

**MATRILINY FAVOURS WOMEN: REALITY OR MYTH?  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL STATUS  
OF MAPPILA MUSLIM WOMEN IN MATRILINEAL AND  
PATRILINEAL FAMILIES OF MALABAR**

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## ***Abstract***

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The status of women in a social group is a matter of utmost importance as it influences not only the interests of women themselves, but also that of the other members of the family. It also affects the developmental issues of the society and the direction of social change. The present study attempts to find out whether a gender egalitarian kinship system is beneficial to women and how the status of women varies from one cultural context to the other. For this purpose, a comparative analysis of socio-cultural status of matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslim women from Malabar is carried out.

The focus of the study is married Mappila Muslim women from two different kinship systems. 250 matrilineal women and 250 patrilineal women from Kannur and Kozhikode districts of Malabar constituted the sample of the study. The different aspects of the 'status of women' were collected with the help of Interview Schedule. The theoretical frame work of the study was drawn from Blumberg's 'General Theory of Gender Stratification', Rodman's 'Theory of Resources in Cultural context', Bourdieu's 'Doxa', and Cain's 'Theory of Children as Potential Source of Social Security'.

The analysis revealed that while there is no difference between matrilineal and patrilineal women with regard to macro level status indicators, kinship played an important role in influencing the micro level autonomy of women. Matrilineal women are seen to have more household decision making power, freedom of mobility as well as freedom from spousal violence, suggesting that matrilineal women, amidst their kin group, enjoy a better status than patrilineal women. The findings also show that status of women is a multi-dimensional concept that varies from one social context to the other.

**Keywords:** Matrilineal Women, Patrilineal Women, Life Options, Autonomy

## *Contents*

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### **Chapter 1**

---

#### ***Introduction* ----- 01 - 19**

1.1	Views on Status of women	03
1.2	Evolution of Matriliney and Patriliney	05
1.3	Kinship and Status of Women in Kerala	09
1.4	Matrilineal heritage of Kerala	11
1.5	Mappila Muslims in Kerala	13
1.6	Matriliney and Patriliney among Mappilas	16

---

### **Chapter 2**

---

#### ***Review of Literature*----- 21 - 79**

2.1	Features of Patriliney among Mappila Muslims of Malabar	21
2.2	Features of Matriliney among Mappila Muslims of Malabar	22
2.3	Decline of Marumakkathayam and Resilience of Matriliney	32
2.4	Status of Women	36
2.5	Indicators of Status of Women- A Macro-Micro Analysis	37
	a. Macro Level Status Indicators	38
	b. Micro Level Status Indicator- Autonomy	40
2.6	Measuring Autonomy of women	43
	a. Women's Economic Decision Making Power	45
	b. Freedom of Movement	46
	c. Freedom from Spousal Violence	47
2.7	Status of Matrilineal Women	48
2.8	Status of Matrilineal Women in India	51
2.9	Status of Matrilineal Mappila Muslim Women in Malabar	54

2.10	Status of Patrilineal Women in India	57
2.11	Status of Women in Islam	61
a.	Education	64
b.	Inheritance	65
c.	Marriage	67
d.	Fertility Preferences	68
2.12	Status of Muslim Women in India	69
2.13	Status of Muslim Women in Kerala	71
2.14	Status of Women and its Influence on Girl Child	73
2.15	Status of Girl Child in Patrilineal System	74
2.16	Status of Girl Child in Matrilineal System	78

---

### **Chapter 3**

## ***Methodology* ----- 81 - 99**

3.1	Theoretical FrameWork	81
3.2	Statement of the Problem	86
3.3	Objectives	88
3.4	Hypotheses	88
3.5	Clarification of Concepts	89
3.6	Variables	91
3.7	Research Design	91
3.8	Universe of the Study	92
3.9	Pilot Study	92
3.10	Sample, Sample Size and Method of Sampling	92
3.11	Tool for Data Collection	96
3.12	Pre Test	96
3.13	Field Work	97

3.14	Analysis and Interpretation	97
3.15	Scheme of Chapterisation	98
3.16	Limitations of the Study	99

---

#### **Chapter 4**

---

### ***Profile of the Respondents ----- 101 - 114***

4.1	Age	102
4.2	Education	104
4.3	Employment Status	107
4.4	Marital Status	109
4.5	Rural- Urban Difference	110
4.6	Standard of Living	111
4.7	Summary	113

---

#### **Chapter 5**

---

### ***Access to and Control of Economic Resources ----- 115 - 144***

5.1	Access to Economic Resources	119
5.2	Natal Inheritance	123
5.3	Dowry – Pre-mortem Inheritance	131
5.4	Gifts by Husband	136
5.5	Control of Economic Resources	137
5.6	Summary	142

---

#### **Chapter 6**

---

### ***Life Options- A Macro– Micro Analysis ----- 145 - 176***

6.1	Macro level Status of Women	147
6.1.1	Age at first marriage	148
6.1.2	Age at first birth	151

6.1.3	Number of children	153
6.1.4	Contraceptive use	154
6.1.5	Level of education	156
6.1.6	Employment status	158
6.2	Micro level Status of Women	160
6.2.1	Economic Decision Making	162
6.2.2	Freedom of Movement	166
6.2.3	Freedom from Spousal Violence	170
6.3	Summary	173

---

## **Chapter 7**

### ***Life Options and the Factors Affecting it----- 177 - 207***

7.1	Factors Influencing Macro Life Options	179
7.1.1	Age	179
7.1.2	Education	182
7.1.3	Standard of Living	184
7.1.4	Area of Residence	187
7.2	Factors Influencing Micro Life options- Autonomy	188
7.2.1	Age and Autonomy	189
7.2.2	Education and Autonomy	192
7.2.3	Standard of Living and Autonomy	196
7.2.4	Area of Residence and Autonomy	198
7.2.5	Natal Inheritance and Autonomy	200
7.3	Summary	204

---

## **Chapter 8**

### ***Girl Child and Kinship System ----- 209 - 233***

8.1	Acceptance of Girl Child	211
8.2	Children as Potential Risk Insurance	215
8.3	Education and Employment of Girls	220

8.4	Ideal Age for marriage	225
8.5	Dowry	228
8.6	Summary	231

---

## **Chapter 9**

---

### ***Resilience and Transformation of Matriliney --- 235 - 264***

9.1	Men and Matriliney	236
9.2	Women and Resilience of Matriliney	246
9.3	Residence pattern	247
9.4	Preference for Nuclear Family	255
9.5	Matrilineage	257
9.6	Advantages and Disadvantages of Matrilineal System- Women's Overview	259
9.7	Summary	262

---

## **Chapter 10**

---

### ***Findings and Conclusion ----- 265 - 286***

10.1	Profile of the respondents	267
10.2	Access to and Control of Economic Resources	268
10.3	Life Options – A Macro -Micro Analysis	271
10.4	Factors Affecting Life Options	274
10.5	Girl Child and Kinship System	277
10.6	Resilience and Transformation of Matriliney	279
10.7	Suggestions	283

### ***Bibliography ----- i - xxxviii***

### ***Appendices ----- xxxix - xlvi***

I.	Interview Schedule	xxxix
II.	Normality Plots	xliv

## *List of Tables*

	<b>Page No</b>
Table 4.1 Age	103
Table 4.2 Education	105
Table 4.3 Marital Status	109
Table 4.4 Standard of Living	113
Table 5.1 Access to Economic Resources	121
Table 5.2 Access to Natal Inheritance	123
Table 5.3 Natal Inheritance and Age at Present	125
Table 5.4 Natal Inheritance and Standard of Living	126
Table 5.5 Mode of Inheritance	129
Table 5.6 Prevalence of Dowry	132
Table 5.7 Gifts from Husband	136
Table 5.8 Control over Dowry	138
Table 5.9 Control over Natal Inheritance	139
Table 6.1 Age at First Marriage	150
Table 6.2 Age at First Birth	152
Table 6.3 Number of Children	154
Table 6.4 Contraceptive Use	155
Table 6.5 Level of Education	157
Table 6.6 Economic Decision Making	163
Table 6.7 Freedom of Movement	168
Table 6.8 Freedom from Spousal Violence	171
Table 7.1 Life Option Descriptives	178
Table 7.2 Age Group and Macro Life Option	180

Table 7.3	Educational Group and Macro Life Option	182
Table 7.4	Standard of Living and Macro Life Option	185
Table 7.5	Area of Residence and Macro Life Option	187
Table 7.6	Age group and Autonomy	190
Table 7.7	Educational Group and Autonomy	193
Table 7.8	Standard of Living and Autonomy	196
Table 7.9	Area of Residence and Autonomy	199
Table 7.10	Natal Inheritance and Autonomy	201
Table 8.1	Preference for Boy Child	212
Table 8.2	Boy Child as First Born	213
Table 8.3	Girl as Single Child	214
Table 8.4	Preference for Higher Education and Employment of Girls	221
Table 8.5	Educational Level of Daughters who are in the age group 24 and 19	223
Table 8.6	Preference for Age at Marriage	226
Table 8.7	Age at Marriage of Daughters below the Age of 25 years	227
Table 8.8	Dowry	229
Table 9.1	Preference for Exogamous Marriage	248
Table 9.2	Reasons for not Preferring Exogamous Marriages	249
Table 9.3	Reasons for Preferring Exogamous Marriages	252
Table 9.4	Advantages of Matriliney	260
Table 9.5	Disadvantages of Matriliney	261

## *List of Figures*

	<b>Page No</b>
Figure 2.1. Interiors of a Taravad from Thalassery	24
Figure 2.2 A Taravad from Thekkepuram, Kozhikode	35
Figure 2.3 Genealogy of the Arakkal Family	56
Figure 4.1 Education of the Respondents	106
Figure 4.2 Employment Status	108
Figure 4.3 Rural-Urban Difference	111
Figure 5.1 Access to Economic Resources	122
Figure 5.2 Mode of Inheritance	130
Figure 5.3 Usage of Natal Inheritance	141
Figure 6.1 Economic Decision Making	165
Figure 6.2 Freedom of Movement	169
Figure 6.3 Freedom from Spousal Violence	172
Figure 7.1 Age Group and Macro Life Option	181
Figure 7.2 Educational Group and Macro Life Option	183
Figure 7.3 Standard of Living and Autonomy	197
Figure 8.1 Factors determining the Worth of a Male Child	216
Figure 8.2 Factors determining the Worth of a Female Child	218
Figure 9.1 Men Resenting Matriliny	241
Figure 9.2 Preference for Nuclear Family	256
Figure 9.3 Use of Matrilineal Surname	258

## Chapter 1

# *Introduction*

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*“Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace”*

*Beijing platform for Action.(UN Fourth Conference on Women, 1995)*

Men and women are considered as individuals, human beings and citizens, with equal rights and opportunities. Everywhere modern women are portrayed as scaling various heights and achieving great laurels, which their counterparts few decades ago could not even think of. Regardless of all these, gender related issues are one of the most discussed topics in recent times. These discussions begin and end with the relative disadvantages faced by women vis-à-vis men in different spheres of life all around the world. Women tend to face many hurdles ranging from lack of opportunities for education and employment to the extremes of poverty, violence and even the refusal of their basic human right to live. The realisation of this state of affairs has driven the necessity to look into the status of women in various social settings, ranging from family to the state, as the status of women is a relative phenomenon that changes from time to time and place to place.

The concept ‘status of women’ attained international importance after the first UN Conference on Women in 1975, where the year was declared

as International Women's Year. It incorporated women's situation from the point of view of the discrimination faced by them, their participation in development and their contribution to world peace. The fourth UN Conference on Women (1995) held in Beijing further proclaimed the need to integrate women into development, without which no country can lay claim to development. In 2000, UN Millennium Summit came up with 8 goals to be achieved by 2015. These Millennium Development Goals are expected to respond to the world's main development challenges, the crucial of them being gender equality and empowerment of women. Thus understanding female status and measuring it became the focal point of various studies carried out by demographers, sociologists and policy makers.

Chauhan (1990:1) observes that 'the study of social status of women is important because it forms one of the trust worthy and reliable indices of the state of society and indicates the nature and direction of social change'. This wellbeing of women or female status has been investigated under various terms and interpreted using different definitions. For example, Status of women (Dixon 1978; Balk 1994), Female autonomy (Dyson and Moore 1983; Jejeebhoy 2000; Morgan et al. 2002; Susilastuti 2003; Ghuman et al. 2004), Empowerment (Kabeer 1999; Mason and Smith 2003) Patriarchy (Cain et al. 1979), and Agency (Sen 1999). Though there are variations in terminologies, definitions and focus, they all tend to highlight one or the other aspect of gender inequality and gender stratification located at various levels ranging from micro level households to the macro level community and state.

The term has been defined by authors from different perspectives. Sanday (1973) defined female status in terms of the number of economic and political rights accrue to women. According to Dixon (1978) status of

women can be explained as women's overall position in the society. Cain (1993) defined the status of women in terms of women's economic dependence on men. It can be seen that, as Mahadevan et al.'s (1989) work on developing an analytical model for status of women point out, the term is a multidimensional and dynamic concept which includes several dimensions like one's own legacy and achievements including money, materials, merits, life styles, privileges and the autonomy to take one's own decision.

### **1.1 Views on Status of women**

Status of women is chiefly analysed from the relative position of women with men in the society. Biological perspective regarding the status of women states that there are certain primary biological differences between man and woman that are responsible for the secondary status and role of women in the society. Dasgupta (2003) writes that biological differences have favored men to subjugate women, even before classes or patriarchy appeared. The subsequent cultural developments which acted in favour of men instilled in themselves and in women, a highly biased cultural value system that could increasingly manipulate everything over time. According to functionalists, the subordinate status of women emerges from the need of all societies to allocate different duties and responsibilities to its members. In Indian society irrespective of caste or religion, the duty of a woman is that of a wife, mother and a home maker.

Marxists viewed class and private property as the main cause of oppression and low status of women. Man is seen here as bourgeoisie within the family and wife represents the proletariat. Radical Feminists see patriarchy as the main cause for the low status of women. Patriarchy according to them is a sexual system of power in which the male possesses

superior power and economic privilege thus forming a male hierarchical order of the society. This system is preserved via marriage and family. Social feminists forms a synthesis between the two approaches and believe that it is the dialectical relationship between patriarchy and capitalism that leads to the oppression of the women and consider them as mutually dependent (Eisenstein 1979).

Mahadevan et al. (1989) writes that the important variables that can affect the status of women are mainly polity and policy; voluntary effort; culture and ecology; and familial and marital variables. They argue that amongst those variables, the most important to bring about a speedy change in the status of women, is the cultural and ecological scenario of the society, which in turn influences the familial and marital institutions too. These factors together may affect the type of roles played by women in society. Similarly Basu (1992) observes that the status of women tends to be influenced by various cultural (marriage, kinship and potential for female employment) and social or non-cultural (education and employment) factors in the society. She points out that norms and institutions of a society may be defined as the cultural influence on the status of women, in the sense that they tend to be accepted by the group as common and are slower to change, than the economic circumstances which led to their development in the first place. These cultural influences may have risen from various other influences such as religion, kinship structure, or even a history of foreign invasion.

In a traditional society like India, religion and kinship has special relevance in determining the position of women. Religions such as Hinduism, Islam and Christianity have always been criticised for giving an inferior position to women vis-à-vis men. Manu Smriti, with its injunctions of dependency of women upon men at all stages of her life, and Islam and

Christianity with their tenets that support patriarchal principles, are just few instances of how religion controls the life of women. But even within these religious groups, variations based on kinship systems can be observed. It is interesting to note that despite Hinduism and Islam advocating patrilineal and patriarchal values, there are few pockets where members of these communities are matrilineal. The Hindus especially Nairs and few other castes of South India were purely matrilineal till a few decades ago and continue to practice some of its features even now. Another patriarchal religion that has matrilineal communities in its fold is Islam. Islamic matrilineal communities are present in certain parts of Africa and South Asia.

Patrilineal and matrilineal communities are two ideal types where the status of women can differ based on lineage, residence, inheritance and authority. Dube (1996), in a lecture, clearly emphasises how the differences in kinship systems and family structures account for the critical differences in gender relations in each system. Presence of matrilineal communities which follows different set of gender relations from their patrilineal counterparts underlines the fact that status of women is contextual and multi-locational and depends on cultural patterns, social institutions and political and the economic structure of both family and society.

## **1.2 Evolution of Matriliney and Patriliney**

Nineteenth century evolutionary theories widely agreed that stages of societal development progressed from matriliney to patriliney. The reason suggested for this is that early human societies lived in promiscuity and due to this it was easier to trace biological relationship of children to their

mothers than to their fathers. L. H. Morgan, Bachofen and Engles were the pioneers who believed that matrilineal clan was the first form of human family, as culture developed through the stages of savagery, barbarism and civilization. McLendon, Spencer, John Lubbock, Tylor, and many others supported this idea that all human societies might have at one time passed through primitive evolutionary stage of matriarchy. This theory however was later rejected. Matriliney is no more considered as the first form of kinship system (Goode 1965). Henry Maine and Franz Boaz were the main opponents of the theory of matrilineal origin of family. Taking note of various details that existed among different hunting societies such as exchange of women among bands or offering weapons or tools to the wife's family in return of her services to the husband's family, anthropologists have collected evidence to prove male dominance and patrilocal arrangement as the first form of family.

Matrilineality, according to Henn (1984), refers to the practice of tracing kinship allegiance and inheritance rights through the mother's family. When dealing with matrilineal social system, the three important characteristics highlighted are matrilineal descent or tracing descent through the mother or through female line; matrilocality where women continue residing in their natal home even after marriage; and finally, the inheritance of property by females. Variations can be seen in the inheritance pattern and residence pattern in different matrilineal societies. Property in matrilineal society passes through the female line. In some places, it is inherited directly by daughters such as the systems in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique (Davison 1997; Holden et al. 2003) and in Native American cultures such as Arikara and Zuni (Murdock 1967). In Khasi matriliney, only the youngest daughter known as *Khadduh* inherits traditional matrilineal

property while other daughters have to move out of the ancestral home (Nongbri 2003). Similarly, matrilineal societies need not confine to a single type of residence pattern. Some societies follow matrilocal pattern, while there are others following duolocal residence pattern and avunculocal residence pattern.

Contrary to this, Schneider (1962) notes that in a patrilineal system, line of authority and line of descent both run through men. Here lineage is traced through the male. The wife moves into husband's residence after marriage and inheritance and succession are through male members. According to Brown (1924), a society may be called patriarchal when descent is patrilineal (i.e., the children belong to the group of the father), marriage is patrilocal (i.e., the wife removes to the local group of the husband), inheritance (of property) and succession (to rank) are in the male line, and the family is patri-potestal (i.e., the authority over the members of the family is in the hands of the father or his relatives). However, he later substituted the terms patriarchy with patriliney, thereby emphasising on the descent principle over the term 'arche' which means power or rule (Uberoi 2003)

Nevertheless, matriliney is never a mirror image of patriliney and both are far from complementary. Ehrenfels (1953) has pointed out a set of features that are different in the actual working of the two social systems. According to him in matrilineal families there is a distribution of authority, loyalty and responsibility to several individuals including maternal uncle, mother and father, while in the patrilineal system, the concentration of power and authority is vested in one person, i.e., the father. This difference in family situation, according to the author, provides an attitude of compromise and adaptation to, or handling of, divided responsibilities among matrilineal members. On the other hand patrilineal family situation

tends to foster centralised power and authoritarian rule. Another point of difference is that unlike the patrilineal system, matrilineal order provides a legal backing to ‘the psychologically and physically weaker members of the family’ such as daughters, sisters, mothers and wives as compared to sons, brothers, fathers and husbands and to the youngest as against elder siblings.

The most important factor highlighting the difference between the two systems other than the aforementioned ones is that when patriarchy can be said to be a feature of patrilineal social system, the same cannot be said of matriarchy. According to Augustine (2007), matriarchy with power vested in females is a hypothetical system of social organisation, while the real type organisation is matrilineal social organisation in which descent is traced through females.

Schneider (1962) observes that the descent group is a decision making group which should have a structured authority to mobilise resources and capacities. In both patrilineal and matrilineal kinship systems, this authority is in the male hands. Men generally have higher status and control over women even in matrilineal systems. Though the property is inherited through the female line, it is men rather than women who controlled land, marriage, dependents and politics (Henn 1984), or in other words while responsibilities of authority and group both are with males in patrilineal societies, it is separated between males and females in matrilineal societies. This omnipresent male authority is in contrast to the idea of matriarchal society. Even in matrilineal societies, there is an ideological support for the domestication of women as in the other social systems (Augustine 2007). Hence a society where women wielded absolute power and authority is more of a hypothetical system or even a myth as Uberoi (2003) puts it.

Nonetheless, it has to be pointed out that pure matrilineal system or pure patrilineal systems are only abstractions. It is only based on the extent to which one or the other aforementioned principles prevail, that a community could be called strongly patrilineal or strongly matrilineal. Even if women are said to have a low status in patrilineal societies, the role of mother is highly valued. Schneider (1962) notes that the psychobiological quality of the mother-child relationship makes the status of mother indispensable to the maintenance of patrilineal descent groups. Regarding North Indian patrilineal systems, Ahuja (1993) notes that mother's brother has many obligations to perform for his nieces and nephews on different occasions. This role is a reminder of the relation between the maternal uncle and the nephews and nieces in a matrilineal system. Similarly Uberoi (2003) points out that those societies which are strongly patrilineal in some functions may not be so with regard to some others and the rule of descent system may not be a direct indicator of relation between sexes. Besides this, one kinship system can in course of time leave its conspicuous mark on the other (Ehrenfels 1953).

### **1.3 Kinship and Status of Women in Kerala**

Status of women in Kerala has always been of a matter of interest among academicians and policy makers. According to 2001 Census by Government of India, the state of Kerala reported above unity sex ratio and in 2011 the state not only retained this status but has also showed considerable increase. The present scenario of Kerala, with high female literacy, better health status of women and involvement of women in social and political activities, has been attributed to women friendly matrilineal kinship norms and property inheritance once enjoyed by women in the state. This, in course of time, is believed to have created a favourable social attitude towards women's issues. (Ramachandran 1997; Dreze and Sen 2002).

Nayar (1984), while giving an account of diverse reasons for high status of women in Kerala, notes that *marumakkathayam* system (matrilineal system in Kerala) that was practiced among various groups is an important reason for high status enjoyed by women in the state. It provided women with economic and emotional security and later not only gave women a broader perspective towards society and their role in it, but also led to the society at large being liberal towards women. At the same time the term *marumakkathayam* is very much different from matriarchy. Even in *marumakkathayam* system different patterns are evident. It differs at various dimensions, yet comes under the general category i.e., matriliney. (Sini 2010).

However not all communities in Kerala were matrilineal. The different caste and religious groups in Kerala such as Brahmins, Christians, and Muslims were predominantly patrilineal. Status of women among these groups also varied. Namboothiri women known as the *Antharjanams* had high status due to their superior caste, but they were mainly confined to their *illams*. On the other hand, Christian women were in forefront with regard to education and employment. However, they were handicapped by their lack of property rights and escalating dowry systems. According to Viswanathan (1999) among the Christians of Kerala, a woman is incorporated to the family of her husband distinctly as a 'wife' with rights restricted to maintenance from her husband's estate. Muslim women in the state were backward with regard to education and employment but could enjoy the property rights and the right to divorce and remarriage granted to them by their personal law. There were also women belonging to lower casts who were oppressed by rigid caste system in the state.

## **1.4 Matrilineal Heritage of Kerala**

The origin of South Indian matriarchal system is still obscure and it is probably connected with the Indus valley culture or with the matriarchal societies in East Africa or Arabia (Fuchs, 1963). Matriliney in Kerala was known as *marumakkathayam*, which literally meant succession through nephew or sister's children. Lineage was traced from female ancestress, and property was inherited through female line. According to Jeffrey (2004/2005), two points that need to be emphasised about matriliney in Kerala are that it was not practiced by all groups and it was not matriarchy.

The theories for origin of Marumakkathaym give various explanations for the existence of this system in Kerala. According to the Brahmanical theory of divine origin, Parasurama, the creator of Kerala, asked Sudra women to satisfy the desires of Brahmins. This theory served the interests of Brahmins as their peculiar custom allowed only the eldest son marrying within the community. Other men in the family were allowed to have illegal liaisons with women of 'lower caste groups' and also have *sambandham* (an informal arrangement for cohabitation) with Nair women. The children born of such liaisons belonged to the mother's family, and fathers had no responsibility over them, thereby paving way for matrilineal system. However, this theory does not have many takers. The most accepted theory seems to be related to property. According to Panikkar (1983), due to the practice of polyandry, establishing maternity was easier than establishing paternity. Hence property came to be devolved through sisters' sons than through the sons of male line. This line of thought also suggests that the practice helped in preventing the partition of property and thereby kept the *taravad* system intact (Menon, 1979). There is also the military theory which points towards the Chola-Chera war of the eleventh century, in which Nair

men had to take part and their women folk were left with the sole option of having *sambandham* with Brahmin men (Pillai 1953). Similar to the many theories regarding the origin of matriliney in Kerala, the period of origin of matriliney in the state has also been debated. Disagreement also exists about whether it was *marumakkathayam* or *makkathayam* that preceded the other (Menon, 1979).

In the history of Kerala, Travancore, Cochin and Malabar were the three distinctive areas that existed as separate entities before the re-organization of the State of Kerala in 1956. Though matriliney prevailed in all these regions, the influence of matriliney in the life of the people in north Kerala, also known as the Malabar region, has been recorded by several authors. During the British administration in Malabar, both patrilineal and matrilineal system of inheritance had existed but the matrilineal system was the predominant form of inheritance (Sini, 2010). According to Iyer (1968), though no separate zone of matriarchy and patriarchy organisations existed, matriarchy had greater incidence in north Kerala where most people, including the Mappilas, were matrilineal. Balakrishnan (1981) notes that the matrilineal system has been the reason for several social evolutions in Malabar. Malabar's social, political and cultural history produced a synthesis that makes it distinct from the districts of South or Central Kerala.

Malabar, the term that literally means the land of hills, is an ancient name for the entire Malayalam speaking territory (Karve, 1965). From the British period the term became restricted to the northwestern coastal area that came under the British rule, thereby differentiating it from Travancore and Kochi, the south and central regions of Kerala. In 1956, Malabar was diffused to Kerala state and the area comprised of Kozhikode, Kannur and Palghat districts. In 1969 and later in 1980 two more districts, Malappuram

and Wayanad were carved out of the aforementioned areas. In 1984, Kasargode district also was added to it. Thus present day Malabar consists of six north Kerala districts –Kasargode, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malapuram and Palghat (Miller 1976; Ramachandran 1997).

This strip of land on the west coast of the country was the home of many matrilineal communities including matrilineal Payyanur Brahmins and matrilineal Mappila Muslims of Kerala. These two communities practicing matrilineality is a subject of significance because they are basically patrilineal communities elsewhere. While Brahmins in other parts of the country including those in central and south Kerala are patrilineal, Muslims worldwide follow patrilineal family organisational patterns, with their religious text emphasising the same. The exemptions to this situation can be seen in case of some Muslim matrilineal communities in Africa and South East Asia, one of them being Mappila Muslims of Malabar.

### **1.5 Mappila Muslims in Kerala**

Mappilas according to Miller (1976) stands for all the Muslims of Kerala. But due to British administrative control of Malabar and the geographical and political separation of the central and south Kerala from the north, a sense of difference in the usage of terms arose. As a result, the term Mappila became more confined to those in Malabar area. But the author points out that, Muslims of central and south Kerala were as much Mappilas as those in Malabar. The term Mappila Muslims of Kerala, according to him is a combination of terms that reflect the fullness of their experience.

The term ‘Mappila’ has several interpretations. According to Gough (1962), Mappilas are Sunni Muslim groups originating from the 8<sup>th</sup> century

Arab traders and indigenous converts to Islam. Another interpretation of the term by Moore (1905) is that Mappila means a bridegroom or son-in-law. According to Logan (1951), the word Mappila is an honorary title of the early ‘*Mohammadens*’ immigrants. The term stands for ‘*maha*’ (great) ‘*pilla*’ (accountant) which literally means great accountant (or traders in case of Mappilas), thereby associating the term with their profession. It is also the term given to Muslims, Christians and Jews by the colonists in Malabar. Muslims were known as *Chonaka* or *Jonaka* Mappila (*Jonaka* is believed to stand for *Yavanaka*, Ionian-Greek), while Christians were called *Nassarani* Mappila and Jews, *Jutha* Mappila. Another tendency is to interpret the term with a matrilineal slant ‘*ma*’ (mother’s) ‘*pilla*’ (child) referring to the temporary ‘*mutta*’ marriage of Arab traders with women on Malabar Coast (Puthenkalam 1977).

The period of Islam’s origin in Kerala is a subject of debate among scholars. However, it should be noted that the Arab trade with Malabar and Kerala began long before the Arabia embraced Islam (Kurup 2006), and hence the early Arabs who came to Kerala were not Muslims. The Arabs, when they visited Malabar for trade, did not bring their women but married the local women here. According to Kabeer (1989), the social life of Kerala with the system of polyandry and sexual freedom for women was conducive to inspire the instinctive immorality of pre-Islamic Arabs. The children born of such alliances between Arab traders and local women were called in Arabic ‘*Kalazhis*’ and in the native tongue ‘Mappilas’ or ‘Moplahs’. The word ‘*Khalaz*’ in Arabic means dark and white. Since mother was dark in complexion and the father white, the children were either dark or white skinned or both combined. The ‘*Kalazhi*’ grew into a community and this community came to be known as the ‘Mappilas’ (ibid).

With the advent and spread of Islam, the Mappilas may be the first community in Malabar to come to the fold of Islam because they were more closely connected with the Arabs than others (Randathani 2007).

The most popular tradition relating to the origin of Islam in Kerala is to connect the event with the emigration of Cheruman Perumal, the last Perumal ruler of Kerala, to Arabia in order to meet the Prophet and accept Islam. Though he is believed to have died on his way back home, Malik ibn Dinar and his associates, who accompanied Perumal on his return voyage, landed at Kodungallur and traveled to different parts of the country spreading the new religion. *Kerololpathi*, Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese writer of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and Malabar Manual, the book of William Logan, also agree with this account of the origin of Islam in Kerala. However, there is a difference of opinion regarding the date of origin. The period between 622 AD and 632 AD, the eighth century, ninth century or twelfth century are all considered as possible dates for the emigration of Perumal (Kunju 1995).

According to Kabeer (1989: 28), 'it seems illogical and unconvincing to trace back to one single source on the advent of Islam in Kerala. The factors that led to the event were many and they lay scattered in the social, economic and religious conditions of Kerala before and after the founding of new faith in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.' The spread of Islam in Kerala was also facilitated by the support of native rulers to the Arab traders as well as the conversions of natives to Islam (Kurup, 2006). Among the rulers of Kerala, it was Zamorin of Calicut who showed special regards to Muslims in his Kingdom and encouraged large number of Muslim merchants to settle in his country. It is said that these Muslim traders not only made Calicut the

greatest port on the west coast of India, but also helped to spread the name and fame of the Zamorin.

Islam, with its egalitarian social structure, attracted a large number of natives who were suffering under the grip of cruel caste restrictions. Converts to Islam not only improved their social status but also improved their economic condition by taking up jobs of their liking (Kunju 1995). Logan (1951) mentions that it is also said that in order to maintain his newly organized navy, the Zamorin had ordered that one member of every fisherman family should convert to Islam.

Persons excommunicated from Hindu society is also said to have embraced Islam. Conversions took place within royal families too, where illegitimate daughters of kings (born of Sudra women) married Arabs, or illegitimate sons voluntarily embraced Islam (Kabeer 1989). Thus there was a flow from avarna and savarna Hindus towards the Islamic community. The religious tolerance of the Malayali community is also cited as another reason conducive for the spread of Islam in Kerala. Consensus exists among historians that soon after its inception, Islam, unlike in North India, spread in the peaceful atmosphere of brotherhood in Kerala. Thus, among Mappilas there are both the descendants of the Arabs through local women and the converts from local people (Randathani 2007).

## **1.6 Matriliney and Patriliney among Mappilas**

Muslims worldwide are patrilineal, and Islam is a religion that advocates patriarchal values. While 90% of Muslims globally follow the patriarchal family organisation, there also exist a few Muslim communities who are matrilineal and matrilocal. Matrilineal communities known to be operating within the fold of Islam include the Yao of Southern Nyasaland,

the Minangkabau of Central Sumatra, an offshoot of Minangkabau in Negri Sembilam in Malaysia, Moors of Sri Lanka, Laccadive Islanders off the southwest coast of India, Navayats of Kanara and the Mappilas of Malabar (Dube 1969; Kutty 1972; Puthenkalam 1977; McGilvray 1989).

While majority of Muslims in Kerala are patrilineal, Muslims of north Kerala have been following matriliney for a long time. According to Kathleen Gough (1962), the Mappilas who settled in central Kerala continued patriliney while the Mappilas of north Kerala adopted matriliney. Ali (1938) tries to explain the existence of duality of *makkathayam* and *marumakkathayam* among the Mappila population of Malabar. The Mappilas of north Malabar follow *marumakkathayam* because their ancestors as Tiyas, Mukkuvans and Nairs, were governed by it. The natives of south Malabar and other parts of central and south Kerala were mainly makkathayees, and hence Mappila converts also followed this system.

The coastal regions of Kannur, Thalasherry, Mahe, Kozhikode and Ponnani are the major areas in north Kerala where Muslims follow matriliney. Some areas as Edava of south Kerala also recorded the presence of matriliney among Muslims. The origin of matriliney among these Muslims is traced to the migration of men for job while women and children were left under the care of matrilineal kins but maintained by the husband (Puthenkalam 1977). Thus, in Kerala there are Muslims who follow father right (*makkathayam*) and those who follow mother right (*marumakkathayam*).

There are several theories behind the origin of matriliney among Mappilas. One version is that Kolathnad (north Malabar) had its own social system and the subjects of the kingdom were supposed to follow it (Balakrishnan 1981). Logan (1951) believed that in the case of Mappilas of

north Malabar, Muhammadan Law is the original law and *marumakkathayam* rules are of later adoption. This however is refuted by several others (Koya 1983). Though criticised by several scholars, a reason cited for the large-scale conversion of matrilineal Nairs into Islam in north Malabar is assumed to be the Mysorean conquests under Hyder and his son Tipu. It is stated by Miller (1976) that family names, existence of wealthy Muslim land owners and the prevalence of *marumakkathayam* system of inheritance among the north Malabar Mappilas is a sign that large-scale conversions from Nair families have taken place during Hyder Ali's time.

In his book *Customs and Law in Anglo Muslim Jurisprudence*, Ali (1938) writes that on conversion to Islam, the Mappilas of north Malabar did not change their laws and customs, to which they were accustomed for generations, all at once and take to the Muslim law. He observes that the Arab priests, being very tolerant, converted the people of Malabar without any regard to what they practiced (except in the essential matter of faith in God and acceptance of Mohammed as Prophet) so much so that instead of making the converts profess Muslim law, they themselves adopted the local practices in many respects; thus they eventually became one with the native population. This according to him explains the origin of various matrilineal features as matrilocality, matrilineage and inheritance based on *marumakkathayam*. Besides, he also observes that the early Arabs who left South Arabia were not learned in theology or Muslim law, but were common place men. Hence, when they settled in a foreign land, they adopted the laws and customs of the people among whom they settled, and became a part of the native population.

Puthenkalam (1977) also opines that Hindu converts to Islam retained the elements of the social system that they were accustomed to even after conversion. Another major reason is that matrilocality was the

most convenient arrangement for Arab traders who settled down in Malabar and entered into *mutta* marriage with local women (Kunju 1989). The conversion of the first Hindu ruler of the Arakkal Royal Family into Islam also saw the practice of Islam and traditional *marumakkathayam* features going hand in hand. It is reported that the Hindu custom of matrilineal succession was sanctioned by Caliph in one of the letters to the Arakkal family. This in a way legalised the practice of the “custom of the land” and motivated other converts to continue their earlier system of *marumakkathayam* (Nambiar and Kumar 2006).

Kerala has definitely undergone changes over the past years. The Hindu Marumakkathaym Act of 1932 and the later Kerala Joint Hindu Family System (Abolition) Act, 1975 abolished the joint family system including *marumakkathayam taravads* and *tavazhis* among Hindus in the state of Kerala. Matriliney has disappeared from many communities that were practicing it. The present day Kerala society is considered as patrilineal and patriarchal despite its matrilineal heritage. The thinning property rights, increasing dowry, lack of employment opportunities for women, increasing violence against women and children etc. have started raising doubts regarding the acclaimed high status of Kerala women.

It is under these circumstances that matrilineal features of matrilocality and matrilineage still continue to exist among Mappila Muslims of Malabar. Hence it would be significant to investigate the status of women in this matrilineal community in relation to their counterparts in patrilineal community. This comparative perspective will throw light on how each kinship system tend to influence the status of women and thereby help in answering the research question –“Matriliney favours women – Reality or Myth?”

## Chapter 2

# *Review of Literature*

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The existence of variabilities in the normative structure of a society and diverse interpretation of the spiritual texts has witnessed the status of Muslim women varying from society to society. Muslim women in Malabar, as in some other parts of the country, face the double barrel of regional socio-economic backwardness (Human Development Report, GoK 2005) on one hand and the constraints of the faith they adhere to on the other. Despite the fact that the Mappilas belong to same social, religious, historical and geographical background, they are not a homogenous group. One main social feature of Mappila Muslims of Malabar that differentiates them from other Muslims in Kerala is that both matriliney and patriliney coexist amongst them. This has led to wide heterogeneity with regard to their kinship system and marriage norms.

### **2.1 Features of Patriliney among Mappila Muslims of Malabar**

According to Haneefa (2012: 16) ‘The popular notion in academics is that the Malabar Muslims are matrilineal and they follow *marumakkathayam* system. However it is just a dominant ideology in academics and an unjustifiable generalisation. Around 14-16% of Muslims in Malabar follow the matrilineal system, and they are mainly from Kannur, Thalassery and some parts of Kozhikode’. Sebastian (2013) too observes that the indigenous patrilineal kinship organisation is found in the interior parts of South Malabar.

The kinship organization and property rules are less complex and elaborate among the patrilineal Mappilas than among matrilineal Mappilas. The patrilineal kinship system of patrilineal Mappilas is similar to that found in other patrilineal groups in the country and does not have a clan system as the patrilineal Muslims in Arabia. They live in patrilineal nuclear families or in patrilineal taravads headed by *Karanavar* who is the male head in the patrilineal line. The system also known as *Makkathayam* in Kerala denotes lineage through one's own children. The children born to a couple are regarded as members of father's family. Male members, their children and their wives are regarded as the members of father's or husband's family. They usually follow marriage exogamy, i.e., marriage cannot take place between persons who are related in the male line such as children of brothers as they belong to same patriline. As in any patrilineal group, married women live in their husbands' house. The property is divided according to the *Sharia* law with both daughter and son claiming share to it, while the house by tradition goes to the youngest son (D'souza 1976; Kunju 1995).

## **2.2 Features of Matriliney among Mappila Muslims of Malabar**

The matrilineal heritage of Kerala has left its imprint on other cultures including the patriarchal and patrilineal Muslims of the state. When Muslims elsewhere were living under the injunctions from the *Sharia* law, Mappilas of Malabar were following Hindu *marumakkathayam*. The Mappilas of Malabar have been following the principles of matriliney due to various historical reasons cited earlier. The following are the main features of Mappila matriliney:

**a. Marumakkathayam and Taravad System**

Matrilineal system in Malabar was known as Marumakkathayam. Miller (1976) points out that probably the most important example of Mappila social adaptation is *Marumakkathayam*. The law regulating the succession to the office of the *karanavar* is known as marumakkathayam. “*Maru*” literally means succession by nephews as opposed to sons and daughters. According to Mappila Marumakkathayam Act 1939, Marumakkathayam means the system of inheritance of which descent is traced through the female line. This Mappila social adaptation of Marumakkathayam, according to Koya (1983), is something of a cultural assimilation that took place between two communities of Hindus and Muslims.

The mother right Mappilas shared certain features in common with other mother right communities like the Nairs and Tiyas. They retained the *taravad* system and the matrilineal (*marumakkathayam*) system of inheritance. A *taravad* in the matrilineal system is a *marumakkathayam* family, consisting of all the descendants in the female line of one common female ancestress. Every individual, both male and female, acquired rights in the *taravad* by birth. These rights include the co-ownership of the *taravad* property and the rights to have a share, if and when property is divided by the common consent of the members of the *taravad* (D’souza 1976). The matrilineal household is generally maintained out of the income from the matrilineal estate by *karanavar* or the male head of the *taravad* (Raviverma 2004).



**Figure 2.1. Interiors of a Taravad from Thalassery**

The Mappila Marumakkathayam Act of 1939 also allows a female, known as *karnothi*, to manage the affairs of the *taravad*, but she has to step down as soon as a male member is available to occupy the position of *karanavar*. The Act also states that every member of the *taravad*, both male and female, whether living in the *taravad* house or not, shall be entitled to maintenance consistent with the income and the circumstances of the *taravad*. It also provided for the creation of *thavazhis*, by the division of the *taravad*, comprising of a mother and her children and their descendents in the female line. In marrying men in the *taravad*, who follows the pattern of uxorilocality also pay cash to his wife, a portion of which is handed over to the senior lady of the house for the upkeep of the house (Puthenkalam 1977).

Even today there are *taravads* in north Malabar that shelter large number of members belonging to different branches in the same matrilineal families. Sini (2010) reports that joint family or extended family system was another important peculiarity of Mappila society of Malabar and this type of residence pattern is still followed by the Mappilas in different parts of Kannur.

**b. Matrilocal Residence**

Writing on the matrilocality among Mappilas, Gough (1962) notes that unlike the Nair husband who visits the wife only in the night, a young Mappila husband moves into his wife's natal house on marriage, where he spends a large part of his time, leaves his personal belongings at his wife's home and contributes to the maintenance of his wife and children. The husband also tends to spend his time between his natal home and his wife's natal home. The fact that Mappilas traditionally dealt much in trade and cash, made it easy for them to give economic support to both natal and conjugal home.

The matrilocal residence may be classified into 3 main types based on the economical constituents (ibid):

- *Dwelling group of traditionally aristocratic Mappilas owning large estates.*

The traditional type of household contains the matrilineally related women of the property group, their unmarried sons, and their *karanavar*, and sometimes his wife and children. Husbands of women either live permanently in the house or visit for several days at a time. The household is largely maintained from the produce of the matrilineal estate, managed by the *karanavar*.

Husbands also pay cash to their wives each month from which she keeps aside some amount for her personal use and then hands over the rest to the senior-most female member of the household for the household expenses. It is a common sight in the few surviving middle-class taravads where each wife occupies separate wing with rooms and kitchen for her conjugal elementary family. There are *taravads* at present which are occupied by three generations of families but each forming different units within a single taravad.

- *Matrilocal extended families of rising middle-class Mappilas who have gained wealth in business and trade.*

It is common for such men to move their wives, daughters and unmarried son into a new home which they have provided. Till his daughters get married and their young husbands join them, this household remains an elementary family. Just like in the above case, here too, older women manages household from the contributions of the daughters' husbands and the kitchen is communal. If, as in most cases among middle-class Mappilas, the husbands' income are disparate, the wife passes on a portion of her income to the oldest female and then each wife cooks separately for her husband and children. At the death of the head of the family, the property of such a man may pass jointly to his wife and her matrilineal descendents thus forming a new matrilineal *taravad*. Thus even if it is the man who originally led to construction of the taravad, the lineage will be traced from his wife who will be the matrilineal ancestress.

- *Matrilocal extended families of the poor, who own no land and are usually laborers.*

If there exist any *taravad* property, it is only a small house and the tenure of a garden. The income of husbands are usually pooled, so that the working members may support the old or temporarily sick or unemployed.

In short, the post marital residences of Mappilas are always uxorilocal where husband moves to his wife's house and the uxorilocal changes to neolocal and neolocal changes to uxorilocal during the 'development cycle' of the family. Thus according to Sini (2010) the household structure of the community is framed as uxori- neolocal.

### **c. Marriage Customs**

A departure from Hindu marumakkathayam is seen in the marriages of Mappilas. Mappilas follow Islamic laws in matters of marriage (Puthenkalam 1977). Polyandry has no place in Islamic law, so also among the matrilineal Mappilas. Gough (1962) has reported that a man has exclusive sexual rights on his wife and her domestic services. *Ara* or the bride's chamber is an exclusive matrilineal feature where husband shifts his residence to the bride's house. *Ara* is the special room provided to the *puthiyapilla* (*puthiya* = new, *Mappila* = bridegroom) or the groom at the girl's residence. Husband resides in his wife's natal house, spends a large part of time there and contributes to the maintenance of his wife and children (Kunju, 1989). The junior male members of Mappila taravad were entitled to maintenance from taravad even when living in the house of their wives, even at a higher rate of maintenance when living with them than while living single.

*Streedhanam* grants were a special feature of the Muslim Marumakkathayam law (Variar, 1969). According to Nambiar and Kumar (2006) dual recognition of Marumakkathayee rule of inheritance and the Islamic rule of marriage has led to certain customs including the practice of *Streedhanam*. It is an allotment made by the taravad for the maintenance of the female member at the time of the marriage. It is not in the sense of modern dowry, but it is for the maintenance of the woman and children, who as the member of the *taravad* are entitled to be maintained by it. This property will revert back to the *taravad* in case of divorce and if the woman dies without any issues. As a maintenance allotment, a *Streedhanam* grant must cease to exist after allotment, but it can also be an absolute gift and need not revert back to the family of the grantor. In such cases *Streedhanam* property cannot be drawn into preview of *taravad* partition.

D'souza (1976) lists different types of money transactions that existed among Mappilas at the time of marriage. *Kashipanam* or *kizhipanam* was the amount that was paid outright to the bridegroom by the bride's father on the day of marriage and this practice according to him was universally prevalent among both patrilineal and matrilineal Mappilas. Another economic dealing is called *kadam vaiyippa*. It is the loan given to the bridegroom in order to enable him to start a business or any other economic activity for the benefit of his wife and children. This loan was however not expected to return back. The *kadam vayippa* is paid only when husbands stay permanently in the *taravads* of their wives. The main underlying ideology of economic transactions during marriage can be traced to the fact that because a man stays in his wife's *taravad*, he virtually forfeits his share in his own *taravad*, the wife's *taravad* has to make provision for his economic wellbeing (ibid)

A woman is a full member of her matrilineal group and continues to be so even after marriage. She does not have to leave her surroundings that she has been accustomed to from childhood. The girl tends to visit her husband's house only for a day or two and very rarely stays there for a longer period. Her visits are a matter of ceremonial obligation, and she is invited to the important occasions at her husband's natal home. The special privileges enjoyed by a man in his wife's house in a patrilineal system are extended to the woman here when she visits her in-laws. Mutual politeness characterises her relationship with her husband's kinswomen and avoidance of those of her husband's kinsmen of the same generation and respect to those of her husband's senior kinsmen (Gough 1962).

**d. Property, Inheritance, Partition and Mappila Marumakkathayam Laws**

Unlike Hindu *marumakkathayam*, Mappila *marumakkathayam* had features of both *marumakkathayam* and *makkathayam*. The custom of two distinct law of inheritance, the *marumakkathayam* law governing the descent of taravad property and the *makkathayam* rule governing the self-acquired property, prevailed amongst Mappilas of Malabar. According to the true principles of *marumakkathayam*, there could be no individual property, and the rule is if a man dies intestate, all his self-acquired property is inherited by his *taravad*, i.e., the matriarchal joint family. But as time passed, the Mappilas became better acquainted with their Islamic religion and laws. They developed the custom of following the Muslim law of inheritance, at least in matter of self-acquired property (Ali 1938; Raviverma 2004).

The Marumakkathayam Act codified in 1932 was made applicable to Hindus and not Muslims. Hence the legislature decided to define and

amend certain aspects of Marumakkathayam law in relation to family, partition and succession among Muslims who follow Marumakkathayam law, thereby creating the Mappila Marumakkathayam Act (Act XVII of 1939) (Nambiar and Kumar 2006). The Section 13 of the Act confers on an individual member of a *taravad* the right to claim his or her share of the property of the *taravad* over which the *taravad* has power of disposal and separate from the *taravad* house. As per the Section 18 of the Act, the succession to the property so obtained by an individual member on partition will be governed by the Islamic Law of inheritance. Hence, the share thus received will not be subject to Marumakkathayam law and goes to his wife and children as per Sharia law. Section 16 of the act states that partition of the *taravad* will not be possible, unless two third of the members including the minors of the *taravad* agree upon it. Otherwise, the *taravad* will remain undivided for the common use of all the members. This, according to Nambiar and Kumar (2006), is a novel step by the legislation to maintain and preserve the grandeur of the *taravad* house. Provision also existed in the Act for registering the *taravad* as impartible if not less than two third of the members of the *taravad* agree upon it, within a year of passing the Act. This registration can be cancelled in future if the same number of members wanted to do so.

In case of partition the individual members in the *taravad* shall be entitled to a share in the *taravad* properties on the basis of per capita. Individual members include all female members and their children, including an unborn who has been conceived at the time of partition and all the male members who can trace a matrilineage to that *taravad*. However, the children of men will be omitted as they belong to a different *taravad*, that of their mother's. The Act also required the *karanavar* to maintain

inventory and accounts of the properties of the *taravad* which the other junior members can inspect in a year. There was also a peculiar tenure known as *streeswothu*, in which only female descendants of the grantee are entitled to the property (Ali 1938; Puthenkalam 1977). The Mappila Marumakkathayam (Amendment Act) of 1963 set forth as an amendment to earlier mentioned Act replaced the term “Mappilas” with the term “Muslims”.

