

**The Dialogue of Martha and Jesus: A Cognitive Narratological Approach for the
Understanding of Luke 10:38-42 in the Indian Context**

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Introduction

This study primarily focusses on reading and interpreting Luke 10:38-42 in a particular context, namely the Indian context. This passage in Luke is a short account of Jesus visiting Martha and Mary in their village. The argument laid forward in this study is that the interpretative roles of Martha and Mary in the story of Lk 10:38-42, as interpreted in the Indian context have intensified particular stereotypical roles of Christian women in the church and in society. The main characters in the story besides Jesus, are two women, with no reference to other men relating to them. Therefore, both men and women in Indian context usually consider this story as a passage meant exclusively for women as it represents the behavioural roles of the women in opposition to each other. However, this hermeneutical approach which underlines the dualistic antagonism of this text is not unique to the Indian context. Applying the ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ Schüssler Fiorenza indicates that “in one way or another most interpretations of Lk 10:38-42 underline the dualistic antagonism either between the two women or between the timeless principles which they symbolize.”¹

The contention of this study is that Lk 10:38-42, on a closer reading, reveals that it is more probable that the reader is oriented to focus on ‘the dialogue between Martha and Jesus’ rather than on the dualistic-antagonistic roles of the two sisters, Martha and Mary. The term ‘cognitive’ is a key element used in this study to indicate that any reading and interpretation of a text is subject to the conscious mental processes of an exegete or of an everyday reader of the Bible. This research intends to re-read the story in Lk 10:38-42 with the help of the analytical tools used in narrative exegesis, more specifically, the ‘cognitive narratological approach’. This reader-oriented approach emphasises that for an effective interpretation of the text, an interpreter has to engage with the literary context of the text as well as with the socio-cultural context of the reader.

At a first glance, Lk 10:38-42, popularly known as the ‘Story of Martha and Mary’, appears to be an unambiguous story. Here is a version of Lk 10:38-42 from an English Bible which gives the impression that the story is quite simple to understand:

³⁸ *Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.*

¹E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Practice of Biblical Interpretation*. Luke 10: 38-42, in: GOTTWALD/HORSLEY (Ed.), *The Bible and Liberation. Political and Social Hermeneutics*, Maryknoll 1993, 179.

³⁹ *And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.*

⁴⁰ *But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me."*

⁴¹ *But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,*

⁴² *but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."*

(English Standard Version, 2016)

But the Greek version of Lk 10:38-42 in the 28th edition of Nestle-Aland, citing nine textual variations within a short passage of five verses reveals the complexity involved in choosing an appropriate Greek variant for interpretation.² According to Reid, "The tensions embedded in this story raise more questions and interpretative problems than any other Lukan text involving women."³

The following section highlights some of the challenges involved in interpreting Lk 10:38-42 at the textual and at the narrative levels.⁴

a) Challenges for Exegetes in Interpreting Lk 10:38-42

The *first* difficulty lies in choosing the appropriate Greek text with its complex textual variations, especially when the choice of the variant is argued based on internal criticism. The transmission of the text and the changes made by the subsequent copyists reflect the problems they encountered in its interpretation.⁵ The much debated and complex textual variant is in the direct speech of Jesus in v.42. The debate has always been on whether Jesus said, ἐνὸς δέ ἐστιν χρεία (or) ὀλίγων δέ χρεία ἐστιν ἢ ἐνός, i.e. 'but one thing is necessary' (or) 'but few things are necessary or one'.⁶

Second, the challenge lies in choosing the appropriate semantic meaning of certain Greek terms. For instance, scholars differ largely regarding their understanding of the term 'διακονία', whose meaning ranges from 'serving a meal at a table' to 'holding an official

²See Appendix I for the text in NA²⁸. An appropriate Greek text for the exegetical study in this research is chosen after a careful discussion of the important textual variants cited in NA²⁸, see section 4.2.

³B. E. Reid, *Choosing the Better Part? Women in the Gospel of Luke*, Collegeville 1996, 144.

⁴Text refers to the passage Lk 10:38-42 in written form and narrative is a technical term in the field of narrative analysis referring to the story (content) and discourse (form) of the text.

⁵Ibid.

⁶See discussion in 4.2.1.

position in a Christian community'.⁷ Based on this choice of meaning exegetes place the text either in the context of the Jesus movement or in the context of early Christianity. For example, some scholars interpret the *διακονία* of Martha as an official job in the early church.⁸

Third, the meaning of the text is determined by the way in which the literary gaps (*Leerstellen*) are filled. Gaps, discontinuities, and ambiguities in the text deserve special consideration, because they have a unique function within the reading process and are turning points in the narrative. When encountered with such gaps, the reader is forced to fill in the gaps and make decisions, and in so doing he/she creates the meaning of the text accordingly and uniquely.⁹ For example, no information or indication of the social identity of Martha and Mary is given, yet these women are identified by certain indicators and assumptions as followers of Jesus during the time of Jesus or as church leaders responsible for the house-churches after Jesus' time on earth. Some interpreters have even gone as far as to indicate the familial status of Martha and Mary as being unmarried.¹⁰

Fourth, when this story is conflated with the story in the Gospel of John (11:1-12:19), it is often interpreted differently. In the Gospel of John, the names Martha and Mary appear along with their brother Lazarus and all three are said to be living in a village called Bethany. Neither the brother, Lazarus nor the village, Bethany are mentioned in the passage in Luke. Some scholars wish to compare the two traditions to highlight the point that Martha is portrayed positively in John and negatively in Luke.¹¹ However, other scholars argue against such an interpretation and insist that a conflated reading is unnecessary and that the stories in Luke and John could be read independently.¹²

The *fifth* important challenge lies in reconstructing the social context of first-century Palestine. For example, the picture of Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus is understood by some as Jesus' act of liberating Mary from the clutches of patriarchy, while some others consider

⁷For the semantics of the important Greek terms and phrases, see 4.4.

⁸ See 4.4.3 and Excursus III.

⁹cf. W. Iser, *The Reading Process. A Phenomenological Approach*, in: TOMPKINS (Ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism. From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, Baltimore ²1981, 55.

¹⁰B. Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, Cambridge et al. 1990, 100, f.n. 5.

¹¹E. Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women Around Jesus*, New York 1982, 25–28.

¹²Cf. F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas. Lk 9,51 - 14,35 (EKK 2)*, Zürich et al. 1996, 103.

the posture of a woman seated at a man's feet as submissive.¹³ Such differing arguments are based on conflicting views on the role and status of women in ancient Jewish society and the interpretations ascribed to these behavioural roles,¹⁴

The *sixth* and the last difficulty is the socio-cultural context of the interpreters, be it first-century readers or today's modern readers. The cultural background with which an interpreter approaches the text affects the meaning and reception of the text. In the process of interpretation, the modern reader is more inclined to interpret the first-century social context based on his/her own knowledge of their own social context in modern times. The context of modern readers includes both the context of an exegete and that of a common reader in an everyday context.

Keeping in mind this observation about the context of modern readers colouring their interpretations, the following section highlights some views of Indian lay women on the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42.¹⁵

b) Interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 in an Everyday Indian Context

As part of this research, few South Indian women from Tamil Nadu were interviewed to capture their unadulterated views on Lk 10:38-42. In this introductory chapter six interesting responses of interviewees are presented as a representative delineation to illustrate the main argument of this research.

1. For the interviewees, the words of Jesus in the text are understood as words of God. Jesus is equated to the heavenly father. In the process of the interview, some even referred to Jesus as 'Papa Yesu' – the one who plays an authoritative father's role.¹⁶ The understanding that Jesus is God derives from the christological confession in the letter to the Philippians, "that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil 2:10-11).

2. The interviewees hailing from a South Indian rural background felt quite at home with the text as it was easy for them to visualise the village setting of Lk 10:38-42. They could imagine the scene with Jesus in the house of Martha and Mary in the familiar settings of their

¹³Cf. B. E. Reid, 1996, 406; see section 4.4.5.

¹⁴ See Excursus IV.

¹⁵ See Appendix IV for interviews of lay women. The results of the interviews are discussed in detail in 3.2.

¹⁶Cf. Interviews 1 and 5.

own homes in their village. With surprise, one of the interviewees questioned the part of the text where Martha complains that Mary left her alone to serve, asking: “What is the problem with Martha, why is she complaining, while it is possible for her to listen to Jesus and cook at the same time?”¹⁷ This question by the interviewee reflects her visualisation of the lay-out of the house as it unfolded in her mind as a reader. The woman pictured her own typical Indian village house with limited space and with little distance between the cooking and living spaces. This reflects that the setting of the story in the village in Lk 10 is imagined along the lines of the interviewees’ own village.

3. In the interviewees’ cultural context, it is quite unusual that a man visits two women living in a house. Almost all the interviewees held that if it was a man other than Jesus such a visit would be usually unacceptable. They reacted to the reception of Jesus by Martha from a cultural point of view. They expressed the fear that such a visit would be spoken ill of by the neighbours. This reflected the interviewees’ conditioning in a culture of honour and shame where women are not encouraged to have male guests when they are alone in the house. The presence of Jesus in the house of Martha and Mary was acceptable only because ‘Jesus is God’, the interviewees held.

4. One of the interviewees expressed that she could identify very well with the helplessness Martha felt because she could understand Martha’s agony. As an elder sister herself among younger siblings, the interviewee could relate to how annoying it could be if the younger sister failed to lend a helping hand.

5. Another response of an interviewee reflected the view that the arrangement of the books and chapters of the Bible are a chronological account of historical events. For example, in their understanding, the stories of Martha and Mary in Luke (10:38-42) and in John (11 and 12) are to be read in succession. According to the interviewee, Jesus raised Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary from the dead in the Gospel of John in response to the love he received from Martha and Mary when he was their guest in this account in the Gospel of Luke.

6. As an impact of the story, one of the respondents strongly believed that something similar as recorded in the Bible will happen in her life at some point of time in future. For example, she expressed the hope that Jesus will visit her someday, just as he visited Martha and Mary.

¹⁷Cf. Interview 7.

So, according to the interviewees, the scene in Lk 10:38-42 mirrored their own life setting. They could identify with the characters in the story and create a story world of their own. In a real sense, the interviewees are reading their own situation into the text and looking for inspiration, guidance and encouragement from the text. Mesters is right in saying: “when they (the common people) read the Bible, basically they are not trying to interpret the Bible; they are trying to interpret life with the help of the Bible.”¹⁸

As a pastor from India, I am also aware that Christian women in India are generally judged for their ‘goodness’ based on their piety and submissiveness and Lk 10:38-42 is one of the texts frequently interpreted to endorse the idea of an ‘ideal’ woman.¹⁹ The role and behaviour of Christian women are compared with the behaviour of Martha and Mary and usually by implying that Mary’s behaviour was superior to Martha’s. But in reality, women are bound by double obligations. While on the one hand, they are encouraged to follow the pious attitude of Mary, on the other hand they are also strongly expected to hold fast to the housewifely virtues of Martha. Hence, for women life is not an ‘either-or’ option as the story is often interpreted. Rather they are expected to fulfil both these ascribed roles in a Christian social context.

Furthermore, women, in broad terms, are expected to be like Mary, who is often counted among the best examples of one who practices the virtue of silence by quietly listening to Jesus.²⁰ In my perception, such dominant and stereotypical interpretations of this passage in the Indian context have had an adverse and even oppressive impact on the lives of women in the Christian community. In some instances, Christian women are even categorised as the ‘Marthas’ - those committed to household chores; and ‘Marys’ - those considered pious and submissive. Such a narrow understanding of Martha and Mary as diametrically opposed characters has the potential of confining Christian women to certain strongly oppressive and polarised stereotypical expectations.

The examples of responses from the interviewees highlight the significance of the context of the interpreter in interpreting Lk 10:38-42, as well as the impact of such a reading in one’s

¹⁸C. Mesters, *The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common People*, in: GOTTWALD/HORSLEY (Ed.), *The Bible and Liberation. Political and Social Hermeneutics*, Maryknoll 1993, 11.

¹⁹ This is evident in the context of arranged marriages among the Christians, when the parents are in search of a bride for their son, they always look for a pious and submissive woman to be their daughter in law.

²⁰ I have not heard of many instances of a girl/a woman in our Protestant Christian community with the name ‘Martha’. In India, when children are named after certain people, they are expected to adopt the characteristics of those people after whom they are named or at least try for it.

own social context. Some of the challenges faced by the interpreters of Lk 10:38-42 are addressed as part of the exegetical study in chapters 4 and 5 in this research. The first chapter explains the background context for the researcher choosing to study Lk 10:38-42 and to discuss the context of the research questions. These research questions are systematically addressed with methodological considerations appropriate to this research.

Chapter 1. Background and Methodology

1.1 Background of the Present Study

This study emerged in the context of my personal experiences in 2010 as a pastor in the Diocese of Madras, in Church of South India.²¹ The motivation for re-reading Lk 10:38-42 in the Indian context emerged from Bible Studies which I led for two different groups of women from my diocese: women clergy and lay women.²² The inferences of the discussions with both these groups were stunning in their differences. Most importantly, the questions that lay women raised during discussions on the text became the starting point for my research. In the first instance, while preparing for the Bible Study for the women clergy, I was influenced by Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist liberative interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 in her article, "The Practice of biblical Interpretation: Luke 10:38-42."²³

As I was in search of elements of liberation in the text, I found the hermeneutical method and the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 from a feminist perspective as proposed by Schüssler Fiorenza appropriate as an alternative reading for readers in the Indian context. I therefore, presented her interpretation of the text first to the women clergy in my diocese and then to the lay women in my church.²⁴

Fiorenza's interpretation of the text has been influential in the recent past as it hardly evades the eyes of any New Testament scholar who studies about women in Luke.²⁵ The following section discusses the problems in the reception of this specific interpretation of Fiorenza's in the Indian context.

Schüssler Fiorenza interpreted the text with the tool of 'hermeneutic of suspicion'. According to her, the Lukan passage on Martha and Mary is an oppressive text for women from a

²¹The Diocese of Madras has 207 pastorates with 1264 congregations and around 26,3074 members. Source: Madras Diocese Council Report, 2015. The Church of South India (CSI) with 4 million members is a Protestant church, ecumenical in its form and being, comprising various traditions: Anglican, Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Reformed. It was inaugurated in September 1947, after protracted negotiations among the churches concerned. Organized into 24 dioceses, it presently has approximately 15,000 congregations. For more information see <http://www.csisynod.com/aboutus.php> (Accessed on 13-11-2016).

²²I prefer to use the term 'lay people' instead of 'ordinary people' for those without the formal theological education.

²³In: N. K. GOTTWALD, R. A. HORSLEY (Ed.), *The Bible and Liberation. Political and Social Hermeneutics*, Maryknoll 1993, 172–200.

²⁴The Diocese of Madras presently has 31 women pastors and 198 men pastors as of February 2017. Source: The administration of the Diocese of Madras, Church of South India. (Accessed on 20-03-2017).

²⁵See 2.3.1 for the influence of her interpretation among other scholars.

redactional point of view.²⁶ With the interpretation of this passage she highlights the suppressed status, women leaders endured under male leaders in the context of the church leadership in the early Christian community. Schüssler Fiorenza expounds this text by comparing how the characters Martha and Mary are presented differently by the Lukan and Johannine traditions (Jn: 11:1-12:8). According to her, Martha and Mary are portrayed negatively in the Gospel of Luke as Mary being silent and Martha being silenced by Jesus, whereas in the Gospel of John they are presented more positively. She argues that as a ‘beloved disciple’, Martha becomes the spokeswoman for the messianic faith of the Johannine community and that her messianic confession that ‘Jesus is the Christ’ parallels that of Peter’s messianic confession for the Matthean community (Matt 16:16).²⁷ With this comparison, she makes her point to show that even though both Martha and Peter made similar confessions, later it was Peter who was recognised as one of the leaders of the early Christian community but Martha was not. Challenging the writings in the Gospel of Luke, Schüssler Fiorenza claims that the Fourth Gospel upholds Martha and Mary as well-known apostolic figures in the early church.²⁸

From a liberation point of view, Schüssler Fiorenza’s interpretation was impressive for me. I shared her views on the text with my clergy women colleagues. Interestingly, there was an enthusiastic and positive reception as the women clergy were hearing it for the first time. Such an interpretation was well suited to challenge the norm of our patriarchal church context. Therefore, the women clergy found the feminist liberative interpretation interesting, challenging, insightful and empowering. The interpretation provided them a new picture of Martha and Mary as church leaders of the early Christian community being discriminated against by male leaders – something that women clergy could resonate with very well. The positive response of the women clergy motivated me to share the same interpretation with twenty lay women of the village congregation where I was pastor.²⁹

The lay women from the village congregation explicitly pointed out that it was difficult for them to accept the reading of the text with Martha and Mary being portrayed as church leaders. According to them, there was no indication either in this Gospel or in other instances in the New Testament, that these women could be identified as leaders of the church.

²⁶E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993.

²⁷Ibid. 185–186.

