shipped off to Malaya as plantation labour is a particularly interesting instance: the sight of the wretched poor he had seen being bundled off as ‘labour’ to be underpaid, abused and grossly insulted is mentioned to have awakened the zeal for birth control in him<sup>102</sup>. However, it does not even seem necessary to inquire after the historical and political conditions that shaped such a state of affairs. Indeed, no explanation is offered at all, only a solution in which an explanation is already implied: “...people who could not be fed and given work should not be born at all”<sup>103</sup>. Interestingly enough, it was also recommended that this solution projected as beyond vested interests was to be pushed through a series of penalising measures denying medical and other benefits to families



that produced more children than the ideal number determined by the statisticians and the bureaucrats<sup>104</sup>. When the root cause of the problem was said to be located within oneself, and well-within one's volition, then the solution would also be easily taken to be oneself acting upon oneself. In case one put up resistance (which would, in this scheme of things, appear, irrational) a benevolent state committed to the overall welfare would appear justified in behaving preferentially to those who comply, or worse, enforce laws that would leave open the only option of acceptance to the reluctant. A more nuanced understanding of colonialism and its compulsions, changes in the agrarian structure, transformation in rural social life and so on in the question of 'excess labour' would have hardly legitimised the identification of the breeding habits of the poor as primarily responsible for their condition.

One of the fundamental conditions that made possible the FPP's claim to being the alleviator of poverty lay in that it was able to appropriate the model of missionary activism as the chief mode of attracting its subjects. This, it can hardly be forgotten, was a highly familiar mode of producing subjects in Malayalee society since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In its crudest version this drew a firm line placing the 'civilised', the 'enlightened', the 'noble' etc. above, and their negative counterparts, below. Its task was defined as one of 'uplifting' those who were below the line. The entire life, energy and material resources of the missionary were to be devoted to the task of finally, at a future time, eliminating all that was below the line. Compliance of the objects of such 'uplifting' was to be secured not only by achieving public endorsement but also by entering into their minds and thoughts. The lines of power were clearly laid out: the journey towards Sameness could begin only when those who were below the line laid down all sorts of resistance they could possibly have and accepted the missionary as having superior knowledge and relied upon him/her as the guide towards a better life. Even the

struggles against the established orders of *Jati* made by the depressed groups with the explicit or implicit support of the missionaries could be fought only in the terms set by the missionary; deviance was scarcely tolerated<sup>105</sup>.

In the writings supportive of the FPP, the dividing line takes various forms: that between the ‘enlightened’ supporters and the ‘superstitious’ objectors; the few fit for self-control and the ‘masses’ unfit for it (incidentally, the ‘masses’ were feared by both the objectors, who feared that artificial birth control may be ‘misused’ by them, and the supporters, who feared the consequence of not making them accept artificial birth control one way or the other). Earlier demands for state sponsored birth control did at times raise the issue of the “...unclean and insanitary life” of the “backward classes”, as one of the key justifications for birth control<sup>106</sup>. These were linked to the sheer poverty these years, but the solution for this seemed to lie primarily in birth control<sup>107</sup>. One of these ways of ‘dividing’ deserves special mention – the one between Malayalees who lived up to their image of being ‘progressive’, and those who did not. In this we may trace one of the ways in which family planning was ‘normed’ into the psyche of those who were subjected to it. The *Kerala Kaumudi* was particularly insistent on this: it repeatedly urged all Malayalees to live up to their progressive image by accepting family planning<sup>108</sup>. The inferiority of those who inhabited the space below the line was reiterated in many ways, in a number of different sites. Large families were found to be filthy<sup>109</sup>, unhappy, unloved and discontented<sup>110</sup>, a threat to public decency and individual privacy<sup>111</sup>, hellholes of female slavery<sup>112</sup>, seats of privation and ignorance<sup>113</sup>, above all, an unbearable burden for both its members as well as the state responsible for its well-being. During the Mass Sterilisation Camp at Ernakulam in July 1971, a tableau was prominently taken out as part of the propaganda work on a jeep depicting a large family full of miserable

and emaciated-looking children, with a banner screaming, 'Let This Misery Not Happen To You'<sup>114</sup>. The theme of a starved population being a political threat, a favourite wisdom of the geo-politically conscious Western demographers of the 1940s and 1950s, was evoked by an American -trained external observer reporting on communist rule in Keralam in the late 1950s. Commenting on Keralam as a state full of 'problems', he identified the root of all such (political) 'problems;' to be economic, mainly ensuing from its 'overpopulation'. He wrote:

“The first impression that Kerala produces on the visitor is of a limited space overflowing with an almost limitless population. Kerala is itself a big village. No distinct villages exist but only a continuous line of hutments and habitations stretching almost roof to roof. Whatever centre we may take in Trivandrum, Kottayam, Ernakulam or Calicut, human beings seem to stretch out in all directions.....This lack of proportion between area and population is the main cause of Kerala's trouble.”<sup>115</sup>

This sordid picture, of a land bursting with unrest because too many people were shoving each other about, began to be endorsed within Keralam itself in the 60s. People who could not make a living in Keralam were projected as a potential political threat, or a possible source of shame for the Malayalee people themselves within the Indian Nation, as the visible symbol of our failure to Develop. C.O.Karunakaran wrote: “ The terrible fires that raged in the slums of Madras is a meaningful danger-signal. Those who have no food and shelter will be ready to commit any extremity. They have nothing to lose.” Such starving masses are useless to the Nation because they do not even pass health tests to become soldiers. “.... It is these burgeoning third-rate people who pull the Nation behind in not only national defense but also in all sorts of productive activities.”<sup>116</sup> An even-more bitter indictment:

“The unfortunate masses from Keralam migrate to other places due to inordinate increase in population and the centuries –old poverty have become a threat to the peaceful existence of India and the nearby States... if unemployment and poverty are rampant in Keralam, it is not given that other people must be made to suffer more than a fair share... Keralam’s burning problems should be solved within Keralam itself. If birth control is not enforced by legislation, Keralam will continue to go from disaster to disaster whichever Golden Party may rule over it... ”.<sup>117</sup>

The *Kerala Kaumudi* fully endorsed this:

“..Already by now, Malayalees who suffer having no means for obtaining food, begging around for jobs and wandering through the other lands are the laughing stock of others. We must give prominence to the Family Planning Programme if we are not to bear even greater insults and difficulties by bloating our numbers even further.”<sup>118</sup>

In several of its editorials, the *Kerala Kaumudi* claimed that Keralam’s seemingly insurmountable problems were due to its teeming population<sup>119</sup>. It was not as though other reasons for Keralam’s economic predicaments were covered up; rather, the contrary. However, ‘overpopulation’ seemed too fundamental; besides it was also as though individuals were morally obliged to do whatever they could immediately, before asking for help, especially because the primary responsibility for such creating such a sorry situation was forcefully laid upon them. Such beating-down of the sense of self-respect of Malayalees (as in the above quotes), could have had considerable significance in ‘norming’ family planning into the literate in Keralam, implicated as they were in the Indian political system that resembled in many important ways, the

emergent post-World War II system of global governance that authorised the division of the World into formally equal Nation-states, and formally responsible for their own material well being<sup>120</sup>. Also, it was not the least out of place within the missionary mode of drawing subjects, i.e., it was not incidental to it. To establish such inferiority is an absolute necessity for missionaries to operate. It is easier to make a people shorn of self-respect to accept charity, sympathy and other forms of ‘uplifting’; only such a people can be *acted upon*. And such acting –upon could be saturated with elitism, even when not advocating outright coercion. Justifying the prominence granted to sterilisations in the FPP, an author wrote:

“..Today, birth control is necessary for those in the lower ranks of society. These people have no thought of the future. Besides remaining steeped in superstition and evil customs, uncontrolled breeding as a solution for the troubles of life is spreading among them. Birth control is not even an issue for them. Only complete control will succeed among them. Therefore intensive propaganda about the important family planning technique of sterilisation must be conducted among them and the male or female heads of all households with more than three children must be sterilised.”<sup>121</sup>

This is a striking passage for more than one reason. First, it does not demand forcible sterilisation, but the elitist impatience with the ‘overbreeding’ masses, which authorises urgent and intense, if physically-non-violent intervention is difficult to miss. Secondly, while it indirectly admits to the existence of “troubles of life” among the poor, it seems to require no solution. Only its effects are to be tackled, namely “uncontrolled breeding”, which is a nuisance to the state, and a millstone on the neck of Keralam's dreams of Development.

The task of ‘uplift’ being common to both the early developmental projects and missionary work, the connection between the ideal images

of the family planning worker, and the missionary must not have been difficult to make. Writing about the rural development project at Marthandam in the Princely State. Tiruvitamkoor (Travancore) which, along with Kochi (Cochin) and Malabar later formed the State of Keralam in the 1930s, Spencer Hatch remembered that the LMS missionaries working in the vicinity offered whole-hearted cooperation saying that, “This was needed to complete the Christian programme. When we had taught the people to live a better way of life....many of them were actually too poor to live it”<sup>122</sup>. Thus it is hardly surprising that developmental work seemed to be the natural extension of the missionary efforts to teach the people a ‘better way’ of life, defined in a thoroughly Eurocentric, with its ultimate standard of reference being the norms and social mores of the English bourgeoisie. The Community Development programmes that were initiated in Tiru-Kochi soon after Independence also drew upon the missionary-model in its early stages, and an early participant in these efforts has documented the missionary zeal of the development workers, who worked selflessly with the villagers, labouring to ‘uplift’ them, aiming at a sort of non-violent revolution in the socio-economic life of the village<sup>123</sup>. It is, then, hardly surprising that the FPP could have effectively accessed this pre-existing mode of drawing subjects. Whether or not general goals or aims converged, this specific path towards ‘rural development’ prescribed by the development-expert-cum-activist Spencer Hatch, succinctly put as “Self-help with expert knowledge”<sup>124</sup> seemed to fit the FPP more than anything else, given its claim that reducing the numbers of individual families was the form of ‘self-help’ that could help them most. As for expert knowledge, the crucial role that institutionalised expertise had in modern birth control was emphasised very early enough; its close affinity to modern medical expertise was often highlighted to add to its trustworthiness<sup>125</sup>. But, as to be expected within the missionary mode of creating subjects,

tempering this 'expert' knowledge with intimacy was continually stressed. For persuasion to work, it was reminded, the family planning agent was to get closely involved with the people, share their problems, clear up their doubts, allay their fears, assist them in all possible ways – in short, acquire the status of a friend and well-wisher<sup>126</sup>. If Science had to be made more 'human', so also the bureaucratic impersonality had to be avoided. As an author pointed out: "...It is everybody's duty to make ordinary people understand that harmless Family Planning methods are the products of scientific research and free of danger. If each person is fired by an internal enthusiasm, the desired victory will not be attained."<sup>127</sup>

Thus the work of family planning, it was often claimed, was not so much that of doctors and bureaucrats, but of those individuals and organisations that interacted intimately with the 'masses'. Thus a privileged role was conceded to voluntary organisations with a 'social uplift' or 'social service' agenda,<sup>128</sup> ranging from elite business-related gatherings like the Junior Chamber and the Lions Clubs to the humble *stree samajams* and rural libraries. The ideal family planning worker would be fired by missionary zeal. Waxing eloquent on one such model worker, the *Matrubhumi* wrote:

".....The weapon he uses to spread the message of family Planning into the hearts of his 'patients' is music....he has himself written a song carrying the message 'small family, happy family'. Whenever possible, he sings it to his 'patients' in a mellifluous voice.....Dr. Mathew Thomas has undertaken Family Planning work with the zeal of a missionary. He has been able to muster the cooperation of his fellow-workers. In the family planning camp conducted in July, he and his colleagues bought a transistor radio as a prize for a lucky dip for acceptors. Imitating his model, another social worker of

the area gifted a time-piece as second prize and the Panchayat contributed fifteen rupees as third prize.... Dr. Mathew Thomas who practices the principles of Family Planning in his own life has but threechildren".<sup>129</sup>