**e. Marumakkathayam in North Malabar and South Malabar**

North Malabar is separated from South Malabar by Kora River (Sebastian 2013). The matrilineal regions that come under north Malabar are found on the coastal stretch extending from Koyilandy in Kozhikode district to Trikaripur in Kannur district. The rest of the regions of Malabar towards the south including the matrilineal *Thekkepuram* area of Kozhikode are referred to as south Malabar. The social organisation of matrilineal Mappilas in both the regions is based on mother right. However, the difference lies in principles of inheritance.

Raviverma (2004) and Koya (1983) have given accounts of marumakkathayam systems of North and South Malabar. The matrilineal Muslims of north Malabar followed the true principles of Marumakkathayam, where there can be no individual property. The rule was that, if a man died intestate, all his self-acquired property was inherited by his *taravad*, that is, the matriarchal joint family. In south Malabar, however, the property was divided according to Islamic law but the house or the *taravad* was excluded from such divisions and becomes the common property of all the members in the *taravad*.

Since the descent is traced in the female line, it is the women in the female line who have a permanent interest in the house as it will be passed

down to their children and their daughter's children. It is also noted that while in north Malabar, the husband permanently shifted to the wife's house, in the south Malabar the man always tends to spend his time between his natal home and his wife's natal home thus forming a duo-local residence pattern. As Islamic law is applied to the property divisions, the role of men in providing maintenance to wife and children is also reported to be more in south Malabar.

Nevertheless these differences have slowly evened in these two regions. However, unlike the Kerala Joint Hindu Family System (Abolition) Act of 1975 that abolished the joint family system including Marumakkathayam *taravads* and *tavazhis* among Hindus in the state of Kerala, no such act has been set forth regarding Mappila matriliney. Muslim matrilineal taravads in north Kerala, i.e., from Koyilandy to Trikaripur, are still legally eligible to partition as per Marumakkathayam law; whereas in south Malabar even the taravads can be partitioned as per Sharia law unless it has been *wakfed* or willed otherwise.

### **2.3 Decline of Marumakkathayam and Resilience of Matriliney**

In 1953, Ehrenfels pointed out that matrilineal joint families will in course of time be considered as "old fashioned"; he elaborated that destruction of joint families will automatically lead to the destruction of matrilineal system, and that the disappearance of matriliney is not because of its primitive nature, but due to the influence of the prestige factor of patrilineal order. According to him, one of the reasons for the breaking up of matrilineal families is the autocratic behaviour of the *karanavars* or the maternal uncles which leads to revolt among the average matrilineal members against *karanavar*. Another reason is the rapid population increase

that can lead to overcrowding and dissatisfaction on joint matrilineal estates.

As free trade and cash crop economy developed, Mappilas began to acquire personal property by their individual efforts, which they gave to their wives and children. The idea was that such self-acquired property of a man should go to his wife and children rather than to his mother right family. The legislative sanctions to this idea were given by the Mappila Succession Act 1918 (Madras), which stated that the self-acquired property of a man would pass to his wife and children thereby providing for the observance of *Sharia* law. Similar acts were passed in Travancore and Cochin also. The Mappila Marumakkathayam Act 1939 provided for division of the matrilineal *taravad* property among the male and female members (Balakrishnan 1981). This law further served to reduce the intensity of the system.

Inheritance change is the main factor that has affected the base of matrilineal kinship system. Dube (2003) points out that issues and disputes over inheritance are common among patrilineal societies which leads to rivalry, competition and even conflict among kins. However, this rivalry over property does not affect the essence of patrilineal principles. This is true in matters of legal procedures carried out for equal right to inheritance among various patrilineal groups. On the other hand, the issue of inheritance and desire for change in the existing inheritance system among matrilineal groups has seen sweeping changes in the matrilineal system as such affecting the principles of descent, inheritance and residence.

According to Lindberg (2009), an argument among Hindus for supporting change from matrilineal system to patrilineal system, seems to

have advanced from a position of ‘political correctness’ and ‘invoking modernity’ rather than from a concern for emancipation of women. At the same time, the Muslim reformers approached the situation from a religious point of view, urging for the introduction of *Sharia* law and condemnation of the practice of Hindu matriliney among Muslims. Factors such as new social awakening, urbanisation, spread of education and considering joint family and its socio-economic structure as an impediment for individual growth and attainment also created a despise towards the system (Kunju, 1995). The general trend found among the Mappilas and the other mother right groups like the Nairs and Tiyas, from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was a gradual disintegration of matrilineal groups coupled with the emergence of the elementary family as a residential and economic unit.

While these factors seem to have led to the decline of the large taravad organisations that is common to *marumakkathayam*, the matrilineal culture and its features such as matrilineage and matrilocality still prevail in many parts of Malabar and are discernible even today. Saradamoni (1999) notes that the legislative measures itself have not replaced matrilineal joint families giving way to patrilineal joint families. Sini (2010) observes that the shift in matrilineal groups of Malabar happened positively from matriliney towards patriliney with a matri – patri continuum in operation. In another sense, matrilineal features are still enduring among the groups which had adopted patriliney. Moreover, though matriliney changed to patriliney, the changes have mainly happened in the economic sphere and have only minimally affected the religious sphere of the communities.

The care given to the individual family members under the taravad system has been mentioned as a reason for the continuance of this system

among Nairs (Balakrishnan 1981). According to Kunju (1995) it is interesting to see that the Mappilas who had adopted matriliney from the Hindu environment still retains its hangover, when among Hindus it has completely dissipated. Similarly, though the Marumakkathayam acts have repealed the system among matrilineal Hindus and also led to drastic changes among matrilineal Muslims, they still adhere to the customs relating to marriage and other features posing several challenges including legal ones (Nambiar and Kumar, 2006). Osella and Osella (2007a) also reported that the matrilineal community of Thekkepuram, Kozhikode, tries to maintain its exclusive kinship status by maintaining endogamy and distinguishing itself from other Muslim communities within and outside Kozhikode. *Thekkepuram* can still boast of some traditional taravads that shelter many members under it (Kanchana 2012).



**Figure 2.2. A Taravad from Thekkepuram, Kozhikode**

Based on this account it can be concluded that among Mappila Muslims of Malabar *marumakkathayam* has given way to matrilineage and matrilocality, or in other words matriliney as a system, though transformed, still remains.

## 2.4 Status of Women

Linton (1936) states that status is the place of an individual in society with its corresponding rights and duties. While occupying a particular status, one's behavior and also one's attitudes tend to be shaped by internalised norms in relation to that status, and by social pressure (Encyclopedia of Social Sciences 2001). According to Peplau et al. (1999:26) socio-cultural analysis of status of women attempts to identify ways in which 'specific features of a cultural context influence specific aspects of the lives of its women and men'. Hence any assessment of the status has to start from the social framework including social structure, cultural norms and value system and their influence on the behavior of both men and women. This will determine their roles and position in society.

Certain attributes about the concept 'status of women' has been highlighted by authors who study situation of women in society. Firstly, status is a relative term. It can be status of men in relation to women within a same social setup or status of women in relation to another set of women across different social systems. According to Balk (1994), traditional status indicator measures one woman's status relative to other woman and her conformity to traditional high social status values. While a modern indicator measure a woman's status relative to men and other participants in a patriarchal institution. This takes the form of individual autonomy, liberty and authority. Though there are variations in terminologies, definitions and focus, they all tend to highlight one or the other aspect of

gender stratification and status of women. Mason (1986) suggests that the term 'status of women' can be applied to refer to differences among women in power, prestige or resources.

Secondly, status of women is also multi-dimensional (Mason 1986; Rustagi 2004). This means there are more than one dimension for measuring status of women and a single dimension cannot provide a complete picture of wellbeing of women nor can high scores in one dimension guarantee similar higher scores in other dimensions. Last but not the least, status of women and gender inequality is also multi-locational and contextual. It means that it occurs in more than one location and it can vary across different social contexts. It is therefore important to specify whether women acquire greater control over their lives within the family, neighborhood, society or in a political sphere (Kishor 1995; Malhotra and Mather 1997). Life cycle can also be another social location where autonomy and empowerment may vary (Mason 1986). For example in the Indian context, the role of a new bride in family decision making will be very different from that of the mother-in-law.

## **2.5 Indicators of Status of Women- A Macro-Micro Analysis**

According to Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (2001), social indicators are measures designed to monitor social conditions existing in a society over a period of time. The selection of these indicators, according to Safilios-Rothschild (1970), is based on the notion that (i) the higher women's ability is to control important events in their lives (such as age at marriage, remarriage, etc.), the higher is their status; and (ii) the more women that have the same life options as men in the same age group and social class with respect to food, education and training, occupations,

remuneration and occupational advancement, migration, use of time and leisure, land and property ownership, and life expectancy, the higher is their status. Rustagi (2004) observes that each indicator reflect a particular aspect of women's wellbeing and therefore any number of these dimensions can be considered as desirable to understand levels of gender development or backwardness.

Indicators for measuring status of women could be identified at the micro family level and macro societal level. According to Malhotra and Schuler (2005) micro level for sociologists and demographers usually mean the individual or the household while the macro level may include anything from the community to the polity. Citing a review based on 45 empirical studies that make use of various terminologies to assess status of women, they have operationalised several dimension of status of women or empowerment of women at macro and micro levels. They also note that these dimensions are not watertight compartments and can overlap one into the other. According to Safilios-Rothschild (1982) the macro level status indicators are those that measure women's status in the society and the micro level status or indicators are those concerned with women's power at the interpersonal level within the household. Das (2000) also emphasise the importance of looking into the status of women at macro and the micro levels.

**a. Macro Level Status Indicators**

According to Sinha and Sangeeta (2003) macro level status indicators show the influence of policy interventions and the results of it at aggregate levels. This in turn is crucial for enhancing the status of women in a social group. Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) - a composite measure of gender inequality in three key areas: Political participation and decision-

making, economic participation and decision-making and power over economic resources; and Gender Related Development Index (GDI)- the human development index adjusted for gender inequality, are usually made use of to create an aggregate index for a population (U. N. Human Development Report 1995). The macro variables that are included in researches on women include age at first marriage, women's education, employment status, standard of living, religion, region etc (Mahadevan et al. 1989; Das 2000; Rustagi 2004). However it does not measure empowerment or status of women on an individual basis nor does it capture the multidimensional view of women's empowerment. These indicators are referred by the present day researchers as indirect measures or proxy measures. It is pointed out that these measures are more useful at macro level or aggregate level studies, even then access to education, higher age at marriage or even material wellbeing of the women cannot indicate higher status of women in a society (Gupta 1987; Hassan et al. 2008).

It is a known fact that the household, interfamilial relations and kinship is a central locus of women's disempowerment in India and determines her access to social and economical resources and interactions and hence, ascertain the freedom and autonomy women can enjoy (Agnihotri 2000) Therefore, the present day researchers are moving beyond these macro level measures (which they term as proxy measures) to include an in-depth micro level. This will provide better understanding of issues such as prestige, relative freedom, autonomy and empowerment within the context of family (Jejeebhoy 2001; Mason and Smith 2003; Haque et al. 2011). The latter approach focuses on the social, psychological and material resources made available to women to choose from and the subsequent choices they make. In other words, it determines the extent to which women

have access to and control over material resources, freedom to act on their fertility preferences, their ability to seek health care or recreation outside family, freedom to take decisions regarding children's education, etc.

This ambiguity in using the appropriate measures for status of women tend to be solved to some extent in Balk's (1994) account of macro and micro level measures. She notes that women's status cannot be represented by one direct measure or by one indirect proxy. Direct measures are usually the micro level measures such as women's mobility, domestic authority, access and control of resources etc. Indirect measures or proxies are usually macro level factors such as age at marriage, education, labour force participation, spousal age difference, standard of living, religion, region etc. She further observes that these proxy measures are mainly independent variables which act as causes that affects the dependent variable, in this case the status of women measured in terms of direct micro level measures. Besides in a traditional society age at marriage or level of education is not usually determined by women themselves. Hence they cannot be treated as a direct measure of women's status but as determinants or institutional elements that can be crucial in shaping the status of women in a social group. In other words, as Basu (2000b) explains, the macro level context includes the development processes and specific policies employed and the micro level context refers to individual, household or community ability to manipulate this larger environment of constraint and opportunity.

**b. Micro Level Status Indicator- Autonomy**

Autonomy is an important concept that is being widely used in researches focusing on female status at the micro level. The term itself has been defined variously by different authors. According to Dyson and Moore (1983: 45), Autonomy is 'the ability—technical, social and psychological—

to obtain information and use it as a basis for making decisions about one's private concerns and those of one's intimates.' High autonomy, according to them means the ability to influence and take decisions regarding a range of personal and household affairs. Jeejebhoy and Sathar's (2001: 688) define autonomy as 'the control women have over their own lives – the extent to which they have an equal voice with their husbands in matters affecting themselves and their families, control over material and other resources, access to knowledge and information, the authority to make independent decisions, freedom from constraints on physical mobility and the ability to forge equitable power relationships within families.'

Empowerment is another popular concept that is used in researches to capture the elements of gender inequality. Empowerment according to Kabeer (1999) is the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability. It is often found that the terms "autonomy" and "empowerment" are used interchangeably (Mason and Smith 2000, Afridi 2010) and at the same time there have been attempts in the literature to distinguish between the two. Agarwal and Lynch (2006) points out that empowerment is the collective aspect of power, which can challenge existing power relations, and autonomy is the individual aspect of the power. In spite of the variation in terminology, the literature review suggests that autonomy and empowerment focus on almost similar dimensions that tend to affect the life of women in the household, such as access to and control of resources, freedom of movement, family size decision making, freedom from spousal violence, child related decision making, etc. Some of these aspects are more beneficial to women themselves while some are more relevant for other members of the household.

Several studies have focused on autonomy and empowerment of women, especially of those in south and Southeast Asia. Few of them have focused specifically on the lives of Muslim women. While quite a few studies have attempted to measure autonomy and empowerment themselves as the outcome of the study, there are others that have focused on autonomy and empowerment as an intermediary factor affecting various outcomes. Examples for the studies where autonomy is the outcome include Rammohan and Johar's (2009) study on autonomy of women in uxori-local setup; Susilastuti's (2003) research on how education and employment relate to different dimensions of female autonomy in Egypt; Malhotra and Mather's (1997) focus on gender and domestic decision making in Sri Lanka; Mason's (1998) study on wives' economic decision making power in five Asian countries etc.

Studies where empowerment or autonomy was seen as an intermediary factor mainly focused on the influence they have in affecting demographic outcomes. Moursund and Kravdal (2003) investigated whether differences in women's autonomy can explain much of the relationship between education and contraceptive use among married Indian women with at least one child. Govindasamy and Malhotra (1996) studied the influence of various dimensions of autonomy in current contraceptive use and fertility decision making in Egypt. Jejeebhoy (1995) looked into affects of education, kinship structure and women's autonomy over their fertility patterns. Bloom et al. (2001) examined the dimensions of women's autonomy and their relationship to maternal health care utilisation in a probability sample of 300 women in Varanasi. Ghunman (2003) studied the impact of empowerment on child health and survival. Afridi's (2010) work concentrated on the autonomy of the mother and its effect on children's education and schooling.

## **2.6 Measuring Autonomy of Women**

As already discussed with regard to status of women, autonomy is also multi-dimensional, and context specific concept. Autonomy is context specific or context dependent in the sense that behaviour and attributes that specify autonomy and empowerment in one context often have different meaning elsewhere (Hashemi et al. 1996; Malhotra and Mather 1997; Mason and Smith 2000; Chavoshi et al. 2004; Malhotra and Schuler 2005). Besides, factors that enable autonomy and empowerment in one context may not necessarily enable them in another context (Kabeer 2000), and meaning of a particular behaviour within a particular socio-cultural context can also change over time (Malhotra et al. 2002).

Autonomy is multi-dimensional, that is, a single dimension cannot provide a complete picture of the wellbeing of women nor can high scores in one dimension of autonomy guarantee similar higher scores in other dimensions. For example, access to education or higher age at marriage cannot indicate higher status of women in a society. Similarly, power in financial decision making within the household does not mean that women may have sexual independence or freedom of movement. Studies have shown that woman may be autonomous or empowered in one area of life while not in other (Kishor 1995; Hashemi et al. 1996; Malhotra and Mather 1997; Ghumman 2003). Similarly, women who are powerless or low in status in one area need not be powerless or of low status in other areas.

Dimensions of autonomy chosen vary based on the focus of the study. Jejeebhoy (2000) considers the following as the critical dimensions of autonomy for women:

- Knowledge autonomy or awareness of new ideas that forms the basis for informed choices
- Decision making autonomy or say in family decision making concerning their own lives and that of others
- Physical autonomy in interacting with the outside world
- Emotional autonomy or more egalitarian power relation, especially between spouses.
- Economic and social autonomy and self reliance or greater access and control over economic resources

Kabeer (1999) points out that empowerment tend to have three interrelated dimensions, which are resources that include material, social and human resources; agency - the ability to define one's goals and act upon them and achievements or the outcomes. Malhotra and Schuler (2005), after reviewing several studies, listed out the most commonly used dimensions of empowerment as economic, socio-cultural, familial/interpersonal, legal, political and psychological - each having their own sub domains.

Basu and Koolwal (2005) tries to distinguish the usually used measures of female autonomy and decision making ability into that which is altruistic or responsibility towards family as a whole (such as taking care of children, going to market, decision making regarding cooking or even earning for the welfare of the family) and self indulgence or non productive freedom (such as access to leisure time, ability to visit friends and relatives without permission, keep aside money for one's own use, availing health care for oneself and even not justifying any forms of spousal violence). The former, since it is useful for the whole family, is less likely to be resisted in intra household relationships, while the latter stands for women's ability to

take what is referred to as ‘selfish charge of things.’ According to the authors, the goal of women’s empowerment/ autonomy should be not just to make women competent in carrying out their duties towards others but also to make them conscious of their duties to themselves and their own welfare, and their ability to indulge in unproductive self indulging activities.

Agarwala and Lynch’s (2006) confirmatory factor analysis found that the indicators of autonomy can be clustered into distinct and meaningful dimensions which have distinct contributions to autonomy. Some of the frequently used indicators are the following:

**a. Women’s Economic Decision Making Power**

According to Haque et al. (2011) women’s autonomy in economic decision making refers to the women’s ability to share or to control over the decision processes regarding domestic financial matters with husband or other male family members. This section combines the dimensions of both access to and control of resources. Control is different from access to resources because control indicates the ability to dispose the resources, while access implies only the right to use or consume it with the permission of those holding the right to dispose it (Mason 1986). Therefore, merely having access is insufficient to have control over one’s environment. It also highlights self-reliance rather than reliance on other family members. This dimension, according to Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001), captures a wide range of routine to out of the ordinary decision making, ranging from purchase of food and household goods to keeping aside money for one’s own use. This is an aspect of gender relation that has both cross cultural and house hold level relevance (Kishor 2005). According to Malhotra et al.

(2002) domestic decision making and access to resources can be merged together, as they tend to focus on fundamental resource allocation

**b. Freedom of Movement**

A key dimension that is used to study the autonomy of South Asian women, whose presence in public sphere is believed to be constrained, is freedom of movement. Freedom of movement is crucial for women because it not only highlights their facility to move around freely (Susilastuti, 2003) but also their ability to get information and take decisions about their private concerns (Dyson and Moore, 1983) such as effective contraceptive use (Morgan et al. 2002), and participation in waged work (Jejeebhoy 2000)

Ghunman's (2003) comparative study of Muslim and non Muslim women from 15 Asian settings, finds that in 12 of the 15 comparisons, freedom of movement of Muslim women in Muslim areas was lower than in the non Muslim setting. Rahman and Rao (2004) also reported that Muslim women in India are more constrained in their mobility than Hindu women. Morgan et al.'s (2002) study comparing Muslim women with non Muslim women from four Asian countries show that Muslim women have reduced freedom of movement compared to non Muslims. However the exception they point out is that women from more egalitarian Malay society have higher value for freedom of movement than patriarchal Indian Muslims and Hindus, thereby highlighting the importance of macro level gender system in effecting the freedom of movement.

Though this ability to move about may not necessarily point to a great autonomy, not being able to go to these places independently is highly indicative of no autonomy (Bertrand and Escudero 2002). Dernes' (1994)

paper on Hindu men's attitude towards controlling their wives' shows that there is severe restrictions on the mobility of unmarried girls as well as married women in India under the pretext of protecting family honor, thereby leading to women's subordinate position in the society. The paper further noted that in every interaction in which a husband gives his wife permission to go outside the home, he reconstitutes the normal state of affairs in which restrictions on women are necessary.

**c. Freedom from Spousal Violence**

Freedom from domestic and spousal violence is important on two accounts. First, it enhances women's physical and psychological well being. Secondly, it also enables women to exercise other dimensions of autonomy such as economic decision making, health related decision making and freedom of movement without the fear of reprisal (Susilastuti 2003). Malhotra et al. (2002) finds that physical intimidation is important in determining one's ability to make strategic life choices. According to Ahuja (2003) violence against woman is the end product of her low status in family and society. Thus it can be considered that freedom from spousal violence is an essential aspect for women's autonomy.

Freedom from violence dimension includes freedom from physical violence, specifically intermediation via force, and psychological violence. Researches using this dimension have operationlised it with questions that ask women about their own experience of ever getting beaten by husband after marriage and psychological violence is measured by asking whether women are scared to disagree with their husbands (Jejeebhoy 2000; Ghunman 2003; Chavoshi et al. 2004; Afridi 2010). Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) write that these questions capture continuum of power relations

between spouses. They also noted that participants in their focus group discussions agreed that women who experienced a non physical rebuke from their husbands were indeed more likely to assert themselves than those who feared physical reprisals. The index the authors constructed to measure freedom from spousal violence reflects this. Agarwal and Lynch's (2006) paper on confirmatory factor analysis of various items measuring autonomy suggest that freedom from violence should be measured using two dimensions, feared and actual violence, as well as views on legitimacy of violence. These two together, according to them, reflects causes and effects of domestic violence against women.

The above mentioned dimensions have been frequently used in determining the autonomy of married women. Morgan et al. (2002:523) considers that though 'not exhaustive these measures draw from many aspects of power and autonomy that wives confronts daily'. Mason and Smith (2003) who has used similar items for measuring empowerment shows that women from different social contexts reports themselves as having differing levels of empowerment and this according to them is not due to differing personal characteristics but due to difference in gender systems.

## **2.7 Status of Matrilineal Women**

While matrilineality does not mean equality between sexes, it has some advantages for women. Keddie (1987) points out that the rural matrilineal Minangkabau women in Indonesia are involved in cultivation of their land; while their urban counterparts are into clerical and professional positions. Matriliney, along with Minangkabau's superiority in the field of education, has benefitted both urban and rural females here. Ling-Pong

(1999) also points out that while reducing gender gap is rare among Muslim countries, there was a dramatic improvement in Malay girls' education mainly because of the bilateral kinship system followed by most Malays and the pure matrilineal heritage in the Malay state of Negri Sembilan. Negri Sembilan of Malaysia is Minangkabau descendents who migrated to Malaysia. Here too, women play an important role in wet rice cultivation. The authority of women in the household in Negri Sembilan is something accepted by the community and the belief that this system is superior to other systems and more beneficial to women, has helped to maintain its existence and continuity. (Gonsoulin 2005).

Reenen (2000) notes that matriliney does make a difference to gender relations in the domestic sphere. Explaining the Minangabau situation, he notes that the inside of *rumahgadang* or the traditional Minangabau house, represents the female domain, while the public sphere or the outside sphere is dominated by males. However neither of these domains is valued over the other. For an outside observer who does not see the difference between the two, the society may appear as male dominated. But if one looks outward with house as the centre, where women leads to the stability of the *rumahgadang*, this society will appear as female oriented. Senior women are likened to 'central pillars of the house'

Bonate's (2006) paper observes that sacred authority assigned to women had a major influence in determining their status in Mozambique matriliney. In Mozambique during the nineteenth century '*Pia- mwene*', the elder uterine sister of the landlord had a chief role in performing certain rituals for the well being of the land and its inhabitants. There were also female Muslim chiefs. Later during the emergence of Sufi orders in 20<sup>th</sup> century the role of '*pia mwene*' was undermined. However new prestige

and status was achieved by women by receiving sound religious training enjoining them to the position of female *khalifa* (leader), which at times made them superior to men who were not *khalifa*. Another study in African matriliney is by Tayki and Doodoo (2005). Their study on fertility decision making of women in Ghana finds some evidence that matrilineal women are more able than non matrilineal women to translate their reproductive preference into actions consistent with their goal.

The most important positive feature of matriliney, which is frequently highlighted, is the importance of natal kin contact for women in matrilineal households. According to Poewe (1979) matrilineal descent, combined with the cultural idealisation of emergence from a womb, results in the general recognition that everyone derives ultimately from a common womb. It gives rise to an egalitarian ideology--equality, no less, between all men and women, between all wombmates. A wide network of matri-ties buffers individuals from the potential hardships of uncertainty associated with different forms of economic expansion.

McGilvray (1989) describes matriliney among Tamil speaking Sunni Muslims in the town of Akkaraipattu on eastern coast of Sri Lanka. He suggests that when compared to patrilineal patrilocal groups, a Tamil/Moorish wife is free from the burdens of a domineering mother in law, patrilocal isolation from her natal female kins, any ritual that severs her relation with her own descent group and transfer to husband's group, unequal or lack of property rights and domestic violence. These kinship features according to him, actually improves the level of female autonomy. Tanner (1974) also records that there are matrifocal societies which may or may not be matrilineal, but the woman has considerable dominant role and economic power in the household as well as public sphere.

## **2.8 Status of Matrilineal Women in India**

One of the important researches on a matrilineal Muslim community in India was Dube's (1969) study of Laccadive Islanders. The study gave an account of women's relative autonomy and their advantageous position in matters of inheriting property, marriage, divorce, segregation and seclusion, when compared to the mainland Muslim counterparts. But at the same time, the influence of *Sharia* or Islamic laws in matters of marriage customs and transfer of self earned property of a man to his children are also evident.

Gneezy et al. (2009) used a controlled experiment to explore whether there are gender differences in selecting competitive environments across patrilineal Maasai in Tanzania and the matrilineal Khasi in India. Their experimental results revealed that in the patriarchal society women were less competitive than men, while in the matrilineal society women were more competitive than men. Perhaps surprisingly, Khasi women were even slightly more competitive than Maasai men.

The matrilineal historical legacy still has some influence on women's status in Kerala. (Jeffrey 1992; Jayasree 1998). Saradamoni (1999), writing on matriliney in Travancore, comments on the importance of matrilineal system for women in Kerala. She points out that matriliney offered an identity and security to women which lasted throughout a lifetime. Similarly Jeffrey (1992) writes that though the system was not matriarchal- women did not govern the household- it accorded them greater freedom, choice and respect than they would have found elsewhere in the world until the twentieth century. Matriliney did not make women rulers of their families, but it did allow some of them a remarkable latitude unknown

elsewhere in India. However, he also notes that legacies of matriliney still run widely through Kerala society and are an essential, but clearly not the sole, condition in explaining the circumstances that have made the Kerala model. (Jeffrey 2004/2005)

Eapen and Kodoth (2003) observe that matrilineal women in Kerala, who carried forward lineage and inheritance, underlined their importance to family or kin identity. Their residence was not mediated through marriage or derived through their husband, as in the case of patriliney. In matriliney, residence and maintenance were directly achieved thereby giving them a feeling of continuity and security rather than rupture and vulnerability. Mahadevan and Jayasree's (1998) work among Kurichias of Malabar observes that the system still exists among the Kurichias and Kurichia women work hand in hand with their men folk. They further note that the women in matrilineal families get higher status according to their age, order of birth and marriage.

Devi's (1997) comparative study on the status of women in Kerala and Madhya Pradesh shows that women in Kerala enjoy better status than her counterparts in Madhya Pradesh in areas of education, age at marriage, age at first birth and overall fertility performances. One of the main reasons she suggests for this difference is the socio-cultural milieu of the two states. While Madhya Pradesh is highly patriarchal, Kerala has a matrilineal history which still recognises women as individuals of significance. This again proves the importance of kinship structure in providing life options for women.

On the contrary there are works that has been critical of status accorded to women by matrilineal. The Meghalaya Human Development Report

(2008) regarding three major matrilineal tribes of north east- the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos- mentions that the traditional gender roles have been constructed in a way that men and women could not function in isolation. But it is a misconception that women enjoy absolute autonomy because in actual practice, a woman can be stripped of the right of inheritance in the event of her failure to conform to the code of conduct accepted by the society or to fulfill her responsibilities to her natal home. Women here shoulder many responsibilities without or with little access to real power.

Harbison et al. (1989) writes that husband wife relations among matrilineal Garo of North East India, are typically characterised by mutual cooperation rather than domination. Garo women play a significant role in their society participating in labour force and in family decision making, but at the same time they note that this autonomy is never absolute. Even the powerful female decision makers exercise their authority, in a context of perceived obligations to the needs of and pressures from their own immediate family, their lineage, their age wise peers and the larger society in which they are members.

Arya (2000) observes that women in matrilineal kinship system are not completely devoid of economic influence. She further notes that when a comparative study of women in matrilineal communities are carried out, it is seen that where a woman has an active role in the economy, she enjoys a better status and greater influence. For the same reason Khasi, Garos and the Lakshwadeep islanders stand in a better position compared to Nairs who do not engage in productive work but act as a link for inheritance and succession.

Augustine (2007) finds in her study that first generation matrilineal women were less involved in decision making when compared to present generation who are educated and even employed. Similarly Renjini's (2000) study on Nair women concludes that present day patrilineal women are in a better position vis –a- vis matrilineal women who have lived in traditional matrilineal households in matters of education, participation in religious and political activities and decision making. Likewise Arun's (1999) research into women's access to land and role in agriculture in patrilineal and matrilineal households find that while the former is excluded from inheriting land, the latter Nair women who despite owning the land or a house may not have effective control over it.

In spite of the contradictions inherent in the matrilineal system, it is said that women in matrilineal societies tend to have greater independence than women in patrilineal societies (Gough 1971). Menon (2007) cautions that it is the need of hour to preserve some of the practices of matrilineality as they provide women with self esteem, the power of belonging and the sense of her own individuality. Researches of Johnson et al. (1982) and Warner et al. (1986) have shown the influence of kinship and family variables in determining the status of women. Their studies supports the hypothesis that wives have more power in marriage and a better position in conjugal power in societies with matrilineal rather than patrilineal customs of residence and descent. Desai and Krishnaraj (1990) also points out the difference between the statuses of women in the two systems especially in the Indian context.

## **2.9 Status of Matrilineal Mappila Muslim Women in Malabar**

Very little has been written about the situation of matrilineal Mappila Muslim women. Gough (1962) and other writers have given an ethnographic

account on the life of Mappila women without much emphasis on the status they enjoyed under the system. Narayanan (2006), in his historical account about Calicut, writes that while Nair ladies enjoyed a lot of freedom in owning property and participating in civic life, the Mappila women were confined to the kitchen and the backyard. The pattern of male dominance prescribed in other Islamic societies continued among these people. Osella and Osella (2007a), writing on the matrilineal women from Thekkepuram, Kozhikode, observes that these women remain strongly rooted in the area and moving in tightly restricted family circles. Women here are enmeshed in the lives of their female kins. Sini's (2010) study in Chirakkal taluk of Malabar, reports that the power of Mappila female members in decision making varies depending on several factors. The major decisions were taken by the senior male members of the family. However, the women whose husbands are working abroad take decisions independently.

At the same time there are other authors who have described about finer status of matrilineal Mappila Muslim women. The female rulers of the Arakkal Royal Family have received considerable attention from the authors who are interested in the matrilineal system of Mappilas. Puthenkalam (1977) writes that, though Muslim Law does not recognise succession through females, succession has always been through females in the Arakkal family. The Beebees who were the senior most ladies, in the royal family, have several times occupied the elite position of rulers and managers of the royal chieftains.

	MALABAR YEAR	CHRISTIAN ERA	PERIOD OF REIGN
1. Muhamud Allee Ade Rajah			
2. Hoossain Allee Ade Rajah			
3. Allee Moossa Ade Rajah			
4. Coonhy Mossa Ade Rajah			
5. Allee Moossa Ade Rajah	359-380	1184-1205	21
6. Allee Buppen Ade Rajah	380-459	1205-1284	
7. Issa Aboobucker Ade Rajah	459-540	1284-1365	
8. Muhamud Allee Ade Rajah	540-627	1365-1452	
9. Aboobucker Allee Ade Rajah	627-720	1452-1545	
10. Allee Ade Rajah	720-766	1545-1591	46
11. Aboobucker Ade Rajah	766-782	1591-1607	16
12. Aboobucker Ade Rajah	782-785	1607-1610	3
13. Muhamud Allee Ade Rajah	785-822	1610-1647	37
14. Muhamud Allee Ade Rajah	822-830	1647-1655	8
15. Kamal Ade Rajah	830-831	1655-1656	1
16. Muhamud Allee Ade Rajah	831-866	1656-1691	35
17. Allee Ade Rajah	866-879	1691-1704	13
18. Coonhy Amsa Ade Rajah	879-895	1704-1720	16
19. Muhamud Allee Ade Rajah	895-903	1720-1728	8
20. Harrabichee Kadavoobe Ade Rajah Bebee	903-907	1728-1732	4
21. Joonoomabe Ade Rajah Bebee	907-920	1732-1745	13
22. Coonhy Amsa Ade Rajah	920-952	1745-1777	32
23. Joonoomabe Ade Rajah Bebee	952-994	1777-1819	42
24. Mariambee Ade Rajah Bebee	994-1013	1819-1838	19
25. Hayashabe Ade Rajah Bebee	1013-1037	1838-1862	24
26. Abdu Rahiman Ali Adi Rajah	1037-1045	1862-1870	8
27. Moossa Ali Adi Rajah	1045-1074	1870-1899	29
28. Muhammed Ali Adi Rajah	1074-1082	1899-1907	8
29. Sulthan Imbichi Beebe Adi Rajah	1082-1086	1907-1911	4
30. Sulthan Ahamed Ali Adi Rajah	1086-1096	1911-1921	10
31. Sulthan Ayisha Beebe Adi Rajah	1096-1106	1921-1931	10
32. Sulthan Abdurahiman Ali Adi Rajah	1106-1121	1931-1946	15
33. Sulthan Maryumma Beebi Ali Adi Rajah	1121-1132	1946-1957	11
34. Sulthan Amina Beebi Tangal Adi Rajah	1132-1155	1957-1980	23
35. Sulthan Hamisa Ali Adi Rajah	1155-1173	1980-1998	18
36. Sulthan Ayisha Muthu Bebej Adi Rajah	1173-1998	1998	

**Figure 2.3** Genealogy of the Arakkal Family- Beebees in the list are the female rulers in the family

Lakshmi (2012) considers matrilineal Mappila women in Malabar as socially more powerful than their counter parts in the rest of the subcontinent. Malieckal (2005), in her essay argues that Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* presents the Mappila matriliney rendered through Oberon and Titania's quarrel over the Indian boy and the camaraderie between Titania and the boy's mother, an Indian "vo'tress", which influences the child's custody, is a construct of Malabar matriliney. She writes that early European traders were surprised to find that Mappilas did not have a harem system, unlike in other Islamic communities and they were disdainful of many Malabari women who dominated social hierarchy.

She further notes that Portuguese influence in Malabar was one of the main reasons that lead to the deterioration of Mappila women. According to Kunju, (1995) there is no denying the fact that the inculcated social virtues under the system ensured decency and security to Muslim women. Koya (1983) writes that matrilocality has provided females the possession of the household thereby making partition of the *taravad* property practically impossible. This impartibility of *taravad*, in spite of several laws passed against the matrilineal inheritance of property, has made the *taravads* occupied by the female members and their families, a common sight.

## **2.10 Status of Patrilineal Women in India**

Carr et al. (1998) writes that women in South Asia has to face several constraints in their life, including a patriarchal kinship system that forces on them female seclusion, lack of opportunities for gainful employment, exclusion from property inheritance and overall dependence on men. India too belongs under this description with its patrilineal heritage embedded in its culture and traditions. Although woman is accorded the status of *Devi* or goddess in Hindu mythology, she is also constrained in several ways. The main reasons that can be responsible for low status of women in patrilineal system are their exclusion from property inheritance, patrilocal and exogamous marriage and the resultant patrilineal descent (Dyson and Moore, 1983).

Providing examples from different parts of Asia, Agarwal (1994) and Dube (1997) tries to explain how virilocal and patriarchal norms reduce inheritance rights of women thereby leading to a negative effect on their status. This leads to the cultural notion that women's role is only supportive and her contributions are to her husband's home, thereby having a bearing on her jural rights. The situation of a newlywed bride or a daughter-in-law

in general, at her husband's house has been recorded by many as requiring lot of adjustments on the girl's side. In a patrilineal system, after marriage a woman does not belong to her father's family, while her membership in husband's family is conditional to her 'proper' behaviour (Desai and Krishnaraj 1990). Despite her efforts there will be attempt to keep her under strict control of the mother-in-law as well as not to involve her in any of the family property affairs. The emphasis is also on the strict control of her sexuality. (Henderson 2004)

Hassan et al.'s (2008) study, examining the gender bias in India with particular reference to Haryana, highlights the role of patriarchal structure in the state in subjugating the status of women. Ahuja's (2003) analysis of violence against women in four cities of Rajasthan, finds that violence of various nature is more common against women who belongs to families that are more patriarchally organized in a traditional way. He notes that low status of women, in both family and society at large, is the direct consequence of the man's ordering of the world and his dominance over women.

Another closely related dimension that affects status of women in India is the gendered division of labour. According to Derné (1994) male dominance in India is rooted in the gender division of labor where men continue to work primarily in the "public" sphere, whether such work involves managing agriculture or earning money and women's work often remains restricted to hours of toil in the domestic sphere. Mukhopadhyay and Seymour's (1994) study on patrifocal family structure and ideology in India emphasise the importance of family and the centrality of men within families that restrict women to the private sphere, give same generational men authority over socially equivalent women within a family, and exert family control of marriage arrangements and women's sexuality.

In her comparative study of potter women from Srilanka and India, Winslow (1994) writes that compared to bilateral and matrilineal Sinhalese women, patrilineal Indian women appear to live a harsher life, with less material abundance and greater suffering, a world more driven by distinctions of caste and status as well as gender. In Sri Lanka, women were more restricted than men but not nearly as much as the Hindu women and were never devalued because of their sex. Similarly Vardhan's (1999) study on female headed households in a patriarchal society points out that Indian society, with its patriarchal structure, has been discriminatory to women in these households when compared to the male heads of male headed households. They have to bear the brunt of various social taboos and restrictions on their movements and actions, which is inherent of a patriarchal and patrilineal system.

The gender division of labor is accompanied by a gender ideology and a process of socialisation that justifies it. Dube's (1988) paper, focusing on the aspects of process of socialisation of Hindu girls through rituals and ceremonies, points out that gender roles and gender differences are culturally produced, yet is interpreted as rooted in biology and is considered the natural order of things. The differential values of sons and daughters, association between marriage and departure from natal home, notions of tolerance, self restraint, self denial at the in-laws house etc. are all consciously cultivated in the minds of females through various rituals and practices in patrilineal Hindu families.

A similar account is given by Bhatti (1988) regarding the socialisation of Muslim girl child in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. She notes that right from childhood these girls are carefully nurtured into the discipline that they would have to observe in their adult life. Little girls

are taught to be submissive, obedient, sacrificing, passive and pious women who should conform to traditional social norms and roles and not aspire to have an identity of their own. She suggests that it is the strong patrilineal bias inherent in Islamic social structure which perpetuates social and legal inequalities, along with the insecurities of Muslim women that is reflected in the socialisation of Muslim female children in India.

Dowry is another factor that is highlighted in connection with low status of women in patrilineal society. According to Srinivasan and Lee (2004), inspite of modernisation and women's increasing role in market economy, the practice of dowry in India is becoming more wide spread with the value of dowry ever increasing. Dowry can affect a woman's status starting from female foeticide (Walia 2005), female infanticide (Kishor 1993), denying daughter's right to inheritance (Channa 1996), depressing female education (Lahiri and Self 2004), domestic violence and dowry deaths (Agnihotri 2003).

While the south Indian women are considered to be less crushed under patriarchal ideology, the recent studies however tell a different tale. Jacob et al.'s (2006) study on community health programs in rural Tamil Nadu finds that the community, with its strong male bias, utilises the health facilities and education and employment programmes more for the benefit of men and boys than for women and girls. According to Eapen and Kodoth (2003) women's property rights in Kerala have shifted towards practices associated with patrilineal forms of families, with property rights being organised around marriage, change in their natal kin identity and residence, dowry, exchange of gifts and several obligations at childbirth. The Kerala Development Report (GOI 2008) also acknowledges the fact that the conventional status indicators of wellbeing of women in Kerala such as

education and health have been harnessed within a family ideology in order to serve the larger patriarchal interests.

Nevertheless, some authors feel that a slow change is being witnessed in the situation of women in patrilineal groups too. The increased entry of women in higher education and in the skilled workforce in recent decades can be seen as an emerging force of social change in sex roles. The increasing presence of women in higher education and elite job sectors have slowly eroded the ideological control of gender roles and women's status under the control of family patriarchs. The population explosion and the shift towards nucleated families and rising educated middle classes have started to weaken age and sex hierarchy within patriarchal extended families and close communities. (Bardhan 1993). Arya (2000) observes that with the breaking down of joint families, a woman can truly be a mistress of a patrilineal nuclear family depending on the personalities of the couple and their personal equation. With education she can gain dignity on her own. Kolenda's (1987) work on family structures in India suggests that though most of the communities in India are patrilineal (except for the matrilineal and bilateral descent areas) there is significant variations in measures of what she calls 'wifely bargaining power' inversely correlated with high proportions of joint families.

### **2.11 Status of women in Islam**

Mappilas of Malabar being a Muslim community guided by the values of Islam, for the purpose of the study, it becomes necessary to look into the status accorded to women in Islam. As Islam spread from the Arabian Peninsula, it covered billions of people with different languages, customs, religions and encountered different legal systems, thereby adapting

it to and in turn being affected by diverse regional contexts. There was no deliberate effort to change the customary laws of these regions as long as they did not directly conflict with Islamic law. Within Islamic countries itself, the Holy Quran (the religious text of Islam) and the *Hadith* (*Sunnah* or the traditions of the Prophet Muhammed) - the two major sources of Islamic law - were interpreted differently by schools of Islamic laws and political leaders (Khan, 1993). Hence Obermeyer (1992) is of the opinion that before making any conclusions regarding the Muslim population in general it is necessary to focus on the variabilities and ambiguities inherent in the normative structure of a society. Due to diverse interpretation and explanation of these two sources and the influence of local customs and norms in the day to day life, the status of Muslim women tends to vary from society to society.

The status of women in Islam is always a controversial issue. It is often alleged that the low status of women is a central feature of Islam. The fact that Islam accorded a better status to women compared to their position in pre-Islamic times is acknowledged by writers (Ephroz 2003; Mondal 2005). Nevertheless, it is not considered that this better status is in par with the status accorded men in Islam (Subamma 1988).

Except in the matters of religion, where men and women stand in equal footing in their relationship with the divine, there exist disparity in every sphere of social life. But authors like Ephroz (2003) are of the opinion that Quranic laws are rich enough to ameliorate the status of Muslim women but male biased interpolative interpretations of *sharia* and their dogmatic approaches are responsible for the present plight of Muslim women. The position of men in Quran is also being interpreted in different ways. Men's position is sometimes considered as superior (Shakir 1987), while others have stressed the responsibility of men towards women.

On one hand when the subordinate position of women in Islam is criticised by reformist, there are others who justify this position and try to re-interpret this position in a more egalitarian manner (Abadalati 2000). Though the text also emphasis the equality of all believers before God, the relation between the sexes are not governed by the principle of absolute equality but by the principle of complementarity (Syed 2008). It is said that there is a fine line between viewing Islamic family law as oppressive and viewing it as liberating for women (Predelli 2004)

Taking into account several works, Obermeyer (1992) points out that the reasons of lower status of women in Islam is mainly due to three major areas discussed in the Koran and the Hadith. They include men being given prominent positions in religious rituals, sons receiving inheritance twice as great as daughters, and a man's testimony in court being worth twice that of a woman. One major criticism against Islamic personal law, which is known as the *Sharia*, is that it was developed centuries ago, when social standards of the time were very different and hence beneficial for the women then who had absolutely no rights or identity during the pre Islamic times. But when seen in the light of modern situation, Muslim women tend to be placed at a disadvantageous position. According to Arya (2000), interpreting the religious texts using the cultural norms prevailing in the medieval times is a major reason for this. Besides, the traditions of Prophet were sometimes invented to validate later cultural norms which were being adopted under various types of influences.

Moghadam (2003) opines that while looking into the status of Muslim women it is not sufficient just to look into the influence of religion or culture alone but there are other crucial factors such as class location, state legal policy, development strategy and even world market fluctuations that can

shape women's status in various spheres. Hence she suggests that rather than basing a study on Islamic principles on status of women, standards set by various declarations and conventions of United Nation and agreed upon by world communities, should be made use of. They were framed by people from diverse cultures, religions and nationalities and intend to take into account factors such as religion and cultural traditions of countries.

The literature in connection with the status of Muslim women draws attention to several macro level status indicators. Some of them include education, marriage and divorce, fertility performances and access to inheritance etc. (Mistry 2005; Mondal 2005)

**a. Education**

Syed (2008) sees education as a human right in Islam that is misunderstood by Muslims and non Muslims. Quran as well as Hadith are full of exhortations to pursue knowledge. But at the same time the knowledge that does not serve the purpose of acknowledging the God and live accordance with Islamic law is considered useless. In the west, the split between the secular and the religious is regarded as fundamental, but the Islamic concept of knowledge whether derived from divine revelation or from the activity of the human intellect, cannot be divided into two classes, one religious and the other secular as all types of knowledge in Islam has religious significance and should ultimately serve to make people aware of God and of their relationship with God (Halstead 2004). According to Syed (2008) Islam allows seeking knowledge for both earning a livelihood as well as to satisfy the natural curiosity about life, creator and the universe.

Education of women is not discouraged by Islam. Infact, *Hadith* clearly states that seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim

man and woman. However with the emphasis on observing *pardha* with clear demarcation of private and public domain, the education of Muslim women took a back seat (Sharma 1998; Hasan and Menon 2005). Another reason for Muslim women not being able to enjoy the benefits of education can be drawn from Halstead's (2004) paper on Islamic concept of education. He writes that independence of thought and personal autonomy do not enter into the Muslim thinking about education, which is more concerned with the progressive initiation of pupils into the received truths of the faith. Hence there is not much emphases on secular education of women and putting it into further use for enhancing one's opportunities in employment outside home. Regarding this Subbamma (1988) observes that though Islam has accorded great significance to the acquisition of knowledge, it is a pity that there is no thirst for knowledge in the Muslim society.

#### **b. Marriage**

Marriage in Islam is considered as a social contract and makes it incumbent and obligatory on every Muslim man and woman, unless prevented by valid physical or economic incapacity, to lead a married life. Muslim marriage known as *nikkah* has three main steps. First a proposal made by or on behalf of the parties, followed by an acceptance of the proposal in the presence and hearing of two male or one male and two female witnesses and finally the settlement of the Dower or *Mehr* (Bhaskar 1996). *Mehr* cannot be considered as bride price but it is the sole property of the wife and she is recognized as its heir at law (Menon 1981). *Mehr* can also be considered as a security for the wife against the possibility of divorce at husband's freewill.

Polygyny or the right of a Muslim male to have up to four wives at the same time is a topic that is criticised both at the national and international level. Ephroz (2003) writes that it is a fallacy to consider polygyny as a fundamental right of a Muslim male because it is an exception to be practiced under certain circumstances but not a rule. As a matter of fact she points out that Quran itself consider monogamy as ideal. Regarding the age at marriage, there is no lower limit set by the religious texts for both males and females. Regarding this point Khan (1993) argues that though no minimum age is fixed for the age at marriage for girls, the clause that a girl should not be married off without her own will could be used as the basis for interpreting the age at which she could be considered fit to enter matrimonial relations.

Another discussed issue related to Muslim marriage is the *talaq* or divorce. According to Babu (2001) Islam considers divorce as most detestable yet it is made permissible to both men and women. *Talaq* is the technical term that denotes the right of the husband to divorce his wife. It's a unilateral form of divorce that provides men the right to divorce their wives without stating any reason (Buxamusa 1993). When *talaq* is pronounced twice, the divorce is revocable and reconciliation is possible. By pronouncing the third *talaq*, the divorce becomes irrevocable. Then he cannot take her back until she is married again, and the second husband divorce her or he dies. It is forbidden to bid three *talaqs* consecutively on a single occasion and requires arbiters from the side of each party. This is to provide the man time to think over to take his wife back.

*Khul'a* and *Fasq* are two types of divorce permissible to Muslim women. The woman who seeks *Khul'a* is expected to return the part of or the entire amount that she has accepted as *Mehr* from the husband, if he

demands it. Sometimes men take advantage of this by forcing their wives to demand separation in order to get back the mehr they have paid at the time of marriage (Babu 2001). *Fasq* is getting divorce through the legal channel, when she is denied the right of *khul'a*. A woman can seek divorce through *fasq* if her husband is cruel, impotent, immoral, denies her basic facilities, squanders family wealth or if he converts to any other religion. She can also approach court of law if she has been married off without her consent or if there are no whereabouts of him for a long time (Ibid). In this case she does not have to give back her *mehr*.

**c. Inheritance**

The Islamic Law of inheritance includes not just single individual but competitive claims from a number of relatives on whom the estate of the deceased should be dissolved. For the same reason this law has been highly appreciated by the authors worldwide for its completeness and formal excellence (Singh 1992). In pre-Islamic Arabia women were completely excluded from any form of inheritance. The reformations brought about by Prophet and Islam included changes in the rules of inheritance that existed in pre-Islamic Arabia. As a result wife or husband was made an heir; Females and cognates were made competent to inherit; Parents and ascendants were accorded the right to inheritance even where there were male descendents; Female share was sometimes equivalent and sometimes a half of the share of her counterpart (Abdalati 2000).