²⁸Ibid. 181.

²⁹Melamayur pastorate, Diocese of Madras, Church of South India.

Furthermore, they were doubtful if this particular interpretation was relevant for them as lay women. According to them not all women turn out to be leaders in the church. So how could a lay woman relate to the story with such a feminist interpretation as that of Fiorenza's? I realised that these women from a village context comfortably identified with the women characters in the story in a more simplistic way and understood Martha and Mary as simple village women. So, the interpretation, focussing on women's leadership was not helpful for them. It neither spoke to them nor challenged them.

The rejection of the feminist interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 by one particular group of women - the lay readers, made me question the reason behind such reluctance. One of the possible reasons according to me is that the Western feminist interpretation is contextual. The meaning of the text had evolved from a particular context to address a particular issue. For example, the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 by some Catholic feminist exegetes like Schüssler Fiorenza is grounded in the context of the Catholic church and its reluctance in addressing the crisis of women's leadership in a male-dominated church. Similarly, the context of the Indian readers plays an important role in the interpretation of these texts. Therefore, some pertinent questions relevant to India that arise from the reading of Lk 10:38-42 are: How do village women understand the reception of Jesus by Martha? What does it mean for them when Mary sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to him?

From the results of the above-mentioned Bible Study, it is clear that the gender perspective in this story was not well received by lay Christian women in the Indian context. This very fact compelled me to explore an appropriate exegetical method which could provide space for an alternative interpretation of this pericope, evading some of the shortcomings, particularly the antagonism of the behavioural patterns between the two characters, and also the suspicions attached to modern feministic reading. I perceived that a probable approach could be an exegetical method that takes into consideration the context of the reader and the literary context of the text.

Before moving into formulating the relevant research questions, it is important to have a general overview of the apparently different understandings of the Bible among biblical scholars and lay Christians in the Indian context.³⁰

³⁰The discussion on Indian Biblical Hermeneutics is quite extensive and the information provided in this section serves only as a background knowledge for the present research work.

1.2 Interpretation of the Bible in the Indian Context

The history on biblical exegesis in India has not been well documented so far. Hence I attempt to provide a short overview of some of the most important trends in biblical interpretation in India among both academicians and lay people. This attempt is not an exhaustive evaluation of Indian biblical hermeneutics but tries to highlight few dominant approaches.

1.2.1 Indian Biblical Hermeneutics

This overview traces different interpretative approaches in Indian biblical scholarship since the arrival of Christianity clubbed³¹ under three different phases: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial India.

Pre-colonial India:

The history of biblical interpretation in India can be traced back to the arrival and spread of Christianity. Until the fifteenth century, the Bible was used as a tool for doctrinal formation. During this time, the Christian community in India was greatly influenced by the East-Syrian Church and the Bible remained a closed book for lay Christians.³² The Bible became accessible to lay people only a century later with the impact of the sixteenth-century Reformation in Europe. In spite of efforts by missionaries to make the Bible available to all, it was not as widely read by all Christians. The unfortunate import of the discriminative caste system into the life and practice of Christianity in India meant that caste-based discrimination by the Brahmin Christian converts over a section of Indians from the oppressed caste of Dalits continued. Dalit Christians were denied education and access to any form of literary

³¹There are legends that Christianity came to South India through the Apostle Thomas around 52 C.E. Although this may be debated, it is popularly agreed and believed that Christianity in India was well established by the sixth century CE. Cf. S. Prabhu, *Interpreting the Bible in India Today*, in: *The Way*, Supplement 72 (1991); D. N. Premnath, *Biblical Interpretation in India. History and Issues*, in: FOSKETT/KUAN (Ed.), *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading. Asian American Biblical Interpretation*, St. Louis 2006; S. P. Matthew, *Indian Biblical Hermeneutics. Methods and Principles*, in: *Neotest.* 38, 1 (2004); D. Joy, *Bible and Hermeneutics*, Tiruvalla 2010.

³²Since the fifteenth century until now, Christianity in India has different denominations. Today, 70% of Indian Christians are Roman Catholics. The history of the Protestant missions in South India began with the arrival of the Lutheran missionaries, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plutschau in Tranquebar, South India, in 1706. Since the 19th century, other Protestant denominations entered India. The major denominations today include the Church of South India (CSI), the Church of North India (CNI), the Presbyterian Church of India, Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Traditional Anglicans and other evangelical groups. For more information cf. R. E. Frykenberg, *Christianity in India. From Beginnings to the Present*, Oxford et al. 2010. Christianity in India, whether Protestant or Catholic, was dominated by the foreign missionaries until the end of the nineteenth century. Cf. J. C. B. Webster, *Historiography of Christianity in India*, New Delhi 2012, 183. The Christians in India today are still a minority with 2.3% of India's total population of 1.21 billion.

knowledge by upper caste Brahmin Christians. This discriminative lack of access to education and Scripture hindered Dalit Christians from contributing to the interpretation of the Scriptures for many generations.³³

Colonial India:

In the pre-Independence era between 1858 and 1947 the shift in biblical hermeneutics was strongly influenced by British colonialism and missionary enterprises in India. In 1890, a series of nine commentaries were published by the Anglican Church in India which served as the textual means of justification for the colonial presence in India.³⁴ During the colonial and the post-independence periods, commentaries were written for Indian theological students with an intention to ‘convert the natives’.³⁵

Post-colonial India:

The post-independence era saw waves of different approaches in interpreting the Bible attempting to articulate a distinctive Indian Christian approach and break free from the Western dominated approach. Some interpretative methods constantly reflected the clash between the colonial and native indigenous readings.³⁶ Indian post-colonial readings emerged to challenge the imperial approach to the biblical texts.³⁷ Catholic scholars introduced a prominent indigenous exegetical method known as ‘Dhvani’, which is an ancient exegetical method dating back to the ninth-century CE. It focusses on the interpretation of Sanskrit poetic texts, was applied to biblical texts in the late 1970s.³⁸ To an extent, this approach to interpret biblical texts as poetic texts attempted to resolve the epistemic tension between Western and Indian scholarship. However, this approach was not widely accepted and

³³M. J. Melanchthon, Dalit, Bible and Method, in: SBLSP, <https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=459> (Accessed on 20-11-2016).

³⁴Cf. R. S. Sugirtharajah, Imperial Critical Commentaries. Christian Discourse and Commentarial Writings in Colonial India, in: JSNT 73, 1 (1999).

³⁵R.S. Sugirtharajah, A Postcolonial Exploration of Collusion and Construction in Biblical Interpretation, in: R.S. SUGIRTHARAJAH (Ed.), The Postcolonial Bible, Academic Press, Sheffield 1998, 93; For critical views on commentaries written during colonial India, see *ibid*.

³⁶Some of the leading Indian Christian journals publish scholarly articles on the Indian interpretation of the Bible emphasizing on indigenous methods as in ‘Bible Bhashyam: an Indian Biblical Quarterly’; ‘Jeevadhara: A Journal of Christian Interpretation’; ‘Indian Theological Studies’; ‘Journal of Tribal Studies’ among few others.

³⁷R. S. Sugirtharajah, The Bible and the Third World. Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters, Cambridge et al. 2001, 95; D. Joy, Mark and its Subalterns. A Hermeneutical Paradigm for a Postcolonial Context (BWo), London 2008; S. Samuel, And they Crucified Him. A Postcolonial Reading of the Story of Jesus, Dehradun 2012.

³⁸A. Amaladass, ‘Dhvani’ Theory in Sanskrit Poetics, in: BiBh 5, 1 (1979), 261; cf. also A. Amaladass, Dhvani Method of Interpretation and Biblical Hermeneutics, in: Indian Theological Studies 31, 3 (1994).

remained an experiment among few Catholic exegetes because of the prominence of the dominant historical-critical approach to biblical texts.³⁹

During the post-independence period, the works of the Latin American theologians like Gustavo Gutiérrez, Juan Luis Segundo, and Leonardo Boff also influenced Indian biblical hermeneutics and hermeneutical approaches. They concentrated on the liberation of the oppressed. Kappen, an Indian liberation theologian advocated this approach, “as an effective resistance to neo-colonial forces.”⁴⁰ Contextual realities became the epistemic and interpretative lenses for the interpretation of biblical texts. The social reality in India is characterised by poverty, the multi-religious context, an oppressive, all pervasive caste system and a patriarchal society. Biblical scholars and theologians insisted that any interpretation that ignored these dominant strains of the Indian fabric lacked credibility and quickly became an exercise in irrelevance.⁴¹ Within liberation hermeneutics that arose during this period, other readings from the perspective of those excluded from mainstream emerged in the theological discourse. These readings represented the culture, gender, caste and ethnic identities of the oppressed and disadvantaged people. The impact of liberation theologies on Indian biblical scholarship turned out to be a challenge to the hitherto dominant approaches to the Bible that had ignored the social reality of the people. Some ground-breaking approaches addressing issues related to Dalits, caste, ethnicity⁴² and Tribal communities⁴³ emerged. The other influential approaches include post-modern and post-colonial readings of the Bible.⁴⁴

³⁹M. Vellanickal, *A Dhvani Interpretation of the Bible. According to Indian tradition*, in: SMITH-CHRISTOPHER (Ed.), *Text and Experience. Towards a Cultural Exegesis of the Bible*, Sheffield 1995; A. Runesson, *Exegesis in the Making. Postcolonialism and New Testament Studies (BINS 103)*, Leiden 2010, 108–112; F. X. d' Sa, 'Dhvani' as a Method of Interpretation, in: *BiBh* 5, 1 (1979); S. Prabhu, *And there was a Great Calm. A 'Dhvani' Reading of the Stilling of the Storm*, in: *BiBh* 5, 1 (1979).

⁴⁰S. Kappen, *Divine Challenges and Human Response. Compiled and Introduced by Sebastian Vattamattam*, Thiruvalla 2001, 112; also cf. S. Kappen, *Auf dem Wege zu einer indischen Befreiungstheologie*, in: *ZMR* 69 (1985).

⁴¹Cf. D. N. Premnath, 2006, 15; S. Prabhu, 1991, 75.

⁴²Cf. G. T. B. Chellappa, *Bibelauslegung im tamilischen Kontext am Beispiel des Johannesevangeliums*. Doctoral Dissertation, Heidelberg University Library 2016; J. Massey, *Towards Dalit Hermeneutics. Re-reading the Text, the History and the Literature*, Delhi 1994; D. Carr, *A Biblical Basis for Dalit Theology*, in: MASSEY (Ed.), *Indigenous People - Dalits. Dalit Issues in Today's Theological Debate (Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 5)*, Delhi 1994; Gnanavaram, *Dalit Theology and the Parable of the Good Samaritan*, in: *JSNT* 50 (1993); K. Jesurathnam, *Dalit Liberative Hermeneutics. Indian Christian Dalit Interpretation of Psalm 22*, New Delhi 2010; V. Devasahayam, *Outside the Camp. Bible Studies in Dalit Perspective*, Madras 1992; V. Devasahayam, *Doing Dalit Theology in Biblical Key*, Madras 1997.

⁴³cf. R. Keitzar, *Tribal Perspective in Biblical Hermeneutics Today*, in: *IJT* 31, 3-4 (1982); J. L. Roy, *Primal Vision and Hermeneutics in North-East India. A Protestant Tribal View*, in: *IJT* 31, 3-4 (1982); Y. VASHUM (Ed.), *Tribal Theology and the Bible. A Search for Contextual Relevance*, Jorhat 2011.

⁴⁴R. S. Sugirtharajah, 2001, 95; D. Joy, 2008; S. Samuel, 2012.

Thus we see that Indian biblical hermeneutics saw several changes encompassing methodological as well as substantive foci that addressed deep-rooted contextual-societal issues. These academic contextual, socio-cultural and cultural approaches in biblical hermeneutics however, downplayed the literary context of the biblical texts.

The following section explains how lay people in their everyday contexts engage with the Bible.

1.2.2 Interpretation of the Bible in an Everyday Context

Despite various academic approaches in biblical hermeneutics, until today, in general, Indian Christians who engage with the Bible in everyday life claim the Bible as a 'Holy Book' - a book containing the revelation of God and God's intervention and guidance in the daily activities of people. For them the Bible is the only source of faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and thus it is a book that contains the infallible, authoritative 'Word of God' that has to be literally believed. Some of the verses quoted for such an exclusivist and literal claim are: "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 3:16); and "No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21). When it comes to the interpretation of the text there is a strong canonical approach through synchronic reading of the Bible.

As Clarke points out:

The Bible remains as an icon, for the oppressed caste, namely the Dalits,⁴⁵ an object that preserves and manifests magical and mysterious sacred power; hence it functions as a native talisman. The Bible is viewed as a sacred object of written testimony that contains and conserves the divine power.⁴⁶

So, the impact of academic methods among lay people remains a moot question. There remains a gap between trained biblical scholarship and lay people's interpretative practices. With this brief overview of the differing interpretative approaches between biblical scholars

⁴⁵The term 'Dalit' refers to the 16% of the Indian population that do not belong to any of the four main castes (priests, rulers, traders, and farmers/labourers). Dalits in general endure a social context which makes them live in religiously legitimized discrimination. Unfortunately, even after having accepted Christianity, the discrimination is practiced also within Christianity. Therefore, Dalit theology emanated from the community of Christian Dalits. 70% of Indian Christians are reportedly Dalit Christians, which makes for around 19.6 million Dalit Christians. Cf. B. N. Banerjee, *Struggle for Justice to Dalit Christians*, New Delhi 1997.

⁴⁶See S. Clarke, *Viewing the Bible through the Eyes and Ears of Subalterns in India*, in: *BibInt* 10, 3 (2002), 253.

and lay Christians in India, the following section moves into the questions that need to be addressed in this research.

1.3 Research Questions

(i) As mentioned in the general introduction, Lk 10:38-42 is liable to multiple interpretations because of the differing interests of the interpreters. In such a textual context that lends itself to multiple subjective interpretations, it is necessary to question what possible hermeneutical approaches could have been used to interpret this passage in church history up to this point. Among the various readings of this text, the one proposed by Schüssler Fiorenza was intended to be liberative for women. However, her interpretation, while having an impact on feminist readings, was in my opinion, quite new for the Indian audience and therefore, received with mixed responses among the Indian readers. Therefore, if the feminist approach to reading the Bible is new and has less relevance among the Indian readers, it is important for this research to question if there were other interpretations - from church history, from the Western context, or other contemporary interpretations - that have impacted the way Indian readers interpret Lk 10:38-42? It is pertinent to this research to also explore if gender has been an important analytical tool in the history of the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42.

(ii) As my preliminary hypothesis indicates the non-acceptance of the feminist interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 among village women in India, this elicits the consequent question about the different ways in which this passage is understood by such women in an everyday Indian context. It also makes it necessary to raise questions about the gap between academic biblical scholarship and lay interpretations. Some of these questions the research will deal with are: How is this text interpreted and preached by biblical scholars and theologians? What could be the most relevant method to interact with lay women to elicit their views on the text? What are the significant socio-cultural, traditional and theological factors that contribute to a reading of Lk 10:38-42 in an everyday Indian context?

(iii) As it has been indicated in the background of the present study, there is a tendency among modern biblical exegetes in India to downplay the importance of literary analysis in biblical exegesis in favour of an over emphasis on using societal issues as interpretative lenses. For instance, there has been hardly any discussion or writings on the textual variations of any Greek text by Indian biblical scholars. In my opinion, ignoring or paying scant

attention to literary analysis of the context of biblical texts is not a fruitful way to interpret biblical texts. Arising from this observation is the next research question as to what might be a more comprehensive method for biblical exegesis that could integrate the literary context of the text and the context of the reader.

(iv) The Bible Study experience revealed that certain interpretative methods which are otherwise influential on lay readers seem to bring less impact on the lay Indian readers in terms of how to creatively and meaningfully interpret texts keeping in mind both the context of its writing, literary context of the text, as well as contextual issues. As briefly highlighted in the general introduction, lay readers consider the Gospel narratives, as representing historical events and facts. However, biblical research and theological enquiry teach us that ancient biblical texts are in itself products of a different culture, written by and for people completely different from current readership. In this sense the important research questions to be raised are: What are the interpretative ways to orient lay readers to understand a first-century text? How does Lk 10:38-42 orient the reader to imbibe its meaning from their own contextual and textual perspective? Does the text intend to propagate the dualistic-antagonistic roles of Martha and Mary? Or does it orient its reader to focus on the dialogue between Martha and Jesus? Does the text tend to have an impact (positive or negative) only on women or on all readers, irrespective of gender? Is there an approach to biblical texts, which provides a perspective for opening up the mind of Indian lay readers to more creative and meaningful interpretations?

1.4 Methodological Considerations

This research integrates different methods based on the research questions. This section discusses the methods used to address the four research questions. In particular, an integrative scientific-exegetical method and its bearing on the second and the fourth research questions that deal with the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 in an everyday Indian context is highlighted in this section.