So while it was conceded that those officials and professionals who did not believe in the FPP were not to participate in it<sup>130</sup>, this could imply not just the liberal attitude of the State or its tolerance for dissenting views. Clearly, complete faith in the desirability of the FPP among the agents was identified as a key condition for its success. When such intentions were clear, then even the offering of cash incentives—which obviously went against the missionary project of ‘mental conversion’—could be projected as justified. Hailing the architect of the successful Eranakulan Mass Sterilisation Camps, S.Krishna Kumar, as the ideal missionary- bureaucrat, the *Matrubhumi* argued precisely this. It pointed out that his motives were spotless, admitting that the popularity of the Camps largely lay in the substantial sum being paid as incentive. This, however, was “....neither inappropriate nor immoral. It is a practical tactic to make people ready to accept new ways of life instead of traditional beliefs”<sup>131</sup>. The incentives were often characterised as a compensation for wages lost in the rest-period after surgery<sup>132</sup>. But it was suggested equally often that hiking up the amount as much as possible would be an effective way of attracting potential acceptors, and that it could act as “ a push to hesitant potential acceptors” to help them overcome “conservatism, fear and procrastination”<sup>133</sup>. The Camp approach (or ‘festival approach’, as the family planning publicists preferred to call it) was one designed to erect a temporary paradise free of inequalities and want. This was counted by diligent observers as one key reason for its thumping victory. As an account put it,

“...It creates enthusiasm and a feeling of oneness and one purpose...Inside the camp all are advocates of



birth control...The jubilant atmosphere, coupled with the generous and respectable treatment one gets, generates confidence, a purpose and a bright future. So the festival approach is appropriate and widely appreciated by the people.”<sup>134</sup>

However, this temporary Paradise soon waned away, as if to set more oppressive realities in place. The above observers lamented that the problem with this approach was that promoters lack the missionary initiative, and seek only the incentives: “Their interest lies in the number of sterilisations and not in the welfare of the person after the operation”.<sup>135</sup> But such instances certainly did not dissuade the family planning publicists from attributing missionary righteousness to their cause.

Thus appearing completely shorn of all interest except altruistic ‘uplifting’, the FPP could well seem to be a radical force breaking down the authoritarian elements in the established ‘traditional’ order, while itself being committed to the building of a power-free society. No power was seen to be ensuing from dependence upon ‘experts’ and ‘intimate counsel’, that sponsored by the state, the international aid agencies and the political powers of the First World. Such shortsightedness is best evident in the support given to artificial birth control, and to the FPP, by the well-known Progressive writer, Ponkunnam Varkey. In Varkey’s short stories, artificial birth control appeared as a radical taking-back of the reproductive capacities of individuals, freeing them from the clutches of an oppressive and exploitative Catholic Church, which is seen to exercise direct and coercive control over the bodies of faithful.<sup>136</sup> But in the context of the FPP, this radical quality takes on a strange flavour. At the Ernakulam Mass Sterilisation Camp in 1971, he stressed that those who dissuade ordinary people from accepting family planning through “propagating superstitions” are class enemies. He asked people “not to be misled by the ideological confusions erected deliberately by a group

of exploiters who have cornered all our resources”<sup>137</sup>. The solution, however, does not even include, as one aspect at least, an effort to take back the resources thus unfairly concentrated. It exhorts the suffering and the exploited to go in for birth control, reduce their numbers, and by implication, end their sorrows through such ‘self-help’. ‘Class enemies’, the Nation, the international geo-politics that drove family planning initiatives in the Third World at such a frenetic pace, all dissolve into the background.

The strategy of depoliticisation was equally conspicuous in the FPP’s approach towards the question of women’s well being and freedom. We find innumerable statements that swear upon the necessity to grant women a prominent role within the FPP both as agents and acceptors<sup>138</sup>. And pro-family planning writing called upon individual women and women’s organisations to play an active part in the family planning propaganda in the spirit of ‘self-help’ towards ‘emancipation from biology’, as that most ardent champion of family planning, Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, put it<sup>139</sup>. Many of the women who had been active in articulating the group-interests of ‘Women’ from the 1930s onwards were actively brought into the family planning campaign<sup>140</sup>. However this did not mean that the earlier practice of highlighting the victim-status of women as justification for interventions that had sought to ‘liberate’ them (as though the amelioration of their condition *necessarily* required projecting them as *passive* victims incapable of rescuing themselves without the aid of the more powerful) had disappeared. Indeed, the stereotype of the victimised woman remained very much in the forefront of the FPP campaign both in the FPP propaganda, and in the writings of pro-family planning authors. The Woman oppressed by her Biology was the symbol of the Mass Sterilisation Campaign at Ernakulam, and the architect of the campaign, S.Krishna Kumar wrote thus about it:

“.....the symbol for this *Yajna* was an especially designed caricature—depicting a careworn and sad woman carrying on her hips an emaciated and undernourished infant and in her belly yet another child to be born—symbolising the desperate though latent demand of the mothers of the country for family limitation—and appealing silently to the world for Justice”.<sup>141</sup>

The Malayalam movie, *Aswamedham* (1967) was praised for its realistic portrayal of the woes besetting the large family. Dr. C.O.Karunakaran wrote about a particularly pathetic character in that movie:

“ The heroine’s mother dies at her tenth delivery. She had not borne it out of any desire on her part. That woman was sacrificed to the brutality of her leper-husband for whom *Guruvayoorappan* is the witness for everything. Three children died young. One contracted Leprosy. Death freed her from permanent hell.”<sup>142</sup>

The entire pattern of dominant Malayalee reformisms of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Keralam is reproduced here, with the Reformer- Man called upon to assume the role of liberator of the hapless women held in thrall by forbidding structures of tradition<sup>143</sup> and /or biology. Needless to say, this meant that the non-reciprocity of relations that was implied in the ‘soft patriarchy’ characteristic of modern reformism came along with this. A poem published as part of FPP propaganda depicted a husband turning into an acceptor of FPP, moved by his wife’s pangs of childbirth, her weakened state attributed to pregnancy, as if it were a pathology in itself<sup>144</sup>. Sympathy was poured upon unfortunate wives whose cruel husbands refused to accept birth control, or allow them to do so. However, this did not seem to point to the solution of strengthening the position

of women so that they could decide by themselves. Faced with one such case, in which a woman whose philanderer of a husband refused to let her use contraception, who asked for some method she could practice without his knowledge, Dr.C.O.Karunakaran could only “sympathise”<sup>145</sup>. For safer methods could be adopted only through common consent, and the pill was too expensive, and anyway, only in the experimental stage. He lamented this sorry state, recommended even-more intensive family planning propaganda, and the ‘gheraoing’ of the unrelenting husband by family planning workers and others as a last-ditch solution<sup>146</sup>. Yet the structures of domination within the family go completely unaddressed; indeed, the common agreement between this woman and the expert whom she approaches for advice, that the existent structure should not be upset, seems to be the very basis of the sympathy generated. While ‘gheraoing’ seems a valid-enough means to pressurise the husband into making a pro- family planning decision, it hardly raises the issue of the husband’s authority over his resisting wife’s fertility. More glaringly, it ignores the conditions under which a woman’s fertility becomes a burden to her. Almost paralleling Ponkunnam Varkey’s speech cited above, here, the philanderer- husband is condemned as the very embodiment of patriarchal power that must be fought radically; but the ‘radical fight’ consists not of efforts to unseat his authority, but is limited to the much-milder measure of forcing him to accept family planning. Also, while the visibility of the working of patriarchy at the immediate level of the family is heightened, that of others seemingly less immediate—like, for instance, manifold increase in the control exercised by the modern medical institution on women’s bodies— is impaired.

In any case, most radical- sounding statements were more or less inevitably followed by the evocation of the duties of women to be thrifty wives and responsible mothers. Emancipation from biology’ seemed to be all the more committed to situating women as more efficient

and hard-working agents in what was deemed their 'natural' domain, the home. The concern over women's health, so often voiced in the pro-family planning and FPP propaganda literature inevitably issued the call for 'healthy mothers to manage healthy families', which in turn reinforced the thoroughly modern but no less burdening subject-position of modern housewife deemed 'natural' to women. In the 1950s and 60s, the problems of working mothers balancing the responsibilities of the workplace and the home was frequently discussed<sup>147</sup>, and family planning often came as a solution. Inevitably, the necessity of income from paid work by women outside the home was tied to the increasing material demands of the family. In debates over the advisability of women's paid work outside the home, those who supported it pointed out that it contributed to the financial security of the home, and the availability of contraception helped to lighten domestic responsibility. Here again, family planning is presented as an aid that enabled women to 'adjust' with some facility,<sup>148</sup> however, the whole issue of the double-burden of labour remained unproblematised. We encounter just the same in the discussions about the efficacy of raising the age of marriage of women as a family planning measure. There were various positions voiced on this question, but they inevitably pivoted whether or not such a measure would help to produce a woman capable of fulfilling the responsibilities of a housewife in a modern conjugal unit and household in both physical and mental senses<sup>149</sup>. At the same time, the 'lightening of the load' seemed, at best, ambiguous. For women were now expected to be ever-more watchful mothers (their very adoption of family planning was taken to testify that they were already so), to be ever more responsible for the welfare of their (few) children<sup>150</sup>. If physical labour was reduced, moral responsibility was doubled.

Thus 'emancipation from biology' certainly did not mean the liberation of women's reproductive capacities from the productivist

modern family, or the channelisation of women's energy into non-procreative concerns, with very rare exceptions<sup>151</sup>. The rhetoric of the Women's Liberation Movement in the West was at times drawn upon, as in a *Matrubhumi* editorial which strongly supported abortion, arguing in a recognisably feminist vein that women must control their reproductive capacities<sup>152</sup>. However, whenever there seemed that a possibility of women may be able to engage in unregulated sexual activity, the family planning publicists immediately fell back, reiterating their commitment to 'safeguards' to maintain moral discipline.<sup>153</sup> Even when the direction of young girls exclusively towards marriage and family life was criticised, it was done in highly instrumentalist terms. A *Kerala Kaumudi* editorial commented: "Our girls are keen on higher education. If employment for them is made plentiful then the tendency to think of marriage as the only way to live will die out...". But this is immediately attached to the imperative to control the growing population as but an instrument, and certainly not as a way of expanding the choices or life-options open to women.<sup>154</sup>

How deep the assumption of the 'naturally moral/ domestic' Woman ran is amply illustrated in the following statement by Dr. Kamala Ramaiyer, in an early speech answering common objections to family planning. Flaying the claim that the ready availability of artificial contraception would lead women 'astray', she argued thus:

"But most women are dragged into evil ways not by the ready availability of facilities for artificial contraception. On the contrary, a close inspection would reveal that it is sheer poverty and the lack of the means to support children that lead women astray."<sup>155</sup>

We are not enlightened fully as to what the 'evil ways' or the 'going astray' means—whether it refers to an active seeking of sexual pleasure, or simply, commercial sex. Whatever it may be, women do not

seek it, it seems, except under the non-normal condition of extreme poverty. Here again, family planning itself is incarnate as the safeguard of moral discipline, committed to the modern monoandrous family by its attributed capacity to fend off poverty. At the same time, it was sometimes argued that certain family planning methods, particularly abortion, may promote laxity in self-discipline, and hence such services needed to be closely monitored. In a discussion about legalising abortion conducted by the *Malayala Manorama* in 1970, Dr. Mary John elaborated this point, claiming that rural women are not very likely to use this method, being rather God-fearing ; however, “.... One of the effects of legalising abortions would be a greater demand for abortions from contraceptive-using educated women of prosperous families, who may seek these services upon becoming pregnant through the careless use of the instruments of birth control.”<sup>156</sup> She, therefore cautioned that a vigilant system of monitoring be set up to regulate abortion services, to sort out the ‘deserving cases’. Self-discipline emerges triumphant in either case; among poor women, it was to be reached by giving them access to family planning services, whereas for well-off women, the reverse seemed to be called for: a closely monitored and restricted access.

