

ADSTRACT OF MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE TOPIC ENTITLED “MANUSHI AND EARLY FEMINIST ACTIVITIES IN KERALA” OF SINI.P.M, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN HISTORY, SRI.C.ACHUTHA MENON GOVERNMENT COLLEGE, KUTTANELLUR, THRISSUR-14, AS PER SANCTION LETTER NO. MRP (H)-1011/13-14/KLCA032/UGC-SWRO dated on 28-03-2014.

This study is on Manushi, one of the early feminist groups that emerged in Kerala. Its birth place is PattambiSreeNeelakandha Government Sanskrit College, commonly known as Patambi College. The present study was carried out with certain objectives such as: To trace out the political and social atmosphere which demanded an organization like Manushi, to evaluate the part played by various organizations to popularize the issues raised by the women engaged in organizing themselves and to study the influence of the movement.

This study is mainly based on newspaper reports, information from the activists of Manushi, and from the interviews that appeared in some magazines. Many books and other sources were utilized for the same. Field Studies were conducted at Palakkad, Maavur, Kozhikode, Cherruvatterry, Aarangottukara, Manjulungal, Vavannur, Desamangalam and Pattambi. Resource persons like, Prof. Sumangalakkutty. R, Sreeja K.V (SreejaArangottukara), Sathi. K, C.M, Narayanan, Vijayalakshmi P.V, M.G.Sylaja and Prof. Indira.K.A, were immensely helped in conducting this study. Apart from introduction and conclusion, this study has two chapters. In the first chapter, socio- political conditions of 1980s are included. For a thorough understanding of Manushi a sketch of the background is essential. In the second one, Manushi and factors related to the working of the organization is included. These chapters are followed with a conclusion.

A conglomeration of miss happenings occurred after the declaration of internal emergency of 26th June 1975, in the form of shortage of food stuffs, severe inflation, escalating unemployment, decay of law and order, violence, ban of several extreme communal organizations and Maoist CPI (ML). There was a wide disparity in the legislation and its execution. It prefers important social groups and dominant individuals. Day to day function of administrative system was under perils. Its rotten side is visible in the case of transaction with ordinary people. There are instances of child marriage, compulsory marriage, impersonation, abduction, dowry, bridal burning, sex racket, sorcery, lockup torture, rape, cheating, Mask ambush, poverty, suicides and murder, due to various reasons such as feuds, insult, mental problem, frightening and economic problems.

The Declaration of International Women’s Decade (1975-85) was a forceful factor to stress for feminism all over the world. Feminism had to face opposition from new social movements in the form of opposition and suspicion. Women liberation movement has different faces in Malayalam literature. Sara joseph is of the view that feminist movement stands in touch with the left movement, at the same time it is different from today’s party politics. By the end of 1980s Kerala women found a new space and language of freedom through theatres. Symposium and

seminar in connection with equality and dowry couldn't do anything related to the present state of affairs. The conditions are not favorable for public activists. They were arrested and imprisoned in their birth suit. Torture was the cruel time pass of police. Atrocities grew to such an extent that Journalists and Lawyers too didn't escape. Police who tried to remain from cruelty have to suffer severe consequences. Though cases are filing punishments are meager due to disappearance of evidences.

In an anti-women society, female experience was not regarded as a human experience. Therefore the name Manushi was accepted which represents the feminine gender of the word man. Here in Kerala while thinking of an apt name for the organization, the name of a Delhi based organization came up. Thus here too a Manushi was born. Part from the similarity of name it had no other relation with that group. In course of time it's Sanskrit flavor was subjected to criticism by its members themselves. Its organizers were in favor of calling it by a Kerala name. There was an opinion to change the name of Manushi. There was also a view to popularize the Dravidian term *penniduti* for the English term Feminism.