(i) Heffner and Eckhart succinctly and profoundly observed that, “To ask what a text means should also involve asking what it has meant. Every text has its own history of interpretation:

a story which can itself be revelatory.”⁴⁷ Based on the idea of ‘effective history’, Luz reiterated that ‘biblical texts do not have a meaning, but rather they produce a meaning - new meaning - again and again in history’.⁴⁸ One has to keep in mind these pertinent observations regarding the bearing a reader’s context as well as the history of interpretation has on meaning-making. Hence, in response to the first research question that necessitates an overview of different interpretations of Lk 10:38-42 in the past and in the present, some examples of the dominant and influential interpretations since the patristic period until today are presented in the first part of the work. The intention to present such examples is two-fold: First, it helps to understand the different perspectives or contexts in which Lk 10:38-42 was interpreted and second, an overview of different interpretations from other contexts helps to analyse their influence on the Indian interpretation of Lk 10:38-42. This approach helps one to understand how the meaning of this pericope evolved in different contexts and in different time periods in Christian history and in contemporary Western context.⁴⁹ Biblical texts possess not only one meaning but several meanings produced in the course of history. This implies that in order to understand a biblical text, we have to rethink our hermeneutical strategy to take into consideration not only current hermeneutic methods but also the various meanings of a particular text produced in the course of history.

(ii) In response to the second research question on the interpretation of the text among the biblical scholars and preachers in India, a few examples of interpretations of Lk 10:38-42 from commentaries, books, articles and sermons are presented. The selection of sermons for analysis is taken from the sermons by pastors and bishops of the Church of South India. Further, in order to explore the interpretation by lay readers in an everyday context, personal interviews were conducted as part of the empirical study. In biblical scholarship in India, acknowledging or involving the participation of lay people in biblical exegesis has been a very recent approach. This approach that is gaining momentum in biblical studies is widely

⁴⁷B. R. Heffner, Meister Eckhart and a Millenium with Mary and Martha, in: BURROWS/ROEM (Ed.), *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective. Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on his Sixtieth Birthday*, Grand Rapids 1991, 117.

⁴⁸U. Luz, *Matthew in History. Interpretation, Influence, and Effects*, Minneapolis 1994, 237.

⁴⁹This part of the work does not reflect the concerns of the reception theory in the sense associated with Gadamer, Jauss and Luz, but they serve the purpose as examples of different interpretations. Moreover, there is no one particular way of understanding the term ‘Wirkungsgeschichte’, when translated in English. As Thiselton points out, “in the interpretation of the New Testament, several contributions to the commentary series *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* contain substantial material on “Auslegung und Wirkungsgeschichte”, variously translated as ‘history of interpretation and history of effects’, or ‘effective history’, ‘post-history of the text’ or ‘history of influence.’” A. C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutical Dynamics of 'Reading Luke' as Interpretation, Reflection and Formation*, in: BARTHOLOMEW/GREEN (Ed.), *Reading Luke. Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*, Milton Keynes et al. 2005, 42.

acknowledged as ‘people’s exegesis’ or ‘intercultural hermeneutics’. In the field of hermeneutics, it is also known as ‘empirical hermeneutics’.⁵⁰

The following section discusses the interview method and the steps followed in the interview process.

a) Interview Context and Selection of Participants:

Since the motivation for this research arose from a particular Indian context, the interviews were limited to one particular Protestant community in South India—the Tamil-speaking Christians of the Diocese of Madras (CSI).⁵¹ Ten women living in a village or associated to a village background in and around Madras (now known as Chennai) were selected as the focus group.⁵² The interviews were conducted at the beginning of the research before I engaged with the scientific-exegetical approach to the text. Therefore, the questions were mostly formulated from a gender point of view to elicit responses of women readers. As the characters in the text, besides Jesus, were mainly women,⁵³ I chose and interviewed only women to understand their potential to identify with the women characters, Martha and Mary.

The participants included lay women as well as women with theological background. They were selected based on how they associated with and used the Bible in their daily life. Out of the ten participants, six (5 homemakers, 1 college student), were lay women who read the Bible regularly on daily basis as part of their normal, everyday living. The other four participants (1 missionary, 2 theological students and one ordained pastor), had a theological background and besides habitual daily reading these women involved in the task of

⁵⁰For empirical Biblical Studies, Cf. S. A. Strube, *Bibelverständnis zwischen Alltag und Wissenschaft. Eine empirisch-exegetische Studie auf der Basis von Joh 11,1-46* (Tübinger Perspektiven zur Pastoraltheologie und Religionspädagogik), Berlin et al. 2009; C. Schramm, *Alltagsexegese. Sinnkonstruktion und Textverstehen in alltäglichen Kontexten*, Stuttgart 2008; E. M. Conradie, A Preface on Empirical Biblical Hermeneutics, in: *Scriptura* 78 (2001); For a contextual and intercultural exegesis involving the local communities, cf. C. Mesters, 1993; E. Cardenal, *The Gospel in Solentiname*, Maryknoll 2010; W. Kahl, *Jesus als Lebensretter. Westafrikanische Bibelinterpretationen und ihre Relevanz für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (New Testament Studies in Contextual Exegesis), Frankfurt am Main 2007; J.-C. Loba-Mkole, *Rise of Intercultural Biblical Exegesis in Africa*, in: *Theological Studies* 64, 3 (2008); G. O. WEST (Ed.), *Reading Other-Wise. Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with their Local Communities* (Semeia 62), Atlanta 2007. In this research, the expression “interpretation in everyday context” or “lay people’s interpretation” (Alltagsexegese) is preferred.

⁵¹This study does not represent the view of all Christians in India and to some extent it represents the thoughts of the members of the Diocese of Madras because of similar cultural and religious background.

⁵²In the process of selecting the participants, I tried to interview some illiterate women from the villages. They showed no interest to interpret the text, even when I tried to read out the text for them. They expected me as a pastor to preach to them from the text. So, illiterate women from the village are not included in the interviews.

⁵³Men are not included in the interviews because I began this research with the presupposition that Lk 10:38- 42 is a text for women readers. This view was challenged later in the process of my research.

interpreting the Bible for others, as part of their job/work. It is important to keep in mind that this careful selection of the interviewees has a bearing on the content analysis of the interviews.

b) Formulating Questions for the Interviews

The method used for the interviews was a qualitative interview method, i.e. the semi-structured interview method (*Leitfadenmethode*), which is analytical and interpretative.⁵⁴ The qualitative method was chosen because it claims to describe life-world from the point of view of the people who participate. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to a better understanding of social realities and draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structural features.⁵⁵ The advantage in the qualitative method is that it allows the researcher to be flexible in probing the responses of participants by asking the ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. This method has a strong orientation to everyday events and/or the everyday knowledge of those under investigation. In this process, attention is paid to the diversity of perspectives of the participants.⁵⁶ The form of interview chosen was *focused interview*,⁵⁷ which means the interviews focus on a particular subject, i.e. the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 by a particular focus group.

In a semi-structured interview method, the interviewer is free to tailor the questions to the interview context/situation, and to the people being interviewed.⁵⁸ The open-ended questions supporting the semi-structured interview method is designed to guide the interviewees to answer the questions related to their cognitive understanding of the text, their emotional access to the text and the impact and contextualisation of the text.⁵⁹ For the cognitive understanding of the text, the participants were guided with questions, such as: How do they characterise Martha and Mary? Which word or line is particularly important for them? What do they think about Martha’s request to Jesus and Jesus’ response to Martha? In terms of their emotional access to the text, they were probed with questions relating to whether they see a

⁵⁴Cf. A. Galletta, *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond. From Research Design to Analysis and Publication (Qualitative Studies in Psychology)*, New York 2013; C. Schmidt, *The Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews*, in: FLICK/KARDORFF/STEINKE (Ed.), *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London 2004.

⁵⁵U. Flick, E. v. Kardorff, I. Steinke, *What is Qualitative Research? An Introduction to the Field*, in: FLICK/KARDORFF/STEINKE (Ed.), *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London 2004, 3.

⁵⁶Cf. *Ibid.* 8.

⁵⁷Hopf points out that focused interviews in their original form are group interviews but in this research, they are individual interviews. C. Hopf, *Qualitative Interviews. An Overview*, in: FLICK/KARDORFF/STEINKE (Ed.), *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London 2004, 205.

⁵⁸Cf. U. FLICK, E. v. KARDORFF, I. STEINKE (Ed.), *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London 2004.

⁵⁹See Appendix III for the draft of the questionnaire.

connection between themselves and the story. Regarding the impact and contextualisation of the text questions, such as those following were posed: In general, how do you view a man visiting two women, who stay alone in a house? How do you engage with the text with women in your own context?

c) Interview Method and Analysis

The interviews were conducted in Tamil language, among the age group of 25-50 years. Every participant was requested to read through the text (Lk 10:38-42) once from their own Bible at the beginning of the interview.⁶⁰ Since they were given enough time to reflect on the text and answer, the duration of the interview lasted between 20-30 minutes. Each interview was audio-taped and later transcribed and translated to English.⁶¹ After collecting the data in the form of interview material, the interviews were analysed based on the analytical categories arising from the interview material. The interview transcripts were read several times to form the analytical categories.

(iii) In response to the third research question, importance has been given to the analysis of the text at the textual level. In the literary analysis, the literary elements that affect the interpretation of Lk10:38-42, such as, textual variations, syntactic and semantic understanding, placing of the text in its context, and discussions on the narrative unity of the text are addressed.⁶² The results of the analysis of the literary context of the text will serve as a preparatory step for the narrative analysis of the same.⁶³

(iv) In response to the fourth research question for an appropriate and comprehensible exegetical method that involves the literary context of the text and the context of the reader, Lk 10:38-42 as a narrative is analysed using the exegetical tools of the cognitive narratological method. The exegetical work in this research i.e. Lk 10:38-42, is analysed at two levels, Firstly, at the textual level for the literary context (a literary analysis) and

⁶⁰Each interview participant had a personal copy of the Bible. There are two versions of Tamil Bible presently in use namely Bower version (1871) and a common language translation (1995). For a short view on the history of the translation of the Tamil Bible, see 3.2.2 and Appendix II for the two Tamil versions of Lk 10:38-42.

⁶¹See Appendix IV for Interview transcripts in English.

⁶²The textual variations in the Greek Bible are hardly discussed in Indian Biblical Exegesis, so importance has been given to the discussion and choice of the variants in the critical apparatus of Nestle Aland²⁸.

⁶³Cf. W. Egger, *How to Read the New Testament. An Introduction to Linguistic and Historico-critical Methodology*, Peabody 1996; S. Finne, *Narratologie und biblische Exegese. Eine integrative Methode der Erzählanalyse und ihr Ertrag am Beispiel von Matthäus 28 (WUNT 285)*, Tübingen 2010.

secondly, at the narrative or story level as understood by the implied reader (a narrative analysis).⁶⁴ Since the narrative exegetical study remains an important part of this research, the following section discusses the importance of the narrative criticism in biblical exegesis and the theoretical considerations of the cognitive narratological approach.

a) Narrative Criticism and Biblical Exegesis

In New Testament scholarship, the last forty years have witnessed an increasing concern with literary theory, especially with narratology.⁶⁵ Narrative criticism, regarding the interpretation of the text, discusses the ‘what’ of the text (the story) and the ‘how’ of the text (the discourse). Generally, this approach in its own right distinguishes itself from other dominating methods such as historical-critical method that is interested in the (historical) world *behind* the text, and structural or semiotic exegesis that gives importance to the world *of* the text.

Narrative analysis in the field of biblical studies has a wide influence in English-speaking New Testament scholarship since the 1970’s.⁶⁶ But in German-speaking scholarship, it was only by the turn of the millennium, that several studies were done based on narrative criticism.⁶⁷ Narrative critics such as Culpepper concerned themselves with the story that the Gospel narrates, and more particularly, with the ways in which that story is told.⁶⁸ Based on this understanding, narrative critics devoted their interpretative efforts to the Gospel’s ‘literary design’; to such matters as plot, narrative point of view, the portrayal of characters, the use and effects of symbolism, irony and misunderstanding, and other literary devices and

⁶⁴The concept of implied reader will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁶⁵For the general history of narratology, cf. M. FLUDERNIK, *Histories of Narratology. From Structuralism to the Present*, in: PHELAN/RABINOWITZ (Ed.), *A Companion to Narrative Theory* (Blackwell companions to literature and culture), Malden et al. 2008; S. LAHN, *Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse*, Stuttgart ³2016, 19–34; S. FINNERN, *Narratologie und biblische Exegese. Eine integrative Methode der Erzählanalyse und ihr Ertrag am Beispiel von Matthäus 28* (WUNT 285), Tübingen 2010, 29–36.

⁶⁶The following is a sample of many studies in biblical scholarship: M. A. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* Minneapolis 1990; D. F. Tolmie, *Narratology and Biblical Narratives. A Practical Guide*, San Francisco et al. 1999; J. L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament. An Introduction*, Grand Rapids 2005; D. M. RHOADS, K. SYREENI (Ed.), *Characterization in the Gospels* (JSNTS 184), Sheffield, England 1999.

⁶⁷Some decisive works, e.g. in the Gospel of Mark, C. Rose, *Theologie als Erzählung im Markusevangelium. Eine narratologisch-rezeptionsästhetische Studie zu Mk 1,1–15*, Tübingen 2012; in the Gospel of Matthew, S. Finnern, 2010; in the Gospel of John, J. Frey, *Narrativität und Theologie im Johannesevangelium* (BThSt), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2012; in the Book of Acts, U. E. Eisen, *Die Poetik der Apostelgeschichte*, Göttingen 2006; A. Cornils, *Vom Geist Gottes erzählen. Analysen zur Apostelgeschichte* (TANZ), Tübingen 2006. Narrative Criticism in analogous to other New Testament criticisms has found its way in few textbooks of German NT exegesis, See M. Ebner, B. Heininger, *Exegese des Neuen Testaments. Ein Arbeitsbuch für Lehre und Praxis* (UTB), Paderborn ³2015, 57–130 and S. Finnern, J. Rügemeier, *Methoden der neutestamentlichen Exegese. Ein Lehr- und Arbeitsbuch* (UTB), Tübingen 2016.

⁶⁸R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel. A Study in Literary Design*, Philadelphia 1987, 5.

strategies.⁶⁹ The application of the cognitive narratological approach in biblical studies is a recent attempt.⁷⁰ In this approach, the meaning of the text is derived from the interaction between the context of the reader and the literary context of the text.

David Darby compares two distinct traditions of narrative theory: the ‘structuralist narratology’ as it emerged in the 1960’s and the ‘German narrative theory’ (*Erzähltheorie*). In his article, he argues that structuralist narratology and German narrative theory have remained separate schools of thought and that structuralist narratology, particularly in its American versions, reflect the key importance of reception, whereas German narrative studies concentrate on rhetoric and voice with the exclusion of a receptive point of view (leaving reception issues to the *Rezeptionstheorie* of Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss).⁷¹ But in response to Darby’s observations Fludernik points out this might have been the case earlier and Darby’s thesis regarding a ‘general resistance of German *Erzähltheorie* to the issues of narrative context’ is not relevant anymore because German narratology is pushing forward into media studies (film, Internet), cognitivist and constructivist narratology, possible-world approaches and into cultural studies.⁷² According to Fludernik, scholars in German narratological criticism who have been reluctant to engage with “context”, in the wake of enthusiasm for cultural studies have shown in their works the combination of structuralist analysis and interpretative contextualisation.⁷³

b) Narrative Exegesis and Lukan Studies:

In Lukan studies, discussions on the author’s aim, theological concerns and his status as a historian had been prevalent over the first half of the twentieth century. This approach has changed dramatically from around 1954, with the work of Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas*.⁷⁴ The shift in the focus from reading the Gospel of Luke as a historical⁷⁵ or a theological book⁷⁶ to reading it as a narrative book has resulted in some

⁶⁹M. d. C. Boer, Narrative Criticism, Historical Criticism and the Gospel of John, in: JSNT 47 (1992), 38.

⁷⁰The term ‘cognitive narratology’ appears to be first used by Jahn and later by Nünning. M. Jahn, Frames, Preferences and the Reading of the Third Person Narratives. Toward a Cognitive Narratology, in: Poetics Today 18, 4; A. Nünning, Deconstructing and Reconceptualising the Implied Author. The Implied Author - Still a Subject of Debate. The Resurrection of an Anthropomorphized Passepartout or the Obituary of a Critical Phantom? in: Anglistik 8 (1997); Finnern has applied this method for the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew. S. Finnern, 2010.

⁷¹D. Darby, Form and Context. An Essay in the History of Narratology, in: Poetics Today 22, 4 (2001).

⁷²M. Fludernik, History of Narratology. A Rejoinder, in: Poetics Today 24, 3 (2003), 408.

⁷³Ibid. Cf. P. WENZEL (Ed.), Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse. Kategorien, Modelle, Probleme (WVT-Handbücher zum literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium), Trier 2004.

⁷⁴H. Conzelmann, The Theology of St. Luke, London 1960.