Islam entitles women their share in property separately for the wife, daughter, mother, sister and grandmother (Subbamma 1988; Banu 1995). A husband cannot exercise any right nor have claim over his wife's property (Sharma 1998). However the most highlighted and criticised is the share of

daughter with respect to son where a daughter is entitled to only one part while the son gets two parts of the property. According to Singh (1990), this women's right to inheritance provided by Islam, though unequal when compared with that of the males, is important especially in view of the fact that they were meant for a patrilineal social structure, which otherwise denied inheritance rights to women.

**d. Fertility Preferences**

One of the main criticisms against Islam is its pronatalist attitude. The higher level of fertility among Indian Muslims is mainly attributed to their negative attitude towards family planning (Mistry 1995). While Muslims considers children as gifts of god, Quran also has laid down stress on the necessity to rear children in a healthy manner and to look after well (Subbamma 1988). Obermeyer (1992), points out that there is a clear consensus among different schools of Islam regarding that family planning is permitted by religion. As a basis for this statement, he points out that there is no direct prohibition against birth control in Koran and there are several statements in Quran stating that God does not want to burden man but improve his life. Besides Hadith points out the Prophet Mohammed practiced withdrawal (*'azl*) and did not discourage his followers in doing the same. On abortion, most schools allow it until the time the foetus is seen as "ensouled" variously defined as day 40, 80 or 120 of pregnancy and prohibit it there after (Roudi 1988, Obermeyer 1992, Ashrafi 1992). Mistry (1995) is also of the opinion that review of Islamic literature reveals that Islam is not against family planning and in matters of procreation, adopts a middle course without going into the extremes of unrestricted multiplication of children. But at the same time Ashrafi (1992) clearly states that family planning and contraception are permissible in Islam, but they can be

sanctioned only under the circumstances sanctioned by the *Sharia* and not for meeting personal gains or social reasons.

## **2.12 Status of Muslim Women in India**

The Shariat Act 1937, officially known as the Muslim Personal Law (*Shariat*) Application Act XXVI of 1937 is applied to Muslims in India as their personal law. It deals with intestate succession, special property of females including personal property inherited or obtained under contract of gift, marriage, dissolution of marriage, maintenance, dower, guardian ship, gifts, trust and trust properties and wakfs. The rest of the areas come under the national legislature such as Indian Penal code, Criminal Procedure Code etc (Khan 1993). In spite of the rights granted by the religion and the state, the situation of Indian Muslim women tends to be different from what is written in the texts to what is actually practiced. According to Mistry (2005), the Muslim women in India are socially and economically deprived as they are part of larger Muslim community, which is also relatively disadvantaged.

There is a great discrepancy between the idealised concept of women in Islam and the actual life situations in which women find themselves, especially in matters of inheritance rights. Due to seclusion, lack of education and prevalence of certain customs and traditions Indian Muslim women have not been able to take benefit of their inheritance right granted by religion (Agarwal 1994; Mistry 1995; Kabeer 1999).

Banu's (1995) study among Muslims Bhoras in Udaipur finds that majority of women were ignorant about their property rights under Shariat and were generally deprived of their share in parental property. If anybody challenged this situation, it merely led to animosity between brothers and

sisters and never ending litigations. Jain's (1995) study on Sunni Muslim women in Jaipur revealed that very few women have in reality received any share in natal property and fewer women were actually aware of their property rights. Besides many have not much knowledge about their rights in husband's property (Singh 1992)

The situation of marriage customs is also not very different. *Mehr* has become a customary token where dowry overruns the amount of *mehr* or small portion is given at the time of marriage while the rest is deferred for a later time (Engineer 1995). Besides, in communities where marriage contract need not be written down, it becomes difficult for women to claim her *mehr* after divorce or widowhood. As *nikkah* is a contract, religion insists on the consent of both parties involved in the *nikkah*, but in practice it is a mere formality, so far as the girl is concerned. Similarly though widow marriage and divorce are allowed in Islam, they are generally frowned upon, especially among the middle and upper classes (Arya 2000).

Though *Khul'a* provides right of divorce to Muslim women, in practice however it is difficult for a woman to obtain divorce by exercising *Khul'a*, while it is easier for a man to exercise his right to *talaq*. Husband can freely divorce his wife without giving any reason by uttering triple *talaq* in one sitting itself (Mistry 2005). The rule which demand *talaq* to be pronounced at different occasions is not followed thereby making it *talaq-i-bida* or innovative form of divorce (Engineer 1995). For women who have to avail divorce through *fasq*, it usually turns out to be time consuming and tedious procedure (Bhaskar 1996). Singh (1992) also finds in her study on Lucknow and Delhi Muslims that women here seldom or never gets their *mahr* or their share in the property. Regarding family planning, Mistry (1995) lists the reasons for non acceptance of family

planning by Muslims in India as low educational level, low socio-economic status, male dominance, lack of spousal communication and overall low status of women along with some degree of opposition on the grounds of religion.

It is evident that Muslim women in India themselves are looking forward for a change in their present situation. The famous Shah Bano Case, where an illiterate Muslim woman from Rajasthan approached the court for alimony after divorce and was granted the same, is an example (Khan 1993). Indian Muslim women are not just under the influence of Islamic law but factors such as modernisation, urbanisation, secularisation, industrialisation, Indianisation and Islamisation influence their life as result of which according to Asrafi (1992) Muslim society in India is passing through a transitional phase of tradition-modernity-continuum with a resolve to maintaining the real Islamic cult. Nasrin's (2012) study of Muslim women from Uttar Pradesh clearly showed that Muslim women want to improve their quality of life in general. It was concluded from that study that education for Muslim women is necessary to achieve the goal of democracy and equality. But the actual change will set in only when Muslim women themselves start thinking about their rights and aspire to come out of the four walls of their home. It is also necessary for them to feel the need to share the responsibilities of society and participate in all spheres of life equally with men.

### **2.13 Status of Muslim women in Kerala**

Muslim women in Kerala have benefitted from the social development witnessed by the state but their condition cannot be said to be much different from their counter-parts in other parts of the country. Menon's (1981) study

of Muslim women in South Kerala is an important work that clearly highlights the low level of education and work participation among women in the community. Polygyny is also cited as major issue confronting Kerala Muslim women (Bhaskar 1996). Sharma (1998) has given accounts and case studies of Malabar Muslim women who are victims of Arab marriages, child marriages and unilateral *talaqs*.

Ephroz's (2003) study of Kashmiri and Kerala women's opinions regarding personal laws related to marriage revealed that, Kerala women in spite of being in more advantageous position in terms of education and social development, also tend to be more religious minded and prefer to observe only those practices that is approved by religion. Their attitude towards polygyny, divorce and many other issues were more conservative than one would expect. This according to the author shows the better understanding of Islam by the Muslim women in Kerala.

Basheer's (2001) article in an English daily reveals the practice of child marriage in Malabar. This has led to a situation where women become grandmothers by the age of 30 years thereby leading to vast gap in their chronological age and social age. He writes that polygyny in Kerala has given way to serial marriages where women are being abandoned or given *talaq* with the intention of taking another woman as wife. According to the census of 2001, Kerala Muslim women have one of the lowest level work participation of 5.9% in the country.

In spite of all this, it has to be acknowledged that status of Muslim women in Kerala has definitely improved from what it was in the past. Mohammed (2007) is of the opinion that there is an improvement in the educational and employment scenario of Muslims girls in Kerala in the

recent years, with girls performing better than boys, though they are far behind than their peers in other communities. Involvement of various religious and non religious organisations in delivering educational services, especially for higher education, is underway and has met with some improvement in girls taking up higher education especially medicine and engineering. Muslim Educational Society (MES), Muslim Service Society (MSS); Citizen's Intellectual Educational Social and Cultural Organization (CIESCO), Kerala Naduvathul Mujahideen (KNM) etc are a few examples (Osella and Osella, 2007a; Osella and Osella, 2008).

#### **2.14 Status of Women and its Influence on Girl Child**

An issue that is most deeply embedded with the status of women in society is the status of girl child. According to Moursund and Kravdal (2003), considering sons as more valuable than daughters may be an indication of women's low autonomy. Women may themselves have an inferior position relative to men in several ways and expect the life for their daughters to be similar, or may base this expectation on perceptions of women's position more generally. According to Rustagi (2004) the lower status ascribed to women stemming from societal beliefs and practices that view them as burdens, costs and dangers to family honour and dignity, further intensify son preference. This along with patrilineal property transfer, and patrilineal ritualistic practices lay an emphasis on the need of at least one male offspring.

The status of girl child or a boy child in a society tends to be influenced by both economical and cultural factors. Kishor (1993) refers to these as economical worth and cultural worth of children. She has attempted to examine the influence of economic worth and cultural worth

of daughters' vis-à-vis sons. Economic worth is measured on the basis of labour force participation and the cultural worth is determined by the kinship system. Economic worth depends on the child's expected future contribution to the material needs of the household by their participation in economic production. When it is less likely that females will participate in the labour force, then in those societies their economic worth tend to be diminished. The heavy dowry payments further raises the economic cost of raising the daughter.

The cultural worth of the children is determined by the kinship structure. In a patrilineal society, sons are seen as a source of power, prestige and family honour, which tends to lower the cultural worth of girls. Besides other kinship rules such as descent, property inheritance, and post marital residence (that also highlight which gender provides old age care for the parents) also determines the cultural worth of the children of each gender. In most of the cases these two factors work together to determine the status of a girl or boy child in a society. In order to bring about a change in women's position in a patrilineal setup, Kishor (1993) suggest that increased labour force participation is required. This, according to her, can change women's perceptions of self worth and worth of their female children. She further notes that women's economic activity may counter male centered kinship arrangements and a female centered kinship arrangement may counter low female economic participation.

### **2.15 Status of Girl Child in Patrilineal System**

Evidence from the various available sources indicates that the discrimination against the girl child is a serious issue existing in Asian countries including India. Gupta et al. (2003) examines the persistence of son

preference in the diverse economic environments of China, India, and Korea, and argue that these countries are characterised by similar patriarchal family systems that create disincentives to raise daughters. Miller's (2001) article focus on the increasing use of sex-selective abortion in several Asian populations since the early 1980s. The main reasons she observes for such a scenario in countries like India, China, Korea, Pakistan is the existence of a patriarchal culture, where males dominate economic, political, social, and ideological spheres. Socially, she notes that the kinship systems in these regions emphasise the importance of male relatives, solidarity among male kin and separation of female kin from each other through exogamy, and dowry systems which require heavy expenditures for the marriage of a daughter but not for a son.

Preference for boy child and aversion towards girl child in India has been documented by several studies. A literature search for the status of girl child always leads to the topic of son preference. Borooah and Iyer (2005) in their paper extend the notion of 'son preference to a complementary concept of daughter aversion'. They argue that just as sons bring 'benefits' to their parents, daughters impose 'costs'. Consequently, complementing a desire to have sons is a desire not to have daughters. Hassan et al.'s (2008) study on women in Haryana points out the importance of sons in strong patriarchal communities. Here a son is considered as one who supplements family income, brings in dowry, provide old age security and above all a matter of social status. On the other hand a daughter is a drain on one's resources; she has to be provided with dowry, followed by a continuing flow of wealth and goods for different family occasions, from the natal home to in-laws home. Above all she is a 'paraya dhan' where her allegiance, economical contributions if any and her contribution to carry on

the patriline are all transferred to husband's house after marriage. This increases the value of sons and costs of the daughters.

The consequences of this gender preference are severe for the girl child. Strong preference for sons usually leads to a skewed sex composition of the family mainly through foeticide, infanticide and relative neglect of girls in health and nutrition leading to higher rates of female than male mortality during childhood (Kevane and Levine 2003). Agrawal and Unisa's (2007) study on girl child in Haryana shows that there exist in the state, significant sex-selective discriminatory mechanisms against the girl child after conception and during her childhood, through sex selective abortions and gender discrimination in child immunisation.

Gupta's (1987) study on selective discrimination against female children in rural Punjab is an important work that brings to light the strong son preference and excess discrimination against female child in this area. The neglect of female child has led to great inequality in male and female post neonatal mortality. This is mainly because of differential allocation of food and medical care favouring the boys over girls. Arokiasamy's (2000) findings indicate the many distinguishing features of the connections between culture, development and gender bias in child health care and child mortality in India. The costs of son preference have an effect on the parents too. The consequences for not bearing a son is even seen a risk for marital disruption (Bose and South 2003). Son preference can also affect the fertility preference of the parents. Clark (2000) reports that on an average, girls belong to larger families because families with girls tend to become large in an effort to have boys. Moreover, large families with many girls are often the families that did not want many girls. At the same time sex preferences, especially the desire for sons, can strongly influences

a couple's decision regarding reducing their ideal family size downward, with an intention of not having any more daughters (Das 1987).

The scene in South India is also not very favourable for girl child. Raju's (1988) study on the status of tribal and rural women in Karnataka has revealed that the birth of a female child was considered as burden among the above mentioned groups. The main reasons for this attitude towards the girl child are the large dowry and other expenses that have to be spend upon her. In addition, male children are favoured as they perpetuate their line of inheritance. Jayasree et al.'s (1989) study of Tamil women brings into light the issue of son preference and the consequent neglect of female child among the universally patrilineal Tamil society. The issue is so serious that female infanticide is also being practiced by certain communities in Tamilnadu.

If low status of women is highlighted as the reason for low status of girl child, then empowering women can definitely improve the status of girl child in the society. Pande and Aston (2007) based on their study in rural India, demonstrates an enormous influence of women's education particularly higher education- for weakening son preference. Murthi et al. (1995) argues that female labour participation could be favourable to the status of girl child in several ways. It can raise the returns on investment made on the girl child, lower dowry levels, lower parents dependence on sons during old age, raise the bargaining power of women within household and above all increase the status of women and thereby the status of girl child.

Ahmed and Bould (2004) found in their study that women employed in garment factories in Bangladesh, no longer look down on their daughters and neither do they look forward to depending on their sons. They feel that

their daughters, especially with an education, would be able to provide them with security in their old age. Croll (2006) argues that the cause of girls might be served better by an emphasis on girls' rights embedded in frameworks that include both gender entitlements and expectations of children and by taking campaigns directly into the familial environment.

### **2.16 Status of Girl child in Matrilineal System**

In a matrilineal society the role of a boy is to be theoretically performed by a girl. Her income, allegiance and her children all belongs to her natal family rather than her husband's. In addition, where the rule is matrilineal she tends to provide old age security and support to her parents during any crises. This support cannot be expected from sons, as they will be married out. According to Mahadevan and Jayasree (1998) among matrilineal Kurichias and Nayars, girl child was given great importance and was seldom treated as unwanted. This preference for girl child is also evident among Malaysian matrilineal Muslims (Ling Pong 1994).

Marak (2012) reports that among matrilineal Garos, a girlchild is received with much joy and expectation in a family, irrespective of her being the first or the third child. Pakyntein (1999) also found that there is a preference for girl child over boy child among matrilineal Khasi. At the same time there are other studies that question the desirability of girl child in matrilineal societies. Subba (2008) however doubts these findings especially among Khasi of Meghalaya. She writes that all this does not indicate that Meghalaya has any perceptible sex preference for girl child, as one would theoretically expect from a matrilineal state, especially as Pakyntein's study referred to above showed. Therefore, preference for girl child in Meghalaya in general and Khasi society in particular still remains tentative.

The present situation of girl child in Kerala has raised several concerns. A key indicator of this is the increasing number of males in the sex ratio of children aged less than six years. As per the 2001 Census, in the 0-6 age-group, the state's sex ratio was 963, i.e., 963 girls for per 1000 boys. The similar figure in 2011 census was 965 females for per 1000 males. Rajan et al. (2000) cautions that either excess female child mortality due to post natal discrimination or sex selective abortion or some combination of two must be the reason for adverse juvenile sex ratio in the state. Similarly Sudha et al. (2007) paper on gender bias among matrilineal Nairs of Kerala, has pointed out this shift towards son preference over daughters.

Rustagi (2000) also draws attention to this phenomena in the state, where boys out number girls in the 0-6 years category. Basu (2000a) finds that processes of modernisation and sanskratisation have a role in creating such a scenario. Hence an attempt to find the attitude towards girl child and their present socio-cultural scenario is an important step in framing policies in direction of their status enhancement.

This brief review of literature on women shows the wide ranging aspects concerning the socio-cultural status of women in both patrilineal and matrilineal settings. Researches on Nair and Khasi matriliney are plenty. However studies concerning the social, economical and cultural status of matrilineal Mappila Muslim women are few and far between. Moreover there is no work particularly referring to comparative study of patrilineal and matrilineal Muslim women in Malabar. In this context, it was considered appropriate to carry out a detailed study of the present situation of Mappila women in Malabar in order to bring to light the cultural influence in determining their status and autonomy as well as the future of girl child among them.

### 3.1 Theoretical Frame Work

'A General Theory of Gender Stratification' by Rae Lesser Blumberg (1984) provides the conceptual framework to analytically comprehend the status of women in two different kinship systems. She proposed this theory taking into account the ideological, biological and structural (economic) factors affecting the status of women. Blumberg (1984: 49) writes that "For women, the most important source of power affecting their position in a sexual stratification system is economic". She further observes that there are three sets of resources that contribute to female economic power, kinship system being one of them (and other two being strategic indispensability of women's work and social relation of production).

According to Blumberg, women may benefit from some aspect of kin arrangement while being disadvantaged by others. She ranks inheritance as the most important kinship/familial variable followed by residence and finally descent, in having an impact on women's economic power. Here, inheritance is of prime importance because women's de facto share in property they actually control, according to Blumberg, is a direct component of their economic power. The most favourable residence pattern according to Blumberg is where the bride continues to reside with her female kin who control the residence and the domestic property, and provide her with solidarity, group alliance and support. The least favourable pattern is where

the bride leaves her home to marry into a complete patrilineal system. With regard to descent also, Blumberg feels that women fare best in matrilineal system and worse in patrilineal system, though she points out that the status of women need not always be high in a matrilineal system.

Blumberg's theory draws attention to macro level societies that have been traditionally male dominated, acting as a "discount rate" reducing the full face value of women's relative economic power at the more micro level. At the same time, favorable macro levels tend to cushion women's less favorable micro level positions.

Blumberg then proceeds to list out a set of 'life options', in other words, the manifestation of privilege, prestige and freedom that a woman tends to enjoy as a result of her access to power. Some of these life options affect at the micro level of household, while the others, at the macro levels of the society. These life options include:

- Control over fertility which includes age at first birth, age at last birth, preferred sex ratio of children, total family size and means of intervention resorted to;
- Freedom in terms of marriage, i.e., whether to marry as well as when to marry and whom to marry;
- Freedom for divorce as to which spouse has greater freedom and more grounds to end marriage;
- Women's freedom for pre-marital and extra-marital sexual activities;
- Women's control over household decision making;
- Freedom of movement;
- Access to education.

Blumberg's theory's main concern is the economic power for women, and kinship system is one condition that explains why women may have higher or lower economic power. This implies that in concert with economic factors, cultural and normative values of the society can act as mediating agents in shaping the status of women and determining how much or what kind of influence they can wield. This is emphasised by Hyman Rodman (1972), in his 'Theory of Resources in Cultural context'. The theory was developed by Rodman using comparative data on marital power structure of United States, France, Greece and Yugoslavia. Based on this, he arrived at four ideal types of society ranging from egalitarian to patriarchal where the effects of resources on power tend to be different under different cultural or normative conditions. According to him, 'decision making behaviour is influenced by the interaction between resources and cultural definitions' (60).

Rodman (1967: 322) formulated a theoretical statement about marital power as:

'The balance of marital power is influenced by the interaction of (1) the comparative resources of husband and wife and (2) the sub cultural expectation about distribution of marital power.' At a time when researchers mainly concentrated on material resources as an independent variables in determining the status of women at micro and macro levels, Rodman's theory suggests that non-material dimensions of social structure also tend to operate as direct and indirect resources in determining the conjugal power or decision making within the family. The larger cultural context in which the marital relationship exists, is as important as the economic contribution of the couples, in influencing the marital power and sometimes even overrides the effects of resources.

This theory was applied to matrilineal societies by Warner et al. (1986). They argued that resources need not be material resources alone but they can include family organisational patterns especially residence and descent practices, and these resources may be at least as important as material resources in determining the conjugal power structure. Their study supported the hypothesis that wives have more power in marriage and a better position in conjugal power in societies with matrilineal rather than patrilineal customs of residence and descent. Rodman's theory, thus applied to a matrilineal society, tries to explain that the marital power results not only from an unequal contribution of resources but also from the larger cultural context within which marital relationships exists. Here the matrilineal group may constitute a social resource for the wife.

Closely related to the status of women is the status of girl child. Cain (1993: 44) defines women's status in terms of 'the extent of women's economic dependence on men'. This dependence can lead to a preference for the sex of children. According to Cain's (1993) Theory of Children as Potential Risk Insurance, in societies where women are excluded from mainstream economic activities and control over property, parents will automatically place greater premium on sons. Secondly, economic dependence of women on men creates special risks for women such as economic insecurity caused by widowhood, divorce, separation or even ill health and ageing process of the husband. In such situations an important source of insurance against losing the economic support from husbands are sons. Thus, the circumstances of women's economic vulnerability tend to influence the role and importance of sons and daughters as sources of security.

While studying the women in a matrilineal group, attention is also drawn towards the resilience of matrilineality amid several agents of change.

The concept of Doxa by Bourdieu (1977) helps to understand how matrilineal culture has continued to exist among the Mappilas of Malabar, and how its members still adhere to it despite several of its features getting diluted. In a traditional society, every established order tends to produce the naturalisation of its own arbitrariness i.e. the natural and social world appear as self-evident. According to Bourdieu (1977: 166) this is a feature of ‘Doxic’ society where the ‘established cosmological and political order is perceived not as arbitrary, i.e., as one possible order among others, but as self-evident and natural order which without saying and therefore goes unquestioned’.

Through ‘Doxa’, Bourdieu conceptualises the natural attitude or taken for granted attitude towards a pre-conscious understanding of this world and how one’s place in that shapes one’s more conscious awareness. As individuals participate in social life, they tend to develop a knowledge of it, which is built into specific relationships they inhabit and into specific modes of cultural understanding. Bourdieu suggests that our everyday life involvements invest us with a great deal of practical knowledge which at the same time requires us to misrecognise much of what we and other people do. This understanding becomes misrecognition because one cannot be objective outside one’s own relationship, and hence cannot see them from all possible angles.

In a later work Bourdieu (2000: 185) writes ‘The knowledge supplied by incorporation of the necessity of the social world, especially in the form of sense of limits, is quite real, like the submission which it implies and which is sometimes expressed in the imperative statements of resignation: ‘That’s not for us’ (or ‘not for the likes of us’) or, more simply, ‘It’s too expensive’ (for us)’. Thus, it can be seen that Doxa for Bourdieu is a natural attitude, linked to a particular habitus, that is seen as defining perceptions and opinions which have not been subjected to reflective thoughts.

Two divides persist in academic research on the factors influencing the status of women, splitting researchers between cultural factors and economic factors. The above descriptions suggest that cultural and economical factors interact together to determine the position of women in the family and society. They complement each other and provide conceptual tools for the purpose of comparisons across two different social groups. The aforementioned works are hence considered appropriate to be utilised as the theoretical frame work to study the influence of context on the status of women.

### **3.2 Statement of the Problem**

Malabar presents an interesting cultural context to study the issues of women mainly because of the heterogeneity with regards to kinship system and marriage norms. Matriliney or *marumakkathayam* has been an important social feature among various religious and caste groups of Malabar. Mappila Muslims are one among them. Though the other matrilineal groups have moved away from many of its characteristics such as matrilocality and matrilineage, Mappilas of Malabar still adhere to it. At the same time both matriliney and patriliney co-exist among Mappila Muslims of Malabar thereby providing an opportunity to study the status of women belonging to same religious, social and geographic background but from two different kinship systems.

According to Dube (1988), kinship system is not merely a moral code but can influence the formation of family and household, residence at marriage, resource distribution including inheritance, and obligation and responsibilities of individual members of the group, including women. Even in this age of modernisation a patriarchal society is criticised for its

treatment of women and their exclusion from social and economic resources. Under these circumstances it becomes utmost important to find out whether an existing matrilineal group is actually beneficial for its female members. Hence the research tries to illustrate the sensitivity of status variation in gender systems by finding out whether the status of women differs with the variation in social context.

The works on matrilineal Muslim women in Malabar and Muslim women in general in Kerala focus on one or another aspect of their status such as education, fertility performances, age at marriage, polygyny and other issues related to Muslim personal law and women. Studies that concentrate on the multi-dimensional nature of the status of Mappila women in Malabar are few and far between. The multi-dimensional nature of status of women means that women may tend to have control over certain aspects of their life but may have a lesser degree of it in other areas. Hence it is relevant to recognise the fact that women tend to fare differently with regard to various dimensions of 'status of women'. Therefore the study acknowledges the need to look into the status of women separately at macro and micro levels.

The study also attempts to find out the reasons for continuance and change of matriliney among the Mappilas of Malabar. Mappilas, being a Muslim community is guided by the values of Islam, whose patriarchal rules are bound equally with both the social systems. With the main backbone of matrilineal system, i.e., the property inheritance, giving way to *Sharia* law, it is a matter of curiosity as to how and why this system continues to survive among the Mappilas of Malabar. Is it mere adherence to a traditionally practiced system or is it because of the benefits the system extends to its members, especially women?

The present research attempts to find answers to these questions by carrying out a comparative analysis of the socio-cultural status of Mappila Muslim women in the matrilineal and patrilineal families of Malabar and thereby assess whether the general assumption that matriliney favours women is a reality or myth.

### **3.3 Objectives**

- 1) To find out the access to and control of economic resources by matrilineal and patrilineal women.
- 2) To assess the macro level status of Muslim women in Malabar with special reference to kinship.
- 3) To evaluate and compare the micro level autonomy enjoyed by matrilineal and patrilineal women.
- 4) To examine the factors that can affect the life options available to matrilineal and patrilineal women.
- 5) To compare the matrilineal and patrilineal women's culturally determined notion of acceptance of girl child and thereby appraise their socio-cultural status.
- 6) To examine the reasons for resilience and transformation of matriliney among Mappilas of Malabar.

### **3.4 Hypotheses**

Based on the extensive review of related literature and personal discussion with experts in the field, the following major hypotheses were postulated for empirical validations.

1. There is an association between kinship systems of Mappila Muslim women of Malabar and the following variables:
  - a) Access to economic resources
  - b) Macro level status indicators
  - c) Micro level status indicators
  - d) Acceptance of girl child
2. Macro level and micro level life options of women tend to vary with the level of education.
3. There is a difference in the influence of economic factor on the autonomy of matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women.

### **3.5 Clarification of Concepts**

- **Mappila Muslim Women**

Mappila Muslim women in the present study include married Muslim women who belong to Kannur and Kozhikode districts of Malabar in Northern Kerala.

- **Kinship System**

According to Theodorson and Theodorson (1969) kinship system is a customary system of statuses and roles that govern the behavior of the people who are related with each other through marriage or descent from a common ancestor. In the present research kinship system refers to matrilineal and patrilineal kinship systems and their related features such as lineage, residence and inheritance pattern.

- **Matrilineal women**

Women whose lineages are traced through their mother's taravad or ancestral home are referred to as matrilineal women.

- **Patrilineal women**

Women whose lineages are traced through their father's taravad or ancestral home are referred to as patrilineal women.

- **Status of women**

In the study, the status of women refers to the 'Life Options' available to matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslim women of Malabar.

- **Life options**

According to Blumberg (1984), 'Life Options' are a set of measurable opportunities and freedom available to women as a result of relative economic power. Life options in this research have been operationalised to include women's relative freedom in terms of marriage, control over fertility, access to higher education and employment and autonomy.

- **Macro level status Indicators**

Macro level indicators include those indicators that can be measured at an aggregate level of society and can be influenced by policy interventions. The macro level status indicators included in the present research are age at first marriage, prevalence of dowry system, age at first child birth, number of children, contraceptive use, level of education and participation in employment.

- **Micro level status Indicators**

The micro level status indicators show the ability of women to make decisions affecting the circumstances of their own lives within the household. In the present study ‘autonomy of women’ is taken as an indicator of women’s status at the micro level.

- **Autonomy**

Dimensions of autonomy measured in this study are autonomy in economic decision making, freedom of movement and freedom from spousal violence.

- **Economic resources**

Economic resources examined in the present study are property inheritance, dowry and gifts from husband.

### **3.6 Variables**

As the main aim of the study is to compare matrilineal and patrilineal women, the key independent variable in the analysis is the kinship system. Other independent variables considered are age, education, rural-urban difference, standard of living and natal inheritance. Macro level life options, autonomy, and access to economic resources are the dependent variables. The interplay of these variables analysed in the following chapters are expected to throw light on the socio-cultural status of Mappila Muslim women in Malabar.

### **3.7 Research Design**

The present study attempts to examine the status of Mappila Muslim women in Malabar with a special emphasis on the influence of matrilineal and patrilineal kinship system in determining their socio-cultural status. Hence an analytical cum descriptive design is adopted.

### **3.8 Universe of the Study**

The universe of this study includes the married Mappila Muslim women from the districts of Kozhikode and Kannur, where Mappila Muslim households that practice matrilineal system and matrilineage are common even now. In the other districts of Malabar, these households are just sparingly seen and hence not included in the study.

### **3.9 Pilot Study**

A pilot study was conducted in the districts of Kannur and Kozhikode in order to prepare a broad plan of the research to be undertaken. It helped to narrow down the universe of the study as well as to assess the feasibility of the study. The discussions with the respondents as well as some eminent personalities from different walks of life helped in gaining a comprehensive knowledge about the various dimensions of the research problem. The pilot study also helped in acquiring a better understanding of the variables of the study, in formulating the hypothesis that has to be tested in the course of the research, and the nature of tool to be prepared for data collection.

### **3.10 Sample, Sample Size and Method of Sampling**

The pilot study revealed that the greater part of the Muslims in Kannur district are matrilineal and follow matrilocality. In Kozhikode, matriliney in its traditional form is concentrated mainly in the urban areas of Kozhikode Corporation and to a lesser extent in the town of Vadakara and Quilandy. Except these coastal areas, Muslims in Kozhikode district follow partiliney and patrilocality. Meanwhile, in Kannur district Muslims who are traditionally patrilineal and patrilocal are found only in four panchayats lying closer to the boundary of Kozhikode district.

They are Kunnothuparamba, Tripangottur, Kariyad and some areas of Pannoor.

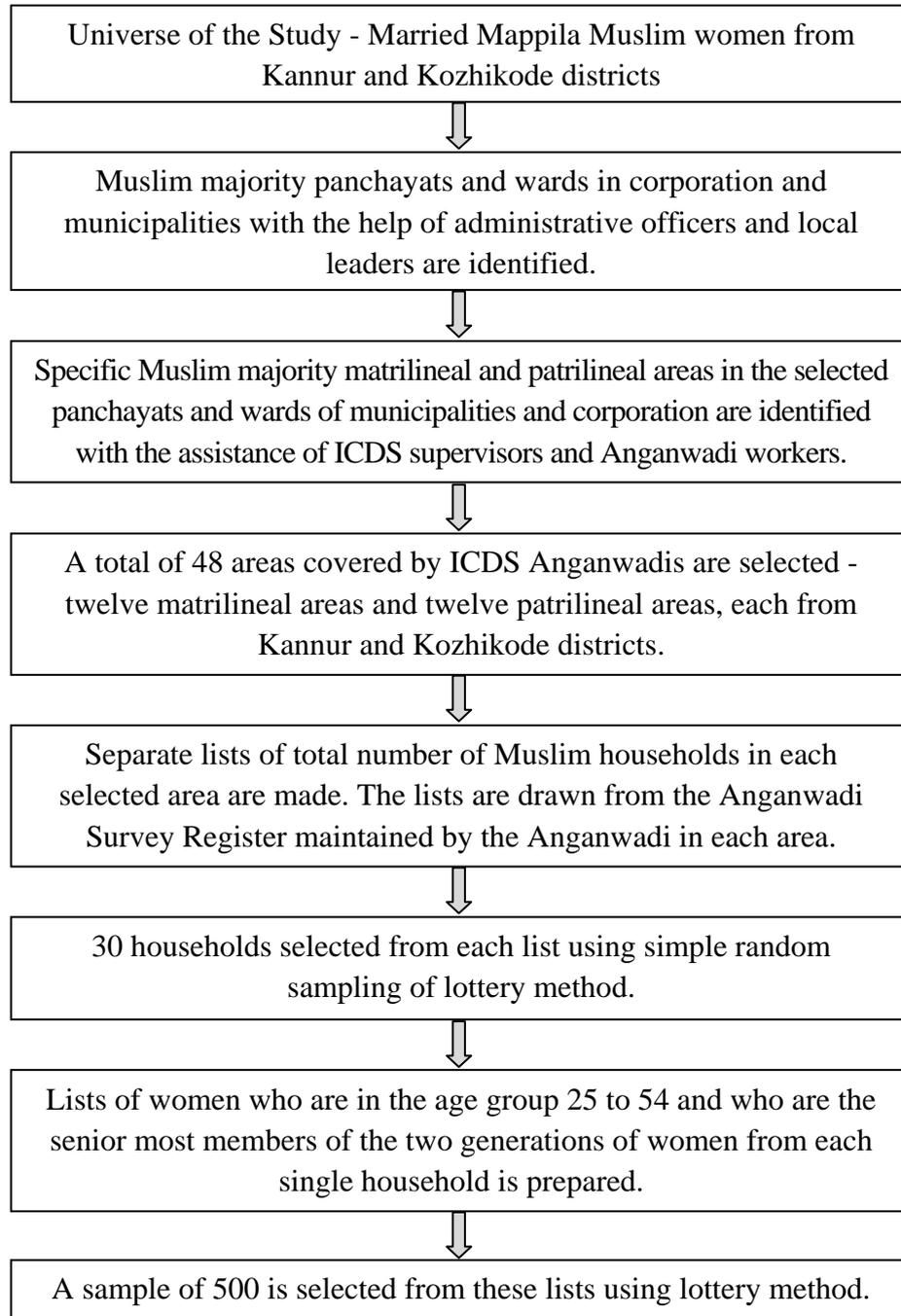
The sample size for the present study is 500. As this is a comparative study, 250 respondents is drawn from the matrilineal areas and 250 from patrilineal areas. Out of the 250 matrilineal samples, 125 are drawn from Kannur district and 125 from Kozhikode district. Similarly, for patrilineal sample 125 are selected from Kannur district and 125 from Kozhikode district.

The matrilineal households in these areas are comprised of many sisters residing with the mother as in the case of extended family, or two or more sisters living with their married daughters and grandchildren under a single roof as in the case of a *taravad*. There are many households whose senior most members are aged above 70 years. Similarly in the patrilineal areas, a daughter-in-law or more than one daughters-in-law may be residing with the mother-in-law in the same house. However, large joint family taravads are not found among the patrilineal Muslims. Nuclear families are also common in both the areas. Taking these factors into consideration only the women who are in the age group 25 to 54, and who are the senior most members of the two generations of women, from a single household are included in the list for sample selection. The reason for selecting this age group is that the research depends on self reported account of women on their socio-cultural status. Hence this age group with 25 years as the lower limit is expected to have enough experience to give accurate account of their situation and perception regarding matters related to family, property and kinship. At the same time higher age limit is kept as 54years in order to include only those women who have experienced matriliney after the system underwent various reforms and changes.

A combination of probability and non-probability sampling procedure has been made use of at different levels of selecting the sample. In the first stage Muslim majority wards in panchayat, municipality and corporation in the selected districts were identified with the help of local administrative staff and leaders. In the second stage specific matrilineal and patrilineal areas within these selected wards were sorted out with the help of Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) officials and Anganwadi workers. Anganwadi Survey Register 2009–2010 served as the sample frame for drawing the list of sample as it maintains the information about each household in the area allotted to each Anganwadi and also maintains religion-wise list of population in panchayats and corporations. Based on the information obtained through purposive non-probability random sampling, 12 matrilineal areas and 12 patrilineal areas from each district were selected – a total of 48 areas from Kannur and Kozhikode districts.

In the next stage, lists of Muslim households under each selected Anganwadi were made. From each list 30 households were selected using simple random sampling of lottery method. From these selected households a list of women who were in the age group 25 to 54 and who were also the senior-most members in the first two generations in each selected household was prepared. Out of the 48 areas covered, 10 women each were selected from 44 areas using lottery method, thus drawing a sample of 440. From the remaining 4 areas, 15 respondents each were selected. Thus the total sample size was 500. The last 4 areas were selected on the basis of the highest number of Muslim females, two from patrilineal areas and two from matrilineal areas of two districts each.

### **Sampling Method**



### **3.11 Tool for data collection**

The data collection for the research was chiefly based on primary and secondary data. For the collection of primary data, an interview schedule with both open and close ended questions was used. An interview schedule was opted for data collection in view of the fact that respondents were mainly house wives from diverse backgrounds such as different levels of education, rural-urban background, and economic setting ranging from low to high. In order to achieve maximum response rate under these circumstances, the close-ended questions were mainly dichotomous ones. Some open-ended questions included in the schedule were essentially employed to elicit qualitative data from the respondents.

The secondary data were collected from the existing literature and related articles from books, journals, periodicals, newspaper reports, websites, and publications of governmental and nongovernmental committees. In-depth interviews and correspondences were carried out with noted educationists, social activists, historians and administrative functionaries.

### **3.12 Pre Test**

Once the interview schedule was prepared, a pretest of the schedule was carried out in order to ascertain whether the tool for data collection was relevant, adequate to achieve research objectives and suited to the understanding of the respondents. A total of 50 married women, 25 from matrilineal group and 25 from patrilineal group, were interviewed for pretest. Following the pretest necessary modifications were made in the interview schedule.

### **3.13 Field Work**

The field work was carried out during the period of 2010-2011. The respondents were contacted with the help of Anganwadi staff who were well acquainted with the respondents, and therefore it was easy to establish rapport with the majority of the respondents. However one of the difficulties faced during the interview was to elicit information from respondents who belonged to higher age group and those with low level of education. In some patrilocal extended households, the interviewer also had problems in getting responses to questions of personal nature especially if the respondent was in the presence of mother-in-law or any other family members. In such cases other members were requested to leave the respondent alone with the interviewer, which at times was not amiably acknowledged.

### **3.14 Analysis and Interpretation**

A qualitative cum quantitative technique has been adopted for data analysis. The data collected with the help of interview schedule was edited, coded, tabulated and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Since the respondents were housewives with different educational, rural-urban and socioeconomic background and in order to increase the response rate, they were asked to give either 'yes' or 'no' answers. It is usually not easy to generate a summated score by using dichotomous responses, because the coding involved is not similar to that of a Likert scale. So it was necessary to go for data transformation.

One of the simplest ways to use certain statistical procedures with data that are not normally distributed is to transform the data. The advantage of transformations is the increase in statistical power from using

parametric statistics over nonparametric statistics. The most common method for transforming percents, proportions, and probabilities is the arcsine transformation. In this case, percentages should first be changed to proportions by dividing the percentage by 100. The usual rule of thumb is that they should be used when there are a number of proportions close to 0 and/or close to 1. The transformations will “stretch out” proportions that are close to 0 and 1 and “compress” proportions close to 0.5.

Here in this research, arcsine transformation was used where the inverse sine of the square root of the proportion was calculated or  $Y = \arcsine \sqrt{P}$  where  $p$  is the proportion and  $Y$  is the result of the transformation.

Percentages, chi- square test, ‘t’ test and ANOVA were applied to the study in order to find out the association and difference between variables. In all the cases the p-value of .05 was treated as “border- line acceptable” error level.

### **3.15 Scheme of Chapterisation**

The first chapter deals with the introduction of the topic, the status of women and the influence of context, i.e., kinship system in influencing the status of women. It also provides a historical account of Muslims in Kerala and origin of matriliney and patriliney among them. The second chapter examines the related literature on macro level and micro level status indicators of women and also socio-cultural status of women in various kinship systems and social contexts. The third chapter presents the theoretical frame work of the study and methodology. The fourth chapter probes into the personal background of the respondents. The fifth chapter looks into the access to and control of economic resources enjoyed by

women in two different kinship groups. In the sixth chapter a comparative analysis of life options as status indicators of matrilineal and patrilineal women at macro and micro levels is carried out. The effect of various independent variables in influencing the life options of matrilineal and patrilineal women are evaluated in the seventh chapter. The eighth chapter examines the acceptance of girl child in matrilineal and patrilineal kinship systems. The reasons for changes and resilience of matrilineality among Mappila Muslims of Malabar are probed into in the ninth chapter. The final tenth chapter sets forth a summary of the findings of the study followed by suggestions and recommendations for challenging the repressive gender norms of the society and also in improving the status of Muslim women in Malabar.

### **3.16 Limitations of the Study**

The major limitation of the research was the time taken to complete the data collection due to the distance between the area of study and the place of residence of the researcher. As an interview schedule was made use to collect the data, the researcher had to visit personally the 500 respondents to collect the information. The available literature on Mappila Muslims of Malabar primarily gives a descriptive and anthropological account of the kinship structure and social change. Very few have focused on the status of matrilineal Mappila women in Malabar. Hence the lack of literature on the status of matrilineal Muslim women in Malabar was another issue faced in the research. Yet another problem encountered was that the data collection from patrilineal houses was at times difficult because the presence of other members from husband's family made the respondent uneasy.

## *Profile of the Respondents*

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The status of women in a social group is a matter of utmost importance as it influences not only the interests of women themselves but also that of the other members of the family. It also affects the developmental issues of the society and the direction of social change. For these various reasons, the theme for International Women's Day of 2014 was aptly stated as "equality for women is progress for all". These concerns and awareness regarding women's status have led to studies that focus on women's situation in different social contexts. The present research is one such attempt to study the status of women from two different social contexts based on kinship.

Blumberg (1984) considers kinship and its features as a set of resources that can influence the status of women. Though lineage is the primary concern within a kinship group, there are its other features such as inheritance, residence and natal support that can determine the status of women vis-à-vis men in a group. By and large, it is regarded that women from egalitarian, bilateral and matrilineal societies have a better status and better life choices than patrilineal women because of the difference in the basic gender principles followed by each group. Patrilineal Mappila women in Malabar are guided by the same patriarchal Islamic rules and customs as followed by other patrilineal Muslims elsewhere in the state. Matrilineal Mappilas, on the other hand, along with strict patriarchal Islamic rules, are being able to enjoy some of the female friendly features of matrilineality such

as matrilineage and matrilocality. At the same time as Arya (2000) observes, even in a matrilineal society, women tend to stand in a better position only when they have an active role in the productive work rather than act merely as a link for inheritance and succession.

These considerations make it necessary to examine whether there are any differences in the status of married patrilineal and matrilineal Muslim women of Malabar. As the initial segment of the analysis, this chapter introduces the profile of the respondents. This includes age, education, occupation, marital status, rural-urban difference and standard of living. The purpose of this analysis is to introduce the sample as well as to give a picture of various background variables that are dealt with in the course of the study.

#### **4.1 Age**

Age is an important biological component that affects the various status indicators. Age is important because a woman's status can rise and fall over her life cycle. Gupta (1995) writes that age and life cycle of a woman determines her position relative to men in a society, and also determines her subordination to other women who are at higher status stages of their own life cycles. It can also influence household formations, inheritance, health and demographic outcomes.

The sample in this study belongs to the age group 25 years to 54 years. As the research depends on self reported account of women on their socio-cultural status, this age group with 25 years as lower limit is expected to have enough experience to give accurate account of their situations and perceptions regarding matters related to family, property and kinship. At the same time higher age limit is kept as 54 years, in order to

include only those women who have experienced matriliney after the system underwent various reforms and changes.

As the sample is spread over a period of three decades, their life experiences, access to resources etc. tends to differ. The age difference will also play a part in determining the ways women tend to internalise and enact their roles. These differences have to be taken into consideration especially while studying variables such as marriage and education. Therefore for the purpose of analysis, the sample is grouped into three age groups 25 to 34 (younger), 35 to 44 (middle) and 45 to 54 (upper).

**Table 4.1 Age**

Kinship	25-34 (younger)		35-44 (middle)		45 -54 (upper)		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliney	91	(36.4)	75	(30.0)	84	(33.6)	250	(100)
Patriliney	103	(41.2)	79	(31.6)	68	(27.2)	250	(100)
Total	194	(38.8)	154	(30.8)	152	(30.4)	500	(100)

The aforementioned table gives the structure of age groups under study. It shows that the respondents are almost evenly distributed. The analysis also reveals that the number of respondents who belong to younger age group is more among patrilineal sample than matrilineal sample. The reason for this could be that the older son in patrilineal households move out of the extended family and set up his own nuclear family as soon as the younger son gets married and brings his wife into the family. As the sample frame in the study includes the oldest women belonging to the first generation and second generation in each household, the women in these nuclear families comes within the first generation even if they belong to younger age group. While

among matrilineal respondents, where extended families are more common, the mother and an older daughter who might be in the middle age group tend to be included in the sample, thereby excluding a daughter in the younger age group. This point was repeatedly given as a positive feature of patrilineal system by matrilineal women as they felt that detaching from their matrilineal family and setting up their own nuclear family is not as easy as in a patrilineal system.

## 4.2 Education

Education opens the doors for other developments. According to National Human Development Report 2001 (GOI:48) 'Education, in the present day context, is perhaps the single most important means for individuals to improve personal endowments, build capability levels, overcome constraints, and in the process enlarge their available set of opportunities and choices for a sustained improvement in well being'. Educating females enhances a woman's ability to take part efficiently in various important social roles that are beneficial to her and her family, as well as for the economic and social development of the society. According to Summers (1993), educating females have far reaching benefits for women themselves, as it increases their value inside and outside their homes. It provides them different set of choices that they otherwise would not have access.

The excellent performance of women in Kerala in matter of literacy and education is lauded by researchers as well as policy makers. Jayasree's (1998) paper tracing the history and contemporary situation of education in Kerala, opines that education is a major factor that has contributed immensely to the better status of women in Kerala. However, low level of

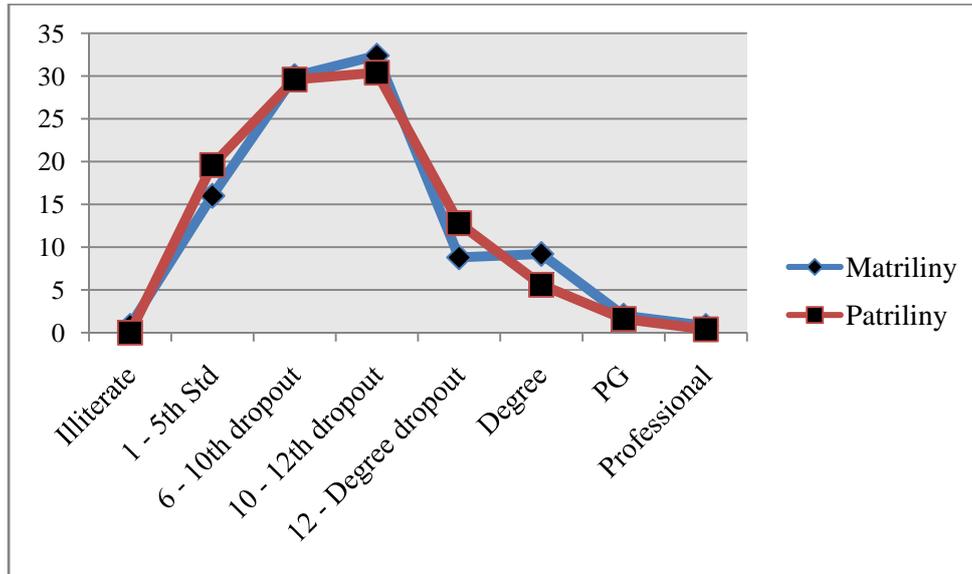
education has been associated with Muslim women in Malabar. According to Ali (1990) Mappila community has been a major contributor to the relatively poorer educational statistics in Malabar. At the same time Haneefa (2012) observes that though the Mappilas lag behind in education when compared to other communities in the region, their educational achievements are much better than Muslims in other parts of the country. Huda (2010) writes that major efforts to link the community to modern education without losing the religious and cultural identity is finding results, with more girls taking up professional courses and scoring top marks in various exams. Hence an attempt is made to assess the level of education of patrilineal and matrilineal Muslim women in the present sample.

**Table 4.2 Education**

<b>Level of Education</b>	<b>Matriliny F (%)</b>	<b>Patriliney F (%)</b>	<b>Total F (%)</b>
Illiterate	2 (.8)	0 (0)	2 (0.4)
1 - 5th Standard	40 (16.0)	49 (19.6)	89 (17.8)
6 - 10th not completed	75 (30.0)	74 (29.6)	149 (29.8)
10 to Pre Degree not completed	81 (32.4)	76 (30.4)	157 (31.4)
Pre degree to Degree not completed	22 (8.8)	32 (12.8)	54 (10.8)
Degree	23 (9.2)	14 (5.6)	37 (7.4)
PG	5 (2.0)	4 (1.6)	9 (1.8)
Professional	2 (0.8)	1 (0.4)	3 (0.6)
Total	250 (100)	250 (100)	500 (100)

The data indicates that though the difference between the two groups with regard to education is less, matrilineal women have better participation in higher education than patrilineal women. It is seen that the majority of the total sample (79.4%) falls under the first four categories i.e., below pre

degree or plus two. Women who have pursued their education beyond this level are only 20.6%.



**Figure 4.1 Education of the respondents**

These findings reflect the results of other studies on Indian Muslims in general. Based on her study on Muslim women in Kerala, Menon (1981) points out that Muslims consider women’s education as not a necessary condition and hence women miss out on their opportunity for higher education. Sachar committee (2006) reports that Muslims in India face a double disadvantage with low level of education on one hand, combined with low quality education on the other. The report further points out that this educational deprivation increases manifold as the level of education rises. Mistry’s (2005) paper on socio-economic status of Muslims in India also draws attention to the low level of higher education among Muslim women in India.