The arrival of the FPP in Keralam was also fortuitously timed in that it came at a time when social tensions were mounting on more than one front. The 1960s and 70s were times that witnessed intense class confrontations; scholars have pointed out that they were powerful enough to push the state to yield important concessions as welfare measures<sup>157</sup>. Less noticed, however, are the tensions in the home front<sup>158</sup>. Judging from the public discussions of the woes of the employed housewife, there is reason to suspect that the problems of ‘adjustment’ within the modern nuclear family might have begun to emerge in force. In both these sensitive areas, family planning appeared to offer at least

a part of the solution that would help the aggrieved to partially, though not fully, resolve some tension, minimising the necessity of a politically charged confrontation. For this, the appropriation of the missionary mode of drawing subjects in the FPP was particularly useful, this being something entirely familiar in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Keralam, indeed, constitutive of modern Malayalee society itself.

Many who wrote in these times sensed a general threat to the earlier project of Individual self-building in the air, seeing it to become more and more a matter of governmental intervention and interest, as though the delicate balance between the Individual and totalising power seemed to be under threat as never before. As Puthezhattu Raman Menon wrote,

“...today’s new ‘technique’ is to apply external pressures upon human activities and instincts to make docile and control, in the same way as natural forces are tamed and controlled. This is political power itself—this path shapes the duties and even the thoughts and emotions of each individual, making them dull and lifeless.”<sup>159</sup>

As for physical intimacy between men and women, the impatient rejection of fertility awareness- based contraceptive practices also cancelled out the possibility of developing fertility control that would call for the most personal and dedicated involvement of women and their male sexual partners. The convenience of readymade non-procreative sex was to devalue the labour of love necessary for the latter. But even such modern aspirations as these seemed to count little, not to mention non-modern sensibilities, more or less shut out of public discussion as obsolete and superstitious. The goal of Development continued to appear so enticing that no sacrifice seemed too costly for its attainment.



## IV

**A Sadder But (Hopefully) Wiser Eye**

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, enthusiastic reformers railed against what they perceived to be ‘sexual anarchy’ in Malayalee society, and set about to remedy it by proposing various ways and means of regulating the sexual urge in the interest of building a modern, materially-productive and disciplined social order. By mid-century, the necessity of consecrating sexual pleasure within the modern family itself was increasingly assented to as a means of both disciplining the sexual urges of individuals, and defusing tensions within the modern family as it emerged in Malayalee society.

To argue that such processes as the above have been crucial to the successful self-presentation of the FPP in the 1960s and early 70s is to demand a more complex tracing out, that would go beyond banal offerings like ‘female literacy’ etc., which are necessary but not sufficient conditions. It is certainly true to say that high female literacy made possible greater spread of family planning information among women, but to stop there would be to ignore the webs of power-relations within which they perceived of it as desirable and acceptable. Thus, much of the social scientific literature that touches upon the success of family planning in Malayalee society shares in the political blindness that was the hallmark of the FPP propaganda. Indeed, when politics is addressed, the tendency is to rely upon a general narrative of ‘freedom-from-traditional bondage’ to conceptualise the political dimensions, even in very recent work<sup>160</sup>. It is striking that this too shares in the self-presentation of the FPP. Here we have argued that the garnering of public consent for FPP was poised upon extensive changes in a number of crucial notions and institutions that cannot be encapsulated within a simplistic ‘freedom-from-traditional-bondage’ frame of reference. The use of such a narrative

as a Procrustean bed, which generates historical explanation by either convenient stretching or lopping, is challenged here. Rather than a fear of Modernity, it is a sympathetic anxiety regarding the attainment of a full-fledged Development-Modernity, that is found to be expressed in the suspicions about artificial birth control expressed in the public sphere in the 1930s to the 1950s in Malayalee society. Besides, the ambiguities of 'liberation' are entirely sidelined. Tied as it was to the interests of productivist Nation-building, the FPP propaganda remained largely uninterested in the expansion of individual choice in any effective sense; the 'liberation' from tradition was to mean not the end of constraint but the insertion into the disciplining of the productivist Nation. It may be true, as a prominent scholar has argued, that the labouring poor began to avail of artificial contraception when it seemed as though that "...ascribed characters are subordinate to acquired ones. So it helped them to be less fatalistic, and induced them to make an important switch from the quantity to the quality of children"<sup>161</sup>. But whether this implied a lightening of life's burdens, or a spread of 'freedom' in the sense of the ability to critically engage with new institutions, old or new, is highly questionable. After all, a radical culture of the subaltern, capable of subverting the dominant, hardly emerged in the 1960s and 70s – though in the context of the FPP, subversion was not entirely absent<sup>162</sup>. It was into the dominant culture of the educated middle-classes, characterised by 'soft' patriarchy, productivist Developmentalism, instrumental rationality and the elitism of modern knowledge that the labouring poor were 'liberated' into. If Malayalee women were 'liberated' from childbearing, they certainly have proved to be dutiful bearers of the responsibility for birth limitation.<sup>163</sup> This paper has tried to highlight the extent to which the ideology of the FPP was involved in such a 'liberationist' project with all its ambiguities. Indeed, covering ourselves with self-congratulation on our 'triumph' over 'tradition' provides no

intellectual resources to understand the crises and questions of contemporary Kerala. The task of turning a wiser, if sadder, eye towards the vicissitudes of Malayalee modernity is a difficult but absolutely crucial exercise today, and this paper represents a preliminary groping towards it.

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**Notes:**

1. The suitability of the term 'middle-classes' to characterise those groups that had imbibed modern cultural and social values in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Malayalee society may be questioned. An attempt to apply this term to the dominant groups of these times seemed to point at so many groups, that the term appears too much a catch-all, which has 'upper', 'middle' and 'lower' sub-sections with considerable internal disagreement. See, Dr. R. Ramakrishnan Nair, 1974. Indeed, here we use it to indicate not so much an economic grouping as a cultural one, in precisely the loose sense hinted at above. It is also pertinent to point out that the rise of these new groups as a decisive influence in politics and culture was anticipated in the 1930s itself. Kunnathu Janardana Menon (1934), for instance identifies the Government servants, the graduates, the new rich and the "people" constituting a new *Chaturvarnyam*, or caste system, in the place of the *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra Jatis*. Pp. 105-15.
- 2 See, R. Jeffrey, 1993, p.53.
- 3 N.N. Pillai's popular play of the 60s, *Vishamavrittam* (Vicious-Cycle), 1969, in which all the earlier stereotypes make their appearance is an excellent example.
- 4 For a fairly detailed argument, see J. Devika, 1999, Chapter One.
- 5 These points are made, more or less explicitly, in almost every piece of writing critical of birth control, between the 1930s and the 1950s that I have been able to see. A few may be cited here: P.M. Nair, 'Santananiyantranam' (Birth-control), *Arogyam* Special Issue, 1932, pp.76-79; 'Lokalokam' (Review of World Affairs) in *Swajanaranjini* 1 (2), 1933-34, pp.33-41; 'Garbhaniyantranam' (Review of a book on artificial contraception), *Deepam* 3 (5), 1932, p. 366; 'Santananiyantranam', *Aryan* 8(5), 1935-36, pp.127-29; M.R. Madhava Warriar, Address to the Annual Conference of the *Prakriti Vaidya Samajam* (Association of Natural Healers), *Arogyam* 2 (8,9), 1925-26; 'Patradhipakurippukal' in *Vanita Ratnam* 7(5,6), 1934, pp.133-34; 'Grihanayakan' 'Aa Premeyam Janananiyantranamo Janannirodhanamo?' (What is that Regulation: Birth Regulation

or Birth Prevention?), *Nazrani Deepika* (henceforth, *ND*) 16 Apr., 1951, pp.1-4; Editorial, 'Janananiyantranam', *ND* 24 May, 1956; Editorial, 'Kutumba saukhyam' (Happiness of the Family), *Matrubhoomi* 29 Nov.1952, p.2; Editorial, 'Janaperuppan' (Population Increase), *Matrubhoomi* 27 Nov., 1955, p.2.; Editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam'(Family Planning),*Matrubhoomi* 1 Oct. 1952, p.2; Editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam'(FP), *Malayalarajyam* 19 Dec. 1959, p.2; editorial, 'Kritrima Janananiyantranam' (Artificial Birth Control), *ND* 2 Oct.1960, p.2; Speech by Agamananda Swamikal at the Hindu Mahasammelanam at Mandaikkatu, 7 Mar. 1952, Reprinted in the *Souvenir of the 15<sup>th</sup> Haindava Mahasammelanam*, Thiruvananthapuram: Haindava Sevaka Sanghom, 1952, pp.51-8. Several books and articles which use these points to build a critique of artificial birth-control were also published in this period: see, Amshi Narayana Pillai, 1932; Koyippalli Parameshwara Kurup, 1938; Ullattil Govindankutty Menon, 1962 ,pp.24-36; Putezhathu Raman Menon, 1970, pp.33-40. Hostile observers in the 1950s like the *Navasakti*, even saw a direct link between the comparatively free availability of the instruments of artificial contraception in these times to an alleged rise in adultery, quoted in Venganoor Balakrishnan, 2000, p. 100. These arguments continued to appear sporadically even in the hey-day of family planning, the 1960s, and by no means from the Catholic Church alone: see, report of Jayaprakash Narayan's criticism of the sterilisation propaganda, *Matrubhoomi*, 7 Nov. 1967; Editorial, 'JeevitaShuddhiyum Janasankhyaprasnavum'(Purity in Life and the Population Problem), *Malayala Manorama* (henceforth, *MM*) 9 Jul.1967, p.2; Report of Speech by Metropolitan Daniel Mar Piliksinos , *MM* 27 Jul.1961, p.5. It is also worth noting that in the 1980s some commentators were actually claiming that the widespread availability of reliable birth control methods had a negative effect on the sexual self-discipline of the youth! See, E.A.Karunakaran Nair (who had been writing on sex-education since the 1960s), 1984,pp.11-19.

- 6 Discussion on Resolution 1: Birth Control Clinics, introduced by K.Ayappan, 22 Jan. 1934, *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings* Vol VI, Parts 1-15, Jan-Mar. 1934, p.80.