⁷⁵Cf. C. K. Barrett, Luke the Historian in Recent Study, London 1961.

ground-breaking works in narrative exegesis.⁷⁷ The argument that the Gospel of Luke draws its readers to participate actively in a dynamic and structured narrative has already been expressed in the narrative hermeneutics of Paul Ricœur.⁷⁸ But with the development of several aspects in the field of narrative criticism, the depth of readers' participation in the interpretation process has been intensified as in the cognitive narratological approach. Furthermore, the narrative approach in Lukan studies has been influenced not only by literary critics but also by works done on the other Gospels.⁷⁹ In Lukan studies, the emphasis on the Gospel as literature, particularly as story or narrative, is characterised by a reservation towards certain kinds of historical-critical exercises, especially source and redaction criticism. Though it may be true that the text under study in this research can be explained without some knowledge of its history, the rise of narrative criticism in biblical scholarship as a challenge to historical criticism need not necessarily evade historical inquiry and they need to be considered as long as they precisely serve the aim of interpreting the final and finished form of the Gospel.⁸⁰

c) Reading Lk 10:38-42 as a Pre-Easter Narrative

In Lukan studies, scholars are divided in their views on reading the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles together as a two-volume narrative, "Luke-Acts", or separately as Luke and Acts. It is important to decide whether Lk 10:38-42 will be read in the context of the Gospel of Luke or as part of "Luke-Acts". The choice determines the narrative world of the text. One typical example could be the attempts of scholars to make linguistic links between Lk 10:38-42 and Acts 6:1-7, where the narrative world is defined in terms of the context of the early Christian community and the term *διακονία* in Lk 10 is defined as a technical term

⁷⁶ E.g. C. K. Barrett, 1961; H. Conzelmann, 1960; I. H. Marshall, Luke. Historian and Theologian, Exeter et al. 1970.

⁷⁷ E.g. C. H. Talbert, Reading Luke. A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel, New York 1992; R. J. Karris, Luke Artist and Theologian. Luke's Passion Account as Literature, New York et al. 1985; R. C. Tannehill, The Narrative Unity of 'Luke-Acts'. A Literary Interpretation, Philadelphia 1991; M. Coleridge, The Birth of the Lukan Narrative. Narrative as Christology in Luke 1-2, Sheffield 1993; J. B. Green, Narrative Criticism, in: GREEN (Ed.), Methods for Luke (Methods in Biblical Interpretation), Cambridge 2010; J. A. Darr, On Character Building. The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in 'Luke-Acts', Louisville 1992; For further study on the history on the interpretation of Luke, see F. Bovon, Luke the Theologian. Fifty-Five Years of Research (1950 - 2005), Waco 2006; also M. A. Powell, What are They Saying About Luke? New York 1989.

⁷⁸ Cf. P. Ricœur, Time and Narrative (1), Chicago et al. 1984.

⁷⁹ Cf. D. M. Rhoads, J. Dewey, Mark as Story. An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel, Minneapolis 2012; J. D. Kingsbury, Matthew as Story, Philadelphia 1996; J. L. Resseguie, The Strange Gospel. Narrative Design and Point of View in John, Leiden et al. 2001; M. W. G. Stibbe, John as Storyteller. Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel (SNTS)1992; D. A. Lee, The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel. The Interplay of Form and Meaning (JSNTS), Sheffield 1994; R. A. Culpepper, 1987.

⁸⁰ Cf. M. d. C. Boer, 1992, 48.

based on its meaning and usage in Acts.⁸¹ The unity of ‘Luke-Acts’ has been an axiom in modern scholarship ever since Henry Cadbury’s 1927 work on the subject.⁸² Any conclusion made regarding the unity or disunity of Luke and Acts invariably affects the interpretation of the texts. On the relationship between Luke and Acts, Bird concludes that in the discourse of New Testament theology, judgements on the unity of ‘Luke-Acts’ determine whether one undertakes a ‘theology of Luke’⁸³ and a separate ‘theology of Acts’⁸⁴ or engages in a ‘theology of ‘Luke-Acts’’.⁸⁵ Some others argue against the unity of ‘Luke-Acts’ based on the reception history, that the second-century writers did not, as far as it is known, read Luke and Acts in unison or treat them as a single literary unit.⁸⁶ Most major commentaries on Luke and Acts continue to reassert the unity of ‘Luke-Acts’. For example, Bovon argues that the prologue in Lk 1:1-4 ‘opens the entire work and not merely the Gospel’.⁸⁷ Some refer to Acts as an intended sequel to the Gospel,⁸⁸ while others see Acts as a complete work by itself.⁸⁹ The arguments could be viewed in multiple ways. There is value in seeing those points where ‘Luke-Acts’ work together to tell a story. There is value in letting Luke be related to the story of Jesus, alongside the way other Gospels tell it. There is also value in treating Acts on its own terms as telling the story of a fresh new era when the community is coming to see where the impact of Jesus has placed it.⁹⁰

⁸¹E. Laland, *Die Marta-Maria Perikope Lukas 10, 38-42. Ihre kerygmatische Aktualität für das Leben der Kirche*, in: *StTh 13* (1959), 70–85; B. Gerhardsson, E. J. Sharpe, *Memory and Manuscript. Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (ASNU 22), Uppsala et al. 1961, 239–242; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993, 183; V. Kopersky, *Women and Discipleship in Luke 10:38-42 and Acts 6:1-7. The Literary Context of Luke Acts*, in: LEVINE (Ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Luke* (Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings), London et al. 2002.

⁸²M. Bird, *The Unity of ‘Luke-Acts’ in Recent Discussion*, in: *JSNT 29* (2007), 425; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC 3), Exeter 1998, 165–169; R. C. Tannehill, 1991; P. Borgman, *The Way According to Luke. Hearing the Whole Story of ‘Luke-Acts’*, Grand Rapids 2006.

⁸³J. B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, Cambridge et al. 1995; C. M. Tuckett, *Luke*, London et al. 2004.

⁸⁴I. H. Marshall, 1970; J. Jervell, *Theology of the Acts of the Apostles*, Cambridge 1996.

⁸⁵F. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament. A Canonical and Synthetic Approach*, Grand Rapids 2005; see M. Bird, 2007, 442.

⁸⁶C. K. Rowe, *History, Hermeneutics and the Unity of ‘Luke-Acts’*, in: *JSNT 28* (2005); A. F. Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts and the Unity of ‘Luke-Acts’*, in: *JSNT 29* (2007).

⁸⁷F. Bovon, *Luke 1. A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, Minneapolis 2002.

⁸⁸I. H. Marshall, 1998; For the unity of ‘Luke-Acts’, see articles in J. VERHEYDEN (Ed.), *The Unity of ‘Luke-Acts’* (ETL), Leuven 1999; also see A. F. Gregory, 2007; R. C. Tannehill, 1991; P. Borgman, 2006; W. S. Kurz, *Reading ‘Luke-Acts’. Dynamics of Biblical Narrative*, Louisville ¹1993; C. H. Talbert, 1992; Yet this view has been challenged by some. J. M. Dawsey, *The Literary Unity of ‘Luke-Acts’. Questions of Style. A Task for Literary Critics*, in: *NTS 35* (1989); J. M. Dawsey, *The Lukan Voice. Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke*, Macon 1986; M. C. PARSONS, R. I. PERVO (Ed.), *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts*, Minneapolis 1993; In response to Parsons and Pervo, Patrick E. Spencer defends the hyphen in ‘Luke-Acts’, see Spencer, Patrick, E., *The Unity of ‘Luke-Acts’. A Four-Bolted Hermeneutical Hinge*, in: *CBR 5*, 3 (2007).

⁸⁹M. C. Parsons, R. I. Pervo, 1993.

⁹⁰D. L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts. Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids 2012, 59.

Then why cannot Luke be read as Luke and Acts as Acts? It may not be possible to outrightly reject that these two works are not interrelated but it could be challenged subtly. The intention is not to make a clear demarcation and claim that these two works are completely independent of each other. They might be interrelated works, but could be read independently. One argument could be that the Gospels can be read as pre-Easter narratives and the Acts of the Apostles as a book of post-Easter narratives. Another claim would be that the Gospel stories are unique in their style and content and Therefore, can be studied on their own. This also helps the reader understand that the Lukan narratives are to do with events related to earthly Jesus and the Acts of the Apostles can be read in relation to the 'proclaimed Christ' and its church

Matera, when he notes that the story of Jesus is extended in the Acts by recounting the role of the risen Lord in the life of the church, raises an interesting question:

*But is there a narrative unity between the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles? Can we speak of a single, uninterrupted story, or do these writings represent different stories: the story of Jesus and the story of his church?*⁹¹

According to Matera, Luke and Acts each has its own story, and their narrative unity exists only in so far as the person of Jesus is the indispensable character of both writings. He writes:

*In 'Luke-Acts' we are dealing with two stories that have a narrative unity rooted in the person of Jesus. One relates the ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of the earthly Jesus; the other recounts the church's witness to the risen Lord.*⁹²

Therefore, Lk 10:38-42 can be read as a pre-Easter story, the story of Jesus with implied meanings for post-Easter Christians. In this research the text will be read within the literary context of Luke, for the narrator distinctly points to Jesus on the one hand and the new Christian community on the other.

d) Choosing a Narrative Model for Interpreting Lk 10:38-42

The highly debatable and controversial part of narrative analysis lies in choosing narrative models. A large number of theories of narrative or narratological models were developed by

⁹¹F. J. Matera, *New Testament Christology*, Louisville 1999, 49.

⁹²Ibid.

narrative scholars by combining various or emphasising certain narratological aspects.⁹³ The aim of narrative analysis is to know how a narrative could be understood by a reader through *what* is narrated and *how* it is narrated. However, in the field of narrative analysis, it is hard to choose the analytical aspects based on one particular model because some of the proposed models are either too elaborate to be applied to a small passage like Lk 10:38-42 or some of the analytical concepts are insufficient to be implemented. It is even more difficult to combine selected aspects suggested by these narratologists as they use the same terminologies with different meanings. For example, the concepts like implied author/narrator, implied reader/narratee, point of view/focalisation, narratological gaps, which are very essential in the narrative analysis are used and emphasised differently by different narratologists. There has been a great deal of developments within the field of narrative criticism from the classical (structural) to postclassical narratological approaches, and this has helped to re-define the above-mentioned concepts. The meanings of technical terms and analytical categories of narratology have undergone several modifications, precisions and re-interpretations since the time of structuralism until today. While classical narratological studies (structuralist approach) focus most exclusively on the text, the postclassical approach, such as cognitive studies, (possible-world theory), emphasise the reader's constructive activity.⁹⁴

⁹³Chatman has analysed the narrative text at two levels (story and discourse), S. Chatman, *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca et al. ⁶1993; On the other hand, Genette and others make their distinction at three levels as [récit (narrative) - histoire (story) - énonciation (narration)], G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse. An Essay in Method*, Ithaca ⁴1990. This model of Genette is further modified and developed by his students Mieke Bal and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, (M. Bal, *On Storytelling. Essays in Narratology*, Sonoma 1991; S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction. Contemporary Poetics*, London et al. ²2004). Although they follow Genette's threefold distinction (Bal: Text, story, fabula; Rimmon-Kenan: Story, text, narration), they differ from Genette's understanding on some narratological concepts, e.g. on the narrative levels and on the concept of focalisation. For an overview on the differences of the introductory narrative models, see U. E. Eisen, 2006, 50–59. The choice for the above-mentioned models depends largely on the interest of the exegetes who prefer to choose one model or combination of few models. E.g. Hentschel follows the model of Bal in her analysis of Luke 10:38-42, A. Hentschel, *Diakonia im Neuen Testament. Studien zur Semantik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rolle von Frauen* (WUNT 226), Tübingen 2007; Tolmie follows the model of Genette, D. F. Tolmie, *Jesus' Farewell to the Disciples. John 13:1 - 17:26 in Narratological Perspective* (BINS), Leiden et al. 1995; and still some exegetes combine the elements from different models as in the work of Eisen, U. E. Eisen, 2006 and others have their own model, see S. Finne, 2010.

⁹⁴For the systematic differences between classical and postclassical narratologies, see A. Nünning, *Towards a Cultural and Historical Narratology. A Survey of Diachronic Approaches, Concepts and Research Projects*, in: REITZ (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Conference of the German Association of University Teachers of English* (Verband Deutscher Anglisten 21), Trier 2000, 358; D. HERMAN (Ed.), *Narratologies. New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*, Columbus 1999.

e) Cognitive Narratological Approach as a Postclassical Approach

The influence of cognitive science on academic disciplines is often called *cognitive turn*.⁹⁵ Since the 1990's, *cognitive turn* is known in psychology and in narratology, also earlier in linguistics (ca. 1960-1990).⁹⁶ The study of the cognitive dimensions of stories and storytelling has become an important subdomain within the field of narrative analysis. It is concerned with how people understand narratives and with the narrative itself as a code of understanding. Some of the specific analytic paradigms that have helped shape cognitive narrative analysis include structuralist narratology, artificial intelligence research, cognitive linguistics and discursive psychology.⁹⁷ The field of inquiry that has come to be called cognitive narratology can be characterised as a subdomain within 'postclassical' narratology.⁹⁸

The table below highlights the major differences between the classical and postclassical approaches as presented by Finnern.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ A text book definition shortly tells that Cognitive science is the „scientific interdisciplinary study of the mind.“ Cf. J. D. Friedenberg, G. W. A. Silverman, *Cognitive Science. An Introduction to the Study of Mind*, Thousand Oaks 2011.

⁹⁶R. H. Bruning, G. J. Schraw, *Cognitive Psychology and Instruction*, Upper Saddle River et al. 1999; E. Ibsch, *The Cognitive Turn in Narratology*, in: *Poetics Today* 11, 2 (1990); T. E. Jackson, "Literary Interpretation" and *Cognitive Literary Studies*, in: *Poetics Today* 24, 2 (2003); R. Schneider, *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Literary Character. The Dynamics of Mental-Model Construction*, in: *Style* 35, 4 (2001); M. Sternberg, *Universals of Narrative and Their Cognitivist Fortunes*, in: *Poetics Today* 24, 2 (2003), D. Herman, *Art. Cognition, Emotion and Consciousness*, in: *Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (2007); T. E. Jackson, 2003; M. Jahn, *Art. Cognitive Narratology*, in: *RENT*; E. Spolsky, *Cognitive Literary Historicism. A Response to Adler and Gross*, in: *Poetics Today* 24, 2 (2003); B. Zerweck, *Der Cognitive Turn in der Erzähltheorie. Kognitive und 'Natürliche' Narratologie*, in: Nünning Ansgar (Ed.), *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie (WVT-Handbücher zum literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium)*, Trier 2002; L. Halász, *Literary Discourse. Aspects of Cognitive and Social Psychological Approaches*, Berlin et al. 1987; For more extensive literature, cf. S. Finnern, 2010, 36 f.n.59.

⁹⁷Cf. D. Herman, *Narrative. Cognitive Approaches*, in: BROWN (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, Amsterdam 2006.

⁹⁸Herman points out that “the postclassical narratological approaches incorporated the ideas of classical, structuralist narratologists but supplemented their work with concepts and methods that were unavailable to story analysts such as Todorov, Barthes, Genette, Greimas, and during the heyday of structural revolution.” D. Herman, *Art. Cognitive Narratology*, in: *Handbook of Narratology* (2014), 48.

⁹⁹S. Finnern, 2010, 36. For the systematic differences between classical and postclassical narratologies, see A. Nünning, 2000, 358; D. Herman, 1999.

| strukturalistische Narratologie | postklassische Narratologie |
|---|--|
| ahistorisch und synchron orientiert | historisch und diachron orientiert |
| textzentriert | kontextorientiert |
| in sich geschlossene, literaturwissenschaftliche Disziplin | interdisziplinäre Projekte |
| Interesse an universalistischen Gesetzmäßigkeiten von Erzähltexten | Interesse an spezifischen Bedeutungen und Wirkungen in einzelnen Erzähltexten |
| Formalistisches, deskriptives Paradigma | Interpretatives, evaluatives Paradigma |
| Bevorzugung (reduktiver) binärer Oppositionen | Bevorzugung einer ganzheitlichen kulturellen Interpretation |

The reason to cross the boundaries of structuralist narratology and enter the domain of cognitive narratology is the structuralist's assumption that the elements of a textual system are 'given', needing only to be 'discovered', and described, instead of being 'constructed' by specific cognitive operations, whereas cognitive narratology asserts that the reader's reactions play an important role.¹⁰⁰ Some of the aspects from classical narratological methods like the narratological gaps (*Leerstellen*), readers' expectation (*Erwartungshorizont*) and readers' orientation (*Leserlenkung*) are further developed and concretised in the cognitive approach. The limitation and one of the basic difficulties in any cognitive exploration is that the working of cognition cannot be observed directly. We may believe that we know how our minds work and we may be able to explain what caused one to arrive at particular decisions about perceived facts, but both introspection and conscious metareflection can virtually only see the tip of the iceberg.¹⁰¹ Before discussing how the reader interacts with the text, it is important to define the concept of reader.