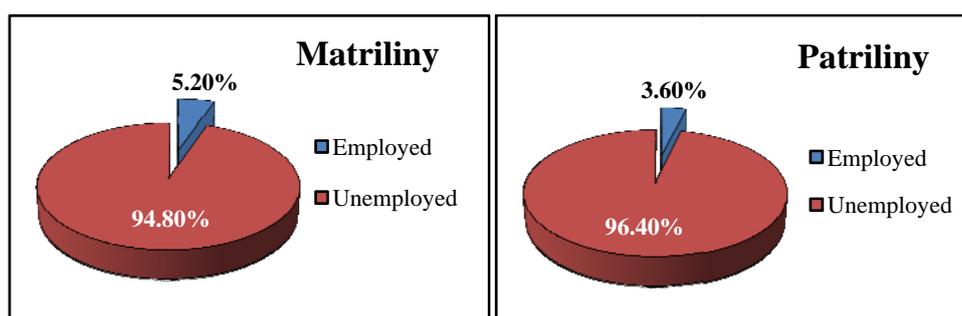
### **4.3 Employment Status**

Education is important not just for improving access to the available resources and providing personal wellbeing, but also for developing human capital and training for participation in labour market. Hence, it is important for education to manifest itself in utilising the new spheres of productive activities that can engage women. Women's work, according to Rustagi (2004), is one of the most crucial indicators of women's status and serves as an empowerment tool. Indispensability of women's labour and female work groups is considered as a top most factor in providing women security in time of any sort of hardships. At the same time it also has the ability to reduce gender inequality and increase the opportunities, power and prestige that women can command (Blumberg 1984).

Labour force participation has been cited by several authors as a major variable in enhancing the status of women and reducing their dependency. However, inspite of 'Kerala Model of development', the work participation of women in the state is low (Census of India 2001). As in education, the rate of employment among Muslim women is also very low. According to Mistry (2005), access to education and economic opportunities, is the first step towards improving the status of Muslim women in India. The situation of Malabar is no different.

Panda (2003) had revealed that urban residence is positively related with women's employment. In addition Muraleedharan (2001), in his work on empowerment of women, concludes that the post marriage period is the right time for Kerala women to step into public life. Since the matrilineal population is concentrated in urban areas of Malabar and married matrilineal women have more conducive environment for taking up jobs

outside their homes because of family support system, an attempt is made in the present study to find out whether there is any difference in the employment participation of Muslim women in this area based on their kinship systems.



**Figure 4.2 Employment Status**

The figure highlights the very low level of participation of Muslim women from both the kinship groups in employment outside home. Even though very minimal, women from matrilineal sample have slightly better work participation than patrilineal sample. It is found that most of the women who are employed are mainly in ‘women friendly’ jobs such as teaching and medicine. Only one person from patrilineal sample is working as an engineer.

Thomas’s (2008) study on professional women in Kerala has also indicated this low level of work force participation of Muslim women compared to Hindu and Christian women. According to her, this situation could be due to conservatism of Muslim community in general and the consequent non encouragement of education and employment of girls. Ashrafi’s (1992) study on Patna Muslim women too had revealed that an overwhelming majority of these women have no professional idea behind their educational pursuit. Mazumdar and Guruswamy (2006) also mention

the role of socio-cultural norms of the community, in depressing work opportunities for women.

#### 4.4 Marital Status

Marriage marks the transition from childhood to adulthood as the individual shifts the focus from the family of orientation to family of procreation. Polygynous marriages, divorce and abandonment are associated with Muslim marriages in Malabar, especially in rural areas. Basheer (2001) draws attention to practice of child marriage and divorces that are prevalent among the Muslims of Malabar. He writes that polygyny in Kerala has given way to serial marriages, where women are being abandoned or given *talaq* with the intention of taking another woman as wife. Sharma (1998) also gives accounts of Malabar Muslim women who are victims of Arab marriages, child marriages and unilateral *talaqs*. Therefore the present research tries to find out whether such practices are prevalent among the sample under study.

**Table 4.3 Marital Status**

Kinship	Monogamous Union		Divorced		Separated		Widow		Polygynous Union		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliny	222	(88.8)	2	(.8)	1	(.4)	22	(8.8)	3	(1.2)	250	(100)
Patriliney	242	(96.8)	1	(.4)	0	(0)	7	(2.8)	0	(0)	250	(100)
Total	464	(92.8)	3	(.6)	1	(.2)	29	(5.8)	3	(.6)	500	(100)

The respondents belonging to the categories of ‘divorced’ ‘separated’ and ‘in polygynous marriage’ is less than 2% in this study. 92.8% of women are presently married and are in a monogamous relationship. The rest are widows. Among the 3 instances of polygynous marriage reported,

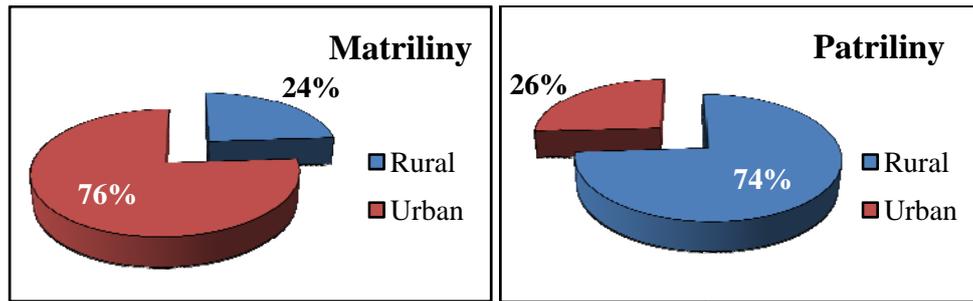
all are from matrilineal sample and one belonged to younger age group of 25 to 34. At the same time there is no reporting of polygynous unions among patrilineal population which draws attention to the fact that matrilineal residential pattern could favor men in having more than one wife as he is not under compulsion to take them to his own house. This could again be the reason why Menon's (1981) study on patrilineal Muslims did not have any polygyny reported. The single case of abandonment in the present study is also among matrilineal sample.

#### **4.5 Rural-Urban Difference**

The rural-urban difference is an important variable that can influence the life of women. They not only determine the standard of living or access to resources, but also the general outlook of people to various aspects of life. Rath (1996: 49) observes that "difference between rural and urban women become vivid in social, economic and political spheres". Rural-urban difference can influence the level of education (Jayasree 1998) as well as the demographic conditions (Murthi et al. 1995). Rural Development Statics 2011-2012 (GOI) also acknowledges the fact there is a difference in the work participation and literacy level of rural and urban women. Kishor (1995) observes that women residing in urbanised areas are believed to be more autonomous than women in rural areas. Hence any conclusion regarding the status indicators of women has to necessarily take into account this difference.

In this study, attempt was made to draw equal number of respondents from urban and rural areas. However it was not possible since matrilineality in Kozhikode is mainly an urban phenomenon confined only to a few urban areas, while patrilineality exists in both rural and urban areas. At the same time,

in Kannur matriliney is practiced by most of the Muslims in urban and rural areas, while patriliney is confined only to four rural panchayats. Hence there is a slight variation in the total sample, as given in the figure below.



**Figure 4.3 Rural-Urban Difference**

It is clear from the figure that almost three quarter of the matrilineal sample are from urban areas while similar number of patrilineal sample are from rural areas. Mohamad (2010) also has referred to this pattern of residence among Mappilas of Kannur and Kozhikode districts in his study. He writes that while patrilineal Mappilas occupy the interior suburban areas of Kozhikode and Kannur, matriliney is seen in the coastal areas that are urban centers of trade and activities. Out of the total sample 49% represent rural population and 51% are from urban areas.

#### **4.6 Standard of Living**

Standard of living is another major factor which tends to influence the status of women. Bardhan (1993) finds difference in women's position from the point of view of economic classes and points out that patriarchal family hierarchy is not uniformly oppressive across various socio-economic strata. The opportunity for employment, freedom of mobility, property inheritance etc. tends to be influenced by this variable. Based on her article

Muslims in India: Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile, Mistry (2005) argues that the Muslim women in India are socially and economically deprived as they are the part of larger Muslim community, which is also relatively disadvantaged.

In this study, very few women are employed and have an income of their own. Besides, some of the respondents belong to large joint families where more than one person contributes to the income of the family. In such a scenario, it becomes difficult to get the actual economic status of the respondent. Therefore a Standard of Living Index proposed by Roy, Jayachandran and Banerjee (1999) is used as a proxy measure for economic status of women. This is computed by assigning weights to various items ranging from household ownership of items, dwelling characteristics, home's construction materials and ownership of land. Kinra et al. (2010) considers Standard of Living Index as an appropriate measure of socio-economic position in rural India, where the joint family structure of the household renders an individual's own socio-economic position less important.

Banerjee et al. (2002) has reported in their paper that gulf migration has considerably improved the living conditions of migrant households in Kerala. Another study by Muraleedharan (2005) also reveals that women in Kerala are in a better position with regard to access to household accessories than their counterparts in other states. During the pilot study, the influence of gulf remittance was evident in the Muslim households in Malabar. Bearing in mind the nature and location of the present sample, a few changes are made from the original list of household items included by the authors. The scores in the final index range from 0 to 48. Emulating the scoring pattern of the authors, this has been categorised into Low

Standard of Living (score 0-9), Medium Standard of Living (score 10-19), and High Standard of Living (score 20-above).

**Table 4.4 Standard of Living**

Kinship	Lower		Middle		Upper		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliny	97	(38.8)	106	(42.4)	47	(18.8)	250	(100)
Patriliney	113	(45.2)	106	(42.4)	31	(12.4)	250	(100)
Total	210	(42.0)	212	(42.4)	78	(15.6)	500	(100)

The number of respondents who belongs to lower standard of living are found to be more among patrilineal sample and those belonging to upper standard of living are found more in the matrilineal sample. This could be because of the concentration of patrilineal sample in the rural areas, while matrilineal sample are mainly from the urban areas. Another reason could be the importance of trade and cash economy among the urban matrilineal Mappilas (Ossella and Osella 2007a; Kanchana 2011).

#### **4.7 Summary**

The aim of the present chapter is to introduce the sample as well as to give a picture of the various independent variables that are dealt in the course of the study. The profile of the respondents shows that the respondents are almost evenly distributed with regard to the age. The younger age group (25-34) represents 38.8% of the total sample, while the middle (35-44) and upper (45-54) categories represent 30.8% and 30.4 % respectively. At the same time number of respondents who belongs to the younger age group is more for patrilineal sample than matrilineal sample. The data reveals that majority of the total sample (79.4%) have an

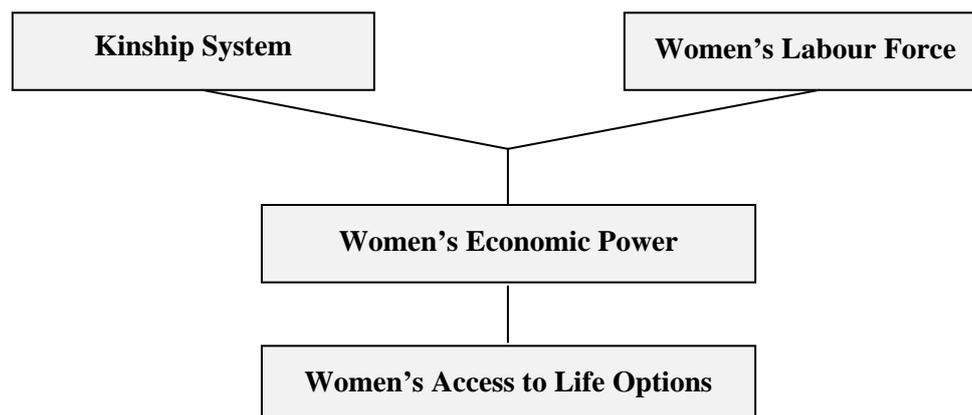
education below pre degree or plus two, thus pointing towards the low level of education among Muslim women in Malabar. However, matrilineal women (12.0%) have better participation in higher education than patrilineal women (7.6%). In the case of employment, only 5.2% of matrilineal women and 3.6% of patrilineal women are employed. This low level of participation in employment of Muslim women from both the kinship groups suggests the general apathy towards Muslim women seeking jobs outside homes.

With regard to marital status, 92.8% of women in this study are presently in a monogamous relationship and the rest belong to the categories of 'divorced', 'separated' 'widowed' and 'in polygynous marriage'. The 3 instances of polygynous marriage identified in the sample are matrilineal women and one belongs to the younger age group of 25 to 34. This tends to point to the prevalence of this practice in Malabar even now. The analysis of the rural-urban differences shows that the patrilineal sample is mainly from the rural areas, while matrilineal sample is concentrated in urban areas. Out of the total sample, 49% represents rural population, while 51% represents urban population. Standard of Living Index has been used as a proxy measure for the economic status of women. Out of the total sample, 42% belong to lower, 42.4% to middle and 15.6 % to upper standard of living. The percentage of respondents who belongs to lower standard of living is found to be more among patrilineal sample due to their concentration in rural areas.

## ***Access to and Control of Economic Resources***

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Blumberg (1984) in her ‘General Theory of Gender Stratification’, considers economic power of women as a main indicator of their status. This economic power can further determine the access to opportunities and freedom which she terms as life options. Though the theory’s main emphasis is the structural factor of economic power for women, Blumberg highlights kinship system as a condition that is crucial in explaining why women tend to have higher or lower economic power in different groups. Therefore kinship system is considered as a resource that can influence social customs, which in turn can contribute to female economic power. The figure below illustrates Blumberg’s Theory of Gender Stratification.



*Adapted from Randal Collins (1997:166)*

The analysis in the previous chapter found that very few women have access to economic resources through employment and income. In most of the agrarian societies including that of India, kinship is a major determinant of access to social and economic resources and hence determines the freedom and autonomy women can enjoy (Agnihotri, 2000). Within kinship, Blumberg (1984) ranks inheritance as the most important kinship variable. Inheritance is of prime importance because according to Blumberg, women's de facto share in property they actually control is a direct component of their economic power. In other words, kinship system can be considered as a factor for enabling or disabling these property rights of women, with patrilineal system making it difficult for women to own resources and matrilineal system favouring women. Hence it becomes important to look into inheritance as an important source of power for women.

The difference in the economic status of matrilineal and patrilineal women, especially their inheritance rights, has been well documented. In a patrilineal system, property is inherited through the males. However, in a patriarchal culture it is not just inheritance that puts women in a disadvantageous position, but as Miller (2001) observes, it is the economic domination by males over females, through male control of and access to important forms of productive property, inheritance rights, and preferred employment that adversely affect the status of women. Hence, in a patrilineal system it is not from production but ownership that the women are excluded. Lack of access to assets and resources for a section of the society chiefly because of the domination of the other is symptomatic of underlying discrimination, exploitation and exclusion (Human Development, GoK 2011).

On the other hand, theoretically, matrilineal women enjoy the benefit of matrilineal system of inheritance, where property is passed through the females. Even if women may not have absolute say in the economic dealings in a matrilineal system, as Sacks (1975) believes, it is not the degree to which women participate in the production of surplus goods, but their ownership or control of means of production that is important in determining their status. Sanday (1973) too emphasises this point and notes that it is not simply women's economic position but basic cultural assumptions, flowing from group relationship and affecting socialisation, which shape gender relations and inequality. Hence, it becomes a matter of great importance to find out whether the two different cultural ideologies have an effect on the economic status of women.

Focusing on economic resources in this study has other significances too. An important source through which women in present day Kerala have access to economic resources is through dowry. It is said that the property rights that was once enjoyed by women in Kerala is giving way to dowry system.

Yet another reason why access to resources become important in this study is that unlike other religious communities, Islam grants women right of inheritance in their parental and spousal properties. The verse from the holy book The Quran, '*men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn*', (Holy Quran, IV: 32) further makes it clear that the religion grants women not just access to resources but also the full control of the economic resources provided to them. Since the present study is on Muslim women, this section of the analysis will throw light on the nature of property inheritance among the Muslims of Malabar.

Matrilineal communities in general grant property rights to women and the matrilineal Mappila Muslims traditionally are no different. Though the *marumakkathayam* inheritance is abolished by law for Hindu *marumakkathayees*, it exists among traditional Mappila matrilineal *taravads* in North Malabar even now. Mohammed (2010), in his study of matrilineal Mappilas of Malabar, has reported that though there are several matrilineal households that have no specific assets of their own, each household has special buildings worth hundreds of thousands of rupees. Along with the matrilineal inheritance, *Sharia* Law also governs the matters related to self-acquired property of a person. Thus, one of the objectives of looking into property inheritance is to understand how far Mappila Muslim women have benefited from this feature of matrilineality.

In contrast to this patrilineal Muslims have only one type of inheritance, and that is based on *Sharia* Law. *Sharia* Law states that when there is no son, a daughter gets half of the natal inheritance and if there are two or more daughters, they get  $2/3$  of the share collectively. Similarly a wife inherits one eighth of her husband's assets if there are children and one fourth if there are none (Subamma, 1988).

Access to resources definitely has important benefits for women, but their exclusion from its management tends to negate the power they could derive from these rights. According to Arun (1999), women gain access to land in several ways such as inheritance, marriage or informal networks but these need not be translated to effective command over it. Kerala Human Development Report (GOK 2011) also acknowledges this fact and comments that it is important that efforts are made to create assets in the name of women and help them to use those assets to live a life with dignity. Hence it becomes necessary to focus not only on women's access to

resources but also the level of control they enjoy over it. For these various reasons an attempt is made not just to analyse the access to resources in the form of property inheritance, dowry and gifts from husband, but also to know women's own perception regarding their role in its control.

### **5.1 Access to Economic Resources**

Women's equal access to and control over economic and financial resources is critical for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women (UN 2009). In the absence of economic resources through employment, it becomes necessary to look into other sources through which women can gain access to economic resources. In their study, Panda and Agarwal (2005) have pointed out the importance of looking beyond the employment status of women and probing the effect of their property status, in particular their owning land or a house, because these can be considered as a fallback option for women in case of adverse marital situations.

Bhattacharya et al. (2009) also observes that a woman's ownership of property increases her economic security, reduces her willingness to tolerate violence and, by providing a credible exit option, works towards deterring spousal violence. Under these circumstances, as Basu (1999) points out, women's access to property is best appreciated by considering various kinds of resources such as natal inheritance, affinal wealth, dowry etc. cumulatively.

Women's access to inheritance can vary based on the kinship system. Though matrilineal women may not have full control over the economic resources they have access to, their involvement in determining the transfer of property is significant. Agarwal (1996), highlighting the difference between matrilineal and patrilineal inheritance system, mentions that the

former is characterised by gender divergence between property ownership and its control, while in the latter there is a convergence between the two, where men own as well as control the property.

The second source of economic resource for women in India is dowry. According to Bhatla et al. (2006a), receiving of property at the time of marriage gives the woman a “propertied” status as she enters the marital relationship. Dowry is a social evil that is legally and religiously considered an offence. It’s presence in a society is considered degrading to women. Yet at times, in a strict patriarchal culture which excludes women from inheritance, it becomes an only source of inheritance for women (Channa, 1996). In fact, Panda (2006) finds dowry as the most important source of property acquired by women in Kerala, with inheritance coming only in the second place. The practice of giving dowry has been customary among patrilineal Muslims of Kerala and also among a section of matrilineal Mappilas (Kerala Development Report, GOI 2008). Therefore it becomes necessary to look into the dowry transactions as a source of women’s access to economic resources.

The third source for economic resources for women who are not gainfully employed are economic resources gifted by the husbands. According to Deere and Doss (2006) the ownership and control of assets brought to and acquired during marriage will determine how women fare in the event of widowhood and marital break down.

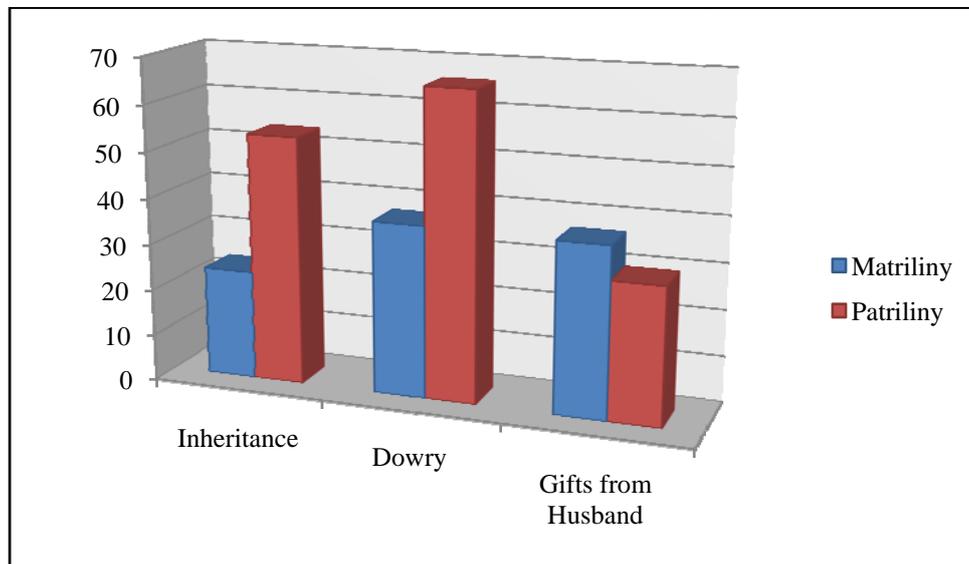
Against this backdrop, an attempt is made to find out whether there is an association between kinship and the access of women to the three important sources of economic resources, i.e., inheritance from natal home, dowry and gifts from the husband.

**Table 5.1. Access to Economic Resources**

Kinship	Inheritance			Dowry			Gifts from Husband		
	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	Total F (%)	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	Total F (%)	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	Total F (%)
Matriliny	59 (23.6)	191 (76.4)	250 (100)	93 (37.2)	157 (62.8)	250 (100)	92 (36.8)	158 (63.2)	250 (100)
Patriliney	134 (53.6)	116 (46.4)	250 (100)	165 (66.0)	85 (34.0)	250 (100)	74 (29.6)	176 (70.4)	250 (100)
Total	193 (38.6)	307 (61.4)	500 (100)	258 (51.6)	242 (48.4)	500 (100)	166 (33.2)	334 (66.8)	500 (100)
	P<0.05			P<0.05			P>0.05		

The analysis from Table 5.1 clearly establishes that among the three forms of economic resources considered, it is access to dowry that is more evident than the other two forms of economic resources, among both patrilineal and matrilineal sample. This finding is in line with the aforementioned study of Panda (2006) where he highlights the importance of dowry as a major source of property inheritance among women in Kerala. The results further expose the fact that the practice of dowry is common among Mappilas of Malabar. Another observation is that it is the patrilineal sample that has more access to natal inheritance as well as dowry at the time of marriage. The table also reveals that the gifts from the husband are low among both matrilineal and patrilineal groups.

Inorder to find out whether the observed relationship between the kinship and the access to economic resources, is statistically significant, chi-square tests are carried out and it is found that except for gifts from husbands, there is a statistically significant relation between kinship to which Muslim women in Malabar belongs to and their access to economic resources, Thus, the hypothesis that there is an association between kinship system and Mappila Muslim women’s access to economic resources is proved.



**Figure 5.1 Access to Economic Resources**

A study by Suchitra and Swaminathan (2010), on asset accumulation by matrilineal and patrilineal communities in coastal Karnataka, revealed that women from matrilineal communities continue to enjoy their traditional rights to own and inherit land and other physical and financial assets. Contrary to this finding that suggests that matrilineal women enjoy customary access to economic resources than patrilineal women, the analysis in the present research is more in favour of the patrilineal women and it is proven by the chi square tests. As shown in the Figure 5.1, it is the patrilineal sample that has a higher level of inheritance than matrilineal sample. Similarly, though dowry is regarded as a pre-mortem inheritance in patrilineal cultures, the table also reveals that the custom that is considered degrading to the status of women is also found among the ‘female-friendly’ matrilineal sample. These results necessitated further probing into these two economic resources in order to get an exact picture of their influence on the status of women and the reason for matrilineal women lagging behind patrilineal women with regard to these economic resources.

## 5.2 Natal Inheritance

Blumberg (1984) considers inheritance as the most important kinship variable that can influence the economic power of women. Explaining Blumberg's theory, Collins (1997) writes that women in matrilineal system have more economic power than women in patrilineal system because of their inheritance rights.

Women in Kerala have had the opportunity to enjoy property rights mainly due to its matrilineal inheritance system. However, Eapen and Kodoth (2003) warns that if the rights in property customarily enjoyed by women in Kerala get eroded over time and women's work expand slowly or into selective areas and their control over resources gets weakened, so also will their relative position within the household. According to Chacko (2003), the concomitant increase in abuses associated with inheritance systems are most keenly felt within marriage, where women's lack of empowerment works against their physical, psychological, and financial well-being.

Hence natal inheritance by women is very essential in determining the position of women in the household as well as for her well-being. Therefore an in-depth analysis is carried out to know more about the natal inheritance of matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women in Malabar.

**Table 5.2. Access to Natal Inheritance**

Kinship	Inherited Property		Will Inherit		No Share		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliny	59	(23.6%)	116	(46.4%)	75	(30.0%)	250	(100%)
Patriliny	134	(53.6%)	95	(38.0%)	21	(8.4%)	250	(100%)
Total	193	(38.6%)	211	(42.2%)	96	(19.2%)	500	(100%)

There is an apparent difference in the natal inheritance by the women from two kinship groups, with patrilineal women having better access to it than matrilineal women. As mentioned earlier, it is seen that only 23.6% of matrilineal respondents have inherited natal property while 53.6% of patrilineal respondents have said the same. But the number of respondents who said that they will get a share of parental property is higher among matrilineal groups when compared to patrilineal groups. Similarly, the number of women who are sure that they will not be able to claim any natal inheritance is also more among matrilineal sample than patrilineal.

Arun (1999) studied matrilineal and patrilineal women's access to agricultural land in Kerala and found that the lack of direct access to productive resources is common even among matrilineal households where women own land. In the present study, out of the total sample only 38.6% of respondents have at present inherited natal property. Human Development Report of Kerala State (GOK 2011) also concedes the fact of decreasing property holdings by women in the state. According to Kodoth (2005), changes in the family structure as well as the agrarian reforms in the state, are the main reasons for this compromising of women's independent rights to inheritance, thereby reinforcing patrilineal frame work of family and property relations.

Quisumbing (2011) observes that age is an important factor that can affect the asset accumulation of women, especially inheritance. It may be as Gupta (1995) pointed out that in Indian joint families the intergenerational transfer of property takes place as the head of the household ages and in most cases after the death of the father. As property is distributed among the children by the parents during their old age or after their lifetime, it can be assumed that women of upper age group might report inherited property

more than those of the younger age group. Hence an attempt is made to find out whether the natal inheritance of women from the two different kinship groups varies with their age at present.

**Table 5.3. Natal Inheritance and Age at Present**

Kinship	25-34		35-44		45 and above		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	No.	(%)
Matriliny	19	(32.2%)	12	(20.3%)	28	(47.5%)	59	(100%)
Patriliny	41	(30.6%)	52	(38.8%)	41	(30.6%)	134	(100%)
Total	60	(31.1%)	64	(33.2%)	69	(35.7%)	193	(100%)

The analysis of natal inheritance and age group reveals that matrilineal women belonging to the upper age group, as suggested by the literature, have more access to natal inheritance than those of the other two age groups. It is seen that out of 59 respondents who have access to natal inheritance 47.5% belong to upper age group. However, this difference is not observed among the patrilineal women.

According to Bhatla et al. (2006b), economic condition and the asset base of woman's natal family influence the property rights of women, with the asset base being restricted for poor families. Mahmud et al. (2012) also observes the odds that the control a woman has of resources increases significantly with the wealth quintile of her household. As asset accumulation tends to be more among members of upper standard of living when compared to those of lower standard of living, women belonging to the former group are more likely to inherit property than those in the latter. Therefore an attempt is made to find out whether natal inheritance varies according to one's standards of living.

**Table 5.4. Natal Inheritance and Standard of living**

Kinship	Lower		Middle		Upper		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliny	14	(23.7%)	21	(35.6%)	24	(40.7%)	59	(100%)
Patriliny	53	(39.6%)	57	(42.5%)	24	(17.9%)	134	(100%)
Total	67	(34.7%)	78	(40.4%)	48	(24.9%)	193	(100%)

The data shows that among matrilineal sample, it is the women from upper standard of living who have a higher level of inheritance than the other two. Among the patrilineal sample, the least property inheritance is among those from upper standard of living. This difference in inheritance pattern between the two samples with regard to age and standard of living needs further probing.

Traditionally, matrilineal Mappilas have two types of inheritance system - the matrilineal inheritance through the female line and that of self-acquired property through the Islamic law or *Sharia*. Interviews conducted during the field work with advocates in Malabar brought to the notice that though the Mappila Marumakkathayam (Amendment Act) of 1963 has repealed the system of matrilineal inheritance among Mappilas, the matrilineal *taravads* in areas extending from Koyilandy to Trikaripur are still legally eligible for partition as per *Marumakkathayam* law. In case of partition, individual members in the *taravad* shall be entitled to a share in the *taravad* properties on the basis of per capita (Nambiar and Kumar, 2006). Individual members means all female members and their children including an unborn who has been conceived at the time of partition and all the male members who can trace a matrilineage to that *taravad*. However, the children of these male members will be omitted as they belong to a different *taravad* that of their mother's (Ali,

1938; Puthenkalam, 1977). There are some wealthy *taravads* in Kozhikode, whose members still get a share from the income of *taravad* properties every month, and addition of a girl child is a matter of joy for them because she brings an additional share to her family. Sons in the *taravad*, however get only their share and not their children's as the children belong to their mother's *taravad*.

However this does not mean that in reality the matrilineal women will be able to gain their property rights easily. The literature study reveals several reasons for this low level of property inheritance among matrilineal Mappila Muslim women in Malabar. Koya (1983) notes that possession of house by females makes division of *taravads* almost impractical. It is seen during the field work that in some *taravads*, particularly those belonging to the lower economic strata, there are still members who are residing there as they cannot afford a house of their own. Besides, it is also seen that some *taravads* have so many members belonging to different generations that the division of property will provide very little material benefit to each member. In such situations those who are still residing in the *taravad* will not agree to move out. Thus, it becomes difficult to divide the property. Another situation is that when a property is divided, it is generally cash that is given to the members. This is usually used up in meeting the needs of the family rather than in investing for the future benefit of the women themselves. Few respondents have used it for constructing a house or depositing the money for future use.

The two important reasons are given by the respondents who said that they are not entitled to natal inheritance – one is the poor economic condition of the household that leaves them with hardly anything to inherit, while other important reason is that their *taravad* is 'wakfed'. *Wakf*, which

literally means ‘to detain, prevent or restrain’, is pledging the property including the *taravad* and its related properties to a mosque or any institutions of public service such as a school, orphanage or any other charitable institution, thereby making it *wakf* property (Hidayatullah and Hidayatullah 2003).

The aforementioned provision makes the *taravad* and related *wakf* properties a heritable possession and prevents them falling into the hands of a third person. As a result property could be enjoyed by the members in the *taravad* for several generations, and a few selected members are appointed as caretakers of the property. The handing over the property to the final benefactor will happen only if there are no female members residing in the *taravad*. When a *taravad* is given as *wakf* to any institution, its members will have only the right to reside and not partition it. As a result individual member, be it a male or female, will not have any partition right in it. Along with poor economic status, the indivisibility of the *taravad* is another important reason for many matrilineal respondents in the present study claiming lack of inheritance rights in their natal property.

According to Keddie (1987), *wakfs* were created in patrilineal Islamic societies in order to create inalienable property as well as to exclude female heirs. However, matrilineal societies as in the case of Mappilas used it to create inalienable property in female line. But females cannot individually own this property. Lindberg (2009) argues that declaring the *taravads* holdings as *wakf* was an Islamic strategy employed by wealthy matrilineal Muslims to block individuals from claiming their rights to *taravad* property under Mappila Marumakkathayam Bill. However, in the present study there are respondents who mentioned a religious reason for creating such *wakfs*. By making it a *wakf* property and deciding to hand it over to religious or charitable institution, the

creator of the property is preventing the fragmentation of the property, and therefore the property will exist forever. By doing so, the original owner expects to receive the benefits from the Almighty as long as the property exists, i.e., till the end of this world and thereafter. This is known as *sadakathul zariya*.

Based on these information, an attempt is made to find out whether the aforementioned factors are the reasons for matrilineal women lagging behind their counterparts in the patrilineal setup, in relation to property inheritance. For this, women who have inherited property are asked about the sources or modes through which they have gained access to property. Women who said that they will be receiving it in future, are asked about the modes whereby they are expecting to receive it.

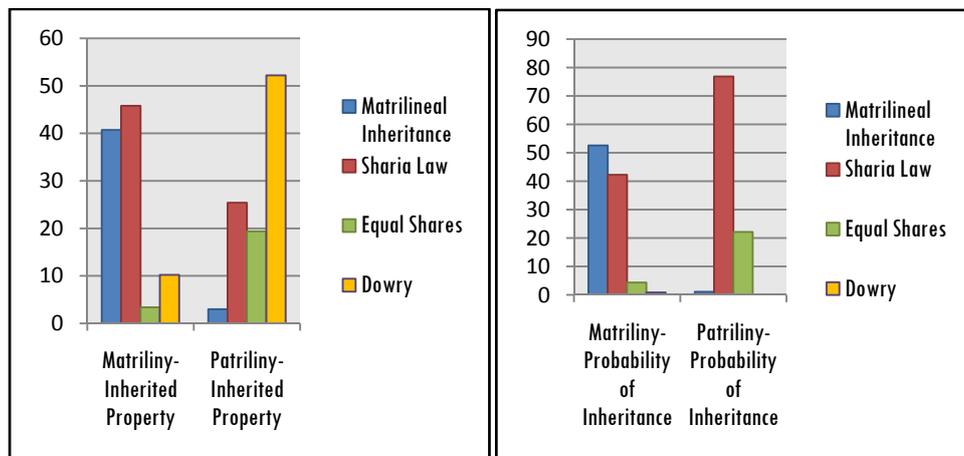
**Table 5.5. Mode of Inheritance**

Mode of Inheritance	Inherited Property		Future Probability of Inheritance	
	Matriliny F (%)	Patriliney F (%)	Matriliny F (%)	Patriliney F (%)
Matrilineal Inheritance	24 (40.7%)	4 (3.0%)	61 (52.6%)	1 (1.1%)
Sharia Law	27 (45.8%)	34 (25.4%)	49 (42.2%)	73 (76.8%)
Equal Shares	2 (3.4%)	26 (19.4%)	5 (4.3%)	21 (22.1%)
As Dowry	6 (10.1%)	70 (52.2%)	1 (0.9%)	0 (0.00%)
Total	59 (100%)	134 (100%)	116 (100%)	95 (100%)

The data from Table 5.5 makes it clear that majority of the matrilineal sample have received natal inheritance through Islamic law of inheritance and an almost similar number have received it through matrilineal inheritance. The women who are looking forward to receiveing property in future, are also expecting to receive it through matrilineal inheritance and

through *Sharia* Law. This shows that as evident from the aforementioned discussion, despite matrilineal property being favourable to women, many have not received its benefits yet as most of the *taravads* cannot be divided as long as any female member and her family are still residing there.

Results also highlight the emphasis of *Sharia* Law in the partition of property among matrilineal Mappilas of Malabar. The table also reveals that the percentage of respondents who have received equal shares and those who are sure that they will receive. in future, an equal share of parental property along with their brothers is more among patrilineal sample. The emphasis on the *Sharia* Law and less preference for equal share among children of both genders point to the fact that the once female-friendly matrilineal system of inheritance is giving way to a complete patrilineal system of inheritance.



**Figure 5.2 Mode of Inheritance**

While these aforementioned reasons can be considered as major factors for lesser reporting of property inheritance among matrilineal sample, the data analysis reveals that the higher reporting of property inheritance among patrilineal sample can be traced to the practice of dowry that exist amongst

them. More than 50% of patrilineal women have gained access to their natal inheritance through dowry. Similarly, majority of patrilineal women who are looking forward to receive natal inheritance in future are expecting it to receive through *Sharia* Law. The instance of patrilineal women receiving matrilineal inheritance is when these women have mothers from matrilineal families and fathers, from patrilineal families.

### **5.3 Dowry – Pre-mortem Inheritance**

One of the pioneer works that considers dowry as a pre-mortem inheritance is by Goody (1976). He writes that in societies that practice dowry, daughters receive wealth, transferred from their parents in the form of dowry at the time of marriage, while sons are given the family estate. According to Kerala Development Report (GOI 2008), dowry has been replacing inheritance over the last quarter of 20th century. In the present study too dowry, as a pre-mortem inheritance, can be considered as a key factor for patrilineal women reporting more property inheritance than matrilineal women.

At the same time though dowry transactions are present among matrilineal Mappilas too, however, unlike among patrilineal Mappilas, they do not consider this dowry transaction as natal inheritance. Or, in other words, all dowry transactions cannot be considered as share in natal property. Kodoth (2008) has reported the increasing trend of dowry practice among a matrilineal group in North Kerala, not as form of inheritance but as a compensation made for women who were marked by a combination of poor social, economic and feminine resources as per marriage market standards. At the same time authors such as Parappil (1994), has reported that the practice of dowry is absent among matrilineal Mappilas of Kozhikode.

Pilot study also revealed that, based on district and kinship, there is a variation in dowry transactions among Mappilas of Malabar. Hence the present study makes an attempt to find out the variation in the prevalence of dowry system among matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslims of Kannur and Kozhikode districts.

**Table 5.6. Prevalence of Dowry**

Kinship	Kannur		Kozhikode		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliny	80	(86.0%)	13	(14.0%)	93	(100%)
Patriliny	91	(55.1%)	74	(44.9%)	165	(100%)
Total	171	(66.3%)	87	(33.7%)	258	(100%)

The data indicates that the practice differs with area and kinship groups. While this practice is seen more among matrilineal women from Kannur than those from Kozhikode, patrilineal women from both Kannur and Kozhikode show similar trends in the practice of dowry transactions. The reason for the prevalence of dowry system among Mappilas of Kannur district can be traced to various traditional practices of marriage related money transactions, which existed among matrilineal Mappilas of north Malabar to which Kannur district belongs. These were absent to some extent in south Malabar to which Kozhikode belongs to.

Dowry among matrilineal Mappilas can be traced to the practice *streedhanam* grants, an allotment made by the taravad for the maintenance of the female member at the time of the marriage (Nambiar and Kumar 2006). This property will return to the *taravad* in case of divorce and if the woman dies without any issues. Though both north and south Malabar had

this practice, D'Souza (1976) observes that while in north Malabar the husband's management of *streedhanam* property entails no strict obligation on his part to maintain his wife and children, in south Malabar such a privilege is accompanied by the duty of looking after all the needs of his family.

Another form of money transaction at the time of marriage called *kadam vayippa* or loan given to the bridegroom to start a new business by the girl's *taravad* was also common among north Malabar Mappilas, while such a practice did not belong to the south Malabar (ibid). Unlike *streedhanam* grants, the *kadam vayippa* was not expected to be returned. These traditional practices among the Mappilas of north Malabar could be a reason why the practice of dowry has intensified among matrilineal Mappila Muslims of Kannur District

However in the modern day, dowry among matrilineal Mappilas has lost its original purpose. The major reasons for the practice of dowry transaction given by matrilineal sample are 'to meet marriage expenses by the boys' side' (70%) followed by 'economic benefit for the boys' side', and a few consider dowry as a 'gift' given to the couple. On the other hand, among numerous reasons given by the patrilineal sample, the majority consider dowry as a gift or natal inheritance (45%) followed by reasons such as 'traditionally practiced custom', 'difficult to get girls married off without the dowry', 'economic benefit for the boys side' and finally 'to meet marriage expenses'.

The major reason given by both patrilineal and matrilineal women, whose marriage did not involve dowry transaction, for not accepting the practice of dowry, is that it is against religion. The second important reason

given by matrilineal women is that it is considered derogatory in their community, for the boys' side to accept dowry. A respondent from the matrilineal Thekkepuram area in Kozhikode, which is lauded for being a dowry-free community, comments that '*it is a disgrace if one among us asks dowry. People tend to feel that boy and his family needs the girl's money to survive. But in their system (patrilineal) it is considered as an honour for the families to give and take dowry. Here we can marry a girl even with 10 sovereigns of gold, which is not possible there (patrilineal system)*'.

The second important reason given by patrilineal women, especially of the younger age group, is that the present generation boys who are educated are against dowry and they give preference to girls who are good looking and religious. This statement echoes the findings of the study titled Gender, Caste and Matchmaking in Kerala by Kodoth (2008), carried out in a village in North Kerala, where dowry is seen as compensation for lack of good looks among girls.

The nature of dowry also differs from one kinship group to another. Among patrilineal Muslims in Kannur, the main form of dowry transaction is land. About 72.5% of patrilineal Mappilas from Kannur have received land as dowry. They consider this dowry transaction as inheritance of natal property. The higher percentage of property inheritance by women of younger age group (Table 5.3) and women of lower standard of living (Table 5.4) in patrilineal sample can be related with the practice of dowry in this area and underlines the fact that dowry seen as property inheritance is rampant among patrilineal groups. Quite a few members of lower economic household as well as women belonging to younger age group have said that they have received land as dowry. Dowry among patrilineal respondents of Kozhikode is mainly gold and money.

This dowry transaction is the chief reason for a higher recording of inheritance of natal property among patrilineal Mappila women than that among their matrilineal counterparts. The article titled Gender, Property Rights and Responsibility for Farming in Kerala, by Kodoth (2004), argues that women's property right in Kerala is now anchored to marriage and marital family and women's independent property inheritance rights are replaced by dowry. The relationship between dowry and inheritance is noted by Agnihotri (2000: 59) as follows: 'Dowry is one manifestation of the role of capital, inheritance is another'. He remarks that dowry on one hand creates the perception of girl child being a liability and on the other it provides an opportunity to inherit natal property, which otherwise may not be allowed to females in a patriarchal setup. However, who actually benefits from dowry is another issue. Dowry also exhausts a woman's opportunity to inherit share equal to that of her brothers. In the present research it is found that dowry exhausts any further claims in parental property among lower economical groups, while few members of middle and upper economic groups said that irrespective of their dowry they will receive a share in future as per the *Sharia* law.

The modern day dowry has made firm inroads into this matrilineal community of Kannur. However it is never seen as a share in parental property. This is because unlike among patrilineal Mappilas where dowry is mainly in the form of land, dowry among matrilineal Mappilas of Kannur includes a combination of cash, gold and consumer goods especially a car or motorcycle, according to the status of bride or groom. Here too, though dowry does not exhaust inheritance rights (Kodoth, 2004), there is very little left among the poor to transfer to the daughter after the payment of dowry. Besides this, the dowry transaction here hardly benefits the women. The gold

is usually with the women, while the cash is used for lavish marriage expenses by the groom's side including buying clothes and *mehr* for the bride. This again is an outright opposition to Islamic law, where a man is expected to provide *mehr* by his own earnings. In reality the women, especially of lower income groups, lose control over their dowry, either for supporting husband's family or wasting it on lavish weddings.

#### 5.4 Gifts by Husband

The third source of economic resources for women other than natal inheritance and dowry is the gifts from the husband. The Islamic Law grants women a share in her husband's property. However the analysis from Table 5.1 reveals that the level of inheritance from the husband is low among both matrilineal and patrilineal groups. In her book titled *Women in Muslim Personal Law*, Singh (1992) observes that as a wife, a Muslim woman never asks for her rights in husband's property. She further notes that it is mainly ignorance, illiteracy and lack of knowledge that denies them the opportunity to inherit from their husbands. To find out whether the women who have received gifts from their husbands actually will benefit from them, an attempt is made to find out the type of resources obtained from the husband.

**Table 5.7. Gifts from Husband**

<b>Kinship</b>	<b>Money F (%)</b>	<b>House F (%)</b>	<b>Land F (%)</b>	<b>Other properties F (%)</b>	<b>Gold F (%)</b>	<b>Total F (%)</b>
Matriliney	44 (47.8%)	32 (34.8%)	9 (9.8%)	5 (5.4%)	2 (2.2%)	92 (100%)
Patriliney	20 (27.0%)	31 (41.9%)	10 (13.5%)	1 (1.4%)	12 (16.2%)	74 (100%)
Total	64 (38.6%)	63 (37.9%)	19 (11.5%)	6 (3.6%)	14 (8.4%)	166 (100%)

The enquiry into resources from husbands finds that there is a difference in the nature of gifts received by matrilineal and patrilineal

woman from their husbands. While, patrilineal women stood in the forefront in acquiring house, gold, and land, it is the matrilineal women who have better access to husband's money mainly in the form of insurance and bank accounts, and other properties. Carr et al. (1998), in their work on empowerment of women in South Asia including India, write that very few women inherit resources from their husbands and that when they do so they have only use rights and not full ownership rights. Most of the aforementioned resources, except gold and bank accounts, are of the nature that guarantee only the right use and do not ensure full ownership rights.

## **5.5 Control of Economic Resources**

According to Bhatla et al. (2006a), women experience gender-based disadvantage in access to and control of productive resources and assets, which severely limits their ability to manage economic shocks and social risks. Hence mere access to resource is not considered sufficient in enabling the position of women. Agarwal (1996) also brings to attention that the full advantage of property ownership, especially that of the land, cannot be derived by women if they are continued to be excluded from managerial control and jural authority. Similarly Mason (1986) also notes that if a social system deprives women of resource control, then their status is likely to be low. As the access to gifts from husbands is minimal and not significant, an attempt is made to find out whom women themselves consider as having actual control over their dowry and natal inheritance

Considering dowry as a pre-mortem inheritance, the actual control women may have over it is very much debated. The study probes into the control Muslim women in Malabar have over their dowry.

**Table 5.8. Control over Dowry**

Kinship	Wife alone		Husband alone		Jointly		Others		Sold or used		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliny	8	(8.6%)	6	(6.5%)	15	(16.1%)	44	(47.3%)	20	(21.5%)	93	(100%)
Patriliny	34	(20.6%)	6	(3.6%)	10	(6.1%)	46	(27.9%)	69	(41.8%)	165	(100%)
Total	42	(16.3%)	12	(4.7%)	25	(9.7%)	90	(34.8%)	89	(34.5%)	258	(100%)

The analysis reveals that the control women themselves have over their dowry is modest among both patrilineal and matrilineal samples. Majority among both the groups have reported that their dowry is either under the control of others or sold or used for the requirements of the family, especially that of the husband. One feature that is seen here is that the number of women who said that they alone have control over their dowry is more among patrilineal woman than matrilineal women. This could be because land is an important part of dowry among patrilineal women and it is less likely to be alienated easily than other forms dowry such as gold or money.

A point that further supports the aforementioned observation is the responses of matrilineal women who said that the cash or gifts that are given at the time of marriage are used by in-laws for conducting the marriage. 'Others' who are taking care of patrilineal women's dowry are usually the natal kin as their dowry is mainly in the form of land, and in few cases by the in-laws of the women. In such cases if the land is being used for any form of cultivation (generally coconut trees), the benefits of the produce are availed by the natal members or in-laws. The woman gets its benefits only when she requires money either for building a house or for children's marriages and sometimes for the husband to start a business. Many of the respondents themselves did not have an issue regarding their inability to manage their own property. They seemed content that they have some property in their names.

According to Henderson (2004), the result of this disparity in receiving dowry compared to inheriting land and the family firm is that women lack ability to muster assets for substantial investment on their own, or to achieve independence outside the extended family. In such circumstances, divorce or widowhood still leaves her in dire situations. The other fact that can be observed from the data in Table 5.8 is that the percentage of respondents who sold their dowry is more among patrilineal members. According to Chacko (2003) communities that traditionally give dowry, rationalise the practice as appropriate transfer to the woman, her share of family wealth. But this *streedhanam* is used up either for paying the loan incurred by the husband, starting a new business or even paying the dowry for the unmarried sisters of the groom. All these suggest that dowry as a pre-mortem inheritance under control of women is doubtful. The next important economic resource considered in the study is natal inheritance. Hence an attempt is made to find out the control women have, over their natal inheritance.