- 7 Ibid. , p.63.
- 8 Discussion on resolution of General Public Interest: Family Planning, introduced by A.P.Udayabhanu, 3 Apr. 1951, Third Session, *Proceedings of the Travancore –Cochin Legislative Assembly* Vol.III, No.I (II), p.1608.
- 9 Several texts may be cited here .See, for example, K.P.Sankara Menon, ‘Aranootandinullil Tiruvitamkoorile Nayarkku Vanna Mattangal’ (Changes among the Nairs of Travancore in the Past Half-Century) in *Sardar K.M. Panikkar Sashtipoorthy Smarakam*, Publication Committee, 1954, pp.207-15; the essays of V.T.Bhattatiripad collected in *Karmavipakam*, 1988; The Ezhava Law Committee, *Report of the Ezhava Law Committee with Draft Bill and Appendices*, Thiruvananthapuram: Govt. Press, 1919. The similarity of the arguments advanced in these with those in texts like that of the Rev.George Mathen written in 1865 can hardly be missed. See his ‘Marumakkathayathalulla Doshangal’ (The Disadvantages of Matriliny) in *Vidyasangraham- The Cottayam College Quarterly Magazine* 1(15), Jul. 1865.
- 10 Ibid., n.7.
- 11 For a more detailed exposition, see J.Devika, 2000, Chapter 1.
- 12 See, for instance, Joseph Vitayathil, Speech in the Discussion on Motion No.117, 30 Jul. 1938, *Proceedings of the Travancore Shree Moolam Assembly Vol. XII- Part II*, p. 803; Thomas Moonjoli, ‘Jananiyantrana Bhramam’ (The Folly of Birth Control), *ND* 4 Jun. 1929, p.5; ‘Lokalokam’, o p.cit., n.5; J.J.Jacob, ‘Santananiyantranamo’ (Birth Control?), *ND* 17 Jun.1936, p.8.
- 13 The parallel between the two was well-illustrated by the well-known humourist of this period, P.K.Rajaraja Varma when he pictured Nature as a ‘government’ extracting tax from its subjects for the pleasure of sex. Artificial birth control is seen as a means of avoiding this tax; people could now enjoy without ‘paying’. See, P.K.Rajaraja Varma, 1948, pp.23-31; 1951, pp.59-67.
- 14 Ever since the 19<sup>th</sup> century a great deal of writing has accumulated around the theme of ‘natural’ capacities of men and women which supposedly made them fit to inhabit two different social domains, the public and the domestic. One of the major burdens of social

reformism in Keralam has been to institute such a partitioning in a world in which such distinctions were definitely blurred and fluid. This ‘contract’ was seen to enable a complementary exchange between men and women for ‘mutual benefit’ so that the realms of production and procreation would be at once separated and mutually linked, energising each other. For a detailed account, see, J.Devika, 1999, Chapter One.

- 15 The speech was on 29 Apr. 1935. Quoted in M. Kochunni Panikker, *Malloor: Oru Matruka Jeevitam*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1954, p. xxxi- xxxiii. She later referred to these arguments in her speech at the Nair *Mahasammelanam* (Nair Conference) at Kottayam . *Ibid.*, p.xxxi.
- 16 ‘Santananiyantranam’ (Birth Control), *Aryakeralam* 1(1) 1935-36, pp.5-6. Such arguments are also to be found in other ‘humorous’ writing, such as that of M.N.Govindan Nair. See his ‘Sadhukkal Bharttakkanmar’ (Poor Husbands) , 1936, reprinted in M.N.Govindan Nair, 1950,pp.50-56. For a ‘serious’ account much later, see, P.T.Chacko, ‘Kutumba Samvidhanam-Kutumbathinte Adiverukal’ (Family Planning – The Roots of the Family), *ND* 26 Apr.1959.
- 17 Speeches by Mrs.I.C.Chacko and Anne Mascrene against artificial birth control at a protest meeting in Thiruvananthapuram, reported in the *ND*, 7 Jan. 1936,p.4. Mrs.I.C.Chacko is remembered to have been an extremely outspoken champion of equal rights for women within the Syrian Christian community, demanding equal property rights for men and women, raising the age of marriage of women etc. Cited in M.Ulakamthara, 1995. Anne Mascrene was to be a well-known political figure, an active presence in the struggle against Dewan’s rule in Tiruvitamkooor (Travancore ). Also see, speech by the noted nationalist activist Ratnamayi Devi at the Nair Conference at Kollam, reported in the *ND* 15 Apr. 1937, p.7; speech by Annamma Kunjacko B.A.B.L at the All- Kerala Catholic Congress at Ollur, reported in the *ND* 12 Apr. 1950,p.1; speech by Mariakkutty John B.A.B.L. at the All-Kerala Catholic Congress at Aluva, reported in the *ND* 15 May, 1951,p.2; speech by Mrs. Malloor Govinda Pillai at the Nair *Mahasammelanam* at Kumaranalloor, Kottayam, quoted in

- Kochunni Panikker, op.cit., n.15. The full text of her speech was published in the *Malayala Rajyam* 18 Nov. 1953.
- 18 P.M.Nair. op.cit., n.5; Koyippalli Parameshwarakurup, op.cit., n.5, pp. 62-63.
- 19 See, for instance, P.T.Chacko, 'Kritrimasantananiyantranam' (Artificial Contraception), *Deepika Weekly* 5(8), 1952, pp.3-10; Fr. Louis Mathias, 'Santananiyantranam' reported in the *Deepika Weekly* 4(1) Aug. 1951, pp.16-20; Editorial, 'Santananiyantranathinulla Samrambham' (The Efforts Towards Birth Control), *ND* 3 Dec. 1935, p.3; 'Nireekshakan', (Observer), 'Santananiyantranam: Atu Sweekaryamano?' (Birth control: Is It Acceptable?), *ND* 7 Jan. 1936, p.1; Editorial, 'Kutumbasamvidhanam' (Family Planning), *ND* 15 Apr. 1958, p.2; 'M', 'Kritrimasantananiyantranam Streetvathinu Orapamanam' (Artificial Contraception an Insult to Womanhood), *ND* 2 Oct. 1960, p.5.
- 20 See V.T.Bhattatiripad's condemnation of the deviant Umadevi Naripetta in *Karmavipakam* (1988). Also see the newspaper reports of the 'Saraswati—Terinchan' Case, in which a Nair woman, Taramel Saraswati Amma left her husband to live with a Pulaya youth, Terinchan, against whom criminal proceedings were initiated. Reported in the *ND*, 11 Jun. 1938, p.1.
- 21 Anna Chandy, 'Streewatantryathe Patti' ( On the Liberation of Women), *Sahodaran* Special Issue 1929. In this brilliant defense of women's right to work and earn outside the home, she recommends "ascetic self-control" to those women who aspire to enter the public domain.
- 22 N.Lalitambika Antaranjanam, 1960.
- 23 K.Saraswati Amma, 'Jeevitrahasyangale Patti' (About the Secrets of Life), 1958, p.47.
- 24 In her only novel *Premabhajanam* (1955), K.Saraswati Amma, constructs a female character who embodies the struggle for Individuality by women, who is marked by her sexual self-control. Not surprisingly, this character voices assent for 'natural' birth control. *Premabhajanam*, p. 42.



- 25 R.Easwara Pillai, 'Uttaravaditvattinte Kaimattam' ( Transfer of Responsibility), *The Mahila* Vol. 16(1), 1936, pp.200-5.
- 26 E.N. Meenakshi Amma, 'Vanitalokam', *M.N.Nair Masika* 1(2), 1936, pp.122-26.
- 27 E.N. Meenakshi Amma, 'Vanitalokam', *M.N.Nair Masika* Vol. 3(9-10), 1938, pp.464-65. *The Mahila*, commenting on the *Kesari's* suggestion that women legislators should petition the government to initiate family planning measures in Tiruvitamkoor, wrote thus: "...is the notoriety of being 'deniers of Motherhood' an ornament to the women of Tiruvitamkoor? Surprising!" ('Mahilabhashanam', *The Mahila* Vol. 11(10), 1931, p. 5) But in 1932, this position changed, now claiming that birth control was a necessity in Tiruvitamkoor and hinted,that women ought to pay attention to this. See, 'Janasankhya Vardhippikkano?' in 'Mahilabhashanam', *The Mahila* Vol.12 (1), 1932, pp.160-61.
- 28 See, Mrs.C.Kuttan Nair (Kochattil Kalyanikutty Amma), 'Swatantryavadikalaya Adhunika Matakkanmar' (Modern Mothers Who Argue for Freedom) in *The Mahila* 11(2), 1931,pp.47-52. See also her autobiography, *Pathikayum Vazhiyorathe Manideepangalum*, 1991.
- 29 Discussion on Resolution One: Birth Control Clinics, 23 Jan.1934, p.1934, *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings Vol.VI*, Parts 1-15, 1934, p.155.
- 30 Discussion on Resolutions on Matters of General Public Interest: Family Planning, 3 Apr. 1951, Session III, *Proceedings of the Travancore- Cochin Legislative Assembly Vol.III* Nos.1 (II), 1951, p.1599.
- 31 See, for example, Editorial, 'Kerala Governor Janananiyantranathe Patti' (The Kerala Governor on Birth Control), *ND* 29 Dec 1956,p.2; Report of Speech by Joseph Pettah at Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Mannanam St.Ephrem's School, *ND* 21 Jan 1936, p.1; M.O.Joseph, 'Jananniyranaprasthanam' (The Birth Control Movement), *ND* 22 Dec. 1933, p.8.
- 32 See for instance, 'Narikkuzhi', 1954 (1952); 1954a; Br.Vadakkan, 'Sa. Damodaran Sannadhanano?'(Is Comrade Damodaran

Ready?), *Tozhilali* 26 Jul. 1953; George Nelayi, 'Communist Vyavastayil Kutumbe Bhadrataikkulla Sthanam'(The Place of Family stability Within the Communist System), *Deepika Weekly* Vol.5 (27), 1952, pp.16-17; Prof. T.J.Job, 'Russiayum Sadacharavum' (Russia and Morality), *Deepika Weekly* Vol.5 (13), 1952, pp.23-25; Speech by Annamma Chacko Kalarickal at the Knanaya Catholic Congress, *ND* 22 May 1960,p.2; Editorial , 'Samaram Arambhichateyullu', *Navasakti* 5 Aug 1959, cited in Venganoor Balakrishnan, 2000, p.198.

33 See, for instance, Narikkuzhi, 1954, p.19.

34 It may be remarked here that despite the large number of judicial enactments securing the modern patrilineal family in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Keralam, discussions on the ways of creating and maintaining it generally conceded that the 'real' strength of the modern family lay in the 'internal forces' that held it together, and not in the legal supports provided. These 'internal forces' were identified to be Romantic Love between husband and wife, the complementary division of responsibilities, the mutual moral shaping expected of partners etc. For a more detailed account, see J. Devika, 1999, Chapter Two.

35 Narikkuzhi, *op.cit.*, n. 33, p.22.

36 See, K.Damodaran, 1952; E.M.S. Nambutiripad, 1999 (1949); C.J.Thomas, 1948.

37 See for instance the warm praise for the Communist Party expressed by the non-Communist politician, Annie Joseph, 1954.

38 See, for example, Cherukad Govinda Pisharoty, 1984; A.K. Gopalan, 1980; K. C. George, 1985.

39 Several such articles may be cited here. Just one: 'Mrs. Hovermartinte Dharana' (Mrs.Hovermartin's Understanding), *ND* 22 Feb. 1935, p.8. This is an article that challenges the view that the Catholic Church has been always against Science, listing the large numbers of Catholic scientists.

40 Such criticism came from Gandhians like Vinoba Bhave and Morarji Desai; at the height of the FPP in the late 60s and early 70s, Jayaprakash Narayan was condemning it for its sheer disrespect for the Individual, *op.cit.*, n.5. In 1972, a Catholic author

was raising precisely such objections, that the very foundations of democracy and the ideal of citizenship were being flagrantly violated by the FPP. C.H. Joseph, 1972, p.31.

- 41 In Nehruvian Developmentalism, the project of 'Development' involved the desire to effect the transformation of the diverse social groups and communities that inhabited the geographical space defined as 'India', in more or less the image of the materially advanced societies of Europe and America. It was an article of nearly uncontested faith that this would ensure material well-being and elevation of sensibilities, both defined in such a way that the ultimate standard of valuation was provided by modern Western culture. This ordinarily involved a beating down of most norms, practices, customs, beliefs, structures of obligation etc. that pre-existed in these societies, and cultivated a certain blindness to the internal fractures or ambiguities in the desired model. This was often combined with the will to push through social change at a vigorous rate and all possible means—persuasion, coercion or a combination of both. Nehruvian Developmentalism was of course only one instantiation of a discourse that was both highly pervasive and persuasive in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century almost all over the world, especially among the political elites. As a modernist procedure par excellence, Developmentalism is thoroughly 'logocentric'—i.e. it is disposed to provide a foundational Archimedian point from which everything seems accessible, but is itself exempt from such inspection; it exhibits a profound nostalgia for origins, and is inclined towards imposing hierarchies between places, things and subjects. See, K.Manzo, 1991. In practical form, Development may be characterised as an apparatus with the strategic function of producing and reproducing disciplined citizens and governable subjects committed to the project of the Modern Nation, a major element in the generalising- normalising practices of the modern state. See, Homi Bhabha, 1991. The distance between these two suggestions regarding the achievement of national prosperity should not be exaggerated. It may be remembered that those who put Development first often admitted that self-control was the 'best', but simply impracticable for the 'masses'. For an excellent example of writing that shows the

common ground shared by these different visions, see, editorial, 'Vinobajiyude Kutumbasootrana Nirdesham' (Vinobaji's Suggestions About FP), *MM* 16 May 1965, p.2.