The concept of intertextuality (the text in the universe of texts) which is an essential factor in semiotic exegesis is challenged in post-structuralistic approaches in terms of the cognitive turn. The claim of intertextuality is that no text exists without being in relation with other texts and also that the reader has a pre-stored knowledge of other texts to understand a particular text. Eco expresses the concept of 'intertextual competence' in his writing as: "Kein einziger Text wird unabhängig von den Erfahrungen gelesen, die aus anderen Texten

¹⁰⁰Cf. E. Ibsch, 1990, 412.

¹⁰¹Cf. M. Jahn, 68.

gewonnen werden.”¹⁰² This concept, which opens the internal structure of a text with regard to its relations to other texts poses a danger when the concentration on the ‘text to text’ relationship leads to historically questionable results if the intertextual theory is limited to literary texts.

Finnern’s argument is convincing when he says:

Die Intertextualitätstheorie des Poststrukturalismus ist in Wirklichkeit eine textimmanente Verzerrung eines kognitiven Phänomens, nämlich, dass die Vorstellungen und Erwartungen der Rezipienten zuvor von anderen Wahrnehmungen geprägt werden. Die Konzentration auf Text-zu-Text-Beziehungen führt zu historisch fragwürdigen Ergebnissen, wenn sich die Intertextualitätstheorie bei den Prägungen auf literarische Texte (,Parallelen‘) beschränkt oder auch ,die‘ Kultur undifferenziert als Textkategorie erfassen will, was oft der Fall ist. Weil schon der Begriff ,Intertextualität‘ suggeriert, dass Texte sich ohne fremdes Zutun gegenseitig auslegen würden, sollte man ganz von ihm Abstand nehmen.¹⁰³

But one can look for possible text relations, that which were known or available for the intended recipients, and as Finnern suggests this should be done only based on cognitive paradigmata or even better not under the title intertextuality but under another technical term.¹⁰⁴ A helpful method is to analyse each text in its own literary context.¹⁰⁵

f) Reader’s Interaction with the Text

Narrators often build silences into their stories to deepen the impact of what follows.¹⁰⁶ The narrator’s silence has to do with the way the story is told. In order to create meaning, readers must fill in unwritten narratological ‘gaps’ or silences in the text.¹⁰⁷ Maxwell, for instance, notes that gaps invite reader’s participation: “a gap, an unexpected hole in the presentation, impels the audience to do more than merely receive the story. The silence of intentional gaps invites the audience to speak, to engage the unfolding rhetoric, and to become part of the

¹⁰²U. Eco, Lector in Fabula. Die Mitarbeit der Interpretation in erzählenden Texten (dtv), München 1990, 101.

¹⁰³S. Finnern, 2010, 42.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵By means of intertextual theory, this pericope is interpreted with the help of other canonical texts outside the Gospel of Luke. The most prominent intertextual relations are made with the passages from John 11-12 and Acts 6:1-6.

¹⁰⁶M. B. Dinkler, Silent Statements. Narrative Representations of Speech and Silence in the Gospel of Luke (ZNW), Berlin et al. 2013, 28.

¹⁰⁷W. Iser, The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response, Baltimore 1978; Orig. German, Der Akt des Lesens, München: Wilhelm Fink, 1976.

story themselves.”¹⁰⁸ In narrative criticism, gaps are understood differently by narrative critics.¹⁰⁹ For my study, two forms of gaps are defined and identified.¹¹⁰

- Gaps as Indeterminacy: The specifications and details which are not necessary to understand the narrative. In narrative criticism, such gaps are identified as, ‘indeterminacy’, or as Ingrad calls it, ‘*Unbestimmtheitsstellen*’.¹¹¹ First, it is important to recognise that not all silences are meaningful or intelligible.¹¹² Certain information that is intentionally not given importance by the narrator should not worry the reader and the reader has to move forward in the reading process. For instance, the place and the exact identity of the characters in Lk 10:38-42 do not seem to be the chief concern of the narrator, which is indicated by the expressions *τις κόμη* and *τις γυνή*, where the reader does not get specific information about the place and the woman (except for the name, Martha).

- Gaps as inference spots: The narratological gaps are filled based on the ‘cognitive schema’, where a narrative world is developed in the minds of the reader during the reading process.¹¹³ In the cognitive approach, these gaps are better expressed as inference spots. These gaps are identified with the help of analytical questions corresponding to the perspective, characters, plot and settings. The analytical questions are then answered as far as possible with the help

¹⁰⁸K. R. Maxwell, *Hearing Between the Lines. The Audience as Fellow-Worker in ‘Luke-Acts’ and its Literary Milieu* (TTCBS 425), London 2010, 1.

¹⁰⁹E.g. Pellegrini explains: *Leerstellen als lexikalische Präsuppositionen und Knotenpunkte*. S. Pellegrini, *Elija - Wegbereiter des Gottessohnes. Eine textsemiotische Untersuchung im Markusevangelium* (HBS), Freiburg im Breisgau et al. 2000; Finnern: *Leerstellen als Inferenzstellen*. S. Finnern, 2010.

¹¹⁰ The gaps in the text and in the narrative, are not dealt in a separate section because the whole purpose of applying cognitive narratological approach is to fill the gaps in the story through a creative reading process. For identifying and filling gaps in a systematic way, see 3.2.1 by the Indian readers and chapter 5 by the implied reader.

¹¹¹R. Ingarden, *Das literarische Kunstwerk. Mit einem Anhang von den Funktionen der Sprache im Theaterschauspiel*, Tübingen⁴1972, 264–269.

¹¹²Meir Sternberg helpfully distinguishes between a gap (missing information that is important for narrative cohesion), and a blank (missing information that is unnecessary for comprehending the narrative). M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative. Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, Bloomington 1985, 235–239. Of course, what is deemed important for narrative cohesion depends upon the reader’s interpretation. See M. B. Dinkler, 2013, 31.

¹¹³“Readers use schemata to make sense of events and descriptions by providing default background information for comprehension, as it is rare and often unnecessary for texts to contain all the detail required for them to be fully understood. Usually many or even most of the details are omitted, and readers’ schemata compensate for any gaps in the text. As schemata represent the knowledge base of the individuals, they are often culturally and temporarily specific [...]” C. Emmott, M. Alexander, *Art. Schemata*, in: *Handbook of Narratology 2* (2014), 756.

of ‘frames and scripts’.¹¹⁴ One should be careful in the context of narrative to use analytical questions.¹¹⁵

As Finnern expresses:

*Dabei ist im Rahmen der Narratologie darauf zu achten, nur analytische Fragen zu verwenden, die nicht bereits ein Skript implizieren. Anschließend müssten die zur Beantwortung der Fragen verwendbaren Frames und Skripts, soweit möglich, anhand von allgemein-sprachlichen, sozialgeschichtlichen oder traditionsgeschichtlichen Erörterungen aufgearbeitet werden.*¹¹⁶

g) Cognitive Approach in Biblical Studies

In biblical studies, since the early 2000, the study of the New Testament and early Christianity has been reconsidered in the light of the cognitive approach.¹¹⁷ A number of biblical scholars have showed their interest in scientific explanations of human thought and social behaviour to understand cognitive processes behind the creation and use of biblical texts.¹¹⁸ As Czachesz points out, the relevance of cognitive science in New Testament and in the study of ancient culture lies in the use of modern methods and assumptions to make sense of ancient history, although these models and knowledge are not those of the ancient people whom we study.¹¹⁹

Cognitive turn is not a new method, as Czachesz says, the cognitive turn has the potential to shed light on many questions on the methodology of biblical interpretation.¹²⁰ Cognitive narratological approach is, in a way, a concretised method of the already existing classical

¹¹⁴U. Eco: “Enzyklopädie” U. Eco, 1990. Based on the theories of Iser and Eco, Alkier understands the cultural and intertextual knowledge as the encyclopedic knowledge. cf. S. Alkier, Wunder und Wirklichkeit in den Briefen des Apostels Paulus. Ein Beitrag zu einem Wunderverständnis jenseits von Entmythologisierung und Rehistorisierung (WUNT 134), Tübingen 2001, 73.

¹¹⁵See for the difference between analytical and synthetical questions S. Finnern, 2010, 274, f.n. 82.

¹¹⁶Finnern also expresses that there is no particular method developed in the narratology in search of frames and scripts of the intended recipient. In his words: “Für die Suche nach den Frames and Skripts, die der intendierte Rezipient zur Verfügung hat, wurde von der Narratologie noch keine Methode entwickelt.” *ibid.*

¹¹⁷For the contributions that set the stage for cognitive turn in New Testament Studies, cf. literature cited in I. Czachesz, Cognitive Science and the New Testament. A New Approach to Early Christian Research, Oxford 2017, 3–4.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.* Toward a cognitive interpretation in biblical studies, cf. K. Ketola, A Cognitive Approach To Ritual Systems In First-Century Judaism, in: LUOMANEN/PYYSÄINEN/URO (Ed.), Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism. Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science (Biblical Interpretation Series 89), Leiden 2007; I. Czachesz, Early Christian Views on Jesus' Resurrection. Toward a Cognitive Psychological Interpretation, in: NTT 61, 1; G. Theissen, Cognitive Analysis of Faith and Christological Change. Contribution to a Psychology of Early Christian Religion, in: CZACHESZ/BIRÓ (Ed.), Changing Minds. Religion and Cognition Through the Ages (Groningen studies in cultural change 42), Leuven 2011; G. Theißen, L. P. C. Chan, I. Czachesz, Kontraintuitivität und Paradoxie. Zur kognitiven Analyse urchristlichen Glaubens (Beiträge zum Verstehen der Bibel Band 29), Berlin et al. 2017, R. Uro, Cognitive Science in the Study of Early Christianity. Why It Is Helpful – and How? in: NTS 63, 4 (2017).

¹¹⁹I. Czachesz, 2017, 7.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

hermeneutical methods even within the field of narrative analysis. The structuralist methods of Strauss, Greimas, Propp and Bremond are proven to be theoretically better grounded in cognitive methods. (E.g. the model of Bremond with ‘nodal points’ in the development of the plot, turns to be the “plot map”).¹²¹ The cognitive approach changes the way we study the historical past. It emphasises that the text comes into existence only if it is read by someone and consequently readers create text as much as authors.¹²² Theorists have explored how experiential repertoires, stored in the form of scripts, enable interpreters of stories to ‘fill in the blank’. Analysts like Palmer have discussed how readers’ world-knowledge allows them to build inferences about fictional minds by bringing such knowledge to bear on various textual indicators.¹²³ An implication of cognitive turn is the increased attention to the connection of texts to emotions, subjective experiences and rituals.¹²⁴ So, the cognitive turn in the narrative opens up new perspectives in the analysis of plot, setting and the characters.¹²⁵ In cognitive narratology, some basic concepts like character, narrator, action, do not lose their importance, but are linked to the same concepts outside the limits of the text, in the life-world context.¹²⁶

Frames and Scripts:¹²⁷ Frames and scripts supply for the gaps in readers’ knowledge. The general notion of gap-filling has long been recognised in literary studies. A reader always has a pre-stored knowledge (*Vorwissen*) and an understanding process (*Verstehensprozess*), while reading a text. Finnein says: “Realer Leser haben immer ein bestimmtes Vorwissen und kognitive Verstehensschemata. Ohne diese ist Verstehen gar nicht möglich. Ein Leser liest durch seine Inferenzprozesse ‚zwischen den Zeilen.‘”¹²⁸ What are frames and scripts? Frames and scripts aim at reproducing human knowledge and expectations about standard events and situations.¹²⁹ ‘Frames’ are the declarative knowledge, which refers to factual knowledge and

¹²¹ See 5.3.3.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Palmer, Alan, *Fictional Minds*, Lincoln 2004.

¹²⁴ I. Czachesz, 2017, 10.

¹²⁵ Each of these analytical aspects are further discussed and used in the narrative analysis of Lk 10:38-42.

¹²⁶ E. Ibsch, 1990, 413.

¹²⁷ Earlier, the necessary pre-stored knowledge of the reader for the understanding of the text was not termed as frames and scripts but with other terms. S. Finnein, 2010, 40, f.n. 72.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ The same concept is used in the Artificial Intelligence, where the researchers attempt to devise a means of programming a computer with so-called world-knowledge (an encyclopaedia-like set of information) so that, given a text involving few terms, the computer is capable of drawing further inferences and understanding presuppositions. Cf. U. Eco, *The Theory of Signs and the Role of the Reader*, in: *Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 14, 1 (1981), 43; Regarding the use of ‘Frames and Scripts’, Schneider expresses, “Cognitive psychology has pointed out that knowledge is not found in the brain as a loose assembly of individual bits of information, but is stored in meaningful structures that arise from the individual’s contact with the world. The organism constructs such structures either as categories according to the similarity of items, or as

information that a person knows, for example, the rules for driving. ‘Scripts’ on the other hand, are the procedural knowledge, which is knowing how to perform certain activities, e.g. driving a car.¹³⁰ In the case of textual data, frames and scripts supply the defaults that fill gaps and provide the presuppositions that enable one to understand what the text is about.¹³¹

As Finnnern explains:

Das Ziel dieses Methodenschritts ist eine systematische, umfassende Beschreibung der Frames und Skripts, die der intendierte Rezipient zur Verfügung haben und anwenden muss oder kann. Es geht also darum, das gesamte Vorwissen zu sammeln, das für ein Eintauchen in die Welt der Erzählung angemessen verwendbar ist (die „Enzyklopädie“ nach U.Eco).¹³²

h) Narrative Model for Lk 10:38-42

The basic purpose of narrative analysis is to know *what* is said in the narrative and *how* it is said. A helpful narrative model would be the one that orients the reader to follow the narrative structure and derive the meaning of the text by filling the narratological gaps with the help of frames and scripts. A narrative is usually analysed in terms of narrative perspective, setting, plot, characters and the reception of the narrative. All these aspects of the narrative are systematically analysed with insights from cognitive turn.¹³³

Since the narrative analysis is more about how a story is communicated, it is important to clarify at this point the terms that would be used at the communication level of the narrative. In narrative criticism, narrative critics are no longer interested in the ‘historical real author’ and the ‘historical real reader’. The concepts ‘implied author’ and ‘implied reader’ were invented.¹³⁴ A further distinction is made between the *implied author*, the ‘subject’ of the narrative strategy and the one who tells the story or narrates, the *narrator*, and the ‘voice’ in the narrative. The one who comes to know the story through reading is called the *narratee*, who is not clearly distinct from the implied reader. Since the two usages, implied reader and narratee do not make significant difference in terms of meaning, the term ‘reader’ (instead of

schemas (or frames or scripts) in accordance with the contiguity of the information encountered.” R. Schneider, 2001, 611.

¹³⁰See R. H. Bruning, G. J. Schraw, 1999, 46.

¹³¹For a detailed description on frames and scripts, see S. Finnnern, 2010, 42–44.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³The analytical categories are discussed in detail in chapter 5.

¹³⁴The notion “implied author” was first used by Booth, who tried to emphasize the relationship between the implied author and the real author, see W. C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago et al. ⁴1963, 71–75; cf. S. Chatman, 1993, 148f. The critics against Booth’s concept were for example, S. Rimmon-Kenan, 2004, 87–89; G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, Ithaca 1988, 139; M. Bal, *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Toronto et al. ³2009, 119; A. Nünning, 1997.

narratee) is preferred in this study. So, in this research, I would like to employ the terms ‘narrator’ and ‘reader’ instead of ‘implied author’ and ‘implied reader’.

Before justifying the use of the terms ‘narrator’ and ‘reader’, it is important to explain the concepts ‘implied author’ and ‘implied reader’ in narrative criticism, because these terms are open to misunderstanding as they are used differently and even with contradictory meanings by narrative critics. It is usually understood that narrative criticism explores the ways in which an implied author determines an implied reader’s response (through the medium of the text) rather than on ways in which the (actual) reader determines meaning.¹³⁵

Implied author: The concept ‘implied author’ is usually understood as a literary construct, or a concept within the text, distinct from the *real author*, the historical character. This means a reader builds the idea of an author from the information provided in the text. In postclassical narrative analysis, ‘implied author’ is understood as the ‘cognitive model of the readers about the author’.

This concept is summarised by Finnnern as:

*Der implizite Autor ist weder ein Sammelbegriff für bestimmte Textstrategien bzw. die Textstruktur insgesamt noch ein Sender innerhalb der literarischen Kommunikation und auch kein Subjekt ‚hinter‘ dem Text, sondern das kognitive Modell des Lesers vom Autor – ähnlich dem mentalen Modell, das sich der Leser von Figuren der Erzählung macht.*¹³⁶

By this explanation, one needs to understand that the reader imagines an ‘implied author’ not only from the information from the text but also by the influence of the information outside the text, which involves a creative mental process.