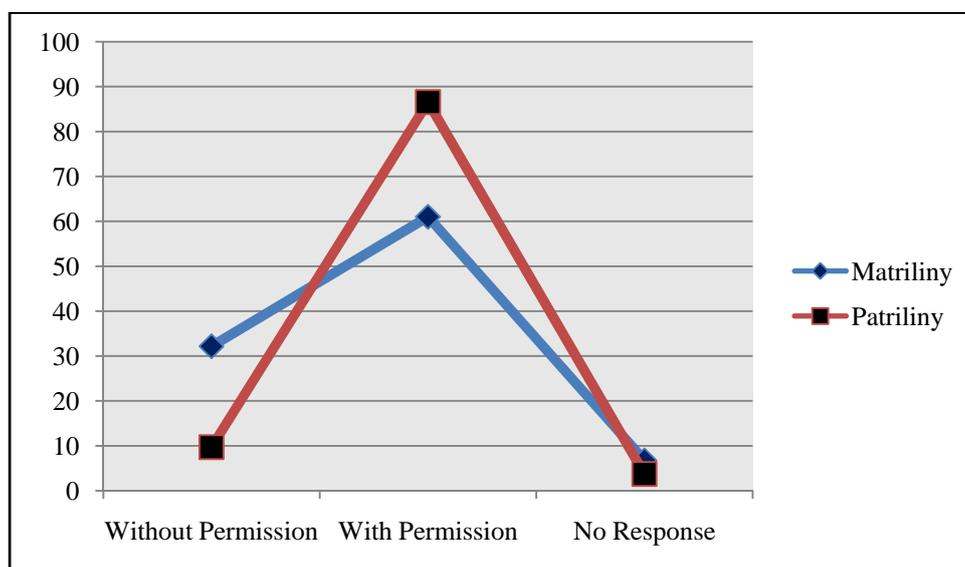
**Table 5.9. Control over Natal Inheritance**

<b>Kinship</b>	<b>Wife alone F (%)</b>	<b>Husband alone F (%)</b>	<b>Jointly F (%)</b>	<b>Others F (%)</b>	<b>Sold or used it F (%)</b>	<b>Total F (%)</b>
Matriliny	7(11.9%)	8(13.6%)	36(61.0%)	6 ( 10.1%)	2 (3.4%)	59(100.0%)
Patriliney	18(13.4%)	12(8.9%)	38(28.4%)	47(35.1%)	19(14.2%)	134(100.0%)
Total	25(12.9%)	20(10.4%)	74(38.3%)	53(27.5%)	21(10.9%)	193(100.0%)

A finding that is evident here is that though the percentage of respondents who have inherited natal property is less among matrilineal sample than among the patrilineal sample, around 72.9% of the total matrilineal women have custody of the property either themselves or jointly

with the husbands. At the same time only 41.8% of patrilineal respondents have said that they themselves or jointly with their husbands have control over their economic resources. This discrepancy in control and access between matrilineal and patrilineal respondents could be because the economic resource came to matrilineal women as inheritance from her natal home while for patrilineal women majority received it as a form of dowry taken care of by others. In her book *Gender and Command over Property*, Agarwal (1996) has identified patrilocal marriages and village exogamy as two of the major reasons that lead to the inability of women to supervise or cultivate in their own land inherited in the natal village. Similarly Arun's (1999) comparative study on land rights in a matrilineal and patrilineal community in Kerala finds that despite the access to resources, women from both the kinship groups have through inheritance, marriage or informal resources, none of them guarantee effective command over it.

Mason (1986) writes that access to resources is the right to use or consume them if those who control them give their permission, while control implies the ability to dispose off the resource if a need arises. The former alone according to her is insufficient to generate control over one's environment. Hence, as Kabeer (1999) notes, the access to or control of resources should be translated into the realisation of choice to facilitate the presence of agency in the entitlement of resources. Since it is evident that women have very little control over their dowry, the respondents who have access to the resources through natal inheritance are asked whether they can use or dispose the aforementioned resources at their own will.



**Figure 5.3 Usage of Natal Inheritance**

Despite the access to the natal inheritance and women's perception that they are the custodians of their economic resource, very few respondents said that they have absolute control over it. Only 16.58% of the total sample has said that they can actually use it without anybody's permission or dispose it if required. Here again the percentage is more in the case of matrilineal women (32.2%) than in that of patrilineal women (9.7%). These findings, once again highlights the fact that women may not have control over the resources they receive and draws attention to the inability of patrilineal women in controlling their economic resources.

Gupta (2006), in her study on property ownership of women in West Bengal, writes that dowry becomes synonymous with the woman's share in the property, in the eyes of the community, when in reality this is not the case. Similarly in the present study, when women say that they themselves or along with their husbands are the custodians of the economic resources, very few have actual control over them. This is true in the case of both

patrilineal and matrilineal groups. Prior (1993) in her study on matrifocal households also maintains that power associated with female control of resources and authority within the household can be compromised based on the interdependence between men and women and access the men have to certain resources. In her article *The status of Women: Conceptual and Methodological Issues in Demographic Studies*, Mason (1986) too observes that the relative control of resources by men and women is more crucial than mere access to resources because in the long run control of resources allow men to be better off and have more power than women. All the tables provided highlight the fact that though women can claim access to resources, their actual control over them is debatable.

## 5.6 Summary

A significant feature of matrilineal system that influences the status of women is the access to economic resources the system provides to its female members. When women are not gainfully employed outside their homes, this feature becomes even more important as it makes a difference to their economic security. The present chapter looks into the variation in access to and control of economic resources by matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslim women of Malabar. The economic resources that are probed into are natal inheritance, dowry as a pre-mortem inheritance and economic gifts from husband.

The analysis reveals that only 38.6% of women from the total sample have inherited some property from the natal family, while 51.6% have resources in the form of dowry. There is not much difference between the matrilineal and patrilineal sample with regard to receiving gifts from husband. But with the natal inheritance, the study shows that matrilineal

sample lags behind the patrilineal sample. It is seen that when 53.6% of patrilineal women have access to natal inheritance, only 23.6% of matrilineal women have inherited any natal property. The study also shows that the practice of dowry exists among both patrilineal and matrilineal groups, but with local variations, i.e., matrilineal Muslims of Kozhikode reporting the absence of dowry amongst them.

The chi square tests show that except for gifts from husbands, there is statistically significant association between kinship to which Muslim women in Malabar belongs to and their access to natal inheritance and dowry, thus proving the hypothesis that there is an association between kinship and Mappila Muslim women's access to economic resources. These differences are more in favour of patrilineal sample than matrilineal sample. The two main reasons for this disparity in property inheritance between the two groups are the joint property system among matrilineal *taravads*, which at times makes it impossible for the partition of the property, and the custom of giving land as dowry among patrilineal groups.

Despite the fact that more than half of the patrilineal sample (53.6%) has natal inheritance, only a small number of them actually have control over it. This is because majority of them received land as dowry, which is also considered as their access to natal property. Women's property rights today are related less with inheritance from natal home and more in connection with marriage. This, in turn, tends to identify their rights to property with her marital family. Besides, most of the dowry goes directly to her in-laws over which she does not have any control.

Among the matrilineal women, the legal and cultural conditions have made it impossible or have delayed their access to natal inheritance. At the

same time, the existence of dowry in the form of cash and gold have made it impossible for many in lower and middle class to have any further claims in natal inheritance. Unlike among patrilineal women, where their entitlement to land received as dowry exists even if they may not have much control over it, the dowry among matrilineal women is completely wasted on lavish weddings, without much benefit for women, other than the *mahr* which is purchased with this money given as dowry. The influence of culture can be seen in the fact that the number of women who consider themselves as custodian of their economic resources and those who are sure that they can use it at their own will are more among matrilineal sample rather than in the patrilineal sample. Thus, as mentioned earlier, economic resources among the majority of matrilineal and patrilineal women in the present study can be seen as what Kabear (1999) describe as a measure of potential rather than actualised choices.

## ***Life Options - A Macro – Micro Analysis***

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Status of women in a society is measured using various social indicators designed to monitor the social conditions existing in a society over a period of time. Safilios-Rothschild (1982) have developed a set of indicators of women's power that can be used in conjunction with indicators of women's status, in order to determine how status in society is translated into power at the individual level. She refers to them as the 'macro level status indicators' or indicators that measure women's status in the society and the 'micro level status indicators' or indicators concerned with women's power at the interpersonal level within the household. The terms 'macro' and 'micro' are the levels of aggregation where women's status can be explored (Mahadevan et al. 1989; Basu 2000b). Citing a review based on 45 empirical studies on the position of women, Malhotra and Schuler (2005) also have operationalised and listed out the possible indicators of the status of women at each level of aggregation.

Some of the macro level status indicators listed out by Malhotra and Schuler (2005) include education, employment, age at marriage, access to contraception and options for divorce. Other indicators such as number of children, age at first birth, region, religion, and standard of living are also considered under macro level status indicators (Balk 1994; Jejeebhoy 2000; Mason and Smith 2003; Rustagi 2004). Similarly some of the micro level indicators listed out by Malhotra and Schuler (2005) and others such as

Ghunman et al. (2004) and Rammohan and Johar (2009) include economic decision making, freedom of mobility and freedom from violence.

According to Sharpe (2004), for a specific study the indicators are chosen mainly based on the domains of interest, the purpose of study and the population to be covered. One of the notions put forward by Safilios-Rothschild (1970) for the selection of these indicators is that the higher the women's ability is to control important events in their lives, the higher is their status. Status indicators for the present study are based upon Blumberg's (1984) General Theory of Gender Stratification. According to her, women's access to economic power is an indicator of their overall status. The access to any type of power, Blumberg observes, should translate into various manifestations of privileges, opportunities and freedom. In order to emphasise on the various indicators that can affect the life of a woman, Blumberg lists out a measurable set of opportunities and freedom which she terms as 'Life Options'. The life options put forward by Blumberg include women's relative freedom in terms of marriage and divorce; control over fertility; her freedom for pre marital and extra marital sexual activities; control over household decision making; freedom of movement; and access to education.

The present study focuses on the kinship structure and how it affects the status of women at the micro and macro level sans economic factor. With the intention of making it culture specific, some modifications are made in the list of life options suggested by Blumberg. Hence for the purpose of analysis, life options in the research have been operationalised to include the following variables.

- Marriage – age at marriage and prevalence of dowry

- Fertility performance- age at first birth, total family size and practice of intervention
- Access to higher education, measured in terms of opportunity for degree level education and above
- Access to employment
- Autonomy- freedom in decision making, freedom of movement and freedom from spousal violence

Some of these life options, according to Blumberg, affect women's position at the micro level of the household and others at the larger macro level. Taking into consideration the multi-dimensional nature of the status of women, the present study analyses life options separately as macro level life options and micro level life options. Hence the life options related to marriage, fertility performance, access to higher education and access to employment are evaluated as indicators of macro level status of women while autonomy and its three dimensions throw light on the micro level status of women.

## **6.1 Macro level Status of Women**

According to Muraleedharan (2005:72), the indicators which 'measures empowerment at the macro level for the purpose of comparison is often called the Macro Indicators'. They show the influence of policy interventions and their results at higher aggregate levels (Sinha and Sangeeta 2003). The macro level life options are important because they open up chances of employment, health, rights and privileges for women. However, these indicators are referred to by the present day researchers as indirect measures or proxy measures because they may be useful in examining limited spheres of the status of women and are more useful at macro level

studies. Moreover, the variables affecting women such as education, age at marriage and work participation are mostly determined by the general norms, values and outlook of the society towards women rather than by the women themselves (Balk 1994). At the same time these indicators can also act as determinants of other aspects of the status of women such as autonomy and empowerment. Therefore Kishor (2000) considers these variables as 'enabling factors' or 'sources of empowerment'. Hence, these macro level variables are also the reflections of status of women in a society.

The general wellbeing of women in Kerala with regard to various macro level life options such as education, health and fertility performances are traced to the matrilineal history of the state (Jeffrey, 2004/2005). Devi's (1997) comparative study on the status of women in Kerala and Madhya Pradesh shows that women in Kerala enjoy better status than her counterparts in Madhya Pradesh (MP) in areas of education, age at marriage, age at first birth and overall fertility performances. One of the main reasons she suggests for this difference is the socio-cultural milieu of the two states is that MP is highly patriarchal, while Kerala has a matrilineal history which still recognises women as individuals of significance. Hence based on the assumption that matriliney provides women with better status, this research try to assess the status of matrilineal and patrilineal women belonging to Muslim community of Malabar with regard to six important macro level status indicators and thereby test the hypothesis that there is an association between kinship and macro level status of matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women of Malabar.

### **6.1.1 Age at first marriage**

Age at marriage of a population is considered as a traditional proxy measure of the status of women at the macro level. Age of women at

marriage is of particular interest because in many societies it is the point at which certain options in education, employment, and participation in society are foreclosed; and the regular exposure to the risks of pregnancy and childbearing begins. It has several implications on the life of women. According to Carmichael (2011), if women marry in their mid- to late twenties (even if their spouses are considerably older) then they have time, between puberty and married life, to mature and build up their knowledge base and human capital investments. This is as opposed to girls who marry and enter their spouses' households in their early teens. Age at first marriage is also a proximate determinant of fertility change (Human Development Report, GoK, 2005). Though it cannot be said that age at marriage can be decided by the girl herself, a higher age at marriage certainly throws light on other important status indicators such as opportunity for education and control over fertility.

According to 2009 Sample Registration System - Registrar General (GOI), mean age at marriage for women in Kerala is 22.7 years, 4.7 years more than 18, the legal age of marriage. At the same time NFHS-3 (IIPS 2007) reports that 17% of girls in Kerala are married off before the legal age. The survey also reveals that the median age at marriage for Muslim women in Kerala is 17.87. Association of early marriage with Islam is fairly common as there is no age limit fixed for marriage in Islam (Hidayyatullah and Hidayyatullah 2003). Early marriages are considered widespread among Muslims in Malabar (Basheer 2001). Annual Vital Statistics Report (GOK 2008) also mentions this trend among Muslims of Malabar, where girls are married off before the legal age.

The Muslim women in the present study are from two different kinship backgrounds but at the same time bound by similar religious rules

of marriage and conjugality and belong to the same geographical area, i.e., Malabar. Hence an attempt is made in the present study to find out whether there is any difference in the age at first marriage between these two groups of women from different kinship groups.

**Table 6.1. Age at First Marriage**

Kinship	14 and below	15-17 yrs	18-20 yrs	21-23	24-above	Total	Descriptive Statistics	
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F(%)	F (%)	F(%)	Mean	SD
Matriliny	19 (7.6)	121(48.4)	90 (36.0)	16 (6.4)	4 (1.6)	250 (100)	17.27	2.174
Patriliney	57 (22.8)	95 (38.0)	76 (30.4)	17 (6.8)	5 (2.0)	250 (100)	16.94	3.160
Total	76(15.2)	216(43.2)	166(33.2)	33(6.6)	9 (1.8)	500 (100)	17.10	2.716

P>0.05

It is seen that the mean age at marriage for matrilineal women is slightly higher than that for patrilineal women. Morgan and Rindfuss (1984), in their comparative study of family formations in patrilocal and matrilocal household structures across four cultural/ethnic groups, found that the patrilocal residence reduces age at marriage than does the latter. A similar finding is reported by Niraula and Morgan (2000) in their study of Nepali women, where they report that women from egalitarian social context marry at a later age than those from areas with strong patriarchal culture. The difference between matrilineal and patrilineal sample is most evident in the 14 years and below age group category with 22.8% of patrilineal respondents getting married during this period. However, the preferred age at marriage among both patrilineal and matrilineal samples seems to be 15 to 17 years which is below the legal age for marriage in India.

In order to find out whether the observed difference in the mean score is significant, 't' test is carried out. The analysis shows that the difference in

the age at marriage between matrilineal and patrilineal women is not statistically significant.

According to Haneefa (2012), in many parts of Malabar, child marriage and dowry pose serious threats to education and social development of women even now. The present research also finds the mean age at marriage for the total sample as below 18 years, i.e., 17.10 years and the data indicates that more than half of the total sample, i.e., 58.4% is married below the age of 18. Todd (1985) finds the reason for early age at marriage, in the type of family system. Writing on different family types, he observes that community families, where the male offspring of the patriarch remains under the parental roof, and bring their wives and children into one large extended household, encourages women to marry at ages younger than 19 and no older than 24. In the aforementioned sample both matrilineal and patrilineal women follow the above ‘community family’ norm during the initial years of marriage and later moves on to a nuclear setup.

### **6.1.2 Age at First Birth**

The direct influence of the age of marriage is seen in the fertility performance. Early marriage leads to early child birth which in turn tends to affect the health of the mother as well as the babies on one hand and burdens the young mother with responsibilities beyond her capacities on the other. Chacko (2003) writes that the ages at which women start and stop child bearing are indicators of women’s ability to control their period of child bearing and rearing. According to Rindfuss and John (1983), the early age of the first birth reduces the options of education and career and also increases the expected quantity and pace of subsequent childbearing. Besides, the mortality risks both for the women as well as for their children increase when women

give birth at young ages (NFHS-2 2000). Age at first birth influences the total number of births that a woman might have in her life, which impacts the size, composition, and future growth of the population (Mathew and Hamilton 2009). Hence age at first birth is important for women as well as the nation.

Early child bearing is fairly common among Hindu as well as Muslim women in India. The median age at first birth for Muslim women in Kerala is reported to be 19.35 (NFHS-3 IIPS 2007). As the age of marriage is slightly higher among matrilineal women in the present study, an attempt is made to find out whether there is any difference between the two kinship groups with regard to age at first birth, another important macro level status indicator.

**Table 6.2. Age at First Birth**

Kinship	14 and less	15 - 17	18 - 20	21 - 23	24 above	Missing	Total	Descriptive Statistics	
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	Mean	SD
Matriliney	2 (0.8)	68 (27.2)	95 (38.0)	53 (21.2)	27 (10.8)	5 (2.0)	250 (100)	19.67	(3.042)
Patriliney	5 (2.0)	63 (25.2)	102 (40.8)	37 (14.8)	29 (11.6)	14(5.6)	250 (100)	19.53	(3.381)
Total	7 (1.4)	131 (26.2)	197 (39.4)	90 (18.0)	56 (11.2)	19 (3.8)	500 (100)	19.60	(3.210)

P>0.05

The data indicates that even though there is only a very slight difference between the mean age at first birth between the two groups, the mean age at first birth of the matrilineal sample (19.67) is higher than that of both patrilineal sample (19.53) as well as the total sample (19.60). Leonetti et al.'s (2007) study among matrilineal Khasi reports that women who reside with their mothers have a higher age at first birth than the women whose mothers resided elsewhere. The missing values in the table include unreported data as well as women who are childless or have not yet started a family.

In order to find out whether the observed difference in the mean score is significant, 't' test is carried out and it is found that the difference in the age at first birth between matrilineal and patrilineal women is not statistically significant.

### **6.1.3 Number of Children**

Age at first birth or the age at which women start childbearing is also an important determinant of fertility, as a higher median age is an indicator of lower fertility (NFHS-3 IIPS 2007). Therefore an attempt is made to find out the fertility performance or number of children for women in patrilineal and matrilineal groups. The number of children born to married women and their age at first birth are some of the important questions included in the various census surveys of India. These variables help in understanding the fertility performances and fertility rates among different groups of women, which in turn indicates the status of women. This also shows their attitude towards family planning. Sachar Committee Report (2006) mentions that there is a substantial contraceptive practice among Muslims. However, the prevalence of this practice is lower among Muslims than among other communities in India, and this is primarily responsible for keeping the Muslim fertility above the average level.

Sivakumar's (2000) study on age at first birth and fertility levels of women in Kerala finds that both the Hindu and Christian women in the state had their first child at later ages and hence, had lower fertility than the Muslim women over the birth cohorts. The data on age at first birth in this study reveal that matrilineal women have slightly higher age at first birth than patrilineal women. Hence an attempt is made to find out whether there is any fertility difference between matrilineal and patrilineal women with regard to this status indicator.

**Table 6.3. Number of Children**

Kinship	3 or less	4 to 6	7 and above	total	Descriptive Statistics	
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	Mean	SD
Matriliny	181 (72.4)	67 (26.8)	2 (0.8)	250 (100)	2.92	(1.196)
Patriliney	181 (72.4)	59 (23.6)	10 (4.0)	250 (100)	2.83	(1.287)
Total	362 (72.4)	126 (25.2)	12 (2.4)	500 (100)	2.87	(1.241)

P>0.05

While in the first two categories there is not much difference between the matrilineal and patrilineal sample, it is seen that respondents who have seven and above children belong largely to patrilineal group than matrilineal group. However, the mean number of children is slightly lesser among patrilineal sample when compared to matrilineal sample. Similar finding is reported by Saikia et al. (2001). They observed that women in the Khasi matrilineal society had a much higher fertility than their counterparts in the patrilineal Karbi society of North-East India.

The Annual Vital Statistics Report (2008) published by Government of Kerala reveals that around 90% of women in Kerala have three or less number of children. Table 6.3 also reveals that majority of women (72.4%) in the present study have three or less than three children. However the 't' test shows that there is no significant difference in the number of children between matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslim women of Malabar.

#### **6.1.4 Contraceptive use**

According to Shah (2006) there is a close relationship between the rate of fertility, an important macro status indicator, and contraceptive prevalence. Though the participation in decision making regarding the use of contraception happens at the micro household level, the programs and policies

initiated by the policy makers have a direct influence on the contraceptive use pattern. National Family Health Survey 3 (IIPS 2007) also maintains that the current level of contraceptive use is one of the principal determinants of fertility and also an indicator of the success of family planning programmes. Malhotra and Schuler (2005) also consider the availability of intervention as an important status indicator at the macro level. For these reasons the contraceptive use in the present study is probed under macro status indicators. The respondents are asked whether they or their partners are using or have used any form of intervention as a means of fertility control.

**Table 6.4. Contraceptive Use**

<b>Kinship</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>(%)</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Matriliny	126	(50.4)	124	(49.6)	250	(100)
Patriliney	82	(32.8)	168	(67.2)	250	(100)
Total	208	(41.6)	292	(58.4)	500	(100)

P<0.05

It can be observed that there is a difference in the rate of use of contraceptions between matrilineal and patrilineal woman. While almost half of the matrilineal sample said that they use or have used some form of intervention, only 32.8% of patrilineal sample said the same. The statistical analysis of the data shows that the tests are significant at 5% level. This reveals that there is a relation between contraceptive use and kinship system with more matrilineal women adopting methods for controlling their fertility.

Blumberg (1986) notes that the type of intervention, such as contraceptive use, abstinence and abortion, is also an indicator of women's control over their life. A further probe into the contraceptive use pattern in this study show that 71.43% of matrilineal women and 78.01% of patrilineal

women who have resorted to contraceptive use, have undergone sterilisation. The rest of the respondents have made use of temporary methods such as IUD, oral pills, abstinence and use of condom by the husbands.

According to Rustagi (2004) the burden for contraception falls overwhelmingly on women. As women are the ones who conceive and bear children, it becomes their responsibility to control or protect themselves against future reproduction. Out of the total number of matrilineal respondents who have adopted a permanent method, 34% said that they underwent sterilisation mainly due to the advice of their doctor, as their first three deliveries were caesarians. As for the patrilineal sample, 54.64% also gave the same reason for adopting a permanent method. This suggests that it is more for a medical reason rather than the desire for family planning that these women agree for sterilisation. This fact is further supported by the cross tabulation of age, kinship and contraceptive use. The analysis shows that contraceptive use increases with increase in the age among both matrilineal and patrilineal women, where more women belonging to older age group have adopted some form of intervention than the younger age group who has not reached their desired family size yet.

### **6.1.5 Level of Education**

Education and employment are two crucial macro level status indicators that can directly be influenced by policy makers and bring about a change in the quality of life of women. Studies have shown the importance of kinship system in improving the educational attainment of girls. Keddie (1987) and Ling-Pong (1999) in separate studies had observed that egalitarian bilateral and matrilineal systems, along with favorable government intervention have helped Muslim women's education considerably in Negri Sembilan in Malaysia

and Minangkabau in Indonesia. However, despite years of developmental programs, the Sachar Committee (2006) reports that in a state like Kerala, where achievements at lower level of education is commendable, the performance of Muslim women becomes very poor in relation to graduation-level education, with rural Muslim women faring the worst.

Though the overall educational level of Muslim women is found to be low in the present study, the percentage analysis depicts that the number of respondents who have degree and above qualification is more among matrilineal sample than patrilineal sample. Hence to find out whether there is a relationship between level of education and kinship system, the level of education is categorised into three sections, i.e., “<10<sup>th</sup> standard”, “completed tenth to degree not completed” and “degree and above”.

**Table 6.5. Level of Education**

<b>Kinship</b>	<b>&lt;10 class</b>	<b>&gt; 10 class- degree not completed</b>	<b>Degree and above</b>	<b>Total</b>
Matriliny	117 (46.8%)	103 (41.2%)	30 (12%)	250
Patriliney	123 (49.2%)	108 (43.2%)	19 (7.6%)	250
Total	240 (48.0%)	211 (42.2%)	49 (9.8%)	500

P>0.05

The lack of enrolments for higher education is evident among both the kinship groups. Around 90 % of women from both the kinship groups belong to the first two categories which draws attention to the lack of participation of Muslim women in higher education. The statistical analysis of the data shows that the tests are not significant. At the same time, it is the matrilineal women who have better performance with regard to degree and above qualification. Rustagi (2004) observes that potential benefits of education will remain limited unless the girls continue their education upto higher levels of schooling. Only then the biases and discriminations which

are the outcomes of socio-cultural factors and patriarchal structure will be overcome. This is true even in case of higher education beyond the level of schooling. Subbamma (1988) feels that the marked difference in public and private lives of Muslim women and the lack of awareness regarding the significance of education for the power of women are some of the reasons for their poor educational performance.

### **6.1.6 Employment Status**

Economic independence of women is a crucial macro level status indicator. According to Carr et al. (1998), among communities that do not allow women to work outside their home, the predicament of widowed, divorced or deserted women often become intolerable. At the same time a woman's work may be primarily poverty-driven. Moreover, a consequence of income-generating activities may be that gender inequality may be less or that she is more likely to be treated well by the family, but either consequence may be less likely to occur if the amount she earns is very small. According to the 2001 census (GOI), Kerala Muslim women have one of the lowest levels of work participation of 5.9% in the country. Panda's (2003) study on work participation of women in Kerala has also revealed that there is a conservative attitude toward working women in Muslim families.

In this research only 5.2 % from matrilineal sample and 3.6% from patrilineal sample are employed. Though there is only slight variation between the two kinship groups, keeping in line with the statistical analysis carried out for the other macro status indicators, an attempt is also made to find out whether there is an association between kinship system and the employment status. The statistical analysis of the data shows that the tests are not significant.

It can be interpreted from the aforementioned analyses that there is a slight difference between matrilineal and patrilineal women with regard to the selected macro level status indicators of women. It is found that that the marriage age is lower for patrilineal Muslim women than matrilineal Muslim women. The former also lags behind the latter in relation to age at first birth. But when it comes to the number of children, patrilineal women have lesser number of children than matrilineal women. The analysis also shows that it is more of matrilineal women who use or have used any form of contraceptions. Women who have higher education are also more among matrilineal sample than among patrilineal sample. The data regarding work participation shows that more matrilineal women than patrilineal women are employed.

However, the statistical analysis reveals that except for contraceptive use, the tests are not statistically significant. Hence the evidence of the sample rejects the hypothesis of the study that there is an association between kinship system and macro level status indicators of Mappila Muslim women of Malabar. This clearly indicates that the difference between the matrilineal and patrilineal women with regard to above variables is negligible and the role of kinship system in influencing these variables is not significant.

Since there are no variations in macro level status indicators for matrilineal and patrilineal women, an attempt is made to find out whether there is any difference in the micro level status indicators between the two groups. The current researches emphasise the importance of going beyond the macro level life options to include more direct variables to identify the actual situations in which women find themselves in. This will help to understand the reality women tend to face on a day-to-day basis. Besides, this will also give an insight to the direct effect of kinship system on the status of women.

## 6.2 Micro level Status of Women

Micro level status indicators of women are mainly related to women's life and their position within the domestic sphere. It reflects the ability of women to make decisions affecting the circumstances of their own lives. Autonomy is one such concept that deals with women's status within the household. It reflects the socio-cultural institution of the society (Afridi, 2010). Kishor (1995) writes that though economic developments and modernisation theories can explain the autonomy of women, its effects can be mediated by the kinship structure within which women live and the culture specific gender and age stratification systems of which they are a part. Dyson and Moore (1983), Malhotra and Mather (1997), Ghunman et al. (2004), Chavoshi et al. (2004), Rammohan and Johar (2009) and others have focused on how prevailing norms and kinship system influence the autonomy of women. These studies in one way or the other, point towards the constraints faced by women in strict patriarchal societies and autonomy enjoyed by women in egalitarian settings. At the same time there are researches by Levine and Kevane (2003) and Rahman and Rao (2004) who have found no notable disadvantage for women in patrilocal setup.

Autonomy is a concept employed to assess women's status at the micro level. Castillo (2009) observes that autonomy is intrinsically valuable because it is a part of human well-being as well as instrumental in promoting human development. According to Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001: 688) autonomy can be defined as 'the control women have over their own lives – the extent to which they have an equal voice with their husbands in matters affecting themselves and their families, control over material and other resources, access to knowledge and information, the authority to make independent decisions, freedom from constraints on physical mobility and the ability to

forge equitable power relationships within families' or in other words it is the extent to which women exert control over their own lives within the families in which they live, at a given point of time, in order to effect desired outcomes within the household.

The extent to which women can exert their control depend on their bargaining power within the household. Extending Sen's (1990) analytical framework, Kathewera–Banda et al. (2011) and Agarwal (1997) have included the effect of gendered institutions and social norms as a special form of bargaining power which affect the bargaining process. The female-friendly norms that provide the perception or even illusion, as Sen (1990) refers to, of the legitimacy of one's claims within the household can affect one's autonomy or decision making behavior. According to Rahaman and Rao (2004) women's perceptions or experiences of their decision making authority on a range of issues can actually influence their autonomy

Following the works of Morgan and Niraula (1995), Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001), Ghunman et al. (2004), Agarwala and Lynch (2006) and Rammohan and Johar (2009), this study makes use of three important dimensions of autonomy that will possibly reflect the influence of kinship system, particularly residence pattern. They include economic decision making autonomy, freedom of movement, i.e., whether women need permission before going to various places, and freedom from spousal violence, both psychological and physical. These aspects of women's autonomy are believed to have a direct influence on the respondents themselves, rather than other members of the family. They also reflect the ability of women to make decisions affecting the circumstances of their own lives within the household. Mason and Smith (2003), who have used similar items for measuring empowerment, show that women from

different social contexts report themselves as having differing levels of empowerment and this according to them is not due to differing personal characteristics but due to difference in gender systems.

For the purpose of analysing the status of women at the household micro level, the aforementioned dimensions of autonomy are operationalised with questions regarding a range of household issues. These questions are expected to elicit responses from the sample, in order to throw more light on the variation in married women's autonomy in the two kinship groups.

### **6.2.1 Economic Decision Making**

Male supremacy in financial domain is considered as a norm in societies where female participation in income generating occupations is limited. According to Govindasamy and Malhotra (1996), in such situations, women's ability to act independently in controlling or influencing economic decision making within the household is indeed a mark of women's empowerment. Susilastuti (2003) observes that patriarchal Islamic society views men as heads of household and decision makers. At the same time, she writes, there is another concept of *Shura* or the principle of consultation in Islam that relate to the western concept of joint decision making. Based on Rammohan and Johar's (2009) study, a consensual definition of economic decision making autonomy is used here, mainly because most of the decisions involved in the household decision making dimension involve other household members too. Hence unlike in some previous works, this research regards involvement in economic decision making in consultation with other members of the family as important as sole decision making by the respondents themselves.

Women's say in economic decision making is measured using seven items which reflect both access to and control of resources. According to

Basu and Koolwal (2005), indicators of autonomy can reflect responsibility and self-indulgence. Items that reflect self-indulgence implicate self-consideration and unproductive freedom. Buying clothing for oneself or buying gifts at one’s own wish comes under unproductive freedom, and the lack of freedom to make these decisions definitely shows lack of autonomy. The same can be said about buying jewellery or keeping aside money for one’s own use. To understand the decision making process, respondents are asked whether they are involved in taking decisions regarding the seven areas of access to and control of economic resources.

**Table 6.6. Economic Decision Making**

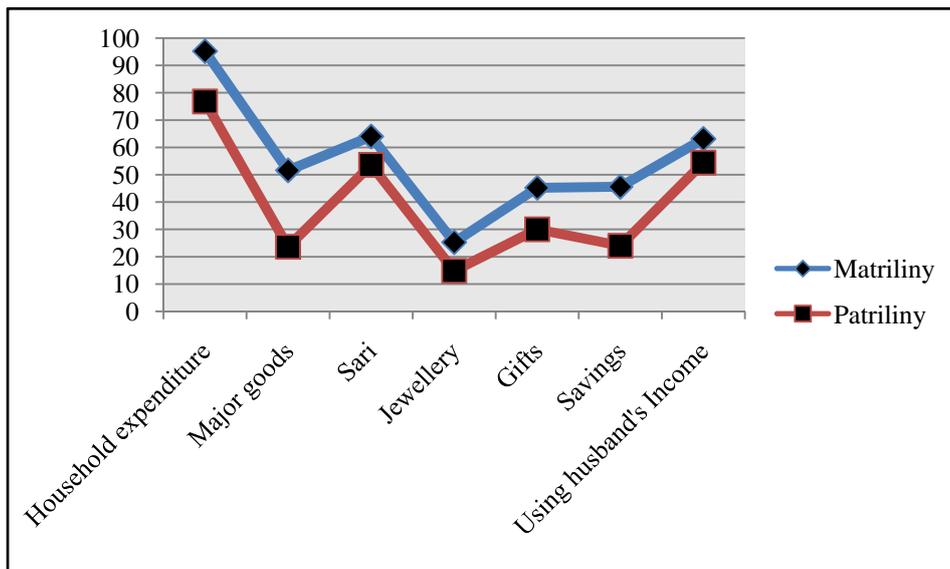
Decision	Kinship	Frequency (%)		Total (%)	Sig
		Yes	No		
Spending money for household expenditure	Matriliny	238 (95.2%)	12 (4.8%)	250 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliny	192 (76.8%)	58 (23.2%)	250 (100%)	
	Total	430 (86.0%)	70 (14.0%)	500 (100%)	
Purchase of major goods such as T.V, fridge etc.	Matriliny	129 (51.6%)	121 (48.4%)	250 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliny	59 (23.6%)	191 (76.4%)	250 (100%)	
	Total	188 (37.6%)	312 (62.4%)	500 (100%)	
Buying sari for oneself	Matriliny	160 (64.0%)	90 (36.0%)	250 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliny	134 (53.6%)	116 (46.4%)	250 (100%)	
	Total	294 (58.8%)	206 (41.2%)	500 (100%)	
Buying jewellery for oneself	Matriliny	63 (25.3%)	186 (74.7%)	249 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliny	37 (14.8%)	213 (85.2%)	250 (100%)	
	Total	100 (20.0%)	399 (80.0%)	499* (100%)	
Buying gifts for friends and relatives	Matriliny	113 (45.2%)	137 (54.8%)	250 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliny	75 (30.0%)	175 (70.0%)	250 (100%)	
	Total	188 (37.6%)	312 (62.4%)	500 (100%)	
Keeping aside money for one’s own use	Matriliny	114 (45.6%)	136 (54.4%)	250 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliny	60 (24.0%)	190 (76.0%)	250 (100%)	
	Total	174 (34.8%)	326 (65.2%)	500 (100%)	
Using husband's income	Matriliny	157 (63.1%)	92 (36.9%)	249 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliny	136 (54.4%)	114 (45.6%)	250 (100%)	
	Total	293 (58.7%)	206 (41.3%)	499* (100%)	

\*Missing values present

Table 6.6 presents the decision making authority women enjoy in seven areas of economic decision making within the household, sort by the kinship system. The data discloses that more matrilineal women provide positive answers regarding their household economic autonomy than patrilineal women. In the areas of economic decision making such as household expenditure, major decision making regarding buying household gadgets, buying gifts for the relatives and having savings which the respondents alone can use, women from patrilineal families have considerably lower participation than women from matrilineal families.

The aspect that needs special mention here is the greater role of matrilineal women in matters related to control of resources such as savings, purchase of major goods and buying gifts for relatives. They do not just reflect access to resource but also control of it. These items are considered by Basu and Koolwal (2005) as unproductive freedom which shows self-indulgence and serves women's self-interests. The most important among these items that show the favourable situation of matrilineal women is having savings that they can use without their husbands permission, because direct control of cash imply greater autonomy (Rahman and Rao, 2004). While 45.6% of matrilineal women, that is almost half of matrilineal sample, agree that they have savings which they alone can use without the permission of other family members including the husband, only 24% of the patrilineal sample said the same. These savings are in the form of post office savings, bank accounts and local chit funds. Kurien's (1994) study on an emigrant patrilineal Mappila community in Kerala also brings to light the exclusion of women in patriarchal extended families, from economic control and

economic decision making for the household. Similar findings can be seen in Niraula and Morgan’s (2000) study on Nepali women where women from more egalitarian hill settings have more control over economic resources than women from patriarchal plains.



**Figure 6.1 Economic Decision Making**

From the figure 6.1, it can be clearly seen that the economic decision making is higher among matrilineal sample than among patrilineal sample for all the given situations. The chi-square tests also prove that the relationship between kinship and economic decision making of women are statistically significant with matrilineal Muslim women enjoying greater economic decision making power than patrilineal Muslim women in Malabar.

The data also reveals that there seems to be less variation between both the groups in matters of buying sari and participating in deciding how to use husband’s income. At the same time the fact that around 40% of

women from both matrilineal and patrilineal samples who do not have freedom to buy a simple item of self-consideration such as sari, definitely points towards the fact that women are not completely free from authorities of other members. This is in contrast to Ramohan and Johar's (2009) study where more than 90% of women from both matrilineal and patrilineal households enjoyed decision making autonomy over their clothes. This low participation of Kerala women in buying personal goods is also observed by Rajan et al. (1996). Around two thirds of the respondents in their study also agreed that they need the permission of their husbands or in-laws before buying personal goods such as sari or slippers.

Results also indicate that both the groups have a low level of participation in buying jewellery at their own will. This low level of participation could be because of the high prices of gold ornaments, and since participation in income generating activities is lower among both the groups their purchasing capacity tends to be constrained.

### **6.2.2 Freedom of Movement**

According to Susilastuti (2003), freedom of movement is an important dimension of autonomy, as it provides opportunities for women to interact with others outside home and family, and to make use of social services such as health care, as well as recreational activities. This dimension focuses on whether women have to face constraints on physical mobility outside homes.

In order to measure freedom of mobility, Jejeebhoy (2000) has identified five places where women can go unescorted. They include health centre, community centre, a home of relative or friend, a fair, and

the next village. Mason and Smith (2000) and Saleem and Bobak (2005) also have used similar items to ascertain mobility of women, but rather than going with an escort they focus on requiring permission to go to these places. During the pilot study, it is seen that women themselves prefer an escort while travelling, as they feel the present scenario ‘unsafe for women’ to travel alone. Therefore instead of escort, the present study look into whether women require permission to venture out to five locations ranging from less threatening local shops to more intimidating places such as outside their city or town. Venturing out of the house without the need to get permission is definitely a sign of autonomy for women.

Morgan and Niraula (1995), Morgan et al. (2002), Ghunman (2003), Susilastuti (2003), Chavoshi et al. (2004) and others have used this dimension of autonomy in their separate studies on South Asian and Muslim countries, where women’s movements may be restricted. Therefore in order to find out whether there is any difference in the mobility between matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women in Malabar, the present research focuses on the freedom of movement dimension operationalised with questions regarding whether women needs permission from male members of the family to visit the five places. Destinations such as market and health center are more instrumental in nature, i.e., places to meet ones necessities, while others are places for recreation and socialising. The table 6.7 gives the results of the data.

**Table 6.7. Freedom of Movement**

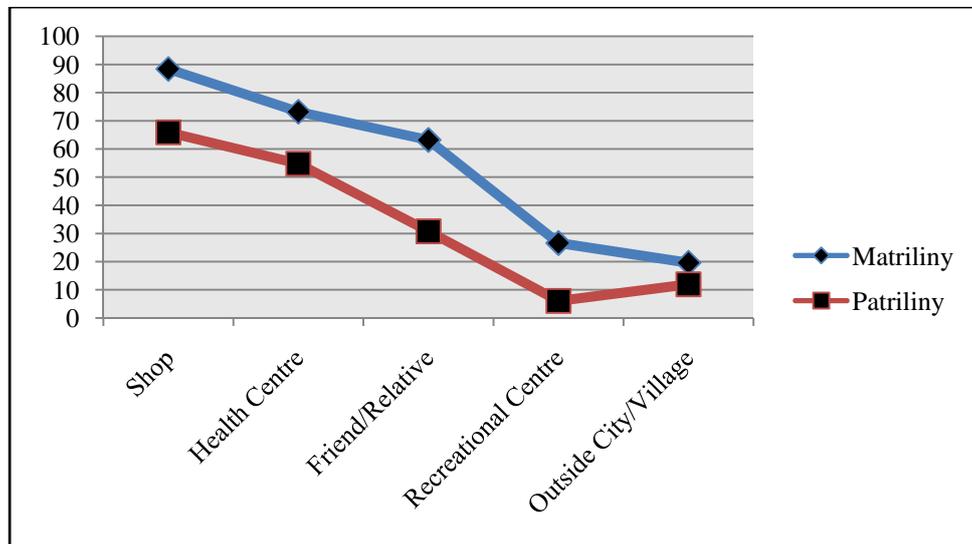
Location	Kinship	Frequency (%)		Total (%)	Sig.
		Yes	No		
Shop	Matriliny	29 (11.6%)	221 (88.4%)	250 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliney	85 (34.1%)	164 (65.9%)	249 (100%)	
	Total	114 (22.8%)	385 (77.2%)	499* (100%)	
Health centre	Matriliny	67 (26.8%)	183 (73.2%)	250 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliney	113 (45.2%)	137 (54.8%)	250 (100%)	
	Total	180 (36%)	320 (64%)	500 (100%)	
Friend/ Relative	Matriliny	92 (36.8%)	158 (63.2%)	250 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliney	173 (69.2%)	77 (30.8%)	250 (100%)	
	Total	265 (53%)	235 (47%)	500 (100%)	
Recreational centre	Matriliny	182 (73.4%)	66 (26.6%)	248 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliney	232 (93.9%)	15 (6.1%)	247 (100%)	
	Total	414 (83.6%)	81 (16.4%)	495* (100%)	
Outside city/ Village	Matriliny	201 (80.4%)	49 (19.6%)	250 (100%)	P<0.05
	Patriliney	220 (88.0%)	30 (12.0%)	250 (100%)	
	Total	421 (84.2%)	79 (15.8%)	500 (100%)	

\*Missing values present

The analysis makes it evident that women from the matrilineal group enjoy much greater freedom of movement than those from the patrilineal group. In both the groups, majority agree that they can go to the nearby shops and health centers without permission. Again, as in the economic decision making autonomy, it is evident that matrilineal women enjoy more freedom in visiting those places that are considered as sign of self-indulgence, especially houses of friends and relatives.

While 63.2% of matrilineal women agree that they did not need permission from their spouses or other senior members to visit their relatives, only 30.8% patrilineal sample said the same. The existing literature has shown how patrilocality restricts women's mobility, as Sengupta and Johnson (2006) reported that residing with mother-in-law can

reduce the mobility of women outside the house. In contrast to this, matrilineal women enjoy the benefit of matrilocality where they are amidst their own natal kin. Since in this study matrilineal sample are mainly concentrated in urban areas, they also tend to benefit from the facilities and amenities provided by the urban areas such as better transport, malls, restaurants and other recreational centers. This can also be cited as a reason for difference in mobility between the two groups.



**Figure 6.2 Freedom of Movement**

As seen in the figure, mobility is higher among matrilineal sample than among patrilineal sample for all types of destinations. Chi square tests shows that in every location there is a relationship between kinship and freedom of movement.

Despite all this, in both the groups, the freedom of mobility shows a declining trend, i.e., there is greater freedom to visit relatively unthreatening places such as local market, health centre or even the house of friends or

relatives. Conversely, a centre for recreation or an adjacent city or village, places to which the mobility require high autonomy and self-reliance for the woman, have very few takers. In spite of the facilities available in urban areas, only 26.6% of matrilineal sample said that they do not need permission to go to a center of recreation such as malls, parks and restaurants. Susilatuti's (2003) work on Egyptian Muslim women also reveal similar results suggesting that women's freedom of movement varies in accordance with destination and purpose of outing. This however is not a particular issue of Muslim women. Niraula and Morgan's (2000) study of autonomy of women in two different settings has shown that women in the more egalitarian hill areas have more freedom of movement for going to health centre and market than women from patriarchal plains. Other destinations like next village or a recreational centre is less acceptable in both the settings, suggesting that women still face constraints of mobility in certain areas.

### **6.2. 3 Freedom from Spousal Violence**

Freedom from spousal violence is an essential aspect for women's autonomy because it enhances women's physical and psychological wellbeing (Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Morgan et al. 2002; Ghunman 2003; Afridi 2010). It is not only the actual violence, but the fear of violence also tends to affect the autonomy of women. The Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing in 1995 declared that the fear of violence, including harassment, is a permanent constraint on the mobility of women and limits their access to resources and basic activities.

Spousal violence refers to violence perpetuated by partners in a marital union and it is the most common form of domestic violence for women aged 15 to 49 (NFHS3 2007). The fact that those who are responsible for the

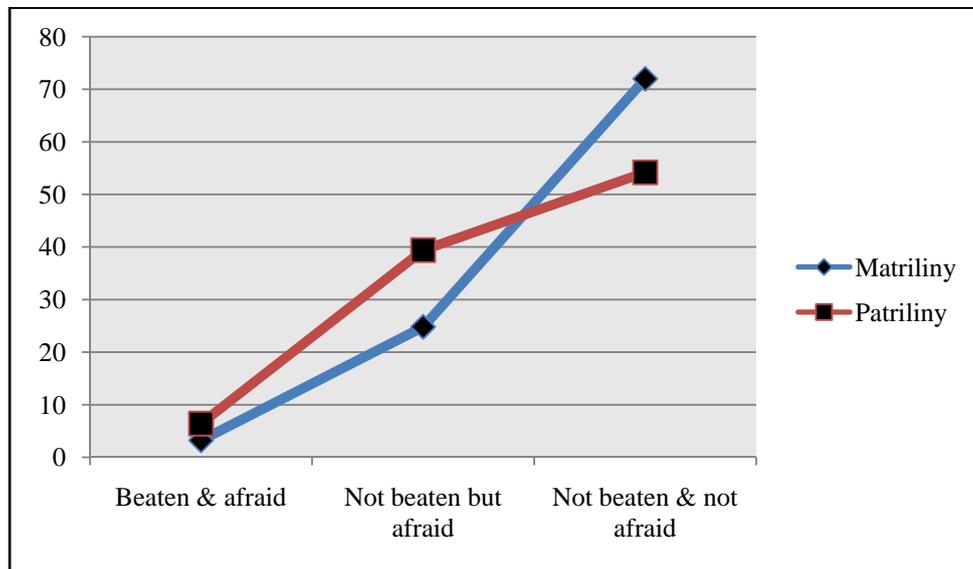
protection of women themselves become the source of violence makes the experience more traumatic. According to Sunny's (2003) study on domestic violence in the district of Ernakulam, the offenders involved in domestic violence against women are usually their male marital partners. She also notes that such women live under constant fear, threat and humiliation.

Ghunman (2003) and Morgan et al. (2002) have measured freedom from violence by asking two questions: whether the respondents have experienced spousal violence and whether they are afraid to disagree with their husbands. As given by the authors, in the present study, freedom from spousal violence focuses on interpersonal control exercised by husbands both at physical and psychological levels using these two items. Emulating the score pattern used in the aforementioned studies, the scores in the present research are also assigned as 0 if the woman has been beaten by the husband and she is afraid to disagree with him at the same time, 1 if she has never experienced physical violence but is scared to voice her opinion and 2 if she is neither afraid to disagree nor suffer beating at the hands of her husband. Though it is not an exhaustive measure of spousal violence, these questions have the benefit of increasing the response rate from the respondents. Ghunman et al.'s (2000) analysis suggests that these items have similar meanings for studies of different groups within a same country.

**Table 6.8. Freedom from Spousal Violence**

Spousal violence	Kinship		Total	Sig.
	Matriliny	Patriliney		
Beaten and Afraid	8 (3.2%)	16 (6.4%)	24 (4.8%)	P<0.05
Not Beaten but Afraid	62 (24.8%)	98 (39.4%)	160 (32.1%)	
Not Beaten and Not Afraid	180 (72.0%)	135 (54.2%)	315 (63.1%)	
Total	250 (100%)	249 (100%)	499*(100%)	

\*Missing values present



**Figure 6.3 Freedom from Spousal Violence**

The data reveals that although the number of women reporting physical violence is low among both the groups, it is patrilineal women who have more experience of spousal violence than matrilineal women. However, the important difference between the matrilineal and patrilineal groups can be seen at the psychological level, where almost 40% of patrilineal respondents agree that though they have not experienced any physical violence, they are scared to disagree with their husbands and hold back their opinion fearing the wrath of their husbands, whereas only 25 % of matrilineal women have given the similar response. The response to this question, according to Mason and Smith (2003), taps women's feelings of intimidation by their husbands. While almost three fourth of the total matrilineal sample (72%) agree that they are neither afraid to disagree with their spouses nor have experienced any violence, only 53.3% of patrilineal sample affirmatively said so. This highlights the freedom experienced or at least the freedom matrilineal women believe they have at the psychological

level by being amidst their own natal kin. Chi square test also shows that there is a relationship between kinship system and freedom from spousal violence.

According to Hyman Rodman's (1972) 'Theory of Resources in Cultural context' decision making behaviour is influenced by the interaction between resources and cultural context. This theory is applied to matrilineal societies by Warner et al. (1986). They argued that resources need not be material resources alone but can include family organisational pattern especially residence and descent practices, and these resources may be at least as important as material resources in determining the conjugal power structure. Their study supports the hypothesis that wives have more power in marriage and a better position in conjugal power, in societies with matrilineal rather than patrilineal customs of residence and descent. The aforementioned analysis also makes it evident that there is an association between autonomy and kinship system with matrilineal women having more say in economic decision making, more freedom of movement and are more free from spousal violence than patrilineal women. The statistical analysis shows that the tests are statistically significant thereby supporting the hypothesis that there is an association between kinship system and micro level status of Mappila Muslim women in Malabar.

### **6.3 Summary**

Status of women is said to vary according to context, level of aggregation and dimensions studied. The two important levels of aggregations where women's status can be measured are micro household level and macro community level. Within these levels, there are various dimensions that throw light on the status of women. Hence, it is said that the

status of women is a multi-dimensional concept. Status of women also varies based on the context women find themselves in. Therefore it is argued that the status of women varies from one kinship group to the other. In the present chapter, a comparative analysis of the macro and micro level status of matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslim women of Malabar is carried out.