The news of the suicide of a student Rajalakshmi was an immediate cause in the formation of Manushi. Discussions were held about forming an independent organization for girls. The necessity of such an organization was seriously felt by the women folk of student community. The members of Kerala VidyarthiVedi, the Student wing of CRC CPI (ML), took the initiative for this. Bindu.M and Sreeja. K.V, the lady representatives of Vidyarthi Vedi in the Sanskrit College, discussed this idea with the other students and teachers of the college. They also approached Sara Joseph who was then working in the Malayalam faculty of the college, and sought her advice in this regard. The core group tried to make Manushi an independent organization and functioned with this objective in mind. There are different phases or spheres for its functioning. Teachers such as Sara Joseph, R. Sumangalakkutty, N. Parvathy, K.A. Indira, and students like K.M. Rema, Geetha Joseph, Bhadra, Santha, Seena, Sylaja M.G, Vijayalakshmi P.V, Reji, Radha, Reeja, Saraswathy, Sarojini, Latha, Sumathi etc. participated in its activities. Sathi K. and Mani are some of it's activists. Though the organization didn't grow, its message and waves reached all over Kerala. Some boys like M.G.Sasi, C.M Narayanan etc. helped in its various activities. There also exists a rumor regarding K.Venu's intervention in the formation of Manushi. K. Venu's role in the formation of Manushi is a heated debate in the history of Manushi. Vaavannoor Camp is an important turning point in the history of Manushi.

Manushi chalked out a series of programmes to fight injustice against women. The first performance of Manushi was made perhaps in college campuses in Kerala. More than three hundred girls marched through the College Campuses with slogans and songs and campaigned against the persecution of women. They also affixed many posters. A massive demonstration was held there in protesting against the incident of ill treatment of a student by a male teacher. Manushi has come out of campus with the incidents like Thankamani event (1986), Balamani case, Mundur event (1987), Muthalamada event and in the interference of the death of some ladies all over Kerala. It interfered in the issue of a nurse of Thaar Memorial Hospital, Cherruturruthi and

campaigned against female infanticide and dowry deaths. So Sara Joseph individually participated in Arrimaavu(1988) anti liquor agitation. Manushi along with Kerala mahilasangham, All India Women's organization etc. jointly demanded the enquiry on lock up deaths. Demonstrative processions were held at Palakkad, Thrissur, Kozhikode and Kasarkode. *Sthree* is a street play (*Theruvunaadakam*) done in 1986 by the members of Women Organization of Sree NeelaKanda Sanskrit College, Pattambi. It is unique in the sense that is written, directed and acted by ladies themselves. Its aim was to awaken the conscience of society against the escalating bad deeds against women of that era. It's members took a pledge that they will not give or accept dowry. It got tremendous popularity. It was played and received wide popularity throughout Kerala, especially in Palakkad, Thrissur, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kasarkode and Kannur. It begins by singing these lines known as *Unarthhupaattu*. Manushi has published a magazine in the same name of its organization. This project will be incomplete without mentioning of the serious issue of Mavur Gwalior Rayons which shackled the very foundation of Manusshi. There are different factions within Manushi regarding its participation in the strike. There are reports in newspaper that they are going to block train as part of its strategy of agitation. As a result of the newspaper reports, police reached at Pattambi College and questioned Sumangalakutty teacher, one of the leaders of Manusshi. It was at the moment Manushi has come to know about such a plan in the name of Manushi. Students of Yuvajanavedi and other parties questioned teachers regarding the same role of keeping away from the same. Part of the students has openly declared that Manushi is their institution and teachers have no right to continue as part of Manushi. The decline of Manushi as a unique organization started from here. Manushi has disappeared due to the pressure of certain circumstances. Nobody has raised antisocial anarchical situation. Kerala's student federations are against war, capitalism and destructive activities. But the attitude of political parties of Kerala is patriarchal. They use money, and power to support flesh trading groups at any cost. Before the transfer, the unity of organization was swinging due to divergence of opinion. Incidents like cutting the hair of a leader were not tolerable to some members. Though it is a personal issue, it was also a topic of controversy. As an organization of ladies from almost all walks of life it has to satisfy the interests of all sections of society.

What we see in present situation is the fate of women continuously becoming victims. Victims are increasing in society. At the same time hunters are becoming stronger. Whatever may be, it is our country has gone a long distance from that period. A lot of organizations emerged for various purposes among different sections of society. Some of its activists are continuing the cultural tradition of Manushi.

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List of persons from whom information gathered

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