In a narrative, the idea of the implied author becomes even more complicated when there are different narrative levels in a narrative. A different narrative level is created when the characters in the narrative speak on their behalf from their perspective. For example, in the Gospels, when Jesus speaks to his disciples in parables, a second communication level arises in such an embedded narrative, where Jesus becomes the narrator emerges. Thereby in embedded narratives, narrators are classified according to different narrative levels as

¹³⁵M. A. Powell, 1990, 18.

¹³⁶S. Finnnern, 2010, 49. Finnnern forms this definition from the suggestions by other critics like S. Heinen, *Das Bild des Autors. Überlegungen zum Begriff des "impliziten Autors" und seines Potentials zur kulturwissenschaftlichen Beschreibung von inszenierter Autorschaft*, in: *sprachkunst* 33 (2002); H. DETERING (Ed.), *Autorschaft. Positionen und Revisionen (Germanistische Symposien-Berichtsbände)*, Stuttgart et al. 2002; cf. S. Finnnern, 2010, 49 f.n. 114.

Narrator 1, Narrator 2 and so on. Since Lk 10:38-42 is a small passage with one narrative level, the ‘implied author’ remains identical to the ‘narrator’. Sometimes the ‘direct speech’ in a narrative is identified as a narrative level.¹³⁷ Based on this claim, Hentschel has identified and distinguished two narrative levels in Lk 10:38-42.¹³⁸ But not all direct speeches could be identified as another narrative level.¹³⁹

Implied reader: The reader’s response is now considered to be important for the understanding of the text. There are number of ways to express the notion of an intended readership in a particular text. In general terms, the stance of the reader is one of three positions related to the text: (1) the reader can be in the text, i.e. a construct of the text. This reader is inscribed or encoded in the text. The critic’s function is to interpret the signals transmitted to the inscribed reader of the text; (2) the reader can be a real reader with complete dominance over the text. This is a subjective form of reading that is freed from authorial intention or the literary dynamics of the text; or (3) the reader can have a dialectic relationship with the text. The third type of reader is neither inscribed within the text nor has he/she complete dominance over the text but interacts with the text. This ‘implied reader’ according to Iser fills the gaps in a literary text. Iser uses the analogy of two people gazing at the night sky to describe the interaction of text and reader: “Both may be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough, and the other will make out a dipper. The ‘stars’ in a literary text are fixed; the lines that join them are variable.”¹⁴⁰

The definitions based on the ‘cognitive turn’ suggest that the ‘implied author’ and ‘implied reader’ are not mere constructs from the text as it has been understood so far, but the cultural pre-stored knowledge of the reader’s context contributes in constructing the implied author.

¹³⁷Narratologists like Rimmon-Kenan and Bal point out that the change in the narrative level is identified not only with an embedded narrative but also with an embedded sentence, which could be a direct speech. S. Rimmon-Kenan, 2004, 92–93; also M. Bal, 2009, 49.

¹³⁸Hentschel: “Im Rahmen einer Erzählung ist es möglich, dass es zu einem Wechsel der Erzählebenen kommt, indem einem der handelnden Charaktere die Erzählstimme übertragen wird, als einleuchtendes Beispiel sei die direkte Rede genannt, wobei in diesem Fall von der zweiten Erzählebene gesprochen wird.” A. Hentschel, Martha und Maria – zwei vorbildliche Jüngerinnen? in: HEININGER (Ed.), Geschlechterdifferenz in religiösen Symbolsystemen (Geschlecht, Symbol, Religion), Münster 2003, 174; Hentschel has used different narrative levels to argue her point that the ‘diakonia’ of Martha is understood differently by the characters in the narrative.

¹³⁹Hentschel’s claim in identifying Jesus and Martha as “character-bound narrators” is not convincing because it gives a false impression that every time a character speaks, the character could be seen as a narrator on a different narrative level. Ibid. 175.

¹⁴⁰ W. Iser, *The Implied Reader. Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, Baltimore et al. 1995, 282

Since the terms used in the communication model are so complicated, I would like to reiterate based on the explanation given above, that in my study, I would use the following terms:

- ‘narrator’ for implied author because Lk 10:38-42, as part of the Lukan narrative, is narrated by a third person and this person could be identified as the narrator.
- ‘reader’ for implied reader (the intended reader). Most importantly one needs to be aware that the implied reader does not exist by itself but only remains in the analysis of the interpreter. The imagination of such a reader remains hypothetical for it cannot be proven that the implied reader reads the text exactly the way I read it. The imaginary reader is largely a construct and exhibits much of a self-portrait.¹⁴¹ Therefore, while talking about the implied reader, my thoughts as an interpreter are also involved.¹⁴²
- ‘Indian readers’ (lay readers and theologically informed) for the real/actual readers from the Indian context.

1.5 Structure of the Work

The entire work is organised into six chapters. The *first* chapter is on the background of the present study and methodological issues. The *second* chapter deals with the interpretative history of the text, where examples of different interpretations of Lk 10:38-42 from the patristic period until today are presented with a special focus on the feminist interpretations of the text. The *third* chapter presents examples of the reception of the text within the Indian context, with a special focus on personal interviews of a few selected Tamil-speaking Protestant Christian women. This chapter also includes some examples of the interpretation of the text from books, articles, and sermons in the Indian context. The *fourth* chapter deals

¹⁴¹Kitzberger in her narrative-critical approach to the female characters in John imagines a female first reader as a reading strategy. I. R. Kitzberger, Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala-Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative. A Feminist, Narrative-Critical Reader-response, in: NTS 41, 4 (1995), 570, f.n.28.

¹⁴²As an example, for the influence of the thoughts of the interpreter on the ‘implied reader’, the work of Bieberstein could be cited. S. Bieberstein, Verschwiegene Jüngerinnen - vergessene Zeuginnen. Gebrochene Konzepte im Lukasevangelium (NTOA 38), Freiburg 1998; Gerber, while commenting on Bieberstein’s use of ‘implied reader’ says, „*In der Praxis hat Bieberstein also die als ‘impliziten Leser’ personifizierte Textstruktur bereits um die kritische Instanz einer aktuellen Leserin erweitert. Dies ist zwar methodisch nicht ausdiskutiert, aber doch sinn- und bedeutungsvoll. Denn sonst könnte ‚der implizite Leser‘ zum Trojanischen Pferd werden, in dessen vorgeblich objektiver, zumindest transsubjektiv abstrakter Hülle unbemerkt Subjektivitäten und Ideologien umso schlagkräftiger eingeschleust werden. Auch der ‚implizite Leser‘ existiert nicht an sich, sondern nur in der Analyse der Interpretin, des Interpreten.*“ C. Gerber, Zur Frage der Geschlechterdifferenz und zu feministischen Diskursen in den Bibelwissenschaften, in: ThLZ 130, 12 (2005), 1375.

with the literary analysis of the text and discusses the problems of textual variations with some controversial phrases like ἐνὸς δὲ ἐστὶν χρεῖα, εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν and on the significance of the inclusion or omission of the relative pronoun [ἧ] and the use of κύριος for Jesus. Furthermore, in this chapter special attention has been given to syntactic and semantic analysis. The results of this analysis have been used in the following chapter for the narrative analysis of the text. In the *fifth* chapter, Lk 10:38-42 is analysed at the narrative level from the perspective of the cognitive narratological approach. The *sixth* and the final chapter discusses the relevance of the cognitive narratological approach in the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 in the Indian context.

Chapter 2. Interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 in Church History and in Contemporary Western Context

This chapter provides an overview of different interpretations of Lk 10:38-42 in different time periods in church history.¹⁴³ Different interpretations are presented as examples in order to highlight the point that Lk 10:38-42 has greatly influenced Christian thinking in the past and continues to have its impact in the present.¹⁴⁴

As Giles Constable says:

*Every generation, almost since the beginning of Christianity, has tried to fit the story of Martha and Mary to its needs and to find in it a meaning suited to the Christian life of its time [...]. The very variety and ambiguity of these interpretations is evidence for the richness of the text and the ingenuity of the interpreters.*¹⁴⁵

The examples of some interpretations provide insights on how Christians in different milieus read the same text in a similar yet different manner. Since the characters with Jesus in Lk 10:38-42 are only women, without any reference to other men, it is generally assumed that this text is about women and for women. The different interpretations presented in this chapter help to analyse the role of gender as a hermeneutical key in different time periods. It questions whether the gender of Martha and Mary was the main concern for the interpreters or whether this text was handled like any other story of Jesus with other characters (male). Further the reference to different historical periods also serves the purpose of analysing the

¹⁴³ In this work, the examples are limited to few sermons, articles and monographs. Interpretations of the text in other forms like poems, art, liturgy and in cultic worship in church history are not discussed in detail but only highlighted because this research does not deal with the history of the reception of the text as understood in the modern sense of ‘Wirkungsgeschichte’. In the modern sense, it is understood as Luz, in his commentary on Matthew, states that the term Wirkungsgeschichte denotes “history, reception and actualizing of a text in media other than a commentary, e.g. in sermons, canonical law, hymnody, art and in the actions and sufferings of the church.” U. Luz, 1994, 95.

¹⁴⁴ It must be conceded that the material available for historical receptions is often incomplete or not readily available. The literatures that were frequently referred for the interpretative history of the text besides citing the ancient writers directly from their original works are the works of Giles Constable, Blake Heffner, Scott Spencer and Daniel Csányi. For the hermeneutical history of this pericope over roughly the millennium between Origen of Alexandria (d. ca. 254) and Meister Eckhart (d.1328) cf. B. R. Heffner, 1991; For the period before Irenaeus, cf. A. F. Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus. Looking for Luke in the Second Century* (WUNT 2), Tübingen 2003; For early exegetical history of this text, cf. D. Csányi, *Optima Pars. Die Auslegungsgeschichte von Lukas 10, 38-42 bei den Kirchenvätern der ersten vier Jahrhunderte*, in: *StudMon* 2 (1960), 5–78; For medieval period, cf. G. Constable, 1995 and D. Mieth, *Die Einheit von vita activa und vita contemplativa in den deutschen Predigten und Traktaten Meister Eckharts und bei Johannes Tauler. Untersuchungen zur Struktur des christlichen Lebens (SGKMT)*, Regensburg 1969; cf. also Bovon’s ‘Wirkungsgeschichte’ in: F. Bovon, 1996, 112–115; F. S. Spencer, *Salty Wives, Spirited Mothers, and Savvy Widows. Capable Women of Purpose and Persistence in Luke’s gospel*, Grand Rapids 2012.

¹⁴⁵G. Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought. The Interpretation of Mary and Martha. The Ideal of the Imitation of Christ. The Orders of Society*, Cambridge et al. 1995, 141.

impact of different interpretations of the text which evolved outside India, on Indian readers.¹⁴⁶

2.1 Examples from the Patristic Period (Until ca.500)

This section addresses the approaches used by the church fathers through the periods of the patristic era and explores how the fathers received and interpreted Lk 10:38-42 depending on the region (East, West), or language (Greek, Latin), or the school of thought (Alexandrian, Antiochian). The patristic period is a vital time in the history of Christianity, as this period was filled with theological importance for the development of Christian doctrines and it was in this period when the early Christian information was contextualised. The church fathers were known not only for their theological writings but also for their sermons.¹⁴⁷

During the second-century, the church fathers were influenced greatly by the Greek allegorical method—a method of deriving hidden meanings from a literal text—and this method of interpretation was used to seek spiritual meanings behind literal sentences.¹⁴⁸ The earliest effort to allegorize the two sisters, Martha and Mary seems to have been from Alexandria in the late second and third centuries. For example, Clement of Alexandria (c.150-215) cited Mary and Martha to illustrate the antithesis between the Gospel and the Law.¹⁴⁹

The most famous allegorical patristic interpretation of Lk 10:38-42, which takes Martha and Mary as representing two ways of life, are *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*. This interpretation is particularly associated with Origen (c.185-254). In his homily on Luke, Origen identified Mary with ‘contemplation and the theoretical life’ and Martha with ‘action and the practical life’.¹⁵⁰ He writes, “You might reasonably take Martha to stand for action and Mary for contemplation.” (Origen Fragment 171: Lk 10:38).¹⁵¹ Origen also made other

¹⁴⁶For the impact on Indian reading, see 3.3.

¹⁴⁷The materials, especially the sermons on Lk 10:38-42 are very limited and unfortunately, there are only small parts of the sermon collections of the church fathers which have reached us. H. J. Sieben, *Kirchenväterhomilien zum Neuen Testament. Ein Repertorium der Textausgaben und Übersetzungen; mit einem Anhang der Kirchenväterkommentare (Instrumenta patristica)*, Hague 1991. Furthermore, the earliest known commentary on Luke was the fifteen-book work of Origen extant only in a few fragments. C. KANNENGISSER (Ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis. The Bible in Ancient Christianity (1)*, Leiden 2006, 344.

¹⁴⁸Cf. Ibid. 248–251.

¹⁴⁹O. STÄHLIN (Ed.), *Clement. The Rich Man’s Salvation (GCS 17)*, London ¹⁰1909, 166; cf. G. Constable, 1995, 15.

¹⁵⁰H. CROUZEL, F. FOURNIER, P. PÉRICHON (Ed.), *Origen, Frag. 72 of the Homilies on Luke (Sources Chrétienes 87)*, Paris 1962, 521–522; cf. G. Constable, 1995, 15.

¹⁵¹J. T. Lienhard, *Origen. Homilies on Luke. Fragments on Luke (FC 94)*, Washington, 192; cf. G. Constable, 1995, 15.

comparisons like identifying Mary with ‘the church’ and Martha with ‘the synagogue’. (Origen Fragment 72).¹⁵² In the same fragment, he interprets Martha as representing ‘the converts from Judaism’ and Mary as ‘Gentile Christians’.¹⁵³ Cyril of Alexandria (c.376-444) followed Origen in his commentary, where he equated Mary with ‘the church, the Gospels and the Gentiles’; and Martha with ‘the synagogue, the Old Testament and the Jewish converts’.¹⁵⁴ Later Augustine of Hippo (354-430) too made a similar distinction, but in contrast to Origen, he compared Martha to ‘the church in the present’ and Mary to ‘the church eternal’.

He writes:

*that in these two women the two lives are figured, the life present and the life to come, the life of labour, and the life of quiet, the life of sorrow, and the life of blessedness, the life temporal, and the life eternal (Sermon 54:4).*¹⁵⁵

According to Augustine, Martha stood for mankind now and Mary for mankind in the future.¹⁵⁶ Besides making these allegorical interpretations, when Augustine became the bishop, he interpreted the roles of Martha and Mary to balance his monastic and practical life. He saw the otherworld in the world, unlike ‘the flight from the world’ which one finds in the gnostical oriented writings of Origen.¹⁵⁷ Gregory the great also taught that the two lives were connected, interactive, and successive rather than distinct or mutually exclusive.¹⁵⁸

Such allegorical interpretations of the text which were quite strong among those from the school of Alexandria were rejected by those from the school of Antioch. A prime example is John Chrysostom (c.349-407). He contends that Jesus does not praise Mary for her ‘contemplative life’ but rather for her knowledge of ‘the time’. He applied the comparison to

¹⁵²H. Crouzel, F. Fournier, P. Périchon, 1962; cf. G. Constable, 1995, 15.

¹⁵³Ibid. cf. D. Csányi, 1960, 24–27.

¹⁵⁴On Luke, ad X. 38 in PG, LXXII, 68 3D-6A; cf. G. Constable, 1995, 16 f.n. 59; R. P. Smith, A Commentary Upon the Gospel According to St. Luke by St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, Studion 1983; Cyril of Alexandria’s commentary on Luke’s Gospel, actually a series of 156 homilies, is complete in a Syriac version, while only three homilies exist in Greek and the rest survive in Greek only in fragments. C. Kannengiesser, 2006, 344.

¹⁵⁵A. Augustinus, Sermon on the Mount. Harmony of the Gospels. Homilies on the Gospels by St. Augustine (A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 6), Grand Rapids et al. 1956, 430; also A. Augustinus, Augustinus-Predigten. Eine Auswahl für Sonn- und Feiertage des Kirchenjahres, Mannheim¹⁵1947, 369–374.

¹⁵⁶Augustinus: Sermon 103 and 104, Patrologia Graeca 38, Para. 613 ff. and 616 ff. cf. Ibid.