The first section of the chapter focuses on the difference between matrilineal and patrilineal women belonging to Muslim community of Malabar with regard to six important macro level status indicators. For this purpose six important indicators that can influence the status of women and can be influenced by the introduction of policies and programs are chosen. They include age at marriage, age at first birth, number of children, contraceptive use, education and employment status. It is seen that matrilineal women fare better than patrilineal women with respect to age at marriage and age at first birth. Patrilineal Muslim women get married early (Mean=16.94, SD= 3.160) when compared to matrilineal Muslim women (mean= 17.27, SD= 2.174). Likewise, women who have higher education are more for matrilineal sample than for patrilineal sample. Though the difference is minimal, the patrilineal women also have a lesser age at first birth (Mean= 19.53, SD=3.381) than matrilineal women (Mean= 19.67, SD= 3.042). On the contrary there is a very slight difference in the number of children with patrilineal women having lesser number of children than matrilineal women.

Status of employment also reveals that very few women from both the groups are employed. Though the difference is very less, more matrilineal women are employed than patrilineal women. The only indicator that shows a considerable difference between two groups is the use of contraception, where 50.4% of matrilineal women agree to the use of

some form of intervention against 32.8% of patrilineal women who said the same. Despite the modest difference between the two samples with regard to some status indicators, these observations are tested for statistical significance. The analysis reveals that except for contraceptive use, there is no statistically significant difference and association between macro level status indicators and kinship system. This means that though the women belong to two different kinship groups, there is no much difference in the macro level status of Muslim women in Malabar, thereby rejecting the hypothesis that there is an association between kinship system and the macro level status indicators of Mappila Muslim women in Malabar.

As there is no difference in the macro level status indicators, an effort is made towards finding out the ground realities and the actual situations in which women find themselves in day-to-day basis. The second section in this chapter make an attempt to find out whether there is any significant difference between matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women in Malabar in relation to selected micro level status indicators, also referred to as autonomy. The three dimensions of autonomy that is in consideration for the present study are economic decision making, freedom of movement and spousal violence. The analysis suggests that with regard to every indicators of autonomy, matrilineal women fare better than patrilineal women signifying the importance of kinship system in influencing the status of women at the micro level. The statistical analysis also proves the hypothesis that there is an association between kinship and micro level status indicators of Mappila Muslim women in Malabar.

The analysis of economic decision making dimension reveals that less than 40% of the total sample is involved in buying major goods for the household, buying jewellery, having a savings account and buying gifts for

the family members. It is also seen that women are free to visit relatively unthreatening places such as local market, health centre or even the house of friends. However, a declining trend is evident when it comes to visiting places such as a recreation centre or nearby city or village, a move that requires high autonomy and self-reliance for the woman. The data also reveals that only 4.8% of women from the total sample have experienced physical violence. Majority agrees that they have neither been beaten by their husbands nor are they afraid to disagree with him.

The multi dimensionality of the term ‘status of women’ is underlined by several researchers. (Mason 1986; Rustagi 2004). This means there is more than one dimension for measuring the status of women and a single dimension cannot provide a complete picture of wellbeing of women. It also suggests that a high score in one dimension does not guarantee similar higher scores in other dimensions. The present research also shows that while micro level status of women is associated with kinshpsystem, there is no variation in macro level status of women with kinship system.

## ***Life Options and the Factors Affecting it***

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The main focus of present research is to find out the difference in the status of women from different social contexts and hence kinship is considered as an important variable that can affect the life option scores. When the life options of women are analysed on the basis of macro and micro level status indicators, it is observed that there is no significant difference in relation to selected macro level status indicators of matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslim women. At the same time, the difference between them with regard to micro level indicators is significant. These findings raise the need to enquire further, the influence of other independent variables on the status of women. As kinship is the key variable, it is also necessary to look into whether the effects of independent variables vary within each kinship system.

The present research therefore makes an attempt to analyse the role played by independent variables such as present age, level of education of the respondents, standard of living and rural-urban settings. Statistical techniques of 'T' Test and one way ANOVA are made use of to find out the association between kinship systems, women's life options and the selected independent variables. Considering the multi-dimensional nature of the status of women, the effects of the independent variables are analysed separately for macro level life options and micro level autonomy.

In order to find out the influences of independent variables for the purpose of further analysis, it is necessary to create a summated score of various questions dealt under life options. Since the respondents are housewives from diverse backgrounds and in order to increase the response rate, the data collected using the interview schedule are mostly in dichotomous form. Values such as education, age at marriage, number of children etc. analysed under macro level status indicators are also coded in the dichotomous form. It is usually not easy to generate a summated score by using dichotomous responses, because the coding involved is not similar to that of a Likert scale. Hence transformation of data is carried out using arcsine transformation. That means, the inverse sine of the square root of the proportion is calculated or  $Y = \arcsine \sqrt{P}$ , where p is the proportion and Y is the result of the transformation. After this transformation, the data is all set to be used for parametric hypothesis testing. Data transformation and analysis for factors affecting life options are carried out separately for macro and micro levels.

For applying the parametric method of data analysis, the normality of data has to be proved. Table 7.1 describes the basic statistics of life option.

**Table 7.1. Life Option Descriptives**

Life option		Life Options (Macro level)	Life Options (Micro Level)
	Mean	.6057 *	.7608**
	5% Trimmed Mean	.6024	.7581
	Median	.6591	.7100
	Variance	.028	.135
	Std. Deviation	.16679	.36726
	Minimum	.36	.00
	Maximum	.91	1.57
	Range	.55	1.57

\* Std Error=.00746

\*\* Std Error=.01642

The table reveals that the means of both the life option scores lies somewhere in the middle of the minimum and maximum values in each group. It can also be claimed that, there are not much of outliers, since there is not much difference between mean and 5% trimmed mean for both the life option scores. The standard error reported for both the scores is also negligible. The normality of the data is also checked using histogram, Q-Q plot and box plot (appendix 2). Since the evidence of normality is found, parametric methods of data analysis is carried out.

## **7.1 Factors Influencing Macro Life Options**

A Report on Millennium Development Goal and Muslims in India, states that ‘the status of Muslim women is determined by social and economic class, urban and rural residence and regional location’ (TPMS 2008, 33). Literature review has shown that variables such as present age, education, rural urban settings and standard of living as some of the important variables that can influence the status of women. Bhagat and Praharaj (2005) have emphasised the importance of education, employment, rural-urban difference and economic status in explaining the status of Indian Muslims especially Muslim women. Jeejebhoy (2000) observed the influence of these variables on the status of women tend to vary across contexts with different gender ideologies. Hence the following section in this chapter attempts to find out how the macro life option scores of married Muslim women varies with regard to independent variables within each kinship system.

### **7.1.1 Age**

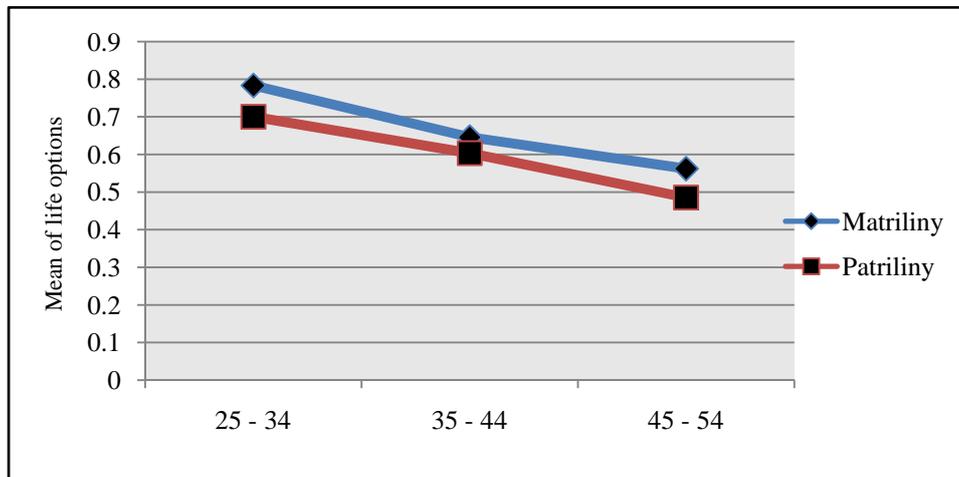
According to Singh (1992) one’s age decides the ability of a person to face challenges and form his own outlook. At the same time opinions of and options available to each age group tend to be influenced by macro level

changes taking place in the society, they witness during their each stages of life. Susilastuti (2003) considers age as a crucial determinant of social stratification within the family. Hence this study attempts to find out the influence of the age upon the macro life option of matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women. Table 7.2 gives a picture about the life option variation among Muslim women with respect to various age groups and kinship groups.

**Table 7.2. Age Group and Macro Life Option**

<b>Matrilineal Women</b>					
<b>Age group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
25 to 34	91	.7832	.16693	29.758	P<0.05
35 to 44	75	.6458	.20836		
45 to 54	84	.5625	.20029		
Total	250	.6678	.21238		
<b>Patrilineal Women</b>					
<b>Age group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
25 to 34	103	.7003	.19976	25.594	P<0.05
35 to 44	79	.6034	.17973		
45 and 54	68	.4855	.19582		
Total	250	.6113	.21073		

The analysis reveals that within each age group it is matrilineal sample that enjoy better life options than their patrilineal counterparts. Even among the younger age group, it is matrilineal women who have higher life option score than patrilineal women of the same age group. This means that the former enjoys more freedom with regard to higher age at marriage, fertility preferences, education and other macro level life option variables than the latter. The least macro life option score is observed among patrilineal women who are in the age group 45 to 54 suggesting the strict patriarchal conditions that provided them with few opportunities to make choices regarding their lives.



**Figure 7.1 Age Group and Macro Life Option**

It can be generally observed that, the life option decreases with respect to increase in age groups. The highest macro life option scores are observed for the younger age group among both matrilineal and patrilineal sample while the least score was seen for the highest age group. Hence it can be claimed that, macro life option increases with decrease in age among Muslim women from both the kinship groups. A one way ANOVA test is conducted to check the significance of variations reported in Table 7.2. The test results indicate that there exists significant difference with regard to life options between different age groups within both the kinship groups.

The difference in the life options with age is a positive change that shows that more women in the present generation are able to take control over their life. Based on her study on villages in Bubhaneshwar, Seymour (1999) observes that the Indian patrifocal family system had to confront and is being challenged by forces of modernity in the form of new educational and occupational opportunities, commercialisation of the economy and the new democratic ideals. As a result, some of its underlying principles that affect the roles and lives of women are being transformed.

### 7.1.2. Education

According to Suguna (2011) education is a milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, confront their traditional role and change their life. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) points out that those women who have been educated are likely to marry later, have smaller families and are more likely to enter labour force. Rustagi (2000) draws attention to female education and its positive relation to child care, access to health, lower fertility and mortality. Additionally education enables economic and political participation of women, thereby empowering them to become agents of change. Thus education is seen as a source for improving the macro life options of women. Hence this part of the analysis is an effort to study the variations in the life option of matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women, among various educational groups.

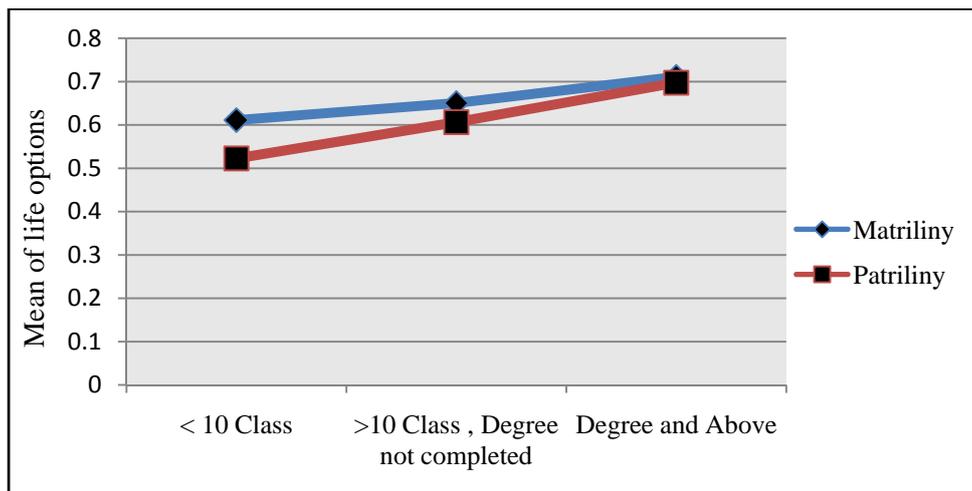
**Table 7.3. Educational Group and Macro Life Option**

Matrilineal women					
Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	P Value
< 10 Class	117	.6113	.18035	4.519	P<0.05
> 10 Class, Degree Not completed	103	.6505	.16158		
Degree and Above	30	.7109	.14570		
Total	250	.6394	.17134		
Patrilineal women					
Education	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F Value	P Value
< 10 Class	123	.5227	.15520	16.931	P<0.05
> 10 Class, Degree Not completed	108	.6062	.14020		
Degree and Above	19	.6973	.11508		
Total	250	.5720	.15528		

As in the case of age, the life option score for matrilineal women is better than patrilineal women in each educational category. The difference in the mean score of '<10 class' category between the two groups clearly indicate

that inspite of low education, matrilineal women enjoy better opportunities to have a control over their life than patrilineal women of the same educational group. This illustrate the influence kinship has over the life of women.

At the same time better mean score of patrilineal women who have ‘degree and above’ qualification than the other women in the patrilineal sample affirms the importance of higher education in improving the status of women even within a patriarchal setup. It is also evident from the analysis, that the difference in the mean score of life option of matrilineal and patrilineal women who have ‘degree and above’ education qualification is very less. The large difference in the mean score between women who have an educational qualification of ‘less than class 10’ and women who have the ‘degree and above’ level of education, within patrilineal sample, further emphasise the role education can play in improving the status of patrilineal women. A similar suggestion is seen in the work of Bardhan (1993) who find the presence of women in higher education responsible for eroding of ideological control of gender roles and women’s status under the control of family patriarch.



**Figure 7.2 Educational Group and Macro Life Option**

It is found that the life option increases with respect to increase in education level among matrilineal and patrilineal women. Hence it can be said that, life option increases with increase in education level among Muslim women belonging to matrilineal and patrilineal groups. The statistical analysis also shows that this variation of life option with education is significant among both the kinship groups.

The importance of education in influencing the important variables of life option such as age at marriage, employment status, fertility preferences etc. is seen in other studies too. According to Cadwell (1986), the education of women can create greater familiarity with modern institutions and instill in them a likely hood of rejecting fatalistic attitudes towards life. Education is also associated with rise in age at marriage, increase work force participation and higher socio-economic status (Jahan 2004). Importance of education on various life options have been reported by others too. Al Riyami et al. (2004) have shown the importance of education in reducing the women's unmet needs for contraception among women in Oman. According to Nath et al. (1999) education can influence even the age at first birth by acting as a mediating factor through its influence on a women's probability of employment outside home and on her role in family decision making.

### **7.1.3 Standard of Living**

Mason (1986) writes that along with gender stratification system of a society, the social class to which a woman's household belongs to, also influence her life chances by determining her access to and control over resources. Hence a woman may be poor because of her gender or because she belongs to a poor household or both. Standard of Living Index is the most suitable measurement of a household's cumulative living standard. The

Standard of Living Index (SLI) is a scoring system where the house, facilities associated with the house, and physical items belonging to the household are given scores (IIPS 2000). The advantages of using standard of living index are that it represents a more permanent status than does either income or consumption on one hand, and can be more easily measured on the other (with only a single respondent needed in most cases). It also requires far fewer questions than either consumption expenditures or income. Thus an attempt is made to describe the macro life option variation among Muslim women with respect to various standards of living.

**Table 7.4. Standard of Living and Macro Life Option**

<b>Matrilineal Women</b>					
<b>Standard of living</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
Lower	97	.6506	.18165	.748	P>0.05
Middle	106	.6865	.23509		
Upper	47	.6613	.21831		
Total	250	.6678	.21238		
<b>Patrilineal Women</b>					
<b>Standard of living</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
Lower	113	.6098	.21626	2.748	P>0.05
Middle	106	.6351	.20419		
Upper	31	.5350	.20004		
Total	250	.6113	.21073		

It is seen that in every level of standard of living it is the matrilineal women who have better life option score than their patrilineal counter parts. Among the matrilineal sample, the mean life option score is found to be lowest for lower standard of living but for patrilineal sample, the lowest life option score is evident among upper standard of living group. This suggests that the patrilineal women belonging to upper standard of living have fewer choices and more constraints regarding various macro life options

compared to other groups. According to Dreze and Sen ((2002), in privileged households women tend be in symbolic position and are more dependent. The data also reveals a non-linear effect of standard of living on the life option score. The middle standard of living groups have highest life options compared to upper or lower standard of living group among both matrilineal and patrilineal sample.

The macro level changes in the society are most felt among the middle class group. Taber (2011) in her paper on changing role of middle class women writes that transformations brought about with globalisation and liberalisation that began in the late 1980s, resulted in many material and social changes that have had significant repercussions for middle class culture. In this changing scenario, women, whose behavior has long been central to middle-class identity, have found themselves having to balance between locally-conceived concepts of tradition and modernity. Kumar (1994) too observes that the advances in science, technology, education and law have helped in raising the position of Indian middle class women. It has helped in improving their life, skills, health and in bringing about a change in social attitude about women themselves. This may be the reason why in the present study also, women from both matrilineal and patrilineal belonging to the middle standard of living, is found to be enjoying highest macro life options.

Though the mean values of both the matrilineal and patrilineal samples shows that there is differences in life options enjoyed by women belonging to different standards of living, the statistical analysis indicate that this difference is not statistically significant in both the kinship groups.

#### 7.1.4 Area of Residence

Rural urban difference is used as an independent variable influencing the status of women in various researches. The findings mainly favor the urban residents. Urbanisation is a phenomenon that is intrinsically bound up with modernisation and societies undergoing a process of development (Carmichael, 2011). The urban population has the advantage of better infrastructural facilities and recreational amenities. Besides it also provides more opportunities for education and as well as wider choices for employment. Kumari's (2014) article titled A Study of Effect of Religious Beliefs on the Educational Aspirations of Rural and Urban Muslim Women and the report of Tehreek-E-Pasmanda Muslim Samaj (TPMS, 2008) specifically highlights the importance of rural-urban difference in determining the various macro level status of Indian Muslims.

In the present study, the matrilineal sample is mainly from urban areas, while the patrilineal sample is from rural areas. Hence it is important to know whether rural-urban difference can affect the macro level life options of women from matrilineal and patrilineal groups.

**Table 7.5. Area of Residence and Macro Life Option**

<b>Kinship</b>	<b>Area of residence</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>t Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
Matriliny	Rural	60	.6329	.19052	-1.466	P>0.05
	Urban	190	.6789	.21813		
Patriliney	Rural	185	.5965	.18324	-1.875	P>0.05
	Urban	65	.6532	.27169		

The analysis from Table 7.5 makes it clear that the life option score varies with rural urban settings and indicates that urban women in both kinship groups have higher life option score than their rural counterpart.

The life option score for urban matrilineal Muslim women is found to be the highest than women belonging to the other groups. The lowest mean with regard to life options for the total sample is seen for the patrilineal rural women. This result suggests that repressive gender system in patrilineal group along with a rural background tend to restrict the choices women can make regarding their own life. The statistical significance of the above observation is tested by using an independent sample 't' test. Though the mean values of both the matrilineal and patrilineal samples show that women in urban areas enjoy more life options than women in rural areas, it can be seen from the table that these differences in both the groups are not statistically significant. Therefore it can be said that there is no significant difference in the macro life option score enjoyed by the rural and urban women belonging patrilineal and matrilineal groups in Malabar.

Though the rural urban differences are not statistically significant, the mean values supports the available literature which suggests that the position of women and life options can have different influence under rural and urban settings. Ghosh (1987) observes that in India, the concept of status varies considerably among urban and rural women. He writes that while urban women tend to strive toward equality with men by adopting western values, rural women are still tradition and caste bound and aspire for a higher social status by emulating traditional role models.

## **7.2 Factors influencing Micro Life Options- Autonomy**

According to Malhotra and Mather (1997), it is important to consider economic factors, household factors and life course factors while examining the autonomy of women in domestic sphere. While each of these objective indicators may be useful in examining limited spheres or

manifestations of autonomy, to truly understand the holistic interactions between such predictive factors and the subjective experience of autonomy, these variables must be seen as some of the determinants of autonomy (Heaton et al. 2005). Female autonomy in the present research is considered as a goal in itself rather than a means to attain various other goals. Hence this section of analysis is an attempt to find out the variations in married matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslims women's autonomy with regard to various selected independent variables. Along with other independent variables selected, the influence of natal inheritance on autonomy of women is also explored. This will help to identify the role of inheritance, an important economic variable in the absence of participation in employment, on the autonomy of married women.

### **7.2.1 Age and Autonomy**

Mahmud et al. (2012) opines that a woman's freedom of mobility, control of resources and participation in decision-making changes over her life cycle and rises with age. Older women are considered to have more independence and autonomy than younger women mainly because they have more life experience which is considered as essential for better decision making. Therefore they more trusted than young women, over whom tighter controls are maintained. Besides as a woman grows older, she gains confidence to stand up for her own rights. Therefore women's autonomy may vary over life course (Mason 1986). Consequently women who are daughters-in-law of the house may have lesser autonomy rather than women who are spouse of the head of the household.

Importance of age in determining the autonomy of women are also seen in the works of Balk (1994), Gupta (1995), Niraula and Morgan

(2000), Padmanabhan (2006). For all these reasons the present study try to find out whether the autonomy of Muslim women vary on the basis of their age at present and whether there is any difference between women of two kinship groups.

**Table 7.6. Age Group and Autonomy**

<b>Matrilineal Women</b>					
<b>Age group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
25 to 34	91	.8851	.32063	.950	P>0.05
35 to 44	75	.8892	.32916		
45 to 54	84	.8227	.39199		
Total	250	.8654	.34857		
<b>Patrilineal Women</b>					
<b>Age group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
25 to 34	103	.6437	.36646	.336	P>0.05
35 to 44	79	.6861	.36868		
45 to 54	68	.6502	.34095		
Total	250	.6588	.35948		

It can be seen from the analysis that the mean value of each age group in patrilineal system lags behind their counterpart in matrilineal system, indicating the lower autonomy patrilineal women have. The present study also reveals a non linear effect of age on autonomy with middle age group having greatest autonomy compared to younger or upper age group, among both matrilineal and patrilineal sample. The table also indicates that difference in autonomy of women of different age group is not significant in both the cultural setting.

Inspite of this result, the mean values show the influence played by the age in determining the autonomy. Among the patrilineal women, it is

the youngest age group who has reported least autonomy reflecting the image of obedient daughter-in-law who cannot assert herself in a patrilineal household. At the same time the middle age group has greater autonomy than the higher age group. The reason for this could be that, as age at marriage is less among Muslim women of both the kinship groups, most of the middle aged women themselves are mothers-in-law and involved in decision making.

In the article titled *The Determinants of Married Women's Autonomy in Indonesia*, Rammohan and Johar (2009) show that women in the middle age group have greatest autonomy compared to younger or older age group. This negative effect on autonomy, they suggest may be a manifestation of their greater likelihood of having adult children, so they may have less of a say on matters relating to some of the measures of autonomy. The present research also has similar suggestion that the adult children may be more involved in decision making regarding buying of goods and daily expenses of the house.

Another reason could be that the spouses of women of middle age group may tend to be important economic contributors to the family as the contributions of older age group might tend to reduce. This again can affect the autonomy of women of higher age group. Mahmud et al.'s (2012) study, measuring the empowerment of women in rural Bangladesh, also find that decision making autonomy is lower for younger and older women and highest for women in the middle group. A plausible explanation they give for this is that younger married women are probably living in an extended household and hence have not yet become central to the household management. The older women, at the same time, become dependent on adult sons as they live in the married son's household, and

become less involved in household management and decision-making. Similarly Vera Sanso (1999) observes that fears and expectations of old-age dependency are what condition a woman's strategies towards her sons and daughters-in-law. Initially, a woman's economic prospects are tied to those of her husband. Subsequently they are tied to those of her sons, for two reasons: first, she and her husband will become reliant on their sons in old age; and second, by custom, a woman has no right of inheritance, although she has a right to maintenance from her husband's estate.

Another notable finding is that the mean values of matrilineal women indicate that the lower age group does not have to face many constraints, and in fact they themselves enjoy higher level of autonomy than the higher age group. This difference could be because of the freedom these women enjoy from being amidst their own natal kin and the agency that exist from the support of uterine kin.

### **7.2.2 Education and Autonomy**

Education is considered as an important enabling factor of autonomy (Kishor 2000). Rammohan and Johar's (2009) study on Indonesian women's autonomy in uxori-local setting showed that both respondent's education and her spouse's education seemed to have a positive effect on autonomy, especially women's economic and physical autonomy. Afridi (2010) has also shown that education has a strong effect on freedom of movement. Contrary to these findings Jejeebhoy (2000), while comparing strict patriarchal Uttar Pradesh and less patriarchal southern Tamil Nadu, has demonstrated that the empowering effect of education is hardly observed among the respondents of Uttar Pradesh. However in case of women from Tamil Nadu, education especially secondary education tends to affect almost

every indicator of autonomy. Taking all these information into consideration, the present research attempts to find out the influence of education in determining the autonomy of women in two different kinship systems.

**Table 7.7. Educational Group and Autonomy**

<b>Matrilineal women</b>					
<b>Standard of living</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
< 10 Class	117	.7739	.35241	10.476	P<0.05
> 10 Class, Degree Not completed	103	.9118	.29536		
Degree and Above	30	1.0624	.39757		
Total	250	.8654	.34857		
<b>Patrilineal women</b>					
<b>Standard of living</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
< 10 Class	123	.6646	.34154	4.723	P<0.05
> 10 Class, Degree Not completed	108	.6129	.36733		
Degree and Above	19	.8829	.35921		
Total	250	.6588	.35948		

The data clearly suggests that in both patrilineal and matrilineal settings, the autonomy of married women is highest among the highest level of education. Again it is seen that there is wide difference between matrilineal and patrilineal women in each educational group with the former enjoying very high autonomy than the latter. This indicates that even the influence of education on autonomy among patrilineal women is not as high as among matrilineal women. A one way ANOVA test is conducted to check the significance of variations and the test results indicate that there exists significant difference with regard to autonomy between different educational groups within both the kinship groups.

It is also seen that matrilineal sample shows positive correlation between autonomy and education, with the level of autonomy increasing with every level of education. But in the patrilineal group, though the highest level of autonomy is correlated with highest level of education, women with middle level education (>10, degree not completed) lags behind the women with lower level of education i.e. less than tenth standard.

The explanation of this pattern among patrilineal group will emerge if the age structure of women is taken into account. In this study, 86.17% of respondents who belong to the 'less than 10 standard' category are women belonging to middle and higher age group, while 63% of lower age group women are those who have completed tenth standard but have either not enrolled or completed degree. The low autonomy of the younger age group, according to Basu (1992) is in line with anthropological literature, where a young wife is seen as of no consequence until she is completely integrated into her husband's kinship group. These data draws attention to the findings that daughters-in-law of younger age group in the patrilineal house may have lesser autonomy rather than women who are the spouses of the heads of the household, who are usually women in middle age. The variation of autonomy with age group also indicates that women of younger age group have least autonomy.

At the same time, patrilineal women with highest education level have the highest autonomy. 94.7% of women who belong to this category are women in the age group 25 -34 or the younger age group and 77.8% of women who are employed outside their homes also belong to this category. This finding highlights the fact that higher education and gainful occupation can definitely work towards improving the autonomy status of

women in the patrilineal setup, thereby helping them to break the shackles of tradition that tend to curtail their freedom and autonomy (Kodoth 2004). Education as an important variable affecting the decision making ability of Muslim women positively has also been reported in Jain's (1995) study on Muslim women in Jaipur.

The two important factors that are considered to have enhanced the status of women in Kerala are matriliney and the education of the women (Nayar 1984; Nayar and Nair 1997; Jayasree 1998). According to Nithya (2013) achievements in literacy and education have positively influenced the status of women in the state with women contributing more than men in the development of education programs and health sectors of the state. Alfano et al.'s (2011) paper on autonomy of women and schooling of children in three states of India also finds that in Kerala there is a significant correlation between female education and their autonomy.

The analysis in the present chapter makes it clear that life options both at micro and macro levels vary with the level of education. The tests results also indicate that difference in life options at macro and micro level are statistically significant. Hence the evidence of the sample supports the hypothesis that that macro level and micro level life options of women tend to vary with the level of education. It is seen that macro level and micro level life options of both matrilineal and patrilineal women are positively correlated with higher levels of education. Malhotra et al.'s (2003) paper Impact of Investments in Female Education on Gender Equality also finds that relatively higher levels of education are consistently and positively related to gender equality, wellbeing and empowerment of women.

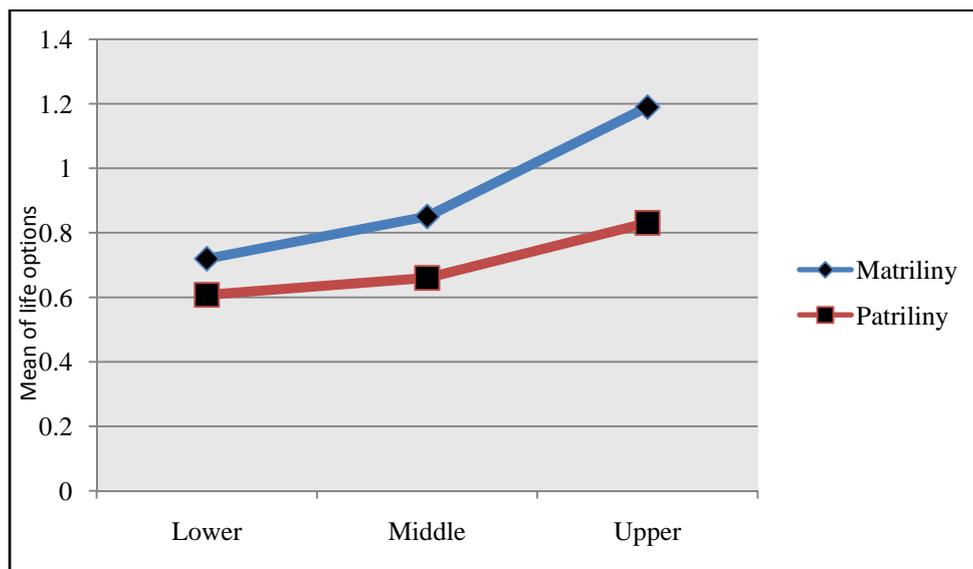
### 7.2.3 Standard of Living and Autonomy

Standard of living is another important variable that can influence autonomy of women. Basu (2000b) emphasises the need to look into the fact that whether ‘poor woman fare worse than non poor women’. For this reason economic position or standard of living has to be taken into consideration while focusing on the status of women. Rammohan and Johar’s (2009) study on Indonesian women’s autonomy showed that women from affluent families enjoy greater economic and physical autonomy. On the other hand Rahman and Rao’s (2004) study on Indian women find that women from wealthy families face more restrictions on mobility and improvement in household wealth reduces female agency. Therefore, an attempt is made here to find out whether there is any variation in autonomy among patrilineal and matrilineal women belonging to various standards of living.

**Table 7.8. Standard of Living and Autonomy**

<b>Matrilineal women</b>					
<b>Standard of living</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
Lower	97	0.7198	.28198	37.902	P<0.05
Middle	106	0.8508	.30490		
Upper	47	1.1896	.34488		
Total	250	.8637	.34643		
<b>Patrilineal women</b>					
	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>F Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
Lower	113	0.608	0.348	4.847	P<0.05
Middle	106	0.6603	0.331		
Upper	31	0.831	0.439		
Total	250	0.657	0.359		

The analysis of the data reveals that standard of living has an influence on the autonomy of women in both matrilineal and patrilineal kinship group. The difference in mean scores shows that there is variation in autonomy, with autonomy of married women increasing as we move from lower standard of living group to upper standard of living group. The statistical significance of this observation is tested by using one way ANOVA and the test was found to be significant among both patrilineal and matrilineal sample. Hence it can be concluded that, there is statistically significant difference in the autonomy scores of women from different standards of living within both patrilineal and matrilineal settings.



**Figure 7.3 Standard of Living and Autonomy**

The high level of autonomy among the women with upper standard of living could be because of better economic situations enjoyed by these women, which in turn let them take advantage of the improved facilities that would have otherwise restrained their mobility and economic decision

making. It is also seen that at every level of standard of living, matrilineal women have higher score of autonomy than their patrilineal counter parts. Heaton et al. (2005) reports that higher socio-economic status tends to be associated with higher levels of female autonomy. Ghunman's (2003) comparative study of Muslim and non Muslim women from Asia also imply that economic decision making power among Muslims was lower where their overall standard of living also was lower, suggesting that socio-economic constraints tend to affect the autonomy in this realm.

On the other hand Dharmalingam and Morgan (1996), based on their study on two villages in Tamil Nadu, argue that the wealthier families attempt to guard the family honour by restricting women's mobility and keeping them under control, while women of lower economic families have to venture out for participating in paid work. However such a scenario does not exist among the respondents because participation in paid employment is less even among economically poor. Lindberg (2009), whose paper deals with matrilineal Mappilas of Malabar too observes that, middle and upper class women have experienced a change regarding mobility. Infact strict dress code has permitted them to leave their houses in a way they could not have earlier, and hence occasionally leading to power. Similarly, Moghadam (2003), in her work on Muslim women across the globe, notes that unlike in the past, where veiling and seclusion were upper class phenomenon, upper class Muslim women in the present times have more mobility than lower class women.

#### **7.2.4 Area of Residence and Autonomy**

According to Bose and South (2003), residents of urban areas in developing countries are often at the vanguard of the adoption of less

traditional, more Western attitudes and cultural practices. Susilastuti (2003) study on Egyptian Muslim women's autonomy reports that a larger proportion of women having urban residence make economic decisions either themselves or jointly with their husband and enjoy freedom from spousal violence. Sengupta and Johnson (2006) also observe that urbanism frees women to travel outside home, independently of the region. Hence it can be assumed that there is a variation in the autonomy of women in rural and urban areas. Therefore the study makes an attempt to find out whether rural-urban difference affects the autonomy of matrilineal and patrilineal women.

**Table 7.9. Area of Residence and Autonomy**

<b>Kinship</b>	<b>Area of residence</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>t Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
Matriliny	Rural	60	.7170	.34886	-3.86	P<0.05
	Urban	190	.9100	.33336		
Patriliney	Rural	185	.6572	.35040	-.051	P>0.05
	Urban	65	.6598	.38601		

The above data makes it clear that urban women enjoy better autonomy among both matrilineal and patrilineal groups. At the same time it is also seen that the effect of rural-urban difference on the autonomy of patrilineal women is very negligible. Hence the 't' test shows that while the rural-urban difference in autonomy is significant among matrilineal sample, this difference is not significant for the patrilineal sample. Thus, it can be concluded that rural-urban residence influences the autonomy of matrilineal women, while it has not much of an effect on patrilineal women's autonomy. The mean scores also reveal that patrilineal women from both the settings, lag behind their counterparts in matrilineal group. In fact

matrilineal rural women have better scores than patrilineal urban women. As found with the macro life options, here too it is seen that patrilineal kinship, along with the rural back ground tends to constrain the autonomy of patrilineal Muslim women in the present study.

Heaton et al. (2005) suggest that one can expect to find higher levels of female autonomy in urban areas as the urban environment fosters greater openness to change and more alternative models for social relationships. Another reason for rural-urban difference in autonomy of women may be traced to the difference in the facilities and amenities available in the two areas. Rahman and Rao (2004) in their comparative study on north and south Indian women emphasise the importance of investing in infrastructure in improving women's agency. The rural-urban difference is most likely to influence the freedom of mobility. Better roads, electric street lights, health clinics, easily available public transports, etc are all factors according to them, which can enhance the mobility and autonomy of women. They point out that mobility restrictions may be in part be because of the concerns for women's safety in the absence of these services. Besides, there is always the benefit of anonymity provided by the city life compared to a rural neighborhood, where venturing out of one's house may be closely watched by others. Urban settings also tend to help in developing egalitarian mentality that tends to increase the participation of women in decision making.

### **7.2.5 Natal Inheritance and Autonomy**

Control of economic resources is an essential requirement for enhancing women's status. Economic variables especially labor force participation as well as control over one's earning, is cited in studies as

important in enhancing the power and prestige of women. Blumberg (1984) considers it as an essential determinant of life options. Hence the present research attempts to find out the influence of economic factors on autonomy of married Muslim women in Malabar, with special focus on whether this influence varies according to kinship system. As the labour force participation of the total sample is low, natal inheritance is chosen over labour force participation as the economical variable.

**Table 7.10. Natal Inheritance and Autonomy**

<b>Inherited Property- Matrilineal</b>						
	<b>Property</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>t Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
Autonomy	No	191	.831	.338	-2.63	P<0.05
	Yes	59	.966	.354		
<b>Inherited Property- Patrilineal</b>						
	<b>Property</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>T Value</b>	<b>P Value</b>
Autonomy	No	116	.6241	.34126	-1.38	P>0.05
	Yes	134	.6871	.37285		

The data reveals that there is a variance in how property inheritance influences autonomy of women in two different cultural contexts. Among both the kinship groups, the mean scores indicate that women who have inherited property are more autonomous than women who do not have any inherited property. Even in a patrilineal group where female autonomy is constrained, higher economic resource is positively associated with higher level of autonomy. The 't' test is carried out to check whether this difference is statistically significant. However in spite of more patrilineal women reporting natal property inheritance in the present study, it is found that the autonomy difference between propertied and non-propertied women is statistically significant among matrilineal group but not

significant among patrilineal group. This finding supports the hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the influence of economic factor on the autonomy of matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women in Malabar.

Blumberg's General Theory of Gender Stratification (1984) points towards context dependency in determining the status of women. She writes that 'since macrolevels influence microlevels more than the reverse, where women's relative economic power at the macrolevels (society; class; at times, community) is less than at the microlevel(s), the less favourable macrolevels will act as a 'discount rate' to reduce (but not eliminate) the extent to which women can exercise their relative economic power at the more microlevel(s); that is, women's actual micropower will be less than their potential power.' (49).

Rodman's Theory of Resources in Cultural Context (1967, 1972) also takes a similar stand. He argues that in what he calls a Patriarchal society, marriage will be almost uniformly husband dominated regardless of any resources and the wife cannot influence marital decisions because the norms prevent her from doing so. India, according to him, shows many characteristics of a patriarchal society and although there are many changes under way especially in urban areas, paternal authority still remain strong.

The underlying explanation of these viewpoints is that micro level effects will be reduced in situations where patriarchy is very strong, and it can be applied to the above data. Though the percentage of respondents who have inherited property is more among patrilineal women than among matrilineal women, there is no significant difference in level of autonomy between property-inherited and non-propertied respondents among the patrilineal sample. Here, in line with Blumberg's aforementioned quote, it

can be argued that patriarchal macro level influence has acted as a discount rate to reduce the so called positive effect of the micro level property inheritance on autonomy of women. At the same time there is a significant difference in the autonomy between property-inherited and non-propertyied respondents among matrilineal women which highlights the fact that resources in an egalitarian setting can enhance women's autonomy.

Blumberg's theory also draws attention to the fact that favorable macro levels tend to cushion women's less favorable micro level positions. The analysis in the present study shows that non-propertyied matrilineal women have a higher autonomy score than the propertyied and non-propertyied patrilineal women. This finding brings to light the importance of matrilineal culture, in supporting the status of women even in the absence of economic resources.

The above results also draw attention to the fact that access to resources is not sufficient for autonomy, but control of it is also necessary (Agarwal 1996). Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001), have shown in their comparative study that inspite of Punjabi women owning more resources than Tamilian women, it is relatively autonomous Tamilian women who reported greater control over resources as well as expectation of self reliance. Malhotra and Mather (1997) also highlight this point by noting that if the constraints imposed on women's involvement in domestic decisions by the larger social context are great enough, personal accumulation of resources may not be enough to empower them. In the present study, the major source of natal inheritance for patrilineal women is dowry, which they agree is not under their control. At the same time 72.9% of matrilineal population who have already inherited natal property said that they themselves or jointly with their husbands manage the inheritance and

32.2% of them have the opinion that they can use it without the permission of their husbands. Whereas only 42.1% of patrilineal sample said the same about control of property and even lesser 9.7% are sure about using it at their own will. Hence despite these patterns of access to inherited property, the data on control of resource suggest that matrilineal women have more control over it than patrilineal women which is further reflected in their reported autonomy.

In line with the arguments of Rodman (1972) and Blumberg (1984), the results highlight the importance of kinship system as a cultural resource that enhancing the autonomy of women and augment their bargaining power (Sen 1990) within the household.

### **7.3 Summary**

Life options, according to Blumberg (1984) are a set of manifestation of privilege, prestige and freedom that a woman tends to enjoy as a result of her access to power. The present research focuses on kinship system to which one belongs to as an important source of power that can enhance the choices available to women. This chapter makes an attempt to find out whether the life options enjoyed by married matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women in Malabar vary according to the selected independent variables such as present age, education level of the respondents, standard of living and rural-urban difference. As the status of women is multi-dimensional, the effects of each independent variable are studied separately for macro and micro level life options.

The effect of independent variables on the macro life option score is as suggested in the existing literature. It is seen that in the total sample married women who belong to lower age group, who have higher education

level, who are from middle standard of living and those who resides in urban areas enjoy higher macro life options. At the same time the effects of these enabling factors upon life options also vary according to kinship system. It is found that with regard to every independent variable, it is the matrilineal sample that enjoys higher macro life option score than patrilineal sample.

The analysis shows that there is a statistically significant variation in macro life options with regard to age and education. It is seen that life options increase with decrease in age of women from both the kinship groups, thereby pointing towards the fact that women in the younger age group are being able to take control over their life and enjoy several benefits witnessed with changing times. Similarly an increase in the level of education also shows an increase in the life option that patrilineal and matrilineal women enjoy, highlighting the role of education in empowering women.

Rural-urban difference and standard of living, the other two variables taken into consideration, however did not show any statistically significant variation within both the groups. Within both the kinship groups it is women belonging to middle standard of living who have the highest life option mean. This suggests that the general trend that is observed with regard to changing life pattern of middle class women is also witnessed among middle class Muslim women in Malabar. Urban women in both the samples enjoy higher life options than rural women, while patrilineal rural women have the least life option score.

Most of the macro level life options suggested by Blumberg are not decisions that can be taken by a woman herself in a traditional society. The level of education a girl can pursue, access to employment, age at marriage, presence of dowry etc are influenced by the decisions taken by other

members of the family which in turn is influenced by the larger socio cultural environment and the prevailing gender ideology. However the direct involvement of women in deciding their status is seen at the micro level life options, also referred to as autonomy.

The analysis clearly shows that micro level life option is strong for Muslim women belonging to matrilineal system as compared to that of patrilineal system. It is found that with regard to every independent variable, it is the matrilineal sample that enjoys a higher life option scores than patrilineal sample. The non-linear correlation is seen in the analysis of present age and autonomy, with middle age group enjoying highest autonomy among both the kinship groups. At the same time it is patrilineal women of lowest age group who enjoy the least autonomy, suggesting the proverbial submission of a young daughter-in-law in a patrilineal household.

It is also seen that there is a statically significant variation in autonomy in relation to education and standard of living. The study reveals that women with highest educational level from both the kinship groups enjoy the highest levels of autonomy, thereby affirming the role of education in enhancing the status of women. Similarly autonomy is positively correlated with the standard of living.

The analysis on the influence of area of residence over the autonomy of women shows that both matrilineal and patrilineal women from the urban areas enjoy higher level of autonomy than their counter parts in rural areas. However this difference is statistically significant only for the matrilineal sample and not for the patrilineal women. Within the total sample it is rural patrilineal women who have least autonomy score.

One additional independent variable studied under micro life option is natal inheritance. In the absence of work participation outside home by majority of the respondents, natal inheritance is considered as an economical variable and an attempt is made to find out the relationship between autonomy, kinship and natal inheritance. The analysis suggests that despite the difference in mean scores between women who have inherited and not inherited properties among both the kinship groups, the difference is statistically significant only for matrilineal sample. While among the patrilineal sample, though women who have inherited property enjoy higher autonomy than women who did not inherit any, the difference between the two is not statistically significant. These findings suggests that the less favourable macro levels will act as a 'discount rate' to reduce the extent to which women can exercise their relative economic power at the micro level, and thereby proving the hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the influence of economic factor on the autonomy matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women in Malabar.

Among the different independent variables considered in the study, level of education is the only common independent variable that seems to affect both the macro level and micro level status of matrilineal and patrilineal women significantly. It is also seen that women with higher education has highest macro level and micro level life options score among matrilineal and patrilineal women. Hence the evidence of the sample proves the hypothesis that the level of education influences the macro level and micro level life options of women.

## ***Girl Child and Kinship System***

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The situation of women in a society has a direct impact on the status of the girl child and vice versa. Several studies have illustrated the influence of status of women on girl child. Cain's (1993) theory of children as potential source of social security argues that the inability of women to contribute economically especially to natal family, tend to lead to strong son preference. Similarly Pande and Aston (2007) find that women's education is strongly associated with weaker son preference. According to Arnold and Liu, (1986) the status of women in relation to men in a society tend to influence the value accorded to sons and daughters and thereby determine parental preference for children in each gender. Similarly the UN Fact Sheet No. 23 clearly states that one of the principal forms of discrimination and one which has far-reaching implications for women, is the preference accorded to the boy child over the girl child. This practice denies the girl child good health, education, recreation, economic opportunity and the right to choose her partner, violating her rights under articles 2, 6, 12, 19, 24, 27 and 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ibid).

The fifty first session of U N Commission on Status of Women (2007) recognises that the prevailing negative socio-cultural attitudes and gender stereotypes, contribute to the de facto and de jure discrimination

against the girl child and violations of the rights of the girl child. Miller, (2001) too points towards the role of economic and socio-cultural factors leading to a scenario discriminating against girl child. According to Nanda et al. (2013), in India, son preference is deeply rooted in our patriarchal cultural and religious beliefs that uphold the essential value of having a son in a family. The patrilineage kinship and inheritance systems and the belief that sons are essential for social survival and economic security powerfully drive son preference (ibid).

Nayar (2011) also observes that a ‘son syndrome’ exists within the Indian culture, which gives preference to sons over daughters and places a greater value on the male child as compared to the female child. The issue is serious in India, where subsequent decennial censuses have thrown light on the unfavourable sex ratio for girl child. Gender differential in allocation of food and medical care for children, female selective abortion, low level of education, higher rates of female than male mortality during childhood etc. are some of other problems faced by girl child in the country.

In contrast to this, the researches have drawn attention to the acceptance of girl child in matrilineal societies. The main reasons suggested for this scenario is the economic and cultural roles assigned to girls by the matrilineal system (Pakyntein, 1999). Kerala has always been branded as a female friendly state because of this importance given to women and girls. But the present and past censuses have exposed the not so favourable sex ratio for girls below the age of 6 years. Rajan and Mohanachandran (1999) records that Kerala with declining infant mortality and a high proportion of infant death below one week, presents a paradox which needs careful investigation. Patel (2002) also warns about the bleak future of girls in Kerala which could result in a skewed sex ratio. Sudha et al. (2007)

specifically observes the changing trends among matrilineal Nairs towards the preference for male children. Sini (2010) also has observed the shift in matrilineal groups of Malabar towards a patrilineal system. Hence under these circumstances it becomes important to know the status of the girl child in one of the surviving matrilineal groups, the Mappila Muslims of Malabar in Kerala.

Since the literature review suggests that the preference of boy child is common in every part of the country, including Kerala that boast of a matrilineal tradition, an attempt is made to investigate whether there is a variation in acceptance of girl child among married matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila women in Malabar. In order to find out the desirability of the sex of the children, respondents are asked about their view of gender preference in their community, their preference for their first born and finally a hypothetical question as to whether they will prefer a girl as their only child. This is followed by questions on their attitude towards education of girls, age at marriage, girls going for paid employment and dowry system. The responses to these macro level status indicating questions are expected to throw light on the scenario faced by the girl child in the matrilineal and patrilineal kinship systems in Malabar.

## **8.1 Acceptance of Girl Child**

Kishor's (1993) conceptual frame work suggests that the status of girl child or a boy child in a society is influenced by both economical and cultural factors. Economically, sons are preferred for the financial support they provide to their parents and the old age care expected from them. In contrast, daughters are held in disfavor because of the expenses they incur in the form of large dowries upon marriage and their lack of economic

participation. Cultural worth of children is determined by the kinship structure. In patrilineal societies, the cultural worth of sons are determined by the role they play in the continuation of the family line and in performing the last rites of their parents. On the contrary the responsibilities and obligations of girls in a patrilineal system, by convention are transferred to their husbands' families after marriage. At the same time, in a matrilineal group, a girl child is a source to continue lineage, and being matrilocal, she lives with her parents providing them care and support. These are important factors that can influence the acceptance and desirability of children of a particular sex among different kinship groups.

With the purpose of finding out whether there is any difference in preference for a child of particular gender, among matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslims of Malabar, the respondents are asked regarding the existence of son preference among the members of their kinship groups.

**Table 8.1. Preference for Boy Child**

Kinship	Yes		No		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliny	125	(50.0%)	125	(50.0%)	250	(100%)
Patriliney	176	(70.7%)	73	(29.3%)	249*	(100%)
Total	301	(60.3%)	198	(39.7%)	499*	(100%)

\*Missing Values present

**P<0.05**

The analysis in the table 8.1 reveals that there is a marked difference in the desirability of boy child and girl child between the two kinship groups. Majority of the patrilineal respondents agree that there is more preference for male children among their community members. At the same time half of the total matrilineal respondents also agree to the existence of son preference

among their community members too. Kuruvilla (2011), in her book on girl child in Kerala titled Discrimination against Girl Child- The Trajectory of Missing Girls, reports that there is an increasing trend in son preference in Kerala with 70% of her sample agreeing to the existence of son preference in the state. It can be seen in the present study also that around 60% of total sample has agreed to the existence of son preference amongst them.