- 42 In his *An Autobiography*, Jawaharlal Nehru writes about the necessity of a degree of violence in power struggles between states and within it: "... we must realise that human nature being what it is, in the mass, it will not respond to our appeals and persuasions or act in accordance with high moral principles. Compulsion will often be necessary in addition to conversion, and the best we can do is to limit this compulsion and use it in such a manner that its evil is lessened'. J.Nehru, 1936, p.552. In *The Discovery of India*, he writes: " Perhaps it is only through pain and suffering that accompany such disruption that a people grow and learn the lessons of life and adapt themselves anew to changing conditions". J.Nehru, 1946, pp.243.
- 43 'Santananiyantranam', *Rasikan* 5 (5) 1934, pp.58-59.
- 44 Rev. George Mathen, 'Marumakkathayattalulla Doshangal', *op.cit.*, n.9, pp.347-48.
- 45 *The Hindu*, 6 Feb. 1891, p.6. Quoted in R.Jeffrey, 1976. In the *Report of the Malabar Marumakkathayam Commission (RMMC)* (Chennai: Lawrence Asylum Press, 1891), respondents often referred to it as a 'pre-historic relic', rooted in not a production-based economy but a plunder- based one. This and the alleged 'sexual promiscuity' of the *sambandham* sort of marital tie were seen to be major obstacles to the 'progress' of the Nairs. See, B.Kumaran Nair, Answer to Interrogatories, Appendix IV, *RMMC*, p.4; K. P. Raman Menon, p.7; K.R.Krishna Menon, pp.1-2. The *RMMC* itself saw the *marumakkathayi* home as unsuitable for rearing children.
- 46 See, for instance, O.Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, 1991 (1889); *Sharada*, 1991 (1892); Cheruvalathu Chathu Nair, *Meenakshi*, 1988 (1890); Komattil Padoo Menon, *Lakshmikesavam*, 1985 (1892).
- 47 *Ibid.*, above.
- 48 For a detailed account, see J.Devika, 1999, Chapter One. For an excellent sample of argument that idealised the conjugal unit

bound by *Premam*, and in which physical union is merely peripheral, see, Vidvan C.P.K.Elayatu, 'Dambatyattil Sukhamundo Illayo?' (Is there Pleasure in Family Life or Not?), *Mangalodayam* 17 (10) 1930, pp.715-724.

- 49 Parvati Nenminimangalam, 'Streetvam' (Womanliness), *Stree* Vol.1 (1) 1933, pp.15-16. She wrote: "A woman must seduce only her husband, but not through artificial dressing. A man attracted by dress will surely turn away if the dress and ornaments are soiled; to make such a man one's husband is surely a mistake. One should try to seduce only with unblemished *Premam*.." Ibid.
- 50 Innumerable citations can be made here. To choose a particularly evocative one, written in 1916 about Nair women: "In this manner, women of different ages exhibit their Mounts of Modesty before all and sundry, generating different emotions and desires in them. Do they go about covering their breasts in some fashion to prevent this? How uncivilised is this? How ridiculous? How shameful? Is this not half-nakedness?" Koyathu Kochunni Menon, 'Nayarstreekalum Uduppum' (Nair Women and Dress), *Kerala Kesari* 2 (4-5), 1916, pp.170-75.
- 51 The frequent calls for widow-remarriage, divorce of young Antaranams married to old men, intra-caste marriage for younger Nambutiris etc. that echoed in the radical strains of Nambutiri reformism explicitly demanded this, pointing to the unlimited opportunities for sensual indulgence permitted to Nambutiri men, contrasting this to the sexual starvation of women. See, *Karmavipakam*, op.cit. n.9. Also interesting is V.T.Bhattatiripad's construction of the young Antaranam as the active subject of sexual desire in some of his short stories. See, 'Vishukkettam' and 'Enkil' in *Rajanirangam* (1931), reprinted, 1990.
- 52 This is well-illustrated in V.T's writings: the sexually active heroines he constructs in his shortstories may be contrasted to the sordid picture of Umadevi Naripetta in *Karmavipakam* (op.cit., n.9), whose active sexual desire did not remain subservient to the interests of the community. Also telling is his comment on that figure of 'deviant' female sexuality, Kuriyidathu Tatri – that she would have been 'normal' if she had been given a chance to find a suitable mate of her choice. Interview appended to M.Govindan, 1989.

- 53 V.T.Bhattatiripad, Speech at Aliyattur Upasabha Meeting, reprinted in Appendix to *Karmavipakam*, op.cit., n.9.
- 54 A fuller account is to be found in J.Devika, 1999, Chapter 5.
- 55 Kesari A. Balakrishna Pillai wrote: "... I do not regard the sex life of man as the mean portion of his nature. A sex-impulse is as natural and noble as another so-called noble impulse. This is why I showed tolerance for sexual feeling in man..." From 'Biographical Notes', written towards the end of his life, in the late 40s, appended to Dr. T. P. Sukumaran, 1987, pp.199-213.
- 56 Changampuzha Krishna Pillai, 'Sahitya Chintakal' (Thoughts on Literature) in *Purogamana Sahityam Enthinu?* (Why Progressive Literature?), Kottayam:SPSS, 1953, pp.71-2. For a critique of modest dressing, see 'Veshavum Sadacharavum' (Dressing and Morality) in C.J.Thomas, 1953, pp.19-25. On the other hand this evoked alarmed reactions from many, who perceived that covering the body was losing its 'proper function' and actually serving to highlight its sexual appeal. See,Elikkutty Thomas, 'Oru Nootanaviplavam' (A New Revolution), *Deepika Weekly* 5 (30) 1952,pp.11-14; Thresiamma Jacob, 'Keraleeya Vanitakalude Vastradharanam' (The Sartorial Habits of Malayalee Women), *Deepika Weekly* 5 (14) 1952, pp. 1952. See also the report on the Catholic Synod at Bangalore, *ND* 5 Jan.1950, p.1.
- 57 One of the most important features of the literary writings produced by the Progressive writers in Malayalam since the 1930s has been the explicit treatment of sexuality, for which they had to face a great deal of criticism, often accusations that they were producing lewd writing that aroused carnal feelings in the name of realistic portrayal. However, they were also defended by others that these were renderings of ugly social realities that the established powers could not find palatable. In fact in the writings of the Progressive writers one finds both these: one the one hand there are texts critical of the hypocrisy that renders sexual desire invisible and mute; on the other hand, there are others which sharply criticise the 'sexual excesses' of the rich and the powerful and make impossible the fostering of sentimental affection and bourgeois familial values among the poor. In short, it seems difficult to characterise the Progressive writers as unambiguous

opponents of bourgeois sexual morality. At the same time, it may be admitted that their writing, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century decades, was taken to represent the ‘freeing’ of sexuality from bourgeois prudery and hypocrisy. In the writings of Ponkunnam Varkey which are sharply critical of the Church for its unabashed corruption, greed and tyranny over the laity, assent for artificial birth control appears often as a point of resistance. See his short stories like ‘Antoni, Neeyum Achanyoda?’, ‘Oru Pishachu’ etc. Placed thus as a subversive force, it was made to appear as ‘liberating’, i.e., freeing the individual from all forms of power relations. For an account of the progressive writers, see, M.Achyutan, 1973.

- 58 See, for instance the treatment of *Premam* and *Kamam* in the writings of the leftist author Cherukad Govinda Pisharoty, especially his novels, *Muthassi* (1989) and *Devalokam* (1971).
- 59 M.B.Menon (M.S.Devadass), 1949, p.7.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 The call for sex-education dates back to the 1920s. the earliest texts that I could find were by V.C. John, 1929; 1930. Numerous articles stressing the need for sex-education in the 30s and 40s may be cited : Paravur K.Gopala Pillai, ‘Chila Dambatyasastra Rahasyangal’ (Some Secrets of Conjugal Science), *Kutumbapatrika* 2(2) 1934,pp.10-12; Speech by Dr.G.H.Gray at the auspices of the YMCA,published in the *Kutumbapatrika* 2 (4) 1934,pp.4; M.S. ‘Kutumbajeevitam’, *Malayala Manorama Weekly* 50 (120 7 Nov. 1948,pp.19-22. A landmark work detailing contemporary scientific thinking on human sexuality, Nalappat Narayana Menon’s *Ratisamrajyam*, was published in 1938. In the 1940s, several texts purporting to give scientific information on sex and desire were published, some widely read, like Helen Thomas’ *Dambatyapremam* ( Love in Marriage) (1945) and *Janananiyantranam* (Birth Control) (1948). Sex-education was being recommended as a pre-requisite for introducing artificial birth control by legislators like V. Gangadharan Nair in 1951 (Discussion on Resolutions of Public Interest: Family Planning, *Proceedings of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly*, Third Session Vol.III Nos.I (II), pp.1594).A flood of texts came in

the 50s and 60s, some of which were: *Lingavijnanam: Balabodhini*, (Sex Education for Boys) Thrissur: Gandhi Grandhalayam, 1955; *Lingavijnanam: Balikabodhini*, (Sex Education for Girls) Thrissur: Gandhi Grandhalayam, 1955; *Purushanmarude Laingikaroganagal*, (Sexual Diseases of Men) Thrissur: Gandhi Grandhalayam, 1955; E.A.Karunakaran Nair, 1968; P.M.Mathew, 1968; 1967; Punalur Sudarshanan Nair, 1970; Dr.V.R.Menon, 1970. By the 60s, newspapers too were figuring this topic prominently. See, P.M. Mathew's *Kumarikumaranmarute Prasnangal*, (The Problems of Adolescent Boys and Girls) serialised in the *MM*, Sunday Supplement in 1967, which was widely welcomed. But criticisms were still to be heard in the 50s, and not necessarily from Catholics. See, Puthezhattu Raman Menon, 1970 (1955). Needless to say, there is no guarantee that sex education must remain 'really scientific'—the large numbers of soft porn 'sex education' films made in Malayalam in the 70s testify to that, but it is significant that this label is used for their justification.

- 62 See, J. Devika, 'Kulinaikkum Kulataikkum Appuram: Lingabhedavicharam Saraswati Ammayute Kritikallil' (Beyond Kulina and Kulata: The Critique of Gender Difference in the Writings of K.Saraswati Amma), in Dr. K. S. Ravikumar (ed.), 2001.
- 63 K. Saraswati Amma, op.cit., n.23.
- 64 Earlier, such demands were made of marriage-and-family guides to distinguish them from texts that offered guidance in the erotic arts, which were inevitably dismissed as prurient and polluting. See, for instance, 'Preface', Koyippalli Parameswara Kurup, 1928, p.iii. However, texts purporting to give scientific information about sexual matters, or aimed at rationalising the sphere of reproduction (irrespective of whether they prescribed traditional or modern methods) did not entirely distance themselves from earlier models of *Kamasutra* texts, at least in their titles. See, for instance, K.Narayana Menon, 1929; 1930; *Ratirahasyaratnam*, Alappuzha: VVS Press, 1930. The demand for a scientific posture in speaking about sexual affairs became more insistent later on, and authors were careful to mention their commitment to the scientific and objective viewpoint in their books; authors were



congratulated by reviewers for adhering to the scientific spirit in such writing. See Dr.C.R. Narayanan, 1960 (1952), p.219; Review of P. M.Mathew's book *Kutumbajeevitam* by N.K.Damodaran, *Kerala Kaumudi* (henceforth, *KK*) 4 Apr. 1971, p.5; Letter from Gopi Manakkalat on P.M.Mathew's articles on human sexuality serialised in the *MM*, *MM* Sunday Supplement, 24 Sept. 1967, p.4. The ability to view the issues scientifically, it was argued, permitted 'openness'; this was at times interpreted as heightening pleasure. See, A.P.Udayabhanu, 'Kutumbasootranam Oru Dharmam' (Family Planning –A Duty), *MM* 15 Jul. 1965, p.4.