¹⁵⁷P. Brown, Augustine of Hippo. A Biography, Berkeley et al. 1969, 204–205

¹⁵⁸G. Constable, 1995, 20.

the distribution of time rather than occupations, to emphasise that there were times to work and times to listen.¹⁵⁹

The story continued to serve a rhetorical purpose in later patristic writings and particularly in ascetical writings. Basil of Caesarea (c.330-379) saw this story as a straightforward warning against an excessive concern with material things, charity or hospitality, and as an admonition to listen carefully to the words of Christ and to concentrate on one thing rather than many.¹⁶⁰ Similarly Cyril of Alexandria (c.376-444) proposes Jesus as the model for disciples - who are not supposed to indulge themselves when they are received into homes, but are to 'first sow for them things spiritual' and portrays Martha and Mary as contrasting models for the hosts. (Homily 69).¹⁶¹ Ambrose of Milan (c.340-397) in his commentary on Luke¹⁶² has argued that "the roles of Martha and Mary overlapped that the zeal of 'attention' abounded in one and the service of 'action' in the other, but the zeal for each virtue was present in each of them."¹⁶³

Some monastic authors were not sure in defining the roles of Martha and Mary in the story as they were divided over the identities of Mary. The identity of Martha was not an issue because Martha's name appears in the New Testament in three instances: Lk 10:38-42, Jn 11:1-44 and Jn 12:1-8. However, the identity of Mary, the sister of Martha was not so simple, and became part of the complex question of identities of the many Marys and other women of the New Testament.¹⁶⁴ Most importantly, in early tradition Mary of Bethany is identified with Mary Magdalene. This mixing up of the identities of the anointing woman with Mary, the sister of Martha, is reflected throughout the Christian tradition. For example, Clement of Alexandria combined the woman of Matt 26:7 with the woman of Lk 7:36-50 and Mary of Bethany in Jn 12:1-8, whereas Origen distinguishes the anonymous woman of Luke, the

¹⁵⁹Chrysostom, Homily on John XLIV, I, in: *Patrologia Graeca*, LIX, 249B; cf. G. Constable, 1995, 15.

¹⁶⁰Basil of Caesarea, Rule, XX,3, in PG, XXXI, 973^B; cf. Ibid.

¹⁶¹Payne, Smith, R., *Cyril-Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke*, Oxford 1983; D. Csányi, 1960, 28–29.

¹⁶²Ambrose was the only Latin Father to compose a Commentary on the Gospel of Luke. The Commentary appears to be his revised and edited compilation of selected homilies on the Gospel. C. Kannengiesser, 2006, 344.

¹⁶³Ambrose, *In evangelio secundum Lucam*, I, 9 and VII, 86 in: *Sources chrétiennes* 45 and 52.

¹⁶⁴The consensus of biblical scholarship supports the existence of at least six individuals named Mary, who were in some way related to the ministries of Jesus and the apostolic church, namely Mary, the mother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55), Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2), Mary of Bethany (John 11:1), Mary the wife of Clopas (John 19:25), Mary, the mother of James (Mark 15:40), Mary, mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12)

woman of Matthew and Mark, and Mary Magdalene as three separate individuals.¹⁶⁵ These complexities in the process of identifying Mary with other characters in the New Testament had an impact on the church's tradition in depicting Mary in the art and paintings of the church, especially during the medieval times.¹⁶⁶

One could conclude from the examples outlined above, that the church fathers were more concerned with putting forward a spiritual meaning to Lk 10:38-42. For the exegetes of the early church, the correct interpretation of the *littera* was in itself a spiritual exercise, because for them the materiality of the written text itself was filled with divine mysteries.¹⁶⁷ On seeking the spiritual meaning of the Biblical texts by the church fathers,

Kannengiesser points out:

*The 'uplifting' (ἡ ἀναγωγή) from the literal to the spiritual sense in the interpreter's mind was the most essential procedure of patristic exegesis. The thought of a meaningful after-life in Christian belief inspired many patristic exegetes to transit from earthly realities to a heavenly condition.*¹⁶⁸

2.2 Examples from the Medieval Period to the Post-Reformation Period (ca.500-1750)

To a certain extent, the allegorical interpretations of Lk 10:38-42 with Martha as the 'present church' and Mary as the 'future church' continued to develop throughout the Middle Ages.¹⁶⁹ Some monastic authors were particularly attracted to the view of Mary and Martha not as two contrasting but complementary roles. For example, when the Cistercians involved themselves in discussing the ideas of a 'mixed life', including both 'active charity' and 'contemplative prayer', the passage was given fresh meaning.¹⁷⁰ In direct contrast to the early church ascetics who fled cities to seek God in the desert, a fresh reading on the roles of Martha and Mary was prompted by the Franciscans and Dominicans who went into the streets of cities and towns to preach the Gospel and to beg for alms.¹⁷¹ The same view is reflected by Francis of Assisi (c.1182-1226) in designing the rules for monks in his monastery. He employed the story of

¹⁶⁵J. A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus Between East and West. The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus (OTM)*, Oxford 2002, 177–179.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷C. Kannengiesser, 2006, 168.

¹⁶⁸Ibid. 256.

¹⁶⁹G. Constable, 1995, 23.

¹⁷⁰By the middle of 11th century, veneration of Mary Magdalene began and even a cult of Martha arose in ca. 1187, see discussion in B. R. Heffner, 1991, 122–123.

¹⁷¹Ibid. 124.

Martha and Mary as his blueprint and saw the two ways—charity and prayer—as complementary and interdependent.¹⁷²

While medieval writers did not doubt the historical or literary truth of the story, they believed that a deeper reality lay behind the actions of Martha and Mary.¹⁷³ Their choice of words to interpret this deeper reality had a significant bearing on subsequent interpretations of the text by different generation of readers.¹⁷⁴ Their difficulties began with an important text critical problem on deciding what Jesus meant by the two phrases used in v. 42: Whether Jesus said, “‘one’ or ‘few things’ are necessary”: *unum est necessarium* (shorter version); *pauca autem necessaria sunt aut unum* and *paucis uero opus est aut etiam uno* (longer versions). Constable points out that the shorter, Vulgate version was universally accepted.¹⁷⁵

In the tenth and eleventh centuries or the central Middle Ages, Mary was increasingly seen as representing the life of monks and hermits and Martha, the life of the clergy and laity.¹⁷⁶ During this period, three main strands of interpretation of Martha and Mary are distinguishable and are as follows: *first* was the traditional stress on the combination and interaction of contemplation and action in this life; *second* was the tendency to separate the two types of lives; *third* exalted Martha’s role of action in the world and deprecated Mary’s part of withdrawal and contemplation. Martha stood for service to others, works of mercy and good housekeeping and Mary was associated with ministering to Christ besides being contemplative.¹⁷⁷ From the twelfth century onwards, movements of religious women called for a new model for their activities and this set in motion new images for Martha as the one who cares for the sick and the poor and Mary as one standing for contemplation.¹⁷⁸ This gave rise to the cult of Martha.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷²See discussion in B. R. Heffner, 1991, 122–123.

¹⁷³G. Constable, 1995, 4.

¹⁷⁴Cf. Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷See G. Constable, 1995, 4.

¹⁷⁸Based on this ideal of *vita mixta*, for example, Elizabeth von Thüringen moved to Marburg and modelled her life helping the sick and the poor. Cf. M. Wehrli-Jones, *Maria und Martha in der religiösen Frauenbewegung*, in: KURT (Ed.), *Abendländische Mystik im Mittelalter. Symposium Kloster Engelberg 1984* (Germanistische Symposien-Berichtsbände), Stuttgart 1986.

¹⁷⁹See for Martha-tradition and medieval pictures of Martha, E. Moltmann-Wendel, 1982, 28–50; E. Moltmann-Wendel, *Die domestizierte Martha*, in: MOLTSMANN-WENDEL (Ed.), *Frauenbefreiung. Biblische und theologische Argumente* (Gesellschaft und Theologie), München ⁴1986.

However, in the late Middle Ages, Meister Eckhart (1260-1327) cast Martha, not Mary, as the more mature and fruitful disciple. Quite contrary to the literary sense of the text, he depicted Martha as the happier, freer and more fulfilled of the two sisters.¹⁸⁰ Moltmann-Wendel calls the interpretation of Eckhart revolutionary for standing against the interpretation which showed Martha in a negative light. Eckhart suspected that Mary sat by Jesus more out of pleasure than out of a desire to advance in spirituality.¹⁸¹

Heffner comments:

*Meister Eckhart's exegetical legacy addresses our (those of us who live in a period characterised by radical secularisation) need to sense the sacred within the secular itself and supports our efforts to develop a spirituality that is both in and for the world.*¹⁸²

As it was among the patristic exegetes, the identity of Mary continued to be an issue for medieval biblical scholars as well. More serious problems were created by conflating the versions of the story in Luke and John and by comparing them with other biblical prototypes and parallels. Mary was identified with the woman who anointed Jesus' head in Mark 14:3-8, and the nameless sinner who washed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair in Lk 7:37-38. Mary was also identified with Mary of Magdala, from whom Jesus cast seven devils (Mark 16:9 and Lk 8:2). In the Western church Mary of Bethany was confused with Mary Magdalene and the woman who anointed Jesus.¹⁸³ Martha and Mary as sisters were also equated with the biblical pairs Rachel and Leah. Leah was equated with Martha and active life, while Rachel was equated with Mary and contemplation.¹⁸⁴

A further confusion arose from the association of Mary and Martha with the Virgin Mary, who was thought to combine the virtues of both sisters.¹⁸⁵ The Cistercians began to conceive connections between Mary the mother of Jesus and Martha and Mary. Through a poem some religious women and Beguines presented, the "Life of the Blessed Virgin and Teaching saviour". They present an intriguing image of Mary the virgin mother of Jesus which plays upon the traits of both Bethany sisters: "a contemplative/active Mary who, after the resurrection of Christ put herself completely into the service of preaching."¹⁸⁶ It was

¹⁸⁰Meister Eckhart, "Intravit Jesus in quoddam castellum..." (Sermon 86), cited in B. R. Heffner, 1991, 118; see discussion in pp. 125-129.

¹⁸¹Ref E. Moltmann-Wendel, 1982, 28-34.

¹⁸²B. R. Heffner, 1991, 130.

¹⁸³Ref G. Constable, 1995, 6-7.

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ See B. R. Heffner, 1991, 125

fashionable at this time to describe great ladies as combining the virtues of Mary and Martha.¹⁸⁷ From at least the middle of the seventh century the text of Lk 10:38-42 was used in Marian celebrations at Rome, and it later became (and remained until 1950) the standard Gospel text for the “Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin.”¹⁸⁸

In the Middle Ages, very few writers recognised the importance of this story in the New Testament for the role of women, both as ministers and as listeners.¹⁸⁹ The fact that Martha and Mary were related as sisters was more important at that time than that they were women, and the characteristics or interpretations of the models they represented were applied to men as well as women. Constable stresses the prevailing tendency that “there was no hesitation in applying their roles to men.”¹⁹⁰

In the sixteenth-century, Martin Luther pressed further the legalistic-Martha and faithful-Mary pattern in the service of his Protestant agenda.¹⁹¹ Lecturing on Galatians, Luther used Luke’s story of Martha and Mary to illustrate that “a man becomes a Christian not by working but by listening.”¹⁹² Luther was also harsh in judging Martha’s role when he said: “Martha, your work must be punished... I will have no work but the work of Mary; that is the faith you have in the word.”¹⁹³

In another instance, John Calvin in his commentary on Lk 10:38-42 questions:

*Luke says that Mary took her station at Jesus’ feet. Does this mean that she was doing this the whole of her life? There is a time for hearing and a time for doing. Hence the monks are foolish to seize on this passage, as if Christ were comparing the speculative life with the active.*¹⁹⁴

So, in the realm of spirituality, “much of the reception history wrestles with whether the sisters, as models of active works (Martha) and contemplative faith (Mary), represent

¹⁸⁷ G. Constable, 1995; Many eleventh century Bishops and abbots were also praised for combining the lives of Mary and Martha.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ F. S. Spencer, 2012, 174.

¹⁹² From Luther’s Sermons on the Gospel of St. John 6-8 and lectures on Galatians 3:2, cited in: G. Constable, 1995, 127.

¹⁹³ Cited in E. Moltmann-Wendel, 1982, 17–18.

¹⁹⁴ T. Parker, Calvin’s Commentaries. A Harmony of the Gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke (2), Grand Rapids 1979, 89; also refer for discussion on Calvin’s treatment of Lk 10:38-42, F. T. Gench, Back to the Well. Women’s Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels, Louisville et al. 2004, 75–76.

divergent or compatible types of spirituality.”¹⁹⁵ The two sisters are cast in roles which are almost stereotypes. This has encouraged strong traditions interpreting the two women as symbols of various attitudes, forms of life or theological principles – e.g. righteousness by works as against righteousness by faith, Judaism as against Christianity, the *vita activa* as against the *vita contemplativa*.¹⁹⁶

2.3 Examples from the Modern Period (ca. 1750 to the Present)

During the modern period and since the dawn of twentieth century, literature and commentaries on the New Testament are on the rise. As the literatures on the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 are also quite extensive, it is unrealistic to study all the available interpretations.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, few examples from the dominant approaches are highlighted. One of the most prominent methods used in biblical interpretation in this period has been the historical-critical method. Lk 10:38-42, in particular, held the attention of several form critics and this episode was categorised into different literary forms depending on the argument of form critics.

The categorisation of the text into different literary forms by different form critics affected the meaning of the text, as such categorisations carried with it suggestions as to what needed to be given importance while interpreting the text. For eg., the climactic words of Jesus in v.42 have been given importance and the event in itself has been seen as a construct.

Some of the ways, the passage Lk 10:38-42 has been categorised are as follows:

- (i) “Apophthegm” (a short pithy instructive saying): According to Bultmann, the original form of the story is a ‘biographical apophthegm’, an ‘ideal construction’ of Hellenistic origin for the climactic saying of Jesus (10:41-42).¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵F. S. Spencer, 2012, 173.

¹⁹⁶Cf. J. Blank, Frauen in den Jesusüberlieferungen, in: DAUTZENBERG (Ed.), Die Frau im Urchristentum, Freiburg im Breisgau et al. ⁵1992, 9–91; J. Brutscheck, Die Maria-Marta-Erzählung. Eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung zu Lk 10, 38-42 (BBB 64), Bonn 1986, 1–4; L. Schottroff, Women as followers of Jesus in New Testament Times. An Exercise in Socio-historical Exegesis of the Bible, in: GOTTWALD/HORSLEY (Ed.), The Bible and Liberation. Political and Social Hermeneutics, Maryknoll 1993, 121; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, Biblische Grundlegung, in: KASSEL (Ed.), Feministische Theologie. Perspektiven zur Orientierung, Stuttgart 1988, 31.

¹⁹⁷ This section presents only few examples in order to have an idea on some of the prominent Western ways of interpreting Lk 10:38-42.

¹⁹⁸R. Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, Peabody 1963, 33, 57ff; The other commentators who followed Bultmann were G. Petzke, Das Sondergut des Evangeliums nach Lukas, Zürich 1990, 112; W. Grundmann, Das Evangelium nach Lukas (ThHK), Berlin ⁸1978, 225ff; G. Schneider, Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Gütersloher Taschenbücher Siebenstern 500), Gütersloh ²1984, 252; Some others preferred the term

- (ii) “Legend” (a story about mythical or supernatural beings (or) events): In a similar vein to Bultmann’s understanding, Dibelius uses ‘legend’ to designate a religious story with a mixture of biographical and aetiological interest designed to provide grounds for the significance of an extraordinary figure it remembers and promotes.¹⁹⁹
- (iii) “Self-contained story”: Even scholars who seek to safeguard the historical value of stories, recognise that these ‘stories about Jesus’ are not biographical in any modern sense but are ‘self-contained stories’ that reflect the needs and interests of the early church.²⁰⁰
- (iv) “Pronouncement story”: Tannehill preferred the phrase ‘pronouncement story’ (Kerygmatische Erzählung) as the simplest and most appropriate designation for this form.²⁰¹ The climactic words of Jesus are given so much importance that Ernst explains:

In the Byzantine lectionary Luke 11:27-28 has been appended to Luke 10:38-42. This creates a completely different climax for the text, which thereby ends not with Jesus’ pronouncement that ‘Mary has chosen the good part which will not be taken away from her’ (10:42), but with his verdict that ‘blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it’ (11:28). [...] This new climax no longer leaves Mary’s listening as the ultimate ‘good part;’ but rather includes both ‘listening and doing’ as that which is blessed.²⁰²

- (v) “Behaviour - normalising story”: One of the later categorising accepted by some scholars was the one suggested by Brutscheck. She categorised this passage as ‘behaviour- normalising/standardizing Jesus story’ (Verhaltensnormierende Jesuserzählung)²⁰³
- (vi) “Behavioural-guidance story”: Some see that the Jesus narration has a ‘behavioural-guidance’ (Handlungsanweisung).²⁰⁴

Later, as a result of reformative theological thinking, much emphasis was given to ‘hearing the word of God’ which was made a priority for Christianity. Although the emphasis was more on the role of Mary, it is interesting to note that scholars were careful not to devalue the

‘chreia’, a brief sentence or maxim, often illustrating an anecdote, see D. E. Aune, Form Criticism, in: AUNE (Ed.), The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament (Blackwell Companions to Religion), Oxford 2010, 146.

¹⁹⁹M. DIBELIUS, G. BORNKAMM, G. IBER (Ed.), Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums, Tübingen ⁶1971, 104.