According to Miller (2001), fertility preference of parents for sons or for daughters generally or, more specifically, for offspring of a particular gender to be the first born or the last born, is conditioned by socio-cultural factors, with patriarchal cultures resulting in preferences by mothers, fathers and in-laws for sons (ibid). In other words if there is a strong preference for a child belonging to a particular sex at the first delivery, then it tends to mirror the general expectation of the society. Afridi's (2010) work on impact of mother's autonomy on gender gap in schooling in India also shows that a male first born raises the position of a woman given the bias towards sons in India. Therefore an attempt is made here, to assess whether there is a bias towards any particular sex. For this mothers' preference for the first pregnancy is ascertained.

**Table 8.2. Boy Child as First Born**

Kinship	Yes		No		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliny	40	(16.0%)	210	(84.0%)	250	(100%)
Patriliny	106	(43.3%)	139	(56.7%)	245*	(100%)
Total	146	(29.5%)	349	(70.5%)	495*	(100%)

*\*Missing Values present*

**P<0.05**

The analysis demonstrates that there is a clear preference for boy child over girl child among the patrilineal Mappila women of Malabar. This

reveals that the general preference for the boy child in community reported by the mothers can be seen as their own preferences regarding the gender of the first born, though not at the same rate. This general bias towards boy child at the first birth has been reported by a nationwide study compiled by Anandalakshmy (1994). In that study 31% of mothers said that they expected a boy and only 2% expected a girl. The rest said they did not expect either sex particularly. The study also revealed that it is not just poverty that leads to bias towards female child, but there is “a strong cultural thread that runs through all economic levels and geographic regions” (62). Behura and Mohanty (2005) too observe that in a society where there is aversion towards girl child, mothers themselves treat birth of a girl child as inauspicious. This according to the authors is because the mothers are socialised in such a cultural milieu. Their study based on patrilineal groups in Orissa, also had majority of mothers desiring a boy as their first born.

Pande and Malhotra’s (2006) study to assess mother’s gender preference shows that majority of mothers want a balance of sons and daughters, and hence not all girls are unwanted. In order to investigate further regarding the desirability of the female child and whether kinship system influence the role expected from each gender, a hypothetical question is posed to the respondents as to whether they will prefer to have a girl as their only child.

**Table 8.3. Girl as Single Child**

<b>Kinship</b>	<b>No F (%)</b>	<b>Yes F (%)</b>	<b>Does not make a difference F (%)</b>	<b>No response F (%)</b>	<b>Total F (%)</b>
Matriliny	64 (25.6%)	137 (54.8%)	42 (16.8%)	7 (2.8%)	250 (100.0%)
Patriliney	112 (44.8%)	85 (34.0%)	31 (12.4%)	22 (8.8%)	250 (100%)
Total	176 (35.2%)	222 (44.4%)	73 (14.6%)	29 (5.8%)	500 (100%)

**P<0.05**

The data illustrate that while 54.8% of matrilineal respondents affirmatively said that they want a daughter as their only child, only 34% of the patrilineal sample said the same. It should also be highlighted that almost 44.8% patrilineal sample expressed their opinion in favour of boy as the only child. The number of respondents who did not respond to this question is also more among patrilineal sample, thereby suggesting an inherent bias against girl child. For 16.8% of matrilineal respondents and 12.4% of patrilineal respondents, the sex of the child is not a concern which means there was no bias to any particular sex group.

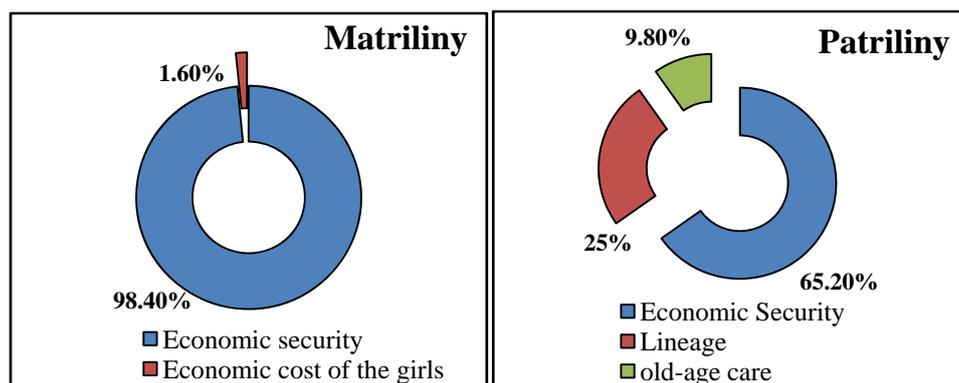
It is evident from the percentage analysis that the girl child is valued more among matrilineal Mappilas than among patrilineal Mappilas. The chi-square tests for all the three questions show that the preference for a male child and female child is related to the kinship groups of the Mappila Muslim Women of Malabar and it is statistically significant; thus proving the hypothesis that there is association between kinship system and acceptance of girl child among Mappila Muslims of Malabar. Narzary and Sharma (2013) also confirm that there is a strong preference for girl child among matrilineal tribal societies of Meghalaya. According to Mahadevan and Jayasree (1998) among matrilineal Kurichias and Nayars, the girl child was given great importance and was seldom treated as unwanted. This feature alone according to them ‘... speaks in favour of matriliney, it has been more beneficial to women.’ (899). The preference for girl child is also evident among Malaysian matrilineal Muslims (Ling Pong, 1999).

## **8.2 Children as Potential Risk Insurance**

Cain’s (1993) theoretical formulation for patriarchal societies observes that one of the main reasons for son preference is economic

dependence of women over men. Economic dependence of women on men creates special risks for women i.e., economic insecurity caused by widowhood, divorce, separation or even ill health and ageing process of the husband. In such situations an important source of insurance against losing economic support from husbands is sons. Where sons are seen as potential source of social security, women are strongly motivated to bear male children. Therefore an attempt is made to identify the factors that determine the worth of male child and female child among two different kinship systems of Malabar.

The data analysis in Table 8.3 reveals that there is a significant difference between matrilineal and patrilineal women with regard to their preference for girl and boy as only child. In order to probe further into this preference, respondents who said that they prefer a girl are asked the reason for their preference and those who preferred a boy are asked the reasons for the same. For this, the respondents are posed with an open ended question, trying to elicit their reasons for the preference of child of a particular sex as their only child.



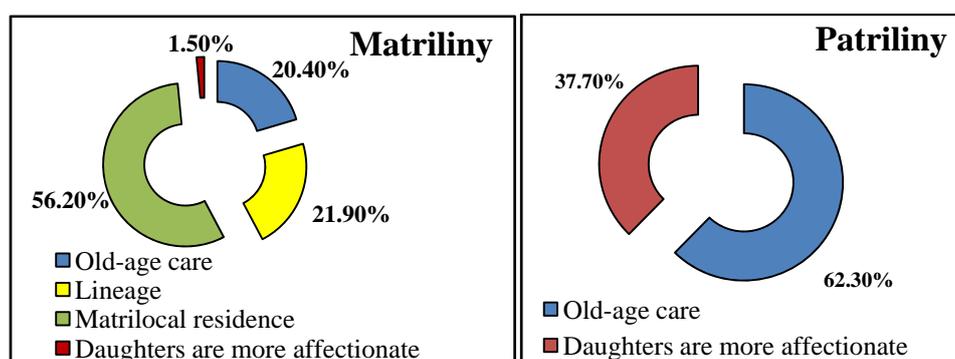
**Figure 8.1 Factors Determining the Worth of a Male Child**

The respondents of both the kinship groups cite the economic security they are looking forward from the sons and not expecting from the daughters, as the main reason for their preference for boy as their only child. Only 64 respondents out of the 250 matrilineal sample said that they want a boy as their only child. Out of this 64, 63 respondents have given economic security they expect from boy child as the main reason for their preference. Similarly 65.2% of 112 patrilineal respondents, who want a boy as their only child, also feel the same. This clearly indicates that it is economic worth of boys that determines the desire of parents to prefer a boy child. Thus as formulated by Cain (1993), male children are seen as the potential risk insurance, thereby underlining their economic worth. The respondents from matrilineal households said that they cannot ask money from their sons-in-law who give them only a fixed amount after which they cannot ask for more. The feature of Mappila matrilineality is that man is expected to provide for his natal home as well as to his wife's home. Hence parents do expect support from male children as daughters are not into any paid employment and hence cannot support them. Or in other words it is the instrumental role, as Parson's (1951) pointed out, that a boy child is expected to perform in both the kinship group.

The other reasons that the patrilineal respondents cite for desiring a boy child are carrying forward their lineage and providing old age care, emphasising the cultural role the males are expected to play in patrilineal societies. These reasons seem to be widespread throughout India. According to Gupta (1987), the son preference in India is culturally determined. She further notes that son preference is in the interest of the lineage, whose continuity depends on sons alone and daughters are considered as transitory members who has to leave ones' natal home and join the in-laws place.

Malhi's (1995) study on the influence of gender preference for children on fertility behaviour in Haryana records that when women are relatively more economically and socially dependent on men, their concern about security is more marked and sons are perceived as an essential future investment. Behura and Mohanty's (2005) study also reveal that economic reason, old age security and continuing one's agnatic line are main reason cited by respondents for favouring male child over female child. .

It is not just economic reasons that can determine the value of children of a particular sex. Kishor (1993) suggests that children are valued for their economical as well as cultural worth. In her work, Kishor (1993) presents the economical worth and cultural worth of children, where economic worth is measured on the basis of labour force participation and the influence of kinship system determine their cultural worth. Majority of the matrilineal respondents and some patrilineal respondents in this study prefers a girl child as their only child. Hence they are asked the reasons for their preference.



**Figure 8.2 Factors Determining the Worth of a Female Child**

The importance of kinship system in determining the cultural worth of female child is immensely visible in the above figure. Matrilineal women who favoured girl child mainly have a cultural reason for their preference. 56.20%

of respondents said that it is girls who stay with them, and therefore it is from them that they can expect care and old age security. Raviverma (2004) attributes this lack of inhibition among aged parents in Kerala, to live with their daughters', to the practice of marumakkathayam, that was once prevalent in the state. About 21.90% of respondents said that they want girl child because it is they who carry their lineage forward. These reasons are directly linked with matrilocality and matrilineage, the continuances of which are the major reasons for the persistence of matrilineal system among Mappila Muslims. Pakyntein's (1999) study on matrilineal Khasi women also list old age security and continuation of lineage as the two top most reasons considered by the respondents for preferring the girl child.

Inspite of the economic role played by boys in patrilineal patriarchal societies, 34% of patrilineal women also have a preference for girls mainly because they feel that they can expect old age care and affection only from girls. Infact these reasons are given more by patrilineal women than matrilineal women. For matrilineal women, this role of daughters is considered as a function of matrilocality. Hence for patrilineal women, more than the cultural worth it is the affection towards daughters and the bias towards daughters-in-law that is evident, or as according to Parson (1951) it is the expressive role that a girl child is expected to perform in a patrilineal system, which inturn leads to a favourable attitude towards her. A study on employed patrilineal Bangladeshi women has also shown that they are looking forward to daughters and not sons to provide them with old age care (Ahmed and Bould 2004) In Philippines too, women who are better educated than men on average, strongly value their daughters than sons for old age support (Mason and Smith 2003)

However it should also be taken into account that 25.6% of the matrilineal respondents made it clear that they want boy as their only child and

50% agreed that there exist a general preference for boys among their community members. The reason given for this preference is mainly economic support provided by the boys to the respondents', thereby falling in line with Cain's (1993) theoretical formulation. He observes that in societies where women are highly dependent on men, sons tend to be valued as economic security for future and also as an insurance against risk of losing the economic support of the husband due to divorce or death. Similarly Sudha et al.'s (2007) paper on gender bias among matrilineal Nairs of Kerala, has also pointed out this shift towards son preference over daughters. The reasons they put forth for this change are the transformation in kinship system from matrilineal / matrilocal to patrilineal / patrilocal and changes in economy and gender roles which enhanced the productive roles of men more than women.

### **8.3 Education and Employment of Girls**

The U N Fact Sheet No. 23 clearly list down son preference, lesser importance for girls' education and employment, early marriage and dowry system as some of the harmful traditional practices that can affect the status of the girl child. After ascertaining the cultural and economical worth of children or their expressive and instrumental values among the matrilineal and patrilineal Mappilas of Malabar, an attempt is made to find out the respondents approach towards the four important aforementioned socio-cultural indicators affecting the status of girls, i.e., encouraging girls for higher education, participation in paid work, age at marriage and payment of dowry.

According to Summers (1993) perception of parents may be a key factor in determining the educational opportunities of the girls. Parents fail to invest in their daughters because they do not expect them to be able to

make an economic contribution to the family, a prophecy that becomes self fulfilling (ibid). Rustagi (2004) too observes that unless improvement in women's educational status take place, their chances of participating in social, economic and political spheres remain severely curtailed. Hence respondents are asked whether they will prefer sending their daughters for higher education and employment outside their homes.

**Table 8.4. Preference for Higher Education and Employment of Girls**

	<b>Kinship</b>	<b>Yes F (%)</b>	<b>No F (%)</b>	<b>Total F (%)</b>
Higher Education	Matriliny	198 (79.2%)	52 (20.8%)	250 (100%)
	Patriliny	201 (80.4%)	49 (19.6%)	250 (100%)
	Total	399 (79.8%)	101 (20.2%)	500 (100%)
Employment of Daughter	Matriliny	181 (72.4%)	69 (27.6%)	250 (100%)
	Patriliny	192 (76.8%)	58 (23.2%)	250 (100%)
	Total	373 (74.6%)	127 (25.4%)	500 (100%)

The responses of both matrilineal and patrilineal samples show that they have high aspirations for daughters' education. Only 20.8% of matrilineal women and 19.6% of patrilineal women feel that girls need not go for higher education. Similarly majority of matrilineal and patrilineal respondents also are in favour of their daughters taking up paid work outside home. It seems that they have realised the fact that their daughters, especially with higher education, would be able to provide them with security in their old age. Jain's (1995) study on Muslim women in North India reports that there is an increased support for the cause of formal education and participation in paid employment outside homes for girls.

Behura and Mohanty's (2005) study on the status of girl child among different caste groups in Orissa also posed similar questions, though worded differently. However their result highlighted that majority of the respondents had higher educational and occupational aspirations for their sons rather than daughters. Their study also found the reason for this gender disparity in the patrilocal nature of the society, where the benefits of girl's employment and education go to her husband's house rather than the natal home.

In Kerala, school enrolment has not been an issue even among Muslims (Sachar Committee 2006). But the emphasis should be in increasing the retention rates of girls for higher studies which equip them for labor force participation as well as instill in them a change of attitude towards this participation. The majority of respondents in the present study agreed that they want their daughters to go for higher education. Hence an effort is made to find out the actual situation by finding out the level of education of the present younger generation.

As the general focus of the present study is to appraise the status of Muslim women in Malabar who belong to the age group of 25 to 54, an attempt is also made to check whether there is any improvement in the educational status of present generation of girls outside this age group. For this, respondents who have children within 19 and 24 years are asked about their children's level of education. Accordingly 163 children are identified. This age group ensures that all the children who are eligible for a degree level education are included. Other respondents have children who are either above this age group or below this age group. Those who are above this age group may already have been included in the study and those who are below this age group may not have reached the age for degree level education. The analysis in table 8.5 presents their level of education.

**Table 8.5. Educational Level of Daughters who are in the Age Group 24 and 19**

Kinship	Level of Education					
	Less than degree		Pursuing/completed degree level education		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliny	48	(57.8%)	35	(42.2%)	83	(100%)
Patriliny	57	(71.3%)	23	(28.7%)	80	(100%)
Total	105	(64.4%)	58	(35.6%)	163	(100%)

The analysis makes it clear that among the present generation, it is the girls from matrilineal families than patrilineal families who are going for higher education. However, despite the favourable responses suggested by the women regarding higher education for girls, data for actual level of daughters' education show a different picture. It demonstrate that though there are 35.6% of the girls who are either pursuing any degree course or who have completed it, there are still 64.4% of girls who have not opted for higher studies even among the present generation. This is in contrast to the attitude of respondents towards educating girl child. This contradiction could be due to lack of support of other family members and the importance placed on marriage over education, a state of affair that further underline the findings from the analysis of the macro level status of the respondents in the present study. As per the analysis of the macro level status of the respondents in chapter IV, it is seen that majority of the respondents are married at the age of 18 or below 18 and 80% of the respondents have below degree level educational qualification.

Begum's (2006) study on Muslim women in Malabar reports this trend of girls discontinuing their college education mainly because of marriage. One patrilineal respondent shared her concern over her fifteen

year old daughter who is doing well in her studies and wants to go for higher education. But her father and his family have given priority for her marriage and have started looking for a match already. All her female cousins too have been married off early. In such situation mothers' attitude towards education, may not be sufficient to improve the level of education of daughters. Anandalakshmy (1994) also suggests that with regard to education, a mother's viewpoint might be important, but not a sufficient condition.

Another interesting trend that came forward is that several respondents have no problem against girls going for higher education but they also agreed that their priority is marrying off the girls to suitable boys and the girls can continue the education if their spouses and in laws have no issue against it. Many girls particularly in the urban areas and matrilineal groups seems to have benefitted from this mind set, as they continue with their education even after marriage especially, if the spouse is working abroad or in situations where *nikah* has been performed but cohabitation of the couple postponed for a later time.

Likewise, participation in employment also is not very promising. As the decision to work is made after marriage, mother's role in decision making regarding daughters' taking up a job outside home will be limited. Therefore the data regarding percentage of daughters who are employed is not ascertained in the present study. However, though the data in table 8.4 show a favorable attitude towards girls taking up jobs, gender differences regarding division of labor between men and women emerged during conversations. There is the notion that only some female friendly occupations are more suited for women. Besides women are expected to withdraw from paid work if family needs arises. Again the final decision for girls working is left to their husbands and in- laws.

#### **8.4 Ideal Age for Marriage**

Marriage is an important institution in traditional societies and Islam has made it a compulsory obligation for both man and woman. No particular age is prescribed by the religion for entering into marital union. Hence early marriage has been a part of many Muslim communities including that of Malabar. However changes have been witnessed due to the efforts of administrative bodies, social organisations and above all constitutional provision that prescribe the minimum age of marriage for boys as 21 years and girls as 18 years. There has also been a change in the attitude of people towards increasing the age at marriage for girls. In spite of all this, we cannot say that child marriage has completely been eradicated among Muslims of Malabar; instead child marriage has given way to early marriage. National Family Health Survey 3 (IIPS 2007), Annual Vital Statistics Report (2008) by the Government of Kerala and ICDS Survey (2012) has drawn attention to minor marriages occurring in this community.

Studies have proven that early age at marriage affects the life of a girl in many ways including depressing the education of the girls, increasing the exposure to fertility period thereby influencing major demographic variables and having an effect on their health. The present study also points towards the presence of early marriage among both matrilineal and patrilineal groups. At the same time as table 6.1. in chapter VI reveals, it is the matrilineal women who have higher age at first marriage compared to patrilineal women. For all the above mentioned reasons, it becomes necessary to find out whether there is a change in the outlook towards age at marriage among matrilineal and patrilineal women.

**Table 8.6. Preference for Age at Marriage**

Kinship	18 or below	19 to 20	21 and above	Total
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)
Matriliny	160 (64.0%)	66 (26.4%)	24 (9.6%)	250 (100%)
Patriliney	130 (52.0%)	97 (38.8%)	23 (9.2%)	250 (100%)
Total	290 (58.0%)	163 (32.6%)	47 (9.4%)	500 (100%)

The data indicates that majority of matrilineal and patrilineal women still feels that ideal age for marriage for girls is 18 or below 18. Though the difference between the groups is not very high, one important fact that needs to be highlighted here is that more patrilineal women favour the higher age as ideal age for marriage than matrilineal women. This difference in attitude of patrilineal and matrilineal women may be traced to residence pattern followed by the two groups. In matrilocal residence, a girl does not leave her natal home after marriage. Hence parents do not have to worry even if she is married early, as she will continue to reside with them. Besides most of the marriage takes place within the same locality (Mohamed 2010). Thus the major concern of the parents here is to find a suitable proposal as soon as possible and to let the girls continue their education if their spouses have no problem against it.

While in patrilineal societies, where again the importance of marriage overrides that of higher education, the decision making regarding marriage is mainly influenced by the patriarch. Here yet again, a mother's favorable attitude may not be a sufficient condition to raise the age at marriage. Therefore inspite of more respondents preferring higher age at marriage for girls, patrilineal women lags behind matrilineal women in matter of mean age at marriage as is seen in chapter VI. During the interview, the mothers in both kinship groups also mentioned about their concern for girls'

security and modesty for their preference for early age at marriage. They have given number of examples where girls have been romantically involved with their class mates. Hence they feel that getting them married off early will reduce any such possibilities.

Though the preference for 18 years as ideal age predominated in the responses, there are many who mentioned ideal age as 17 or 16 years. While the legal age is 18 years, they agreed that they start looking for a good proposal even before that. The mothers' preference for 18 years as ideal age for marriage for their daughters is also seen in the nationwide study on status of girl child by Anandalakshmy (1994).

As in the case of education, an attempt is made to find out at what age their daughters are married. For this purpose, details regarding the marital status of respondents' female children who are below the age of 25 years are collected. Based on that, 156 married daughters are identified. The table below presents their age at marriage.

**Table 8.7. Age at Marriage of Daughters below the Age of 25 Years**

Kinship	Below 18		18 and above		Total	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Matriliny	22	(28.2%)	56	(71.8%)	78	(100%)
Patriliney	28	(35.9%)	50	(64.1%)	78	(100%)
total	50	(32.1%)	106	(67.9%)	156	(100%)

The age at marriage of daughters from both the kinship groups support the general trend of increasing age at marriage. Though there is a slight variation between both the groups with more girls from matrilineal group marrying at 18 years and above than patrilineal group, majority of girls (67.9%) are married after reaching the legal age of 18 years. Reporting

a similar trend in increasing age at marriage of Muslim girls among different world populations, Carmichael (2011) writes that, by 1995 a new pattern emerged of higher percentage of Muslim population having a positive effect on female age at first marriage. This is a positive trend proving beneficial for girls and women because early marriage is the main indicator of low status of women in a society. Besides as Dommaraju (2009) observes changes in marriage age may influence schooling levels rather than other way around.

It is also found that 32.1% of the daughters are married off below 18 years of age. According to Reproductive and Child Health Survey (GOI 1998- 1999), percentage of women married before the legal age of 18 in Kannur district was 19.0% and Kozhikode district was 13.6%. The present study carried out more than a decade after the above said survey also reports the existence of marriages before the legal age. This point to the serious fact that early marriages are even now practiced among Muslims of Malabar.

## **8.5 Dowry**

Presence of dowry system in a society can be said as the most direct influence in determining the other socio-cultural status indicators affecting a girl child. It affects are felt even before her birth where a female foetus is subjected to foeticide. Later it shapes every stage of her life. The birth of a daughter is a financial disaster for a family, especially if they have no son whose bride will bring in money and goods that can be used for the daughter's marriage. Kuruvilla's (2011) study on the discrimination towards girl child in Kerala has revealed that economic burden necessitated by dowry to the girl is the most important reason for son preference in the state. However in this study, only one respondent

mentioned this reason for the preference of boy child (Figure 8.1). Therefore, the opinion towards this practice is essential towards studying the status of women and girls.

Among Malabar Muslims, the practice of dowry shows variation from one area to another. A study by Mahila Smakhya Society (GOK 2008- 2009) carried out in Malapuram district of Malabar has drawn attention to the escalating practice of dowry in the region as the reason for desertion of girls who are victims of *Mysore Kalyanam*, a practice of marrying young girls to men of Mysore and nearby areas. In the present research Matrilineal Mappila women of Kozhikode districts affirmatively said that there is no practice of dowry among them. While matrilineal Muslims of Kannur agree that inspite of being matrilineal, dowry has existed among them in the past and is continued even now. Patrilineal respondents of both Kannur and Kozhikode said that dowry is common amongst them. The respondents from both the samples also agree upon the influence of religious teaching in controlling the practice to some extent. Hence the respondents of the present study are asked about their opinion regarding giving and accepting dowry for the daughters and sons respectively.

**Table 8.8. Dowry**

Opinion Towards Dowry	Kinship	Yes		No		Total	
		F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Giving Dowry for daughter's marriage	Matriliny	59	(23.6%)	191	(76.4 %)	250	(100%)
	Patriliney	96	(38.4%)	154	(61.6%)	250	(100%)
	Total	155	(31.0%)	345	(69%)	500	(100%)
Accepting Dowry for son's marriage	Matriliny	21	(8.4%)	229	(91.6%)	250	(100%)
	Patriliney	73	(29.2%)	177	(70.8%)	250	(100%)
	Total	94	(18.8%)	406	(81.2%)	500	(100%)

The percentage analysis reveals that those who favour accepting dowry for sons and giving dowry for daughters are more for the patrilineal sample than matrilineal sample. This shows that practice of dowry is common among patrilineal Muslims of Malabar and by giving a favourable response towards dowry, it demonstrates that the practice is embedded in the minds of people as a natural step for a marriage. The situation reflects what Bourdieu (1977) refers to as *Doxa*. The *Doxa* help to comprehend how women have internalised those aspects of tradition and culture that are so taken for granted, that they become naturalised.

Discussions with the respondents also found that the women who support dowry for their daughters feel that the practice has become so naturalised, that it becomes difficult to get the girls married off without it. Few even feel that dowry is a source of natal inheritance and hence there is nothing wrong in its practice. Those, especially of the lower income groups, who support dowry for sons, justify it by saying that they use this dowry to get gifts for the bride such as wedding saree and clothes including her *mehr* and hence it is the brides themselves who ultimately benefits from it.

Srinivasan and Lee's (2004) study of attitudes toward the dowry system among married women in the Northern Province of Bihar found that nearly two thirds of the women in their survey disapproved dowry system. Similarly, the data in present study also reveals that majority (81.2%) of the sample are against accepting dowry for boys. However, only 69% could say that they are against giving dowry for their daughters.

It is also evident from the analysis that the number of respondents who agree with giving or accepting dowry is very low when compared to actual practice that is going on among Muslims of Malabar. According to

Table 5.1., more than 50 % of the total sample agrees that dowry transactions are involved in their marriages. When compared to this actual practice, the number respondents who agree with dowry practice is very low. The fact that the nature of this question posed to the respondents may tend to elicit a biased answer, cannot be overlooked. However as Srinivasan (2005) observes, raising the critical consciousness of women about their identity and self-esteem is a crucial for effective strategies in fighting against dowry system.

## **8.6 Summary**

According to Cain (1993) the inability of women to be economically contributing to one's family leads to strong son preferences as risk insurance. Kishor (1993) points out that the children are valued based on their cultural and economical worth. Hence when a boy child is valued for his economic worth, a girl child is valued in a matrilineal society for her cultural worth emanating from the security offered to the parents by daughters residing with them and the role the daughters play in carrying the lineage forward. Taking these factors into consideration an attempt is made to find out whether there is any difference in the acceptance of girl child among matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women of Malabar.

In order to find out the desirability of the sex of the children, respondents are asked about their view of gender preference in their community, their preference for their first born and finally a hypothetical question as to whether they will prefer a girl as their only child. The analysis reveals that there is a marked difference in the desirability of boy child and girl child between the two kinship groups with 70.7% of patrilineal women agreeing that there is general preference for boy child in

their community against 50% matrilineal women. Similarly while only 16% matrilineal women said that they prefer boy as their first born 43.3% of patrilineal women said the same. When 25.6% matrilineal women agree that they will not prefer their only child to be a girl, 44.8% of patrilineal sample feel the same. The statistical analysis also shows that the difference between the two groups is significant thereby supporting the hypothesis that there is a difference in the acceptance of girl child among matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslim women. The data also reveals that there is, though small in number, a preference for boy child among matrilineal Mappilas as a source of economic support.

Study also makes an attempt to study the reasons for the preference for a particular sex among the respondents. Preference for a boy child as a source of economic security stands in the forefront for the inclination towards boy child over girl child among both matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila women. Girl children are valued by matrilineal women for their matrilocal residence and the role they play in continuing the lineage. At the same time, girl child is seen as a source of affection by patrilineal women.

After finding out the cultural and economical worth of children among the matrilineal and patrilineal Mappilas of Malabar, the study makes an attempt to elicit the perceptions of respondents towards the four important socio-cultural indicators affecting the status of girls, i.e., education of girls, participation in paid work, age at marriage and payment of dowry. The analysis reveals that despite women's favourable view towards educating girl child and sending them for job, low level of higher education is present among daughters of both patrilineal and matrilineal women. The preferred age at marriage is still '18 or less' among both the groups. In spite of the positive trend of actual dowry practice found in the study, majority of

women from total sample have voiced their opinion against dowry system. However, the percentage of respondents who favour accepting dowry for sons and giving dowry for daughters is found to be more from the patrilineal sample than matrilineal sample.

## *Resilience and Transformation of Matriliney*

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*“Let matrilineal system continue...  
No legal intervention is needed for dissolving it.”*

*A.N.P. Ummerkutty,  
Former Vice-Chancellor of Calicut University*

Change is inevitable in any social institution. Matriliney worldwide has undergone transformation. Some have adapted to new situations, while in other cases it has given way to patriliney. The influence of modernisation and education has been cited as the major reason for this drift (Marak 2002; Nongbri 2003). At the same time legal interventions from the state, regarding marriage and property inheritance, have also worked towards legitimising patrilineal values (Eapen and Kodoth 2003; Sradamoni 1999). In spite of these, matriliney among Mappila Muslims have managed to survive. Though laws have changed the inheritance pattern, people here, still adhere to tracing matrilineage and following matrilocality in the form of extended matrilocality. The fact that this phenomenon is observed among Mappila Muslims of Kerala, who are considered to be pious believers of patriarchal Islam, makes it even more interesting. Regarding this Balakrishnan (1981: 17-18), in his book *Matrilineal System in Malabar*, writes as follows- ‘here was a case where in the two faiths whose adherents always opposing each other, found a meeting place and matriliney became a historical symbol of religious tolerance.’

According to functionalists a social structure continues to function mainly due to the benefits it extends to its members. They note that a structure may be dysfunctional for the system as a whole and may continue to exist, because it is functional for a part of the social system (Merton 1957). In the case of matrilineal Mappilas, the resilience of matriliney needs to be probed from the stance of men and women who are still practicing its features, inspite of the legal interventions and influence of modernisation. McAllister (1991) in her study on Malay matrilineal women emphasise the need for detailed examination of people's actual lived experiences, especially that of the women. This, according to her, not only provides the basis for the discovery of facts about social realities, but also provides the context for generating and determining significant questions for the research. Therefore an attempt is made in the present study to find out the viewpoint of women from matrilineal families of Malabar, towards the resilience of matriliney and discuss the results with the help of the data collected through the field work and secondary sources.

## **9.1 Men and Matriliney**

Unlike the general belief, men are never invisible in a matrilineal system. While in most matrilineal societies, women take care of the private inside world of the household or at times even the activities related to matrilineal land and property, men have assumed to take over the public arenas of social and political decision making (Harbinson et al. 1989; Reenen 2000). But in the recent developments, a discontentment seems to have built up among men regarding matriliney, which has led them to voice the need for change in the system. Nongbri (2003), in her work on Khasi matriliney, has revealed that Khasi men have tried to replace matrilineal system with the patrilineal system, perceiving that

bestowing inheritance and descent rights on women is an age-old practice detrimental to men. Mukhim (2007) and Augustine (2007) have also noted similar concerns. Arunima (2003) writes that it was men who have played a role as agents of change in Nair matriliney.

At the same time believers in the resilience of matriliney have also noted that men themselves have supported the system. Changes in matrilineal system of inheritance in Laccadive Island were proposed in 1971 and later in 1982-83 by the authorities, but during both the times, it was vetoed by male members (Dube 2003). McGilvray (1989) has also reported among matrilineal groups of Srilanka, men themselves wish to continue this matrilocality as they receive special respect and support from his wife's family. In fact as McGilvray (1989: 230) puts it, matri-uxorilocal residence is 'an essential ingredient for a successful marriage and happy household.'

Several reasons can be cited from the literature as the reasons for the adjustment of Mappila men with their matrilineal system. Schneider (1962) had foreseen the cause of matrilineal disintegration, in the strain caused by the natural affection that can develop between the father and children in a matrilineal descent group, thereby threatening the traditional matrilineal authority of mother's brother. In contrast to this, matrilineal Mappilas' compliance with the Islamic injunctions regarding the marriage and the patriarchal role of father, can be said to be an important reason for the survival of Matriliney among Mappilas.

Polyandry was never practiced by Mappilas as it was proscribed by the religion, and hence the paternal uncertainty cited as a feature of many matrilineal groups was never an issue among Mappila Muslims of Malabar. They have always incorporated the importance of father's role even in

matrilocal households. Miller (1976) observed that Mappilas have tried to strengthen the patrilineal ties to make it compatible with matrilineal descent. Though the children belonged to matrilineage, the authority of father over the children was never questioned (except for some rich *taravads* headed by influential *karnavars* or when fathers themselves neglected the duty towards their children). Provision was also there to pass over the self-earned inheritance of the father to children under *Sharia* law.

According to Kutty (1976), this unequivocal recognition of the father-child bond counterbalanced the influence of the matrilineal residence pattern and gave socio-religious sanctions to effective father – child relationship. Along with it, this also increased the assumption of father’s responsibility for maintaining and bringing up children. It can be seen that Mappila men today are not just involved in the matters of child’s rites of passage but also in other activities such as schooling, entertainment, and so on.

Schneider (1962) also argues that institutionalisation of very strong and lasting solidarities between husband and wife is not compatible with the maintenance of matrilineal descent groups. Man with authority over his wife will be in a position to disrupt the bonds between matrilineal kin and require his wife to have her primary loyalties towards him. Unlike in Nair *sambandham* (Nambiar and Kumar 2006) or marriages in other matrilineal groups (Dube 1969), marriages among matrilineal Mappilas have been relatively stable (Puthenkalam 1977; Mohamed 2010). With the emphasis on chastity within and outside marriage and prohibition on polyandry by Islam, the husband has been able to maintain exclusive rights over the sexuality of his wife. Gough (1962) has reported that a man has exclusive sexual rights on his wife and her domestic services. Lindberg (2009) notes that due to this feature of Mappila matriliney, the revision of their family

system on ideological grounds related to gender such as polyandry and paternal uncertainty was less imperative than that of Hindu matriliney.

In the present scenario, domestic authority is greatest as the husband provides for almost all of his wife's expenses even while she is residing matrilocally. This also has led to a gradual shift from the emphasis of control and authority of matrilineal kin to the more emotional and psychological support they provide to the women and children. Once the husband is able to build a house on his own, he could move his family out of the taravad or the extended family and become the head of the household. Among aristocrats, a woman remained primarily under the authority of her matrilineal elders who maintained her (Gough 1962). However, this has become dysfunctional to the extent that even among them, the husband wife-bond is of prime importance.

Unlike the other matrilineal systems, men here seems to be less torn from the conflicts created between responsibilities towards natal home and towards wife and children (Augustine 2007; Mukhim 2007). According to one's ability, most Mappila men provide economical support to their natal house as well as to their uxori-local residence. As uxori-local residence was customarily open to the members, the males of the society tended to marry from nearby villages, so that they could visit their native houses also (Sini 2010). It is a common practice for these men to have their lunch at the mother's house and other meals with their wives. This practice is also reported by Osella and Osella (2007a). Therefore, even if Mappila matrilineal men are away from their natal home either following uxori-locality or neolocality, they are never alienated from their matrilineal descent group.

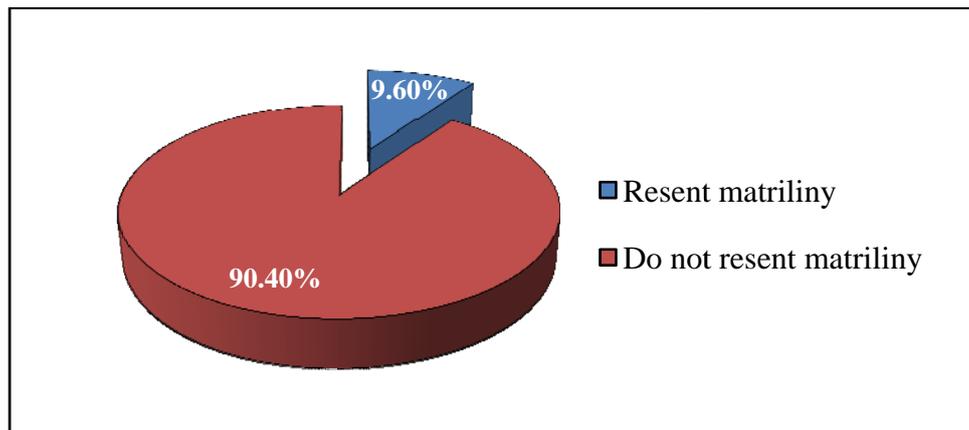
Inheritance is another point of contempt that prompts men to shift from matrilineal ideology (Poewe 1981; Muhkim 2007). As per the matrilineal system in Malabar, the sons were entitled to a share each of the ancestral property, while the daughters were entitled to their individual share plus the share of their children of both the sexes. Therefore matrilineal Mappila men were not completely sidelined from enjoying matrilineal property, though their conjugal family could not enjoy it, as the men's share reverted to their matrilineal taravad on their death. But the passing of Mappila Marumakkathayam Act 1939 made it possible for the property so obtained by an individual member on partition, to be governed by the Islamic Law of Inheritance and be given to his wife and children.

At the same time Mappila matriliney also made provision for men to keep his self-earned money and divide and give it to his wife and children as per Islamic *Sharia* law. In the present time, where *Sharia* rules apply to inheritance among Mappilas (except for *taravads* that are still partitioned on the basis of Marumakkathayam Act), men enjoy the inheritance rights more than women. This shift to *Sharia* law, where women are legally entitled to the natal property as well as that of their husbands, seems to have sufficed women as well. The advantageous arrangement in the matter of property inheritance have also put men in a comfortable position and could be the most important reason why unlike in other matrilineal groups, men here do not feel threatened by matrilineal system. The *Sharia* law which is legally binding over the Muslims of Kerala can also be viewed as the functional alternative for the traditional matrilineal inheritance when the inheritance based on *marumakkathayam* became dysfunctional.

The list of advantages Mappila men enjoy under matrilineal system is never complete without mentioning the respect and special privileges a man

receives at his wife's house. He is always referred to as *puthiyappila* (which means a 'new groom') throughout his lifetime by his wife's kin. He is treated with hospitality, respect and careful politeness. *Ara*, a special room in the wife's house with all the modern amenities, is provided to the *puthiyappila*. The socialisation process that takes place here is in such a way that there is no looking down on a man living in his wife's house. Infact young men, especially from lower income groups, look forward for the special status that accompanies the uxorilocal residence.

Based on the discussed information, an attempt is made in the present study to understand the matrilineal women's opinion regarding the attitude of Mappila men towards matriliney



**Figure 9.1 Men Resenting Matriliney**

According to 90.4% of matrilineal women in the present study, their men do not resent matriliney and its features. Mohamed's (2010) study on the continuity of matrilocal families in Malabar also finds that *puthiyappilas* are much attached to matrilocal residence pattern and this attachment in a way has strengthened the Mappila matriliney. Along with this, the role of Islam in the community has also played a part in catering to

the needs of men irrespective of matrilineal system. Based on her study on Malaysian Muslim matriliney, Gonsoulin (2005) is of the opinion that women controlling household affairs and men involved in public affairs suited the public private split that Islam consider proper for men and women and this has further helped in the resilience of matriliney.

The aforementioned social, cultural, religious and legal sanctions, along with the special privileges extended by uxorilocality may be said to be the reasons as to why Mappila men have not openly challenged matriliney amongst them. However, it is also important to know the opinion of men themselves about the continuance of the system. Hence interviews and discussions are carried out with matrilineal men of different age groups and socio-economic statuses. The first impression given by all of them is that it is due to the insistence of women that the system is still being practiced among the Mappilas of Malabar. They agree that even if they wish to shift to patrilocality, their women will not agree to it and young girls too disagree to proposals from patrilineal families.

At the same time, they are also prompt to point out that the system has many benefits especially for women. One middle-aged respondent from Kozhikode brought to the notice that it is because of this system that the matrilineal women have more freedom in household matters, as well as enjoy lack of constraint in mobility, than patrilineal women who have to live under the control of not just the husband but also their in-laws. Another male respondent points out that his daughter enjoys the freedom in all matters in her own house- *'She can rest when she feels like or take a snack if she wants to at any time and even visit a relative's house at any time.'* There are also several references to lack of dowry related domestic violence amongst them.

Nevertheless, there are others who agree that men also have benefits under their system. A 45-year old male brought attention towards the psychological benefit that uxori-locality offers to men, as a main reason why men have not openly challenge this system. He notes that a young man, who will be under the control of the other senior male members in his own house, tends to find relief when he visits his wife's house, where he is served and treated with deference. Another educated business man points out that for a man who has to travel a lot, it is a matter of reprise that his family is taken care of by the wife's own kin and hence will not face any hardship due to the husband's absence. According to him, this situation, unlike in patrilocal households, where women are in the company of only her in-laws, is a major source of support for matrilocal women to overcome the psychological and emotional challenges of living away from the husband.

According to a 65-year old male, just like matrilocality, as insisted by Islam, facilitates the woman's avoidance of male members who are not her blood relatives, (here it means her husband's kinsmen), *ara* ensures that the husband also gets very little opportunity to mingle with his wife's matrilineal kinsfolk when he is at his wife's house. He spends most of the time in his *ara* and therefore the *ara*, other than being a bed room for the couple, also functions to provide the maximum comfort for the man, who may otherwise feel like a stranger in his wife's house and may not be able to move about freely among his wife's female relatives. Thus, as one respondent said, '*a puthiyappila is the master of his own chamber, but stranger in the house.*' However, he also agrees that the boys of the present generation are more involved with the affairs of their wives' house rather than those of the earlier generations.

At the same time not all are happy about the situation. Men have started feeling apprehensive about the status accorded to them by matrilineal system. Few responses point towards the fact that men feel it to be an incursion on their dignity and manhood. Menon (2007) has noted similar feelings among Nair men who were in the forefront in introducing patriarchal norms to the community. Vayzhakad's (2006) and Jabbar's (2006) arguments in an Islamic magazine asserts the existence of male conflict towards the continuation of matrilineal system in Malabar. The system of matriliney and matrilocality, according to them, have several disadvantages including un-Islamic nature of the system, low status of *puthiyappila* or the bride groom, irresponsibility of man towards his family, lack of attachment between father and child and husband and wife and above all, the economic burden for girl's parents due to unwanted customs related to *ara* system and other marriage features among the matrilineal Mappilas of Malabar. Lindberg (2009) questions this tendency among Mappila men to raise the issue of the so called un-Islamic nature of matrilineal system, without addressing other un-Islamic situations such as the dowry system and the mere symbolic existence of *mehr*.

A youth in one of the households eagerly joined the conversation and pointed out that he is teased by his friends in his college for practicing a system where women have 'upper hand'. In fact they use terms such as one who is living in 'achhi veedu', a derogatory term used to refer to a man who sleeps in his wife's house. But immediately he also points out that '*in our system you will not find any suicides because of domestic violence or dowry harassment as in your system*' (hinting at patrilineal system which the researcher is a part of). '*So there are benefits to it. But even if we want to practice patrilocality, the girls in our area will not agree.*' When quizzed

whether he is looking forward to the special treatment he is entitled to at his wife's house, he passed the question by smiling, without the answer.

Another man, 60 years of age, who belongs to a traditional low income household with several members residing under one roof, has concerns about his low status in that house. He feels that he cannot move out because of his low economic status and has to be confined to his own bedroom all the day, as there are other female members in the house. However, the female members in the household have a different story to narrate. He is a typical figure usually considered as an irresponsible husband in a matrilineal household and at times is also physically abusive towards his wife.

The economic burden of taking care of the daughters and their families that falls on the parents' echoes repeatedly in the responses of men, especially of lower-income groups. A father of four girls from the lower economic background lamented about the hardships he is facing in meeting the demands of the grooms' side regarding the arranging of the *ara*. *Ara* has now become a matter of status symbol. Hence demands range from air-conditioning, television and sometimes even refrigerator. This concern is also raised by some middle and upper class men.

It is generally seen that men who are the heads of the extended matrilocal households and those who are living in the wives' house without any other co-brothers-in-law, do not have any complaints about their uxorilocality status. It is men who are still residing in the traditional *taravad* system or in a household with several co-brothers-in-law as well as those burdened by the economic issues related to matrilocality, who have troubles in adjusting with the system. Though they do not want to shift to their own natal house with their family, they did not show any dislike towards exogamous marriages for their children

## 9.2 Women and Resilience of Matriliney

During interviews with matrilineal Mappila men and with some respected people in the community, it was brought to the notice that the taravad system has lost its importance and some shift towards patriliney has come up among matrilineal Mappilas too. But they also agree that the main reason for matriliney, especially matrilocality to survive among Malabar Mappilas, is the resistance of women to change the matrilineal residence pattern.

Several authors have emphasised the role of women in the resilience of matriliney. McAllister (1991) remarks that the resilience of matriliney among Negri Sembilan in Malaysia, is mainly due to the attempt of women to resist some of the negative consequences of capitalist economy by continuously participating in matrilineal and Islamic traditions, thereby forming what she terms as 'every day forms of resistance'. Nongbri (2003), taking note of the work of various authors who believe in the resilience of matriliney, highlights that stability of the family and kinship domain is associated with women and not with men who are primarily dictated by the economic motive. She later remarks that the present status of matrilineal institutions can be understood only by taking into account the question of gender. Poewe (1981) also suggests that women tend to support matrilineal ideology mainly because it is guided by values of commonality, unrestricted access to resources and a matrilateral distributive justice.

Taking all these details into consideration, an attempt is made in the present research to find out the factors that can influence change as well as stability of matriliney from a female perspective. For this, matrilineal respondents are asked a series of questions pertaining to two important features of matriliney, i.e., matrilocality and matrilineage.

### **9.3 Residence pattern**

One of the key features of matriliney that keeps the system alive is matrilocality. According to Murdock (1949), changes in residence patterns preceded all the other types of changes in social organisation, such as descent and kin terminology, by altering the physical distribution of related individuals. He points out that disintegration of matriliney is closely related to patrilocal residence as this involves social participation with father's patrilineal kin. This in long run can bring an end to matrilineal descent, another key feature that is keeping matrilineal kinship system literally alive.

A practice that is helping matrilineal Mappilas to keep their matrilocal residence pattern intact is the practice of endogamous marriage, whereby they prefer to look for marriage proposals among their community itself. Though the *taravad* system is losing its importance among Mappilas, people are shifting to extended matrilocal system, where married daughters stay with their parents and sons move out to their wives' house. Osella and Osella (2007a) have reported in their study on Koyas of Kozhikode, that the matrilineal community of Thekkepuram in Kozhikode tries to maintain its exclusive kinship status by maintaining endogamy. Maetala's (2008) study in matrilineal Solomon Islands in Pacific also point to intermarriage with patrilineal groups as one of the main causes for the disintegration of matriliney in that area. Mohammed's (2010) study on matrilocality among matrilineal Mappilas also reveal this dislike of Mappilas to shift out of their matrilocal culture. He considers this dislike of Mappilas to shift from their matrilocal system to patrilocal system as an attempt to celebrate their 'subcultural identity', which Mappilas believe is different from other patrilineal Muslims in Kerala. He observes that, by not preferring exogamy, they try to maintain their '*tharavaditham*' or aristocracy.

The objection of women to shift their matrilineal residence pattern is pointed out by the community members themselves as a main reason for the resilience of Mappila matrilineality. Hence an attempt is made to find out whether there is any change in the preference for endogamous marriages among matrilineal Mappila women by asking the respondents whether they prefer exogamous marriages, i.e., whether they will marry off their children, both sons and daughters, outside their kinship group.

**Table 9.1. Preference for Exogamous Marriage**

Kinship	Exogamous Marriage for Daughters			Exogamous Marriage for Sons		
	No F (%)	Yes F (%)	Total F (%)	No F (%)	Yes F (%)	Total F (%)
Matrilineality	176 (70.4%)	74(29.6%)	250(100%)	168(67.2%)	82(32.8%)	250(100%)

The analysis makes it clear that matrilineal women do not want to marry off their children to a kinship group other than theirs. About 70.4% of matrilineal women affirmatively said that they will not prefer exogamous marriages, suggesting that they do not prefer a shift from the matrilineal system to patrilineal system. The analysis also suggests that, as in the case of daughters, majority of respondents agree that they will not look for proposal from outside their group for their sons too. By giving a negative answer to this question, these women ascertain that they will not prefer their sons and daughters-in-law residing in their house after marriage. Such a scenario is impossible to imagine in any patrilineal household, which values their sons to the extent that they consider boys living in the wives' place as a matter of low status. This response further underlines the fact that one of the reasons for resilience of matrilineality is the dislike of women to shift to patrilineal system.

At the same time, one issue that stands out here is that around 33% of matrilineal sample agree that they prefer their sons to be with them. Considering that it is the features of matrilocality and uxorilocality that is keeping matrilineal system alive in Malabar, this response in a way draws attention to the fact that the preference for boys might act as a catalyst in the disintegration of matriliney in this area.

It is therefore important to find out whether this indifference to accept proposals from outside one's kinship group is because of the benefits women perceive that the kinship system extends to them or a bias towards any gender or merely an adherence to a traditionally followed culture. Hence it is not sufficient to know about women's opinion regarding marrying off their children outside their kinship group, but to get a better picture, it is also necessary to know the reasons for their resistance. Consequently women are asked why they disagree or agree to exogamous marriages i.e. marriages outside one's own kinship group.