- 65 To cite just a few texts: Dr.Louis Ponnookkara, 1979; 1979a; C. H. Jose, 1975; 1970; 1971; Chackochan Kalappura, 1972; Fr. D. Manikkathan, 1972; 1973.
- 66 M.Kurien, 1958, p.71.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Mentioned in C.H.Joseph, 1972, pp.11.
- 69 Ibid., p.153.
- 70 Popular magazines of the 1950s such as the *Kaumudi*, the *Malayalarajyam Weekly*, the *Malayala Manorama Weekly* etc. published great many articles on human psychology precisely in this spirit. For instance, see, K.Kuttappan, 'Kuttikalude Anveshanabuddhi' (The Inquisitiveness of Children), *Malayalarajyam Weekly* 12 Dec. 1965, pp.16-18; K.G.Kesavan Nair, 'Manasinte Atbudhasaktikal' (The Wondrous Powers of the Mind), serialised in *Malayalarajyam Weekly*, Oct.—Nov.1956. The *Malayala Manorama Weekly* used to run a regular column on psychology, written by V.K.Alexander. See, 'Akarana Bhayam' (Unreasonable Fear), *MM Weekly* 50 (2), 29 Aug. 1948, pp.25-6; *MM Weekly* 50 (4), 12 sept.1948 etc. A prominent author writing on human psychology was Vakkom M.Abdul Khadar whose articles published in the 1940s have been collected in *Vicharavedi* (1947). These magazines were an important site through which modern psychology began to draw its subjects; the psychology column in the *MM Weekly* promised to answer its readers' queries. *MM Weekly* 50 (9) 17 Oct.1948, pp.15-16. They also served to assert the relevance of modern psychology to other field like, for example, pedagogy. See, Rev.V.V.Abraham,

‘Adhyapakanmarum Manassastravum’ (Teachers and Psychology), *MM Weekly* 50 (11) 31 Oct. 1948.

71 Op.cit., n.41.

72 Perhaps this is nowhere documented so well as in K.Saraswati Amma’s short stories, which follow this emergence with brilliant cynicism and near-scientific precision. See, J. Devika, op.cit., n.62. Sociologists and anthropologists have also closely recorded the spread of dowry into more and more communities and groups in Malayalee society as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progresses. See, Puthenkalam, 1977; C.Osella and F. Osella, 2001.

73 K.Saraswati Amma has recorded this in poignant terms in her short stories. See, J.Devika, *ibid.* Even radicals like Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai were admitting that a marriage cannot be sustained on Premam alone, but requires financial stability. See, ‘Dambaty Jeevitattile Sambattika Khatakam’ (The Financial Factor in Married Life), 1965. Reprinted in Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai, 1990, pp.152-55.

74 It is not surprising that popular magazines and newspapers carried great many articles and discussions from the 1940s onwards about the problems of ‘mutual adjustments’ within the nuclear family. See, for instance, the articles written regularly by ‘M.S’ in the *MM Weekly* in 1948: ‘Saubhagya Jeevitam: Vyaktiparamaya Bahumanattil Dambatyam Munnittu Nilkkanam’ (A Fortunate Life: Respect for Individuality must Predominate in Marriage), *MM Weekly* 50 (11), 11Oct. 1946, pp.25-7; ‘Kutumbajeevitam Engane Saubhagyakaramakkam’ (How to make Family Life Fortunate), *MM Weekly* 50 (9), 7 Oct. 1948, pp.13-14. The same concerns about adjustments run through the discussions on the problems of working mothers, and the challenges of adjusting to the responsibilities of mothers in the modern family. See, Viji Velappan, ‘Santushta Kutumbam: Adyam Tanne Adittara Paniyuka (The Happy Family: Build the Foundation First), *MM* 12 Jun. 1970, p.6; Mrinalini, ‘Kalyanam Kaliyalla’ (Marriage is no Play) *Matrubhumi Weekly* 41 (10), 26 May 1963; Padmini Balakrishnan, “Kutumbajeevitam Enthinu? Engane?” (Family Life: For what? How?), *Matrubhumi Weekly* 41 (16), 7Jul. 1963; Sati Ramachandran, ‘Udyogastakalaya Matakkaalum Kunhungalum’(Working Mothers and Children), *KK* 4 May

- 1970,p.5; C.K.Lilly, 'Bharyayaya Udyogasta' (The Working Woman Who is Also a Wife), *KK* 3 Mar. 1968, p.4; V.Subhadra Devi, 'Bharyayaya Udyogastaye Patti' (A Reply to C.K.Lilly), *KK* 10 Mar. 1968, p.6. All these issues and arguments are humorously engaged with in the 'Kunji' series written by the popular humourist of these times, P.K.Rajaraja Varma, whose heroine Kunji is the barely- educated wife of a lawyer, Panju Menon, negotiating with what gets presented to her as 'modernity'.
- 75 See for instance, editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam' (Family Planning), *Matrubhoomi* 18 Dec. 1966, p.4.
- 76 Report in the *KK* 6 Apr. 1969, p.7.
- 77 Dr.C.O.Karunakaran, 'Vanitakalude Pratisshedham' (Women's Protest), *KK* 11 Aug. 1967, p.2. For similar justifications, see his article, 'Garbhachidra Bhedagaty'(Abortion Amendment), *KK* 4 Aug. 1967,p.2; C.S.Thomas, 'Garbhachidram Sadhookarikkamo?' (Is Abortion Justified?), *MM* Sunday Supplement 5 Jul.1970, p.I.
- 78 'Preface' to Dr.C.R.Narayanan, 1968,p.13. Also see, Dr.C.O.Karunakaran, 'Kutumbabandham Bhadramakkunna Kanaka Shringkhalakal' (The Golden Chains that Secure the Marital Relationships), *MM* 12 Nov. 1961, p. IV.
- 79 See for instance, Dr.G.Velayudhan, 'Enthane Kutumbasamvidhanam?' (What is this Family Planning?), *KK* 24 Sept. 1967, p.5; M.S.Bhaskaran Nair, 'Kutumbasootranam Vandhyamkaranam Matram Avarutu'(FP Must Not Be Sterilisation Alone),*Matrubhoomi* 8 Jun 1971,p.4; M.I.Oommen, 'Entu Vilayum Koduttu Janasankhya Niyantriche Teeru' (Population Should be Controlled at All Costs), *MM* Sunday Supplement 20 Feb. 1966, p.III; K. Peetambaran 1969,p.88.
- 80 Report in the *MM* 11 Sept.1959, p.4.
- 81 For an excellent example of such argument, see,A.P.Udayabhanu, 'Vasectomyum Jnanum' (Vasectomy and Me) , *Matrubhumi* 26 Mar. 1970, p.5. He wrote: " I can guarantee that after this, (i.e. undergoing vasectomy) life has been 'free of fear', 'contented' and 'anxiety-less'. After the operation, husband and wife stopped fearing each other" As for the effect, "... 'Enthusiasm' may be heightened a bit. It is said that old men practice this to gain

- youth". Also see, Dr. N. Krishnan Tampi, 'Kutumbasamvidhanatinte Aavashyakata' (the Necessity of FP), *Deshabhimani* 18 May 1958, p.3.
- 82 C. H. Joseph, 1972, pp.31-32.
- 83 See the announcement of the All-India Photo- Painting-Cartoon Contest on FP Themes which appeared in the *MM* 30 Oct. 1963, p.7. The topics specified clearly reflect this.
- 84 *Matrubhumi*, 14 Apr.1967, p.1.
- 85 Suggestions that artificial birth control must be introduced along with or after scientific sex education were made early enough: Dr. J. C.Ghosh, a member of the Planning Commission suggested in 1957 that girl students must be given sex education at the secondary school level. Reported in the *Kerala Sandesam*, Feb. 1957. It continued to be demanded in the later pro-family planning texts. K.Peetambaran wrote: "The lack of proper sex education is more evident among young couples. Sex education will lead the way to strengthening the marital relationship, making it secure and reducing the number of children". Also see, Dr. C.R.Narayanan, 1960, pp.218-19.
- 86 S.Krishna Kumar, 1971, pp.65-67.
- 87 *Ibid.*, pp.67. The slogan raised in the family planning rally was this: 'Here the voices of the Indian masses/ Who sweat and toil on this sacred land/ Hear this patriotic clarion call / Two (parents) we are, and two (children) for us'.
- 88 *Ibid.*, pp.106.
- 89 See, Sukumar Azhikode, 'Bharateeya Samskaravum Kutumbakshemadarshavum' (Indian Culture and the Idea of Family Welfare), *KK* 22 Jul. 1971, pp.5-6. Interestingly, this claim often went along with other claims that it was ancient customs that stood in the way of widespread acceptance of artificial birth control in India (see, for instance, K.Peetambaran, 1969, p.91.). Obviously, the 'Indian Culture' that was invoked in support of family planning was the 'high' one, not that of the commons, judging from Azhikode's use of Puranic legends.
- 90 Editorial, 'Janaperuppa Pratirodha Yajnam' (Yajna against Population Increase), *Matrubhumi* 22 Dec. 1970, p.4: "Until

recently, vasectomy was prevalent among us only as a protective and private measure adopted here and there by some folks.. (but in the Ernakulam camps). The reticence of individuals and society towards vasectomy has ended". Also see, Editorial, 'Janaperuppa Pratirodha Yajnam, *KK* 24 Dec. 1970, p. 2; Parvati Ayyappan, 'Jeevitanilavaravum Swabhavaroopikaranavum' (Standard of Living and the Formation of Character), *KK* 22 Jul. 1971, p. 5.

- 91 See, *Report of the Committee for Evaluation of Family Welfare Programme (Kerala)*, Govt. of Kerala, 1978, pp. 88-90.
- 92 K.E.Varghese, 1986, pp.166-70.
- 93 Ibid., pp.167-8.
- 94 Marion den Uyl, 1995, pp.181-83.
- 95 See, Mohan Rao, 1994; Debabar Banerjee, 1985: Mahmood Mamdani, 1976, pp. 1141- 48; M.V.Nadkarni, 1976, pp.1163-73.
- 96 See for example, L.C.Issac, 'Santananiyantranam' (Birth-Control), *ND* 15 Jan. 1932,p.6; Report of protest meeting organised in Madras by Catholics, *ND* 21 Jan. 1936; L.J.Chittoor, 'Congress Padhatiyile Kutumbasamvidhanam' (family planning in the Plan of the Congress), *ND* 13 Nov. 1951; Editorial, 'Janananiyantranam' (Birth Control), *ND* 24 May 1956, p.1-4 ; P.T.Chacko, 'Kutumbasamvidhanam IV', *ND* 17 May, 1959, p.5; Annakkutty Kurishummoottil, 'Janasankhyayum Santananiyantranavum' (Population and Birth Control), *ND* 22 May 1960.
- 97 E.Gopalkrishna Menon, Speech during discussion on Resolutions of General Public Interest: Family Planning, introduced by A.P.Udayabhanu, Third Session, 3 Apr. 1951, *Proceedings of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly* Vol. III (I-II), pp. 1601-3.
- 98 Reported in the *ND* 20 Jun. 1957, p.1.
- 99 See, for example, Dr. P. K. Sukumaran, 'Santananiyantranamo Sambattikasootranamo' (Birth Control or Economic Planning), *Janayugam Weekly* Onam Special Issue, 1963; E.M.S. Nambutiripad, 'Planningum Vyavasayavatkaranavum' (Planning and Industrialisation), *Janayugam Weekly* Annual Number, 1963; Speech by E.M.S. at the stone-laying ceremony of the Toshiba

- Anand Lamps factory at Kalamaserry, reported in the *KK* 17 Apr. 1967, p.2.
- 100 Reported in the *Matrubhumi* 21 Sept. 1967, p.3. However, this does not really mean that the Communists adopted an unambiguous anti-birth control position. Indeed not. Some of the fellow travellers of the Communists were ardent propagandists of the family planning, like V. R. Krishna Aiyer and Dr. A R. Menon. See, for instance, speeches by Dr. A. R. Menon and Thoppil Bhaskaran Pillai, Discussion on Demands for Grants: Medical, Public Health and Capital Outlay on Public Health, 20 Mar. 1959, *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly* Vol. VII, 1959, pp.2000-3; p.1979; Speech by V.R.Krishna Aiyer, Discussion on Demand for Grants: Medical, 19 Jun.1957, *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly* Vol. I, 1957, pp.1498-1502. For a direct attack on the international politics spurring population control in the Third World, see, editorial, 'Janapperuppattine Karyam' (On The Increase in Population), *Deshabhimani* 18 Jun. 1958, p.2; editorial, 'Pattiniyum Mukhyamantriyum' (Poverty and the Chief Minister), *Deshabhimani* 19 Jul. 1953, p.2, which criticised a statement by the chief minister of the Madras State that the poverty of Malabar was due to its populousness. However, the *Deshabhimani* was never completely opposed to birth control, emphasising its worth as a personal choice, and so one does find writings favourably inclined towards family planning in it, especially from the late 50s onwards.
- 101 For instance, see, Dr. C. O.Karunakaran, 'Kutumbasootrana Paddhati'(The FPP), *KK* 11Mar. 1967, p.2; Editorial, 'Kerala Governmentum Kutumbasootranavum' (Kerala Government and Family Planning), *KK* 30 Jun. 1967, p.2; Prof. S. Chandrasekhar, 1966, pp 68-71.
- 102 *Ibid.*,p.2. Also see, by the same author, 'Kutumbasootrana Pracharanam' (Propagating Family Planning), *Matrubhumi* 15 Jul. 1965, p.5.
- 103 *Ibid.*
- 104 *Ibid.*

- 105 This is true even in the early struggles like the 'Breast-Cloth Rebellion' of 19<sup>th</sup> century South Tiruvitamkoor, in which the LMS missionaries had a major role to play. This event is particularly worth citing because it clearly contained two different strands, one in which the missionary concern over female modesty was highlighted, and the other in which the aspirations of the Channars to higher status in the established *Jati* order were explicit, and the two never really subjugated the other, and indeed, sometimes clashed. See, R.Jeffrey, 1976.
- 106 P.Kunjkrishnan, Discussion on Motion No. 117, Demands for Grants, Public Health and Sanitation, 30 Jul. 1938. *Proceedings of the Travancore Shree Mulam Assembly* Vol. XII- Part II, 1938, p.803.
- 107 For an argument of this sort combined with a eugenics-influenced plea that " ....Anyhow we must get rid of these people who are suffering from tuberculosis and other diseases" which allowed " the sterilisation of all persons suffering from infectious and who are defective", see, speech by Kadakkavur P.Madhavan, General Discussion on the Budget, 26 Jul.1945, *Proceedings of the Travancore Shree Mulam Assembly* Vol. XXVI, 1945, pp. 281. It may be remembered that these were extremely difficult years, when near-famine conditions prevailed over parts of Tiruvitamkoor, for which 'overpopulation' was certainly not the major cause.
- 108 Editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam' (Family Planning), 19 Dec. 1968, p.2; editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam', 28 Jul. 1968,p.2; editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam', 24 Sept. 1967, p.2; editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam', 21 Jun. 1967, p.2; editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam',12 Jul. 1970, p.2; Editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam', 28 Oct. 1971, p.2; Editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam', 13 Dec. 1969, p.2. However, the *KK* was not alone: such exhortation was made by the *Matrubhumi* as well. See, editorial, 'Kutumbasaukhyattinte Rakshakavacham' (The Protective Armour of Family Happiness), *Matrubhumi* 15 Jul. 1965, p.4.
- 109 For instance, consider this statement: " How many houses and courtyards with very many dirty and screaming children infested

- with scabies and eczema, almost indistinguishable by age, adorn our rural scene!!". Dr. C.R.Narayanan, 1960, p29. For a more figurative use of 'dirty', see the message to the Mass Sterilisation Camp at Ernakulam in 1971 sent by Lalitambika Antarjanam in which she remarked that women should emulate the elephant that gives birth only once in twelve years, and not the pig that delivers a number of young every year, to be thrown "...into the dirty gutters". Published in *KK* 22 Jul.1971, p.5.
- 110 To cite just a few texts: Message by the Chief Minister of Keralam on the Family Planning Fortnight, *KK* 18 Oct. 1970,p.8; Vrindavanam Venugopal, 'Kutumbasootrana Pravartanangale Kurichu' (About Family Planning Activities), *KK* 19 Dec. 1968, p.6; Dr.G.Velayudhan, 'Sanatana Niyantaranam Aarkku?' (Birth Control for Whom), *KK* Weekend Magazine, 5 Apr. 1970, p.6.
- 111 This was particularly lampooned in the humorous writing supportive of family planning. M.Krishnan Kutty's article 'Santanagopalam' sets up a scene in which two characters argue for and against family planning with equal conviction and reasonableness. The debate remains unresolved until a large family enters the scene and the brood of children 'invade' the privacy and the pocket of the character who harboured scepticism about family planning. In M.Krishnankutty, 1961, pp.52-6; also, P.K.Rajaraja Varma, 1951, pp.59-67.
- 112 Dr. C. O. Karunakaran, 'Bahujanam Kanenda Oru Chitram' (A Film That People Must See), *KK* 1 Oct. 1967, p.6.
- 113 P. Kesava Dev's pro-family planning novel *Njana Tettukaran* draws lurid pictures of such families. For a brief account, see S.K.Vasantan, 1986, pp.79-80. Also see, A. P. Udayabhanu, 'Enthoru Jeevitamanu Ningal Enikku Tannatu?' (What A Life Have You Given Me), *Matrubhumi* 19 Sept. 1967, p.4.
- 114 S. Krishna Kumar, 1971, p 105.
- 115 Jitendra Singh, 1959, pp.12-13. See also, the explanation of the anthropologist Adrian C. Mayer for the widening spread of Communist sentiments in Malabar in the 1940s. A.C.Mayer, 1952, p.150.
- 116 Dr. C. O. Karunakaran, 'Janaperuppa Niyantaranattinu Niyamanushasanam Anupekshaneeyam' (Legal Enactment



- Necessary for Population Control), *KK* 24 Sept. 1967, p.5. Such an impending chaos is warned against by N. J. Nair, 'Keralattinte Sambattika Purogati' (Kerala's Economic Progress), *KK* 6 Dec. 1970, pp.2-4.
- 117 A.P.G.Nair, 'Takarunna Keralam' (Disintegrating Keralam), *Jayakeralam* Nov. 1958, p.9.
- 118 Editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam' (Family Planning), *KK* 21 Jun. 1967, p .2.
- 119 See, for instance, Editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam' (Family Planning), *KK* 28 Jul. 1968, p.2; editorial 'Kutumbasootranam', *KK* 28 Oct. 1971, p.2; editorial, 'Kerala Governmentum Kutumbasootranavum' (The Kerala Government and Family Planning), *KK* 30 Jun. 1971, p.2. Not just *KK*, but also others joined in : see, editorial, 'Kutumbasootranam' (Family Planning), *Malayalarajyam* 29 Nov. 1968, p.2.
- 120 For an account of the implications of this new World order in ushering in that post- World War II version of Developmentalism, see Akhil Gupta, 1999.
- 121 Dr. B. M. Ambady, 'Santrippta Kutumbam' (The Contented Family), *KK* 12 Jul. 1970, p.5.
- 122 D. Spencer Hatch, 1932, p.89.
- 123 See the reminiscences of Tottam Rajasekharan as a development worker in the Social Development Programme of the Community Projects in the 1950s in Keralam, in Tottam Rajasekharan, 1991, pp.53-58.
- 124 Spencer Hatch, op.cit., n.122. p.6.
- 125 See, 'Garbhadharana Niyantanam' (Control of Pregnancy) in *Deepam* 3 (1), 1932. This article reassured the "intelligent woman" that she need not be scared of artificial contraception as she could get advice from"...doctors and nurses who had expertise and experience in this topic". The same assurance, of the superior knowledge of modern medicine, is given in Margaret Sanger's pro-artificial birth control pamphlet translated and published in *Arogyam* 10 (4), 1936, pp.85-89.
- 126 For excellent instances of such argument, see, Dr.G.Velayudhan, 'Enthanee Kutumbasamvidhanam' (What is this Family

- Planning), *KK* 24 Sept. 1967, p.5 ; ‘Sanatananiyantranam Arkkuvendi?’ (Birth Control for Whom?), *KK* 29 Mar. 1970, p.3; K. Narayana Aiyar, ‘Balaramapuram Camp’, *KK* 15 May 1968, pp.3-4. There were also explicit criticisms of the bureaucratisation of family planning. See, ‘Kutumbasootranavum Chuvappunatayum’ (Family Planning and Red-tape), *Malayalarajyam* 13 Sept. 1964, p.5.
- 127 Dr. P. Kalyanikutty, ‘Santanangalkkidayilulla Pravyatyasam’ (Age- difference Between Children), *KK* 13 Dec. 1969, p.5.
- 128 Innumerable speeches and articles on this theme contain this exhortation. For a few, see, Speech by Dr.S.Chandrasekhar to the Bharat Sevak Samaj, reported in *Matrubhumi* 2 Oct. 1968, p.6; report of inaugural speech by Kerala state Health Minister B.Wellington at family planning Seminar at Thiruvananthapuram in *KK* 26 Apr. 1968, p.8;editorial, ‘Kutumbasootranam’ (Family Planning), *KK* 12 Jul. 1970, p.2. Voluntary organisations like the Bharat Sevak Samaj, business clubs committed to social service like the Lions’ Club, the Rotary Club and the Junior Chamber were actively involved in organising and funding camps; so also were *mahila samajams*. One important reason identified for the success of the Ernakulam Camps was the enthusiastic participation of the voluntary organisations. See, Mrs. Grace Kurien, ‘Ernakulatte Kutumbasootrana Camp Oru Mahatbhutam’ (The Ernakulam Camps- A Great Miracle), *Matrubhumi* 25 Jul. 1971, p.4.
- 129 See, write-up on Dr. Mathew Thomas of the Perunkadavila PHC, *Matrubhumi* 5 Oct. 1966, p.5. Indeed, the *Matrubhumi* was explicitly calling for a ‘missionary attitude’ towards family planning and lamenting that enough was not forthcoming. See, editorial, ‘Kutumbasootranam’ (FP), *Matrubhumi* 19 Dec. 1965, p.4.
- 130 See answer to Starred Question by P. C. Raghavan to Home Minister P. C. Chacko, 22 Jul. 1960, Second Session, *Proceedings of the Kerala State Legislative Assembly*, pp.2447-49; statement by Health Minister B.Wellington in the Kerala Legislative Assembly that Catholics and other doctors with conscientious objections to sterilisations would be exempt from them. 19Jan.1968, First Session, *Proceedings of the Kerala State*