**Table 9.2. Reasons for not Preferring Exogamous Marriages**

<b>Dislike for Exogamous marriages for Daughters</b>		<b>Dislike for Exogamous marriages for Sons</b>	
<b>Reasons</b>	<b>F (%)</b>	<b>Reasons</b>	<b>F (%)</b>
Not accustomed to other kinship systems	96 (54.6%)	Not accustomed to other kinship systems	101 (60.1%)
Concerned about daughter's freedom in the in-laws' house	59 (33.5%)	Adjustment problems are bound to rise between daughter-in-law and other members of the family	39 (23.2%)
Concerned about daughter's security in the in-laws' house	21 (11.9%)	Daughter- in-law as well as mother-in-law will have less freedom	28 (16.7%)
Total	176 (100%)	Total	168 (100.0)

The main reason why the respondents did not want to marry off their children (both sons and daughters) outside their kinship group is to ensure the adherence to a traditionally followed culture to which they are accustomed to. They consider their own cultural system generally experienced as natural and therefore to them it seems to be unalterable at any circumstances. This situation cannot be merely explained with a functional perspective alone that suggests that social institutions survive mainly because of the functional prerogative they provide. Instead another sociological concept of 'Doxa' by Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) fits in well. Doxa is Bourdieu's term for the taken for granted, pre-conscious understanding of this world and how one's place in it shapes one's more conscious awareness. As individuals participate in social life, they tend to develop a knowledge of it, which is built into specific relationships they inhabit and into specific modes of cultural understanding. Bourdieu suggests that our everyday life involvements invest us with a great deal of practical knowledge which at the same time requires us to misrecognise much of what we and other people do.

The concept of Doxa in this study helps to understand how women from each group have internalised those aspects of tradition and culture that are so taken for granted that they have become naturalised. This understanding becomes misrecognition because one cannot be objective outside one's own relationship, and hence cannot see them from all possible angles. The misrecognition according to Calhoun (2000) is, however, not 'false consciousness' because how people perceive their needs and interests is perceived by their individual histories and everyday realities, and by the material and social contexts of their experiences. Hence women have some perceived benefits by holding on to their own realities, which they would not want to change. Misrecognition lets each person to play the game of life

because it obtains from each member undisputed, pre-reflexive and native compliance with the fundamental pre-supposition of the field.

Taking this native compliance with the fundamental pre-supposition of the field into consideration, Doxa can be used to comprehend how matrilineal women have internalised matrilineal culture to the extent that that they choose not to move beyond it and hence facilitate the continuance of matriliney among Mappilas of Malabar. Misrecognition, in the sense that one does not want to look outside one's experiences, is also evident when women voice their concern about the freedom and safety of their daughters, if they are married off to patrilocal households. An educated matrilineal woman points out "*how can you ensure the safety of my daughter in a house where outside male members other than her husband also reside?*"

Likewise regarding the marriage of sons, around 40% of matrilineal women feel that some sort of adjustment problems and lack of freedom are sure to creep in, if a daughter-in-law stays with her in-laws. This again is a situation where internalised belief of women (here regarding the proverbial mother-in-law daughter-in-law conflict) tends to be considered as natural or real. A similar situation is reported by Marak (2002) among matrilineal Garos of north east India. Garos support the continuation of their existing system just because it has been the tradition and custom that has been practiced by their forefathers and therefore it should continue.

The fear of loss of freedom or autonomy one enjoys in a matrilineal household, is also evident when 33.5% of women give their reason for not favouring exogamous marriages as concern for the freedom of girls in their in-laws' house. The present study has shown that women enjoy considerable freedom and autonomy under matrilineal system despite their

not so favourable macro level status. Bartle's (2007) paper titled *Modernisation and the Decline in Women's Status: Covert Gynocracy in an Akan Community*, prepared for the Ghana National Council of Women and Development, put forth the term 'Covert Gynocracy' to depict the hidden or covert power enjoyed by matrilineal women. He observes that matrilineal women may not seem to have much power overtly but in reality they may play a crucial role in taking decisions regarding their lives and carry out their activities without much interference. Extending Rhodman's theory (1967, 1972), it can also be said that women in relatively egalitarian matrilineal system have greater conjugal power than their counterparts in patrilineal system. Hence shifting to a patrilineal system is not perceived as favorable to them.

Table 9.1 also reveals there is a section of respondents who are ready for exogamous marriages. Hence it is important to know whether it is openness to change or any advantage they presume to benefit them, which have prompted the respondents to agree for a change in residence pattern.

**Table 9.3. Reasons for Preferring Exogamous Marriages**

<b>Favouring Exogamous marriages for daughters</b>		<b>Favouring Exogamous marriages for sons</b>	
Reasons	N (%)	Reasons	N (%)
If the proposal is good	50 (67.6%)	Only son/ son will stay with his parents	31 (37.8%)
Religion prescribes patrilocal residence	10 (13.5%)	If the daughter- in- law agrees	22 (26.8%)
If the daughter has no objections to such proposals	8 (10.8%)	Is not against any kinship system	21 (25.6%)
Less economic burden for the girls family	6 (8.1%)	Religion prescribes patrilocal residence	8 (9.8%)
Total	74 (100%)	Total	82 (100%)

The analysis in Table 9.3 gives descriptions of the reasons cited by matrilineal women as to why they agree to marry off their children to different kinship group other than their own. Two factors that can generally be seen here are the demographic factors and the need for hypergamous marriages (good proposals). A good proposal is the main reason cited by the matrilineal women for preferring exogamous marriages for their daughters. By good proposals majority of respondents mean families who are financially better off than theirs. This is more common among the rich who wants to consider marriage proposals in par with their socio-economic status, even if it means exogamous marriages. Osella and Osella (2007a) have reported that despite strong preference for endogamy among matrilineal community of Thekkepuram, Kozhikode, some intermarriage do occur with wealthy patrilineal families from the interiors of the district. Among the poor, in areas where dowry is practiced, a proposal without any demands is always welcomed even if they are from patrilocal households.

Another important consideration for good proposal is the educational qualification especially that of the boys. Education has been mentioned by several authors as an important catalyst for social change in matrilineal societies. It is believed to create a negative attitude towards matrilineal system and a favourable attitude towards patrilineal system. Marak (2002) notes that among Garos, exposure to education and modern thinking has created a favorable attitude supporting transformation to patriliney. However, the effect of education on social change is different on matrilineal Mappilas. It was brought to the notice during the field work that compared to Muslim boys in Malabar, girls fare better in the matter of higher education. Hence for these girls, parents look out for proposals for boys with similar or higher educational qualification, for which they are

ready to accept proposals from outside their kinship group. There are quite a few instances among matrilineal Muslims where marriage proposals for daughters are accepted even from outside Malabar area to suit their educational needs, especially if the girl is professionally trained as doctor or engineer. Hence it can be said that education as an important agent for social change, is slowly extending its influence in the direction of transformation of matrilocality among matrilineal Mappilas too.

At the same time a different type of education, i.e., religious education seems to have an influence in bringing about attitudinal change among matrilineal Mappilas. Kutty (1972) had foreseen that among the Laccadives Islanders, factors generated by Islam can accelerate the process of disintegration of matrilineal system of the island society. Among the Mappilas of Malabar, Lindberg (2009) remarks that a process of Islamisation has gained strength, which in turn has influenced changes in their matrilineal principles. By Islamisation she means changing perceptions that strengthen religious and cultural values among people who consider themselves Muslims. Osella and Osella (2007b), based on their study among matrilineal Muslims of Thekkepuram, have also mentioned that there is a realisation among Muslims that most of the Muslim socio-cultural practices are the offshoots of other religious practices and hence there is a deliberate attempt to shift away from these cultural and religious influences towards more Islamic idioms.

In the present study also, it is found that there is a small percentage of respondents who have said that patriliney and patrilocality are the religiously prescribed form of family and adherence to it is a part of religious duty. With the opening up of opportunities to get familiar with the basic principles of Islam through Quran classes and religious discourses, more people are becoming conscious of the points of incompatibility between

matriliney and Islam. This sentiment is also mentioned by several women and men during the field work.

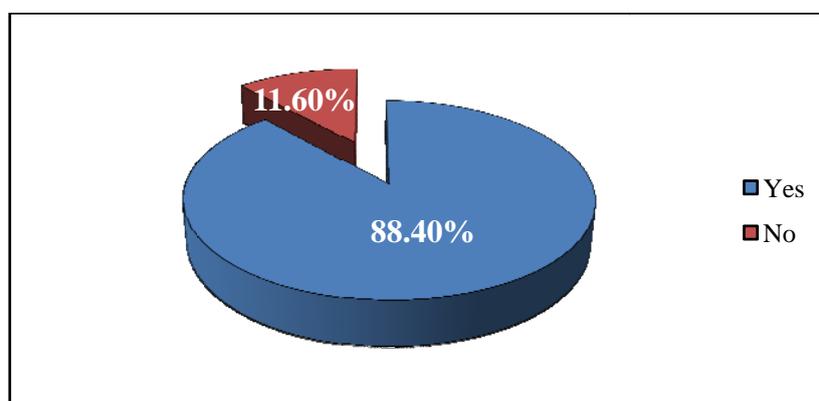
However, there are others who countered this argument, by pointing out that religion prescribes that women have to be under the care of their husbands, not insisting on any particular residence pattern. A Mappila woman, who lives in her own house, still continues residing with her husband and therefore is eligible to be of his financial support. They argue that nothing in the Quran says anything against matrilineal system and cites the example of Prophet Mohammed who had lived in the house of his first wife Khadeeja till her death. Osella and Osella (2007a) have also observed in their study that despite the adherence to strict Islam by matrilineal Koyas, there is a tendency among this community to maintain their exclusive status and justify matrilineal orientation as a culturally specific adaptation of Islam which hence does not breach the tenements of Islam.

The major reason that matrilineal women cites for preferring exogamous marriages for their sons is that they have only one son and hence want him to be them. This reveals that the influence of small family norm has also brought about a change in the outlook regarding residence pattern, where the women want their only child, whether boy or girl, to be with them. Thus, demographic transition to one child or two children norm in a family also can prove as a factor for transformation of matriliney among Mappilas of Malabar. It also echoes the increasing son preference that is creeping into the community.

#### **9.4 Preference for Nuclear Family**

As evident from the earlier analysis, majority of the respondents in the present study did not prefer marriages outside their kinship group

mainly because they did not want to change their residence pattern. Ehrenfels (1953) noted that destruction of joint families will automatically lead to destruction of matrilineal system. This points towards the importance the nuclear family will garner in course of time. Augustine (2007) and Mukhim (2007) have also drawn attention to this nucleation of family as a major trend transforming matrilineality. Hence women are asked whether they would prefer exogamous marriages if the couple sets up a nuclear family soon after marriage.



**Figure 9.2 Preference for Nuclear Family**

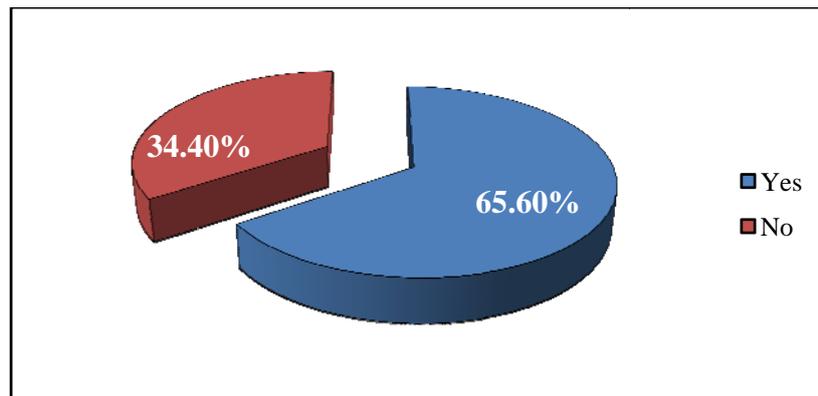
The shift from *taravad* system has definitely gained momentum among matrilineal Mappilas. But at the same time, the nuclear families they set up retain the features of matrilocality, which in course of time becomes extended family with married daughter and her family residing in the same house. This is a functional alternative that has come up for the traditional *taravad* system. Similarly many youth pursuing job opportunities have migrated to foreign countries taking their wife and children along with them and forming their own nuclear families. These women who go abroad spend more time in their own houses when they come home for vacation. They tend to visit their husband's house only for a day or two and very

rarely stay there for a longer period. Therefore, in order to continue this pattern they still prefer endogamous marriages. Contrary to this observation, the above figure 9.2 reveals that almost 90% of matrilineal women in the present study agree that they are ready to consider marriage alliances with patrilineal families, if the couple can set up their own nuclear family soon after marriage. This acceptance of nuclear family system also points towards the factors that can bring about a shift from matrilineal kinship towards patrilineal kinship.

## **9.5 Matrilineage**

Tracing descent through females is perhaps the most important feature of matrilineal system where women have a direct role to play. Murdock (1949) had drawn attention to the fact that the decline of matrilineal residence would finally put an end to tracing matrilineage, thus leading to the erosion of this kinship system. In patrilineal system it is the father's name or father's family name that is taken up by children as their surname, while in matrilineal households, tracing lineage from matriline means attaching the mother's taravad name along with one's first name. Among the matrilineal Garos, Marak (2002) points out that as a part of shift from matrilineal kinship system to patrilineal system, a woman has to surrender her traditional right to give her surname to her offspring. Augustine's (2007) study on Nair matriliney has also reported the vanishing of matrilineal surnames among present generation Nairs, among whom patriliney has almost replaced matriliney. Besides as Sudha et al. (2007) observes that it is also a reason for son preference in much of Asia as it is the sons who carry on the family name, a role fulfilled by daughters in matriliney.

Therefore, assuming that tracing descent through the females is important for the resilience of matriliney, matrilineal Mappila Muslim women are asked whether matrilineal surname is still used by the present generation of their families.



**Figure 9.3 Use of Matrilineal Surname**

The matrilineal system continues to have a strong hold among the matrilineal Mappilas of Malabar. About 65.6% of the matrilineal sample said that their family members still follow the matrilineage surname. At the same time, waves of change are evident when 34.4% respondents agree that matrilineal surname is no more used by the junior members in their families, instead the name of the father of the child is used. This may be pointed to the practical purposes such as issuing of passports where surnames in the form of taravad names and initials can create confusions. There are others who mentioned that young fathers prefer their children to have their own names as surnames. This reason again highlights the changing trends within the Mappila matriliney. There are also instances of adopting father's family name as surname, if he belongs to an elite family such as Keyi or Baramy. Muhkim (2007), citing Khasi matriliney, questions how mere tracing descent through females help the cause of women if they

are denied other rights and opportunities. Nevertheless, the trend among Matrilineal Mappilas' sidelining matrilineal surname has to be viewed with caution, because in course of time it can put an end to tracing descent through matriline and other key attributes of matriliney that are keeping the system alive.

It is evident that among Mappila Muslims of Malabar, matriliney is transforming due to changes in the inheritance pattern, demographic transitions, advantages of job-related migration, and teachings of Islam that emphasise patrilineage and patrilocality. But at the same time the injunction of patrilineal Islam regarding conjugal relationships, paternal responsibilities, inheritance pattern and filial piety are being strictly adhered to, thereby trying to overcome or mask the so called un-Islamic nature of matriliney among Mappilas.

## **9.6 Advantages and Disadvantages of Matrilineal System- Women's Overview**

Mukhim's (2011) presentation in the Third Matriarchal Conference held in Switzerland warns that one of the reasons why Khasi matrilineal women have not resisted moves to upstage them is because they are not aware of the strength of the matrilineal system and that it is fast eroding. In the present study, women disliked endogamous marriages mainly because of their dislike to shift from a traditionally accustomed way of life. However it is also important to know whether women themselves perceive the matrilineal system as beneficial to them. Hence before closing the interview, matrilineal respondents are asked about the advantages and disadvantages of their kinship system in contrast to the patrilineal system. This is an attempt to know the perspectives of women regarding the functions and dysfunctions of their system, based on their day-to-day life experiences.

**Table 9.4. Advantages of Matriliney**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>(%)</b>
No adjustment problems between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law as in patriliney	81	32.4%
More freedom for girls	79	31.6%
Daughters will receive support and care of natal members in case of adverse situation	72	28.8%
Daughters providing old age care and security for parents	18	7.2%
Total	250	100%

It is interesting to note that all the merits of matriliney as perceived by women respondents are female-friendly statements and highlights the informal agency that exists between the female uterine members of their households. Poewe (1981) in her work on matrilineal Laupula in Zambia maintains that women in matrilineal system recognise the importance of co-operation and interdependence between uterine kin. Mohamed's (2010) study on matrilineal Mappilas also revealed that women perceive matrilocality as female friendly.

From the responses of respondents in the present study, it is also seen that women resist change in the matrilocal system, not just for the security and assistance they can claim from natal kin, but also the fear that there could be adjustment problems between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, if they stay together. They feel their daughters also will end up in similar situations if married to patrilocal residence and hence are concerned for their freedom. Hence from the functional perspective, it is evident that the matrilineal women considers freedom women enjoy and the help they tend to get from their own natal members, as the main function of matrilineal system that has been extended to them by the system.

The study also reveals that there is a section of matrilineal women who favour a shift to patriliney; hence women are also asked about the disadvantages they face within their matrilineal system.

**Table 9.5. Disadvantages of Matriliney**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>(%)</b>
No disadvantages	119	47.6%
Economic burden for natal home	64	25.6%
Difficult to shift to one's own nuclear setup and hence adjustment problems can arise between sisters	33	13.2%
Matrilineal men have less status and are less responsible	18	7.2%
Girls become less responsible	16	6.4%
Total	250	100%

The majority of the matrilineal respondents note that there are no demerits in their system. This again emphasises the various statements that assert the resilience of Mappila matriliney is due to women who do not want to change their system. Functions, according to Merton (1957) are those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system. Hence matrilineal women by acknowledging that their system has only positive functions, is infact contributing to its continuation despite the winds of change.

A major disadvantage that matrilineal women cite is the economic burden that arises by meeting the demands of the *ara* as well as taking care of the daughter and children if the husband becomes irresponsible. This is a problem especially for lower income groups. When there is more than one daughter residing in the same house, it becomes difficult for the parents to treat the sons-in-law equally. This becomes more problematic if the financial contribution of sons-in-law to the wife's house is not uniform and one who makes larger contributions may start feeling being taken for

granted and the others feel inferior and neglected. It is usually the parents of the daughters who land up in trouble trying to maintain harmony among the members.

At times there are situations when sons-in-law tend to neglect their duties, as 7.2 % of women have said, towards their conjugal family. In such situation the responsibility falls on the parents, increasing their economic burden further. There are times when these situations can create competition and differences of opinion among sisters. Even if they want to live separately their financial condition may not let them do so. This is the concern raised by 13.2 % of matrilineal respondents when they cite the difficulty in shifting to a nuclear set up as a major drawback of matrilineal system. One solution that many households have come up for this situation is setting up separate cooking arrangements in the same kitchen where each daughter cooks and serve what her husband prefers. This provision is accepted without any disagreement because in traditional taravads it is common to see that though living under single roof, separate kitchens functions for each family living under it.

## **9.7 Summary**

Changes in the structure and practices of family in state of Kerala over the last century have wide-range consequences for gender relations. The present chapter makes an attempt to analyse the point of view of matrilineal women towards their kinship system, with a special focus on the causes of resilience and transformation of matrilineal among matrilineal Mappilas of Malabar. Along with this, analyses of personal interviews with matrilineal Mappila men inorder to know their opinion towards the systemis also carried out.

90.4% of matrilineal women in the present study feel that their men do not resent matriliney and its features. Men's opinions towards matrilineal system vary according to age and socio-economic status. It is seen that while men who are the head of the extended matrilineal households and those who are living in the wife's house without any other co-brothers do not have any complaints about their uxorilocality status. It is men who are still residing in traditional *taravad* system or in a household with several co-brothers as well as those burdened by the economic issues related to matrilineality have troubles with adjusting with the system.

In order to find out the factors that can influence change as well as the stability of matriliney from a female perspective, matrilineal respondents are asked a series of questions pertaining to two important features of matriliney, i.e., matrilineality, and matrilineage.

One of the important factors that can bring change to matrilineal residence pattern is exogamous marriage with the patrilineal group. Hence an attempt is made to find out whether there are any changes in the preference for endogamous marriages among Mappila women by asking the respondents whether they prefer exogamous marriages, i.e., whether they will marry off their children, both sons and daughters, outside their kinship group. Around 70% of matrilineal women said that they will not marry off their daughters to other kinship system than their own. At the same time 67.2 % of matrilineal women also did not want to marry off their sons to a patrilineal system. The main reason for not preferring exogamous marriages is that they are not accustomed to a kinship system other than their own.

Two reasons that can generally be seen in the statements of those who prefer exogamous marriages are the demographic factors and the need for hypergamous marriages (good proposals). About 37.8% of matrilineal women who approve intergroup marriages for sons said that they have only one son and hence they prefer their only child to be with them. 88.4% of the total matrilineal women also agree to exogamous marriages, if the couple set up a nuclear family immediately after marriage. With regard to matrilineal surname, an important feature of matrilineality, family members of 65.6% of the matrilineal sample still follow matrilineal surname.

Women's opinion regarding advantages and disadvantages of the matrilineal system also shows that majority of women perceive matrilineality as female friendly. These responses also highlight the reasons why women do not prefer patrilineality. In fact 47.6% of respondents feel that there are no disadvantages in their system.

Mappila matrilineal systems are not undeniable to change and the study also points towards it. The fact that men are in conflict with the system cannot be completely denied as indicated by the points put forward by the articles in an Islamic Magazine *Aramam*. The discussions with men, especially of younger generation, also reveal the fact that they would prefer patrilocality. Hypergamous marriages, mainly among the rich and the educated, and migration also seem to point to the gradual shift the community is facing. At the same time the Mappila matrilineality also shows a capacity to adapt to changes and new situations because of its socio-cultural, historical and religious background. As Puthenkalam (1977) had mentioned, what is there in Malabar now is matrilineal homesteads that are father-controlled with children who still belong to the mother's family.

## *Findings and Conclusions*

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Women's access to freedom and opportunities is determined by the status they occupy in a society. The status of women in turn is influenced by several factors. In traditional societies, kinship and the related norms regarding the status of women play an important role in the wellbeing of women. Patriarchy and patriliney, where man's superiority and woman's subordination are accepted as the social norm, is the customary kinship system in most parts of the world. Along with this, there exists a few but sociologically significant matrilineal communities of the world. The situation of matrilineal women, when compared to the patrilineal women, is believed to be fairly better, due to the features of matrilocality and matrilineage that entitle women with important roles. Matrilineal women also find themselves in advantageous position with regard to natal support and access to resources. Hence it is said that any assessment of the status of women has to start from the social frame work including social structure, cultural norms and value system.

Kerala is well known for its matrilineal legacy. However, legal intervention and the influence of modernisation and urbanisation have eroded the practice among various communities that were once matrilineal. It is under these circumstances that Mappila Muslims of Malabar, who are strict believers of patrilineal Islam, still adhere to matriliney and matrilocality.

Hence it would be significant to investigate the status of women in this matrilineal community that continue to survive even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in relation to their patrilineal counterparts.

The present study attempted to find out the relationship between kinship and socio-cultural status of women. As status is a multi-dimensional concept, status of women was appraised at macro level as well as micro level. The status indicators were derived from Blumberg's list of 'life options'. An attempt was also made to appraise the acceptance of girl child by women belonging to two different kinship systems and finally to examine the reasons for resilience and transformation of matriliney among Mappilas of Malabar.

The universe of the study included the married Mappila Muslim women from the districts of Kozhikode and Kannur. Anganwadi Survey Registers 2009–2010 served as the sample frame for drawing the list of sample. The sample consisted of 250 matrilineal women and 250 patrilineal women, who were married and were 25 to 54 years of age. The sample was selected through a combination of probability and non-probability sampling procedures. With the help of an interview schedule, data regarding the socio-cultural status of matrilineal and patrilineal women, at macro and micro levels, were collected. These findings were supplemented with informal talks, field observations, interviews with experts and secondary sources. The filled in schedules were edited, coded, analysed and interpreted using SPSS. The theoretical frame work of the study were drawn from Rae Lesser Blumberg's (1984) 'General Theory of Gender Stratification', Hyman Rodman's (1972) 'Theory of Resources in Cultural context', Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) 'Doxa', and Mead Cain's (1993) Theory of Children as Potential Source of Social Security.

### **10.1 Profile of the respondents**

The sample was grouped into three age groups 25 to 34 (younger), 35 to 44 (middle) and 45 to 54 (upper). The analysis showed that the respondents were almost evenly distributed. The younger age group represented 38.8% of the total sample. The second and third categories represented 30.8% and 30.4 % respectively. The analysis also revealed that the number of respondents who belonged to younger age group was more among patrilineal sample than matrilineal sample.

The educational performance and participation in employment of married Mappila Muslim women from both the kinship groups were in line with the literature that suggests the general backwardness of Muslim, with respect to these aspects. The analysis revealed that though the difference between the two groups with regard to education was less, matrilineal women had better participation in higher education than patrilineal women. In the case of employment, only 5.2% of matrilineal women and 3.6% of patrilineal women were employed.

The analysis of the marital status of the respondents showed that 92.8% of women were presently married and were in a monogamous relationship. Those belonging to the categories of 'divorced' 'separated' and 'in polygynous marriage' were less than 2%. The rest were widows. Among the three instances of polygynous marriage reported, all were from matrilineal sample and one belonged to the younger age group of 25 to 34. Out of the total sample, 49% represented rural population while 51% represented urban population. It was not possible to draw equal number of respondents from both urban and rural areas, as matriliney in Kozhikode district was mainly an urban phenomenon confined only to a few urban

areas, while patriliney existed in both rural and urban areas. At the same time, in Kannur district, matriliney was practiced by most of the Muslims in urban and rural areas, while patriliney was confined only to four rural panchayats.

A Standard of Living Index proposed by Roy, Jayachandran and Banerjee (1999) was used as a proxy measure for the economic status of women. The analysis revealed that out of the total sample, 42% belong to lower, 42.4% to middle and 15.6 % to upper standard of living. The numbers of respondents who belonged to lower standard of living were found to be more among patrilineal sample and those belonged to upper standard of living were found more in the matrilineal sample.

## **10.2 Access to and Control of Economic Resources**

The study draws its main theoretical frame work from Blumberg's (1984) 'A General Theory of Gender Stratification', where she states that the key factor for determining the status of women is their economic power. Though the theory's main emphasis is the structural factor of economic power for women, Blumberg highlights kinship system as a condition that is crucial in explaining why women tend to have higher or lower economic power in different groups. Within kinship, inheritance is of prime importance because according to Blumberg women's de facto share in property they actually control is a direct component of their economic power. The analysis in the present study showed that very few women had an opportunity for economic power through participation in employment. Hence the present research focused on other sources of economic power that women in Kerala generally have access to. They included natal inheritance, dowry and economic gifts from husbands.

The study found that among the three forms of economic resources considered, it was the access to dowry that was more evident than the other two forms of economic resources, among both patrilineal and matrilineal samples. Chi square tests revealed that expect in the case of gifts from husbands, there was relationship between kinship system and access to other forms of economic resources, thereby supporting the hypothesis that there is an association between kinship system and Mappila Muslim women's access to economic resources.

Results also indicated that though access to economic resources varied with kinship system, it was not as expected, with matrilineal women being in an advantageous position compared to patrilineal women. Only 23.6% of matrilineal respondents had inherited natal property, while 53.6% of patrilineal respondents had access to natal property. About 37.2% of matrilineal sample and 66% of patrilineal sample had received dowry at the time of marriage. The level of inheritance from the husband was low among both matrilineal and patrilineal groups.

There were mainly two reasons for the disparity in property inheritance between the two groups. One was the joint property system among matrilineal taravads which at times made it impossible for the partition of the property and the other was the custom of giving land as dowry among patrilineal groups. A further in-depth probe into natal inheritance showed that out of the 59 respondents who had inherited natal property in matrilineal sample, 40.7% had received it through the matrilineal inheritance and 45.8% had property through the Islamic law of inheritance. It was also seen that 52.6% of matrilineal women who had not received their natal inheritance, were looking forward for it through matrilineal inheritance in future. The number of women who were sure that

they will not be able to claim any natal inheritance was also more among matrilineal sample than patrilineal. These results suggested that even if the property is vested in the female line, it was not easy for matrilineal Mappila Muslim women of Malabar to gain complete access to it. The importance of Islamic law of property division was also visible among the matrilineal sample.

At the same time, the higher recording of natal inheritance among patrilineal Mappilas could be traced to the dowry system prevalent amongst them. About 52.2% of patrilineal Mappilas had reported of receiving natal property in the form of dowry and 25.4% as per Islamic Law. Though the practice of dowry was prevalent among a section of matrilineal Mappilas too, they never considered it as natal inheritance and hence it turned out to be more beneficial for the groom's side rather than of any use for the bride herself. The prevalence of dowry system and the nature of dowry transacted also varied between two kinship systems, as well as between two districts under study.

Access to resources definitely has important benefits for women, but their exclusion from its management tends to negate the power they could derive from these rights. The analysis revealed that the control women themselves had over their dowry was modest among both patrilineal and matrilineal samples. Though the percentage of respondents who had inherited natal property was less among matrilineal sample than the patrilineal sample, 72.9% of matrilineal women agreed that the custody of the property rested with the respondents themselves or jointly with the husbands. Only 41.8% of patrilineal respondents had replied the same. This discrepancy in control and access between matrilineal and patrilineal respondents could be because of the fact that the economic resource came

to matrilineal women as inheritance from her natal home while for patrilineal women, majority received it as a form of dowry taken care of by others.

Despite the access to the resources and women's perception that they were the custodian of the resource, very few respondents actually agreed that they had absolute control over it. As it was evident that women had very little control over their dowry, the respondents who had access to the resources through natal inheritance were asked whether they could use or dispose the aforementioned resources at their own will. Only 9.7% of patrilineal sample and 32.2% of matrilineal sample, who had access to natal inheritance, agreed that they could actually use it without anybody's permission or dispose it if required.

### **10.3 Life Options – A Macro -Micro Analysis**

The status of women in this research was studied in relation to the 'life options' that were available to matrilineal and patrilineal Mappila Muslim women of Malabar. According to Blumberg (1984), 'life options' are a set of measurable opportunities and freedom available to women as a result of relative economic power. Life options in this research have been operationalised to include women's relative freedom in terms of marriage, control over fertility, access to higher education and employment and autonomy. Considering the multi-dimensional nature of the status women, life options were analysed separately as macro level life options and micro level life options.

The analysis shows that there is difference between matrilineal and patrilineal women with regard to various macro level status indicators. The mean age at marriage for the total sample was 17.10. At the same time, the

mean age at marriage of matrilineal sample was 17.27, which was slightly higher than the total sample as well as that of patrilineal sample which was 16.94. Majority of the total sample was married between 15 to 18 years. The mean age at marriage for the total sample was below 18 years, which is considered as legal age for marriage in the country. Matrilineal women also had a slightly higher mean age at first birth, i.e., 19.67, as compared to that of patrilineal women, whose mean age at first birth was 19.53. The mean number of children for matrilineal sample was 2.92 which were more than that for the patrilineal sample with 2.83. With regard to contraceptive use, while almost half of the matrilineal sample agreed to using or having used some form of intervention, only 32.8% of patrilineal sample said the same.

Though the level of education and rate of employment was low among both the matrilineal and patrilineal women, these two variables are considered as important macro level status indicators and hence were included in the hypothesis testing. The data regarding the level of education revealed that only 9.8% of the total sample had a 'degree and above' level of education. The lack of enrolments for higher education was evident among both the kinship groups, though it was more matrilineal women than patrilineal women who had degree and above qualification. The statistical analysis of all the six macro level variables showed that except for the contraceptive use, there was no association between kinship and macro level status indicators. Hence, the hypothesis that there is association between kinship system and macro level status indicators of married Mappila Muslim women in Malabar is rejected.

As there was no difference in the macro level status of Mappila Muslim women belonging to two different kinship systems, an attempt was made to find out whether there was a relationship between micro level

status or autonomy of women and kinship system. Autonomy is a concept employed to assess women's status at the micro level. This study made use of three important dimensions of autonomy that will possibly reflect the influence of kinship system, particularly residence pattern. They include economic decision making autonomy, freedom of movement, i.e., whether women need permission before going to various places and freedom from spousal violence, both psychological and physical.

The data disclosed that more matrilineal women gave positive answers regarding their household economic autonomy than patrilineal women. It was found that patrilineal women had considerably lower participation than matrilineal women in the areas of economic decision making such as spending money for household expenditure, major decision making regarding buying household gadgets, buying gifts for the relatives and keeping savings which the respondents alone can use. The data also revealed that there seemed to have less variation in the matters of buying clothing and participating in deciding how to use husband's income between the two groups. Similarly both the groups showed a low level of participation in buying the jewellery at their own will. These differences observed between the two kinship systems were statistically significant.

Women from the matrilineal group enjoyed much greater freedom of movement than those from the patrilineal group. However, it had to be taken into account that in both the groups, the freedom of mobility showed a declining trend, that is, there is greater freedom to visit relatively unthreatening places such as local market, health centre or even the house of friends or relatives. On the other hand, a centre for recreation or an adjacent city or village, a move that requires high autonomy and self-reliance for the women had very few takers.

The number of women reporting physical violence was low in both the groups. At the same time, it was the patrilineal women (6.4%) who had experienced spousal violence more than matrilineal women (3.2%). However, the important difference between the matrilineal and patrilineal groups was seen at the psychological level, where almost 40% of patrilineal respondents had agreed that though they had not experienced any physical violence, they were scared to disagree with their husbands and hold back their opinion fearing the wrath of their husbands, while only 25 % of matrilineal women had given the similar response. The analysis made it evident that the association between kinship system and every indicator of micro level status indicators was statistically significant, thereby proving the hypothesis that there is an association between kinship system and micro level status indicators of Mappila Muslim women of Malabar.

According to Hyman Rodman's (1972) 'Theory of Resources in Cultural context', decision making behaviour is influenced by the interaction between resources and cultural context, with egalitarian culture giving women more conjugal power. Applying this theory to matrilineal Mappila women and the autonomy they enjoyed when compared to patrilineal Mappila women, it can be argued that the matrilineal kinship structure, especially residence and descent pattern, can act as a resource for women, thereby influencing their conjugal power and decision making.

#### **10.4 Factors Affecting Life Options**

Several variables influence the position of women in a study. Some of them are present age, level of education of the respondents, standard of living and rural-urban settings. Hence an attempt was made to find out how the macro level and micro level (autonomy) life options enjoyed by

matrilineal and patrilineal women varied with regard to these aforementioned independent variables. Along with these, the influence of the natal inheritance on micro level autonomy of women was also explored. This will help to identify the role of inheritance, an important economic variable in the absence of participation in employment, on the autonomy of married women. For this purpose life option scores were computed separately for macro level and micro level life options using the statistical procedure of data transformation.

Statistical analysis using ANOVA showed that macro level life option scores of matrilineal and patrilineal women varied significantly with regard to their age and level of education. Within each age group it was matrilineal women who enjoyed better macro life options than their patrilineal counterparts. The highest macro life option scores were observed for the younger age group among both matrilineal and patrilineal samples. This suggested that there was an improvement in the macro level status indicators such as age at marriage, level of education, age at first birth, and others, among the younger generation of women when compared to their older counterparts. The influence of education on the life option of women revealed that within each educational group, it was matrilineal women who enjoyed higher level of autonomy than patrilineal women. At the same time this difference reduced considerably when it came to 'degree and above' education with patrilineal women (Mean= .6973) enjoying almost similar life option score as matrilineal women (mean=.7109).

The standard of living and rural-urban difference were not found to have a significant influence on the macro life options of patrilineal and matrilineal women. Again, it was seen that within every level of standard of living, it was the matrilineal women who had better macro

life option score than the patrilineal women. It was also seen that the women belonging to middle standard of living groups, had the highest life option score compared to upper or lower standard of living group among both matrilineal and patrilineal sample. Similarly urban matrilineal Muslim women were found to have the highest macro life option score than the rural matrilineal women as well as patrilineal women belonging to urban and rural areas.

Among the various independent variables studied, education and standard of living had a significant influence on the micro life options or the autonomy of women. As in the case of macro life options, both patrilineal and matrilineal women with highest level of education enjoyed highest autonomy among both the kinship groups. Hence the hypothesis that the macro level and micro level life options of women tend to vary with the level of education is accepted.

Within every level of standard of living, it was the matrilineal women who enjoyed higher autonomy than patrilineal women. For the total sample, it was found that matrilineal and patrilineal women belonging to upper standard of living enjoyed the highest autonomy or micro life option score than the other groups. Age did not have much role in affecting micro level life options of matrilineal and patrilineal women. Rural-urban difference on the other hand seemed to have an influence in the autonomy of matrilineal women; however its role in the autonomy of patrilineal women was not significant.

The influence of property inheritance on the autonomy of matrilineal and patrilineal women revealed that there was a variance in how property inheritance influenced the autonomy of women in two different cultural contexts. Among both the kinship groups, the mean

score indicates that women who had inherited property were more autonomous than women who did not have any inherited property. Even in a patrilineal group, where female autonomy was constrained, higher economic resource was positively associated with higher level of autonomy. However, despite more patrilineal women reporting natal property inheritance in the present study, the 't' test revealed that this difference was statistically significant only among matrilineal sample but not significant among patrilineal sample .

Extending Blumberg's (1984) theory, this findings suggested that the less favourable macro levels act as a 'discount rate' to reduce the extent to which women can exercise their relative economic power at the more micro level and supported the hypothesis that there is a difference in the influence of economic factor on the autonomy of matrilineal and patrilineal Muslim women in Malabar. The aforementioned results also fall in line with the arguments of Rodman's (1972) 'Theory of Resources in Cultural Context', where he observed that in a 'patriarchal' society, marriages will be almost uniformly husband dominated regardless of any resources and the wife cannot influence marital decisions because the norms prevent her from doing so.

### **10.5 Girl Child and Kinship System**

The fact that the status of women in the society tend to influence the status and opportunities of the girl child made it essential to probe into the situation of girl child among the matrilineal and patrilineal Mappilas Muslims of Malabar. In order to find out this, respondents were asked about their view of gender preference in their community, their preference for their first born and finally a hypothetical question as to whether they would prefer a girl as their only child.

It was found that there was a marked difference in the desirability of boy child and girl child between the two kinship groups. 70.7% of the patrilineal respondents against 50% of matrilineal respondents agreed that there was more preference for male children than female children among their community members. If there is a strong preference for a child of a particular sex, then it tends to be reflected in the expectation of the mothers with regard to the sex of their first born. When 16% of matrilineal women agreed that they preferred a boy as their first child, 43.3% of the patrilineal sample said the same. An attempt was also made to find out whether a daughter was preferred as their only child. Here too, the difference between matrilineal and patrilineal sample was evident with more patrilineal respondents expressing their opinion in favour of boy child. The chi-square tests for all the three questions showed that  $P < 0.05$  and hence supported the hypothesis that there is an association between the kinship system and preference for girl child among Mappila Muslims of Malabar.

In order to probe further into the preference for a child of a particular sex as the only child, respondents were asked the reasons for their preference. The most important reason cited by matrilineal and patrilineal women for their preference for boy as their only child was the economic security they were looking forward from sons and not expecting from daughters. This finding is validated by Cain's (1993) theoretical formulation for patriarchal societies where he observes that one of the main reasons for the son preference is economic dependence of women over men. In such a situation sons are seen as 'potential risk insurance' against calamities such as widowhood, divorce or even ill health of the husband. While it was his economic worth that favoured boy child, girl child was preferred for her cultural worth. A girl child was valued by matrilineal

women for their matrilineal residence and the role she played in continuing the lineage. At the same time girl child was seen as a source of affection by patrilineal women. This falls in line with the conceptual frame work by Kishor (1993) which suggests that children are valued for their economical and cultural worth.

An attempt was also made towards eliciting the perceptions of respondents towards the four important socio-cultural indicators affecting the status of girls i.e., education of girls, participation in paid work, age at marriage and payment of dowry. The analysis revealed women's favourable view towards educating girl child and sending them for job. However, the preferred age at marriage was '18 or less' among both the groups. The analysis also revealed that, majority of women from total sample voiced their opinion against dowry system. Despite these perceptions, the data on the level of education of daughters of the respondents revealed that though there were 35.6% of the daughters who were either pursuing a degree course or had completed it, there were still 64.4% of daughters who had not opted for higher studies even among the present generation. Similarly there were 32.1% of daughters who were married before the legal age of 18. It was also found that the percentage who reported positively for accepting dowry for sons and giving dowry for daughters were more from the patrilineal sample than matrilineal sample.

### **10.6 Resilience and Transformation of Matrilineality**

Apart from the issues related to the status of women, the present research also made an attempt to analyse the perceptions of matrilineal women towards their kinship systems, with a special focus on the causes of resilience and transformation of matrilineality among matrilineal Mappilas.

Along with it, personal interviews carried out with matrilineal Mappila men in order to know their opinion towards the system was also analysed.

According to Murdock (1949), the disintegration of matriliney is closely related to patrilocal residence, as this involves social participation with father's patrilineal kin. This in the long run can bring an end to matrilineal descent, another key feature that is keeping matrilineal kinship system alive. Hence an attempt was made to find out whether there are any changes in the preference for endogamous marriages among Mappila women by asking the respondents whether they prefer exogamous marriages, i.e., whether they will marry off their children, both sons and daughters, outside their kinship group. Around 70.4% of matrilineal women said that they will not marry off their daughters to a kinship system other than their own. At the same time 67.2% of these women disagreed to marry off their sons to a patrilineal system. The main reason for not preferring exogamous marriages for sons and daughters was that they were not accustomed to a kinship system other than their own.

Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) 'Doxa' seems to validate this reason as one of the factors for the continuance of matrilineal system among the Mappilas of Malabar. 'Doxa' is Bourdieu's term for the taken-for-granted, pre-conscious understanding of this world and how one's place in that shapes one's more conscious awareness. As individuals participate in social life, they tend to develop a knowledge of it which is built into the specific relationships they inhabit and into specific modes of cultural understanding. 'Doxa' helps to comprehend how matrilineal women have internalised matrilineal culture to the extent that that they choose not to move beyond it and hence facilitate the continuance of matriliney among the Mappilas of Malabar.

The preference for exogamous marriages was more evident for sons, than for daughters. Two reasons that were highlighted in the statements of those who preferred exogamous marriages were the demographic factors and the need for hypergamous marriages (good proposals). Respondents disclosed that they would prefer exogamous marriages for their daughters' if they get economically and socially superior marriage proposals even it is from outside their kinship group. 37.8% of matrilineal women who approved intergroup marriages for sons said that they have only one son and hence they preferred their child to be with them.

It was also evident from the analysis that nuclear family system encouraged exogamous marriages, as 88.4% of the total matrilineal sample agreed to exogamous marriages, if the couple could set up a nuclear family immediately after marriage. With regard to matrilineal surname, an important feature of matrilineality, 65.6% of the matrilineal sample still followed the matrilineal surname. Women's opinion regarding advantages and disadvantages of the matrilineal system also showed that majority of women perceived matrilineality as female-friendly. These responses also highlighted the reasons why women do not prefer patrilineality. In fact, 47.6% of respondents felt that there were no disadvantages in their system.

About 90.4% of matrilineal women in the present study felt that their men do not resent matrilineality and its features. However, men's opinion towards matrilineal system varied according to age and socio-economic status. It is seen that while men who were heads of the extended matrilineal households and those who were living in the wife's house without any other co-brothers did not have any complaints about their uxorilocality status. It was men who were still residing in traditional *taravad* system or in a household with several co-brothers as well as

those burdened by the economic issues related to matrilocality had troubles adjusting with the system.

The present study clearly points towards the fact that the status of women is multi-dimensional and varies with context. While there was not much difference with regard to macro level status indicators between matrilineal and patrilineal women, the analysis made it evident that there is a clear association between kinship and micro level status indicators with, matrilineal Mappila Muslim women faring better than patrilineal Mappila Muslim women in Malabar. Despite scoring low on economic variables as well as macro level variables, it was found that matrilineal women enjoyed higher levels of autonomy. As Rennan (200) has observed with Malaysian matrilineal women, in Mappila matrilineality too, even if women may not have a role to play in the public domain, their position in the household is crucial. It is evident that though women may not have power overtly, they tend to play decisive roles in taking decisions regarding their lives and carry out their activities without much interferences. This has given them hidden or covert power that is ideologically and normatively supported and considered as normal state of affairs by their kinship system.

The kin support as well as the emotional support that women experience, in being amidst their natal kin is reflected through several autonomy indicators. When majority of matrilineal women in the present study say that they are not afraid to voice their opinion in front of their husbands, it directly points towards the psychological benefit that these women enjoy under the matrilineal system. Matrilocal residence ensures that women are embedded in localised group of female kin, whose support can be expected at the time of crises. It instilled in them a sense of security and continuity unlike in a patrilineal patrilocal system, where women have to face sudden disconnect from

their familiar environment. Even if there is a shift to neo local residence, the feeling that one's affiliation is still with one's matrilineal family as well as one's role in continuing the lineage, provides a sense of perceived agency and a self perception of one's entitlements. It offers them an identity and security that last a lifetime. The male members of their kin group also tend to take an interest in their welfare, because the identity of matrilineal women is still with their matrilineal family even after marriage. All this tend to reflect the covert gynocracy enjoyed by matrilineal women when compared to their counterparts in patrilineal society.

The acceptance of girl child in matrilineal system also directly points towards how a female friendly kinship can be beneficial to the status of women. When the tradition of considering female child as unwanted exists in patriarchal cultures in south Asia, matrilineal women agreeing that they want their only child to be a girl, highlight the benefits a gender egalitarian society can extend for girl children. This feature definitely speaks in favour of matrilineal system and how it is advantageous to women. Similarly the resilience of matrilineal system amidst the winds of change, also highlight how women perceive their system as favourable to them and hence play a role in the continuance of the system itself.

It can be suggested from these findings that there is some reality in the general assumption that 'matrilineal favours women' and it is not totally a 'myth'.

### **10. 7 Suggestions**

The disintegration of matrilineal system in the state of Kerala is justified in the name of progress and development. But a question that needs to be addressed is that who benefits from this shift towards patrilineal

system. The presents study clearly shows that women in matrilineal system have several benefits being amidst their natal kin. In spite of the economic factors not being in their favour, cultural support that these women receive cannot be undermined. **It will definitely be a loss for women if this system gets completely absorbed into the larger patriarchal fabric of the society.**

The policy implication of the findings from the study directly draws attention towards the need to challenge the repressing gender norms of the society. The general bias of attaching a low status to ‘bride givers’ and high status to ‘bride takers’, which is a feature of most patrilineal societies, is the main hindrance in improving the status of women and hence this change has to be initiated from the attitudinal level. For this, **gender sensitivity has to be a part of socialisation processes initiated by the socialising agents such as family and school and even mass media.** This will help to unshackle the false value systems and ideologies of oppression held by men towards women in a patriarchal society, where women are seen as of secondary value. Steps have to be taken to bring about this attitudinal change.

The normative acceptance of women’s control over decision making and their cultural significance is definitely favourable for women. But this favorable condition or potential agency has to be translated into actual women’s agency. The autonomy that women enjoy at the micro level, especially matrilineal women, has to be converted into the empowerment of women in other fields by education, employment, and control over resources. Without leading to this sought of empowerment, autonomy within household will have limited meaning or can even be said as a ‘wasted favourable situation’. It’s only then, the role of decision making that they enjoy at the home front can be extended to the community and the

nation, and thereby the idea of gendered development, where women's perspectives are integrated into developmental agenda of the nation, be fulfilled.

Perhaps the most important step to be taken is to increase the women's gender consciousness about themselves and provide them support to challenge the existing repressive system. The policy makers and administrators can target the back ward Muslim women, especially from low income groups, to participate in various self-help groups that are functioning in their neighbourhoods. It was seen during the field work that despite poverty, there was not even a single respondent who had taken advantage of these group activities in their localities. Such comprehensive, direct and context-specific strategies help enhance women's position in household and as well as bring out their potential agency.

Tremendous efforts have to be undertaken to improve the macro level status of Mappila Muslim women in Malabar. The present scenario over the cry for bringing down the legal age at marriage is a clear example of the preference for early marriage among at least some sections of Muslims. The study brings attention to the fact that more comprehensive strategies involving the community members and the religious leaders themselves are required in order to improve the macro level status of Mappila Muslim women in Malabar. The importance of higher education in breaking the patriarchal norms is evident in the study. It is important for women to realise their rights and opportunities and to appreciate the need for better educational and occupational prospects. The favourable opinions expressed by matrilineal and patrilineal women with regard to education and occupation of girls emphasise the need for adequate motivation and a strong leadership initiated by women from the community itself.

The study has also found that the main reason for the preference for boy child was not the concern of girls as an economic burden, but because of the lack of their financial support to the natal home. Hence, encouragement for women's employment can improve their status. Just as a daughter's contributions to a her natal family is not looked down upon in a matrilineal household, a daughter-in-law's contributions to her marital home should be appreciated and taken into account in a patrilineal system. This, in a long way can reduce the gender bias against female child and help enhance the status of women.

Certain findings in the study lead to the provision for further probe into the status of Muslim women in Kerala. A comparative study of matrilineal Mappila Muslim women in Malabar and patrilineal Muslim women in south and central Kerala, may provide more insights to the multi-dimensional nature of women, as well provide more answers to the question whether matriliney favours women or not. Similarly a comparative study of matrilineal Muslim women and patrilineal non-Muslim women will also help to understand the role of culture and economic factors in shaping the lives of women.

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