- Legislative Assembly* Vol. XXII, pp. 615-19. See also, 'Janannirakku Kuraikkan' (To Reduce Birth Rates), in the 'Weekly Notes' column of *KK* 16 Jan. 1967, p.2.
- 131 'M', 'Ernakulatte Kootavasectomy' (Mass Sterilisations at Ernakulam), *Matrubhumi* 26 Jul. 1971, p.3.
- 132 See, for example, M.P.Sadasivan, 'Kutumbakshema Pakshacharanam' (Celebrating Family Planning Week), *MM* 5 Jul. 1970, p.IV.
- 133 P. Visaria, 1976, p.1189. A follow-up study on the family planning acceptors in the Mass Camp held at Thiruvananthapuram in Jan. 1972 reported that "...the overwhelming importance given to cash remuneration shows that persons are undergoing vasectomy as if only for cash." G.Surendranathan Nair, P. Gopinathan Nair, 1978, p.154.
- 134 G.Surendranathan Nair, P. Gopinathan Nair, 1978, p. 9.
- 135 Ibid. Another study conducted by the above authors (ibid., n. 153, above) showed that though only a week's rest was necessary to become fit for normal work after vasectomy, "...But here about 64% of the acceptors took more than thirty days to become fit for their normal work.... If this simple operation results in the loss of several weekdays and thereby the wages for the poor labourers, an unwillingness among them to undergo the operation is likely to develop." p.155.
- 136 See, endnote no. 57, above.
- 137 Ponkunnam Varkey, Speech at the Mass Sterilisation Camp at Ernakulam, reported in the *Matrubhumi* 20 Jul. 1971, p.2. But there were others who would go so far as to claim that large families were really 'exploiters', as they claimed a greater share in the common pool of resources. See, speech by Justice M.U.Issac, reported in the *Matrubhumi* 26 Mar. 1968, p.3.
- 138 For just a few, see, 'Kutumbasootranathil Streekalkkulla Panku' (Women's Role in Family Planning), *Malayalarajyam* 8 Mar. 1956, p.3; editorial, 'Samtriptakutumbam' (Contented family), *Matrubhumi* 7 Jan. 1970, p.4; Dr. C.O. Karunakaran, 'Vanitakalude Pratishtedham' (Women's Protest), *KK* 11 Aug. 1967, p.2; Leela Damodara Menon, 'Kutumbasootrana Paddhatiyil Streekalkkulla

- Panku' (The Role of Women in FPP), *Matrubhumi* 19 Nov. 1970, p.7; report of interview with Achamma John Mathai, Chairperson of Central Social Development Board, *MM* 6 Jan. 1966, p.5; Report of Congress Women's Convention at Thiruvananthapuram, *MM* 7 Sept. 1960, p.2; report by 'M' on the Mass sterilisation Camp at Ernakulam, *Matrubhumi* 28 Nov. 1970, pp.4-5.
- 139 Report of statement by Dr. Chandrasekhar at New Delhi, *KK* 12 Aug. 1969, p.5.
- 140 Women who were prominent in the 1930s like T.C.Kochukutty Amma (speech reported in the *Matrubhumi* 4 Aug. 1966, p.4), Parvati Ayappan (*Matrubhumi* 25 Jul. 1971, p.2), Ambady Kartyayani Amma (report in *MM* 6 Oct. 1960, p.4) were active in pro-family planning work as members of committees etc., as speakers and so on.
- 141 S. Krishna Kumar, 1971, p. 36.
- 142 Dr. C. O. Karunakaran, 'Bahujanam Kandirikkenda Oru Chitram!' (A Film the Public ought to See!), *KK* 1 Oct. 1967, p.6.
- 143 For a fuller elaboration of this point, see, J. Devika, 1999, Chapter Two.
- 144 Interestingly, this poem written by C.Krishnan Nair, titled 'Anattamullon Dheeran' (He, the Manly, the Brave), clearly linked the assumption of the posture of liberator by the Man as the surest sign of manliness, as in radical reformism in Malayalee society of the 1930s, especially Nambutiri reformism. *Matrubhumi* 30 Jun. 1970, p.7.
- 145 Dr. C.O.Karunakaran, 'Hridayasoonyaraya Bharttakkanmar-Sahatapikkate Enthu Cheyyum' (Heartless Husbands- What else to do but Sympathise), *KK* 4 Jan. 1970, p.4.
- 146 Ibid. One plea to end maternity leave and benefits to women workers with large families even claimed that unemployed husbands impregnated their wives solely to claim such benefits. The solution to such powerlessness of women, however, was family planning, and not any restructuring of family relations to give women a better say. K.S.Pillai, 'Nammude Janasankyayum Bhakshyaprasnavum'(Our Population and the Food Crisis),

- Malayalarajyam* 8 Jan. 1967, p.4. See also, the account of workers in the Kannan Devan tea estates given in Pavanan, 1967, pp. 115-17.
- 147 For some articles which raise these issues, see, Soma Krishna Pillai, 'Veetammamar Vazhittiruvil' (Housewives at Crossroads), *MM* 10 Oct. 1969, p.6; Dhanya Narayanan, 'Kutumbam Innale, Innu, Nale' (The Family- Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow), *MM* 19 Sept. 1969, p.6; Subaida Beevi, 'Udyogasthayaya Matavu Kutumbattinu Shapamo?' (The Employed- Mother: A Curse to the Family?), *MM* 23 Oct. 1969, p.7; Lalita Mohana Panikker, 'Streekalkku Oru Putiya Veekshanam Avashyam' (Women Need a New Vision) *KK* 16 Mar. 1969, p. 4; Annamma Jacob, 'Udyogastayaya Kutumbini' (The Employed Housewife), *MM* 22 Oct. 1971, p.6; V.Subhadra Devi, 'Bharyayaya Udyogastaye Patti' (About the Employed Wife), *KK* 10 Mar. 1968, p.6.
- 148 See, Usha Sukumaran, 'Udyogastayaya Bharya: Oru Vishadeekaranam' (The Employed Wife: An Explanation), *MM* 19 Nov. 1971, p.3; Gracy Cheriyan, 'Akattum Purattum Modiyulla Veedu' (A House Splendid Inside and Outside), *MM* 27 Nov. 1970, p.6; Annamma Kurian, 'Jananniyantranavum Kutumbinikalum' (Birth Control and Housewives), *MM* 28 Nov. 1969, p.6; Annamma Joseph, 'Bharya Udyogastayayal' (When the Wife is Employed), *MM* 6 Jul. 1969, p.4; V.Subhadra Devi, *ibid.*
- 149 See the discussion in the 'Yuvakkal Chintikkunnu' column of *Matrubhumi* 14 Jul. 1968, p.4; 21 Jul. 1968, p.4 ; see also the discussion on the same topic in the *MM*, in *MM* Sunday Supplement 21 Aug. 1970, p.6; *MM* 4 Sept. 1970, p.6. Those who argued for a lower age claimed that being impressionable will help the woman to fit with less friction into the new family as housewife; those who argued for a greater age claimed that the older the bride, the more mature she will be to take up housewifely responsibilities. See also. Dr. C.K.Lakshmikutty Amma, 'Janaperuppavum Vivahaprayavum' (Population Increase and the Age of Marriage), *Malayalarajyam* 26 Aug. 1967, p.3.
- 150 Ambady Kartyayani Amma, Speech, *Matrubhumi* 4 Aug. 1966, p.4; Leela Damodara Menon, *op.cit.*, n. 138; Lalitambika Antarjanam, *op.cit.*, n. 109. Speaking at the half-yearly AIWC

meeting at Kochi in 1971, the Chief Minister of Kerala, C. Achyuta Menon reminded women that gaining freedom must not mean abandoning “..their duties”, like in the West. “..Women must not forget their duties while seeking freedom...In some countries where women have gained freedom children have been isolated from their parents. Do not deny children the love and affection of their parents...” Reported in *KK* 31 May 1971, p.6.

- 151 An exception is Dr. O.K. Madhavi Amma, ‘Kutumbasanvidhanam’ (FP), *Matrubhumi* 30 Jun. 1971, p.7, who argued for a ‘liberation from biology’ in a general sense, claiming that this was no time to devote all of one’s energies to procreation and childcare.
- 152 Editorial, ‘Garbhacchidram’ (Abortion), *Matrubhumi* 2 Jun. 1971, p. 4.
- 153 See, for instance, ‘Garbhamalasikkal Udaramakkanom: Kalyani Ammayude Abhiprayangal’ (Abortion may be made free: Kalyani Amma’s Opinions), *Matrubhumi* 5 Jan. 1969, p.7.
- 154 Editorial, ‘Vivahaprayam’ (Age of Marriage), *KK* 7 Jan. 1967, p. 2.
- 155 Dr. Kamala Ramaiyar, ‘Kutumbashreyassum Kutumbasootranavum’ (Family Well Being and FP), *MM* 18 Dec. 1959, p.2.
- 156 Dr. Mary John in Discussion: ‘Garbhacchidram Sadhoo-karikkamo?’ (Is Abortion Justifiable?), *MM* 5 Jul. 1970, p.I.
- 157 See, for instance, P. Heller, 1999; K. P. Kannan, 1998.
- 158 The humorous writings of P.K.Rajaraja Varma in his ‘Kunji’ series, immensely popular in the 1940s, 50s and 60s may be read as an attempt to negotiate the tensions between the husband and wife, with their different aspirations, rampant in the emergent modern family, which seemed, at one and the same time, modern and not-too-modern. See his collections of ‘Kunji’ essays, 1948; 1954 etc. The bitterness about the double-burden of work for working women is well-expresses in much public discussion of the issue by women: “The state of affairs in homes in which both husband and wife go out to work is pitiable indeed. What peace of mind will a mother have, when she has to entrust little babies to the care of those who work for wages. Besides today’s Heads of Households don’t move even a little finger to lighten the domestic loads of their wives who work like cattle to reduce their financial burdens...” Soma Krishna Pillai, op.cit., n. 147. Whether or not

women should enter the public domain was a topic that continued to enjoy prominence in the Women's Columns of newspapers and magazines, in a social milieu in which women were increasingly seeking work, often for reasons of pure survival. Some of these discussions were prolonged and heated. For one such, see the discussion that followed an article written by M.Krishnan Nair titled 'Satyattinu Kaippundu' (The Truth is Bitter) in the *Kaumudi Weekly*, 7 Mar. 1954.

- 159 Putheshattu Raman Menon, 1969, pp.45-54.
- 160 See, for instance, G.K. Leiten, 2002, pp.47-67.
- 161 K.C.Zachariah, quoted in P.M. Bhat and Irudaya Rajan,; see also, K.Mahadevan and M.Sumangala, 1987, pp.29-38.
- 162 In 1968, a frustrated family planning worker wrote : "During festivals like Onam, Christmas and other special occasions, women commonly approach family planning centers more frequently to insert and remove IUDs. This is because they get paid for insertion. They claim an incentive from one family planning center and get a loop inserted. When in financial need again, they put up false complaints like stomach pain and bleeding to get it removed. Then they go to another family planning center, get an IUD inserted, claiming an incentive..." Dr. P. Ambujakshan Nair, Letter to the Editor, *Matrubhumi* 18 Jan. 1968, p.4.
- 163 From the late 70s onwards, female sterilisations have registered a steep climb, eclipsing male sterilisations decisively. In 1976-77, vasectomies in Keralam peaked to 120,800, but by 1984-85, they had declined to a mere 12,000. Tubectomies, on the contrary, grew from 84,600 in 1976-77 to 102,200 in 1984-85, peaking in 1982-83 with 126,800 operations. R.Jeffrey, 1993, p.198.

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