²⁰⁰J. L. BAILEY, L. D. VANDER BROEK (Ed.), Literary Forms in the New Testament. A Handbook, Louisville ¹1992, 147; Joachim Jeremias argues that this story has sound historical basis although Luke has composed it in his own language and style in J. Jeremias, New Testament Theology. The Proclamation of Jesus (1), London 1971, 226; see also I. H. Marshall, 1998, 451

²⁰¹R. C. Tannehill, The Gospel According to Luke, Philadelphia 1986; D. E. Aune, 2010, 146.

²⁰²A. M. Ernst, Martha from the Margins. The Authority of Martha in Early Christian Tradition, Leiden et al. 2009, 211.

²⁰³This is seen as a right way of categorizing by Bovon and Schürmann.

²⁰⁴H. Frankemölle, Biblische Handlungsanweisungen. Beispiele pragmatischer Exegese, Mainz 1983.

role of Martha and, at the most, they insisted that the activity of Martha should be secondary to ‘hearing the Word’.²⁰⁵

Petzke emphasises that the theme of text is to prioritise ‘hearing of the Word’ over household work. It has to do with the ‘busyness’ of Martha which Jesus condemns and not her household work as such. It also does not devalue the household work of women at home in principle, but speaks about the priority of the message of Jesus for all busy people (“*nicht um eine grundsätzliche Abwertung der Hausfrauentätigkeit, sondern um die Priorität der Botschaft Jesu vor aller menschlichen Geschäftigkeit*”).²⁰⁶

Schürmann also in his comments on the text mentions that the acceptance of missionaries was a big issue in the Christian community during the post-Easter period and he sees this story as reflecting the act of hospitality in missionary communities. The attitude towards the wandering apostles and prophets is implicitly narrated in Lk 10:38-42: the attitude towards the wandering, resting/eating/drinking and teaching Jesus (“wandernden, einkehrenden und lehrenden”).²⁰⁷ However, the focus of the ‘sent-ones’ should be on ‘hearing of the Word’ (“Hören auf das Wort”), and not on demanding hospitality (“Aufwartung”). In the Lukan context, this pericope obviously has been interpreted in the context of proper reception of the apostles and wandering prophets. Schürmann further insists that in a community gathering for worship, the service of Word (“Wortdienst”) was more important than table-service (“Tischdienst”); ‘hearing’ more than the saturating-meal (“Sättigungsmahl”).²⁰⁸

Some scholars made an extra effort to read Lk 10:38-42 in tandem with other biblical passages. Here are few examples to show how the meaning of the passage evolves in tandem reading. For example, Spencer undertakes a comparative, intertextual analysis with other texts in the Old Testament and in the Gospel of Luke that outline scenes between household rivals such as Sara and Hagar; Leah and Rachel; Hannah and Peninnah; Bathsheba and Abishag; Naomi and Ruth; Elizabeth and Mary. Spencer in her work intends to show Luke’s (and Jesus’) view of sisterhood, sibling rivalry and family roles and values. She finds the

²⁰⁵W. Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Zürich 1980, 129.

²⁰⁶G. Petzke, 1990, 112.

²⁰⁷H. Schürmann, *Kommentar zu Kapitel 9,51 - 11,54. Das Lukas Evangelium (2)*, Freiburg im Breisgau et al. 1994, 153; For similar view cf. W. Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, Berlin 1988, 212.

²⁰⁸H. Schürmann, 1994, 161, He supports the idea of Laland, see E. Laland, 1959, 81.

closest affinity of Martha and Mary with Leah and Rachel, who were sisters as well as co-wives.²⁰⁹

Spencer in supporting the rivalry between Martha and Mary says:

*In some respects, maintaining Martha's and Mary's distinctive historical and literary identities is best served by maintaining their rivalry. This way they remain alive to fight for themselves, their rights and choices.*²¹⁰

Another example of tandem reading is the connection made with I Cor 7: 32-35. The suggestion that the Martha/Mary episode is echoed in Pauline terms in I Cor 7: 32-35, that it is better for women 'to be free from anxieties and to be anxious about the affairs of the Lord', Spencer argues that "the household that matters most in Luke is the *household of God*... Accordingly, women's primary relationship of devotion and obedience is to God and his son Jesus rather than to husband or children."²¹¹

Scholars who held that Lk 10:38-42 upholds only one position, i.e. listening to the word, tried to resolve the issue by reading Lk 10:38-42 in tandem with 10:25-37. According to them, the Good Samaritan illustrates Christian service, while Mary exemplifies the hearing of the word. One argument is that Lk 10:38-42 has to be read in tandem with the Good Samaritan story because both these stories are linked through the way the characters are introduced. Martha is introduced by the same formula as γυνήτις, as the traveller in 10:29, ἀνθρωπός τις.²¹² This argument is not convincing as Reid comments that this formula for introducing characters occurs very frequently in Luke and Acts and it does not prove any particular connection.²¹³ The most frequent argument is that the Good Samaritan story is the teaching on the love of one's neighbour and the story of Martha and Mary is said to be the teaching on loving God, and that the two stories together form the teaching on the two commandments.²¹⁴

²⁰⁹F. S. Spencer, 2012, 166.

²¹⁰Ibid.

²¹¹Ibid.

²¹²F. T. Gench, 2004, 58.

²¹³Cf. B. E. Reid, 1996, 148; Donahue had made such pairings, see J. R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable. Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels*, Philadelphia 1988, 134–135; For further discussion on Gender patterns, cf. T. K. Seim, *The Double Message. Patterns of Gender in 'Luke-Acts'*, Edinburgh 1994.

²¹⁴Some of those who see a complementary relationship with the Good Samaritan story are J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (AB 28A)*, New Haven 2005, 892; L. Alexander, *Sisters in Adversity. Retelling Martha's Story*, in: LEVINE (Ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Luke (Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings)*, London et al. 2002; J. J. Killgalen, *Martha and Mary. Why at Lk 10:38-42?* in: *Biblica* 84 (2003); M. D. Goulder, *Commentary. Luke 9.51 - 24.53 (JSNTS 2)*, Sheffield 1989, 493; I. H. Marshall, 1998, 450–451; R. Wall, *Martha and Mary (Luke 10.38–42) in the Context of a Christian Deuteronomy*, in: *JSNT* 35 (1989), 19–35; C. H. Talbert, 1992, 120–126; R. A. Culpepper, *The Gospel of Luke*, in: KECK (Ed.), *The Gospel of Luke. The Gospel of John*, Nashville 1998, 226, 231-32; W. Grundmann, 1978, 225; Others argued that Luke's connection of the episodes is patterned after Deuteronomy 5:1-8:3. C. A. Evans,

The other argument is that Lk 10:38-42 is paired in typical Lukan fashion of pairing stories about men in one passage with stories about women in the succeeding passage.²¹⁵ Here are few more examples of modern interpretation from twentieth century New Testament exegetes whose commentaries on Luke are written in German and are widely referred to, such as Michael Wolter and Francis Bovon.

Bovon for instance, in his commentary on Luke explains two forms of approach to Luke 10:38-42: one form as ‘real’ and the other form as ‘ideal’ i.e., ‘concrete’ and at the same time ‘exemplary’.²¹⁶ He argues that the text has two meanings – one narrative and one normative; and one at the redactional level and another at the traditional level. He cites Bultmann, Tannehill and Dibelius who saw this episode as a simple story (narrative) in the past, and then he compares it to Brutscheck²¹⁷ who saw the story of Jesus as one with a normative meaning. Without denying the connection of the story to the past, he emphasises that the story contributes to a specific theological understanding. According to him, the story has to do more with faith than to holding official positions.²¹⁸ According to Bovon ‘hearing the word’ was central, and when one has been strengthened by the word, one could then concentrate on actions..²¹⁹ He further emphasises that one should allow oneself to be served by Christ rather than to serve him. He analyses the text with the emphasis on christological components. According to Bovon, anthropology and ethics are secondary and Christology is of primary importance.²²⁰

It is also interesting to see how Bovon later admits to his changed view about Martha when he cites different biblical passages to suit his argument in the process of exegesis. He admits

Luke (NIBC), Peabody 1995, 167; R. Wall, 1989, 19–35; D. P. Moessner, Lord of the Banquet. The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative, Minneapolis 1989, 1-44; J. A. Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke (I - IX) (AB), Garden City ²⁴1985a, 1.823, esp. 825-826 and bibliography. 1.830-832, cf. 1.166-170. However, no consensus has been reached regarding the nature of the structure or its Old Testament roots.

²¹⁵Seim argues convincingly that there are insufficient reasons to consider these as pairs. T. K. Seim, 1994, 14.

²¹⁶F. Bovon, 1996.

²¹⁷J. Brutscheck, 1986, 158–159.

²¹⁸F. Bovon, 1996, 104; W. Schmithals, 1980, 129.

²¹⁹Bovon insists that the case of Mary is quite exceptional and the posture of Mary at the feet of Rabbi would have been shocking to many. F. Bovon, 1996, 106, n.25; see I. H. Marshall, 1998, 452.

²²⁰F. Bovon, 1996, 116; Bormann distinguishes between the ‘Catholic and protestant’ understanding of the text in their handling of ‘λογος’ und ‘διακονία’, where the protestants have anthropology and ethics as their first criteria and the Catholics, the ecclesiology in the first place in L. Bormann, Recht, Gerechtigkeit und Religion im Lukasevangelium. Mit 12 Tabellen (StUNT 24), Göttingen 2001, 273.

that, as a man, he formerly believed that the text puts Martha and Mary in opposition. He also believed that the search for the kingdom of God should be the priority and all other activities should be pushed behind.²²¹ However, he later became convinced that Martha and her activity are not to be seen in a negative sense but should be viewed in the light of priorities. His previous understanding of the text (which he corrected later) was based on three biblical texts. When he mentions the priority of the kingdom of God, he has in mind Matt 6:33 and Lk 12:31. When he talks about worldly sorrow, Bovon cites Paul as found in I Cor 7:32-35, and the allegorical interpretation of the parable of the sower in Lk 8:14.²²² In prioritising ‘Word’ and ‘Works’, he cites Col 3:1-2 and 1:13, which talk about looking for the things above and anchoring one’s hope in order to serve (Heb 6:19). He concluded that one can serve with material things, when one allows Christ to serve with spiritual things (John 4:31-34).²²³

Bovon strongly argues that the response of Jesus to Martha being troubled and worried can be understood only in connection with ‘πολλά’. His argument is that ‘διακονία’ in this episode is qualified by ‘πολλά’. So the narration is more concerned with the quantity of Martha’s διακονία rather than with the quality of the serving. Martha was concerned about many things and failed to see that one thing which is important, i.e. listening to the word of Jesus, which Mary chose to do.²²⁴ Therefore, what is more important is the presence of Jesus in this narration and to understand the different kinds of reaction of the sisters towards Jesus. He argues that the episode narrates two logical reactions in encountering Jesus: Does one take a break from daily activities for Jesus’ sake like Mary, or does one continue with one’s own work like Martha?²²⁵

The text Lk 10:38-42 is accepted by all scholars as Lukan material (Sondergut des Lukas) and studied in the context of Lukan double-work. Some scholars differ in their view about including the Johannine tradition. Primarily scholars see this text as a text for women. These scholars were aware that men are socialised to usually identify with male characters and do not typically identify with female characters. While women have little difficulty in identifying with the prodigal son, men do not typically identify with Martha and Mary.²²⁶

²²¹F. Bovon, 1996, 116. He modifies his view because of the criticism of his women assistants. See *ibid.*

²²²*Ibid.*

²²³*Ibid.*

²²⁴*Ibid.*

²²⁵*Ibid.*

²²⁶D. E. Aune, 2010, 157.

Bovon in his commentary mentions that the search of Christians, who try to find a voice for women in the Holy Scripture and to support their identity and position cannot be ignored.²²⁷

This pericope is Therefore, generally regarded as a story depicting the contrasting behaviours of the two women towards Jesus and the action of Martha (serving) is set against the action of Mary (hearing).

Wolter in his commentary on Luke, insists that this episode is not the story of women, but that it is the story of Jesus. He criticises the feminist approach of reading the episode as the story of women in Christian ministry.²²⁸

As he expresses:

*Gegenüber solchen allegorisierenden Interpretationen ist darauf zu insistieren, dass es sich bei der Episode nicht um eine Frauengeschichte, sondern um eine Jesusgeschichte handelt, die genauso auch mit zwei Männern erzählt werden könnte. Ihr Thema ist nicht die Rolle der Frauen in einer christlichen Gemeinde, sondern es geht um Jesus und die richtige Reaktion auf die Begegnung mit ihm: ob man den Alltag seinetwegen unterbricht wie Maria, oder ob man so weitermacht wie bisher, wie Martha es tut. Ohne diesen Bezug auf die Anwesenheit Jesu könnte die Erzählung nicht funktionieren.*²²⁹

Among contemporary exegetes, some of the influential interpretations are from the feminist interpreters and these will be discussed in detail in the next section.

2.3.1 Dynamics in the Feminist Interpretations of Lk 10:38-42

It was in the mid-1970's, accompanying the general women's liberation movement that feminist, New Testament studies began to evolve approaches to the biblical texts with feminist concerns. Luke's Gospel particularly became a feminist rallying point in those early years. Feminist readers hailed the author of Luke as celebrating women's discipleship, self-determination and leadership. Often it was asserted that Jesus was revolutionary in encouraging women to engage in theological discourse. When it comes to the feminist understanding of Lk 10:38-42, feminist scholars had differing views. While some saw the text as liberating, others interpreted it as restricting the role of women and still others felt that the gender aspect has no part to play in the interpretation of the text. Each of these approaches is discussed further in the following sections.

²²⁷F. Bovon, 1996, 101.

²²⁸E. Schüssler Fiorenza, A Feminist Critical Interpretation for Liberation. Martha and Mary: Luke 10:38-42, in: *ReInL* 3 (1986); A. Hentschel, 2007; B. E. Reid, 1996; H. Melzer-Keller, *Jesus und die Frauen. Eine Verhältnisbestimmung nach den synoptischen Überlieferungen* (HBS), Freiburg im Breisgau et al. 1997.

²²⁹M. Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, Tübingen 2008, 402.

a) Interpreting the text as liberative for women

Lk 10:38-42 is seen as a liberative text in terms of Jesus' attitude towards Martha. Jesus is seen as the one releasing Martha from gender-determined domestic responsibilities and the emotional anxiety that accompanies them. That Jesus affirms her sister, Mary's choice for intellectual and spiritual development, is also uplifted. Such an understanding is well-presented in the works of Moltmann-Wendel. In her discussion, she enhances the role of Martha by interpreting this text to mean that housewives are being freed from household responsibilities.²³⁰ Also Wemple in her writings has interpreted this pericope as one proclaiming a revolutionary doctrine, where women were 'equal to men in their spiritual potential' and were being freed to 'seek fulfilment in religious life'.²³¹ Schottroff on the other hand does not agree that this text favours the total liberation of women from their household responsibilities, and argued that the housewives can only free themselves from their role as 'busy' housewives. This implies that it is improbable to get women completely out of their role as homemakers (Hausfrauen), and all that she could try to do is simply not keep herself 'busy' with household work, but give importance to 'hearing'.²³²

A few other authors like Witherington claim that this text's portrayal of Mary depicts women's new freedom to be disciples of a great teacher. He holds the view that Jesus elevates Mary's behaviour to being a disciple of a rabbi – something that was supposedly unheard of in Jewish culture.

He states:

*Jesus remarks, however, are neither an attempt to devalue Martha's efforts at hospitality, nor an attempt to attack a woman's traditional role, rather Jesus defends Mary's right to learn from him and says this is the crucial thing for those who wish to serve him.*²³³

For Witherington, discipleship comes first, practical things second. He says, "one's primary task is to be a proper disciple; only in that context can one be a proper hostess." ²³⁴ In the context of discipleship, Witherington along with few others, acknowledges Mary as the

²³⁰E. Moltmann-Wendel, 1986, 228–240.

²³¹S. F. Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society. Marriage and the Cloister, 500 to 900*, Philadelphia 1981, 149.

²³²W. Schottroff, W. Stegemann, *Traditionen der Befreiung. Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen*, München 1980, 123.

²³³B. Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus. A Study of Jesus' Attitude to Women and their Roles as Reflected in his Earthly Life (SNTS 51)*, Cambridge et al. 1984, 10.

²³⁴B. Witherington, 1984, 10; R. C. Tannehill, 1986, 186.

disciple of Jesus and not Martha.²³⁵ He sees Jesus, speaking alone with women or his eating with them as daring moves, crossing the boundaries of social customs of the time.²³⁶ According to Witherington, the pericope is an accurate account of an event in the life of the historical Jesus, although written by Luke in his own language and style.²³⁷

While some scholars see women-related texts as liberative, feminist scholars from a redactional point of view heavily criticise the understanding that the Gospel of Luke promotes equality of women. D'Angelo notes that the portrait of women in Luke is ambiguous. She has argued that the women were assigned limited roles in 'Luke-Acts'.²³⁸ Schaberg strongly argues that the Lukan portrait of women is dangerous in showing women at the table-fellowship with Jesus. According to her these women were included not as equals of men.²³⁹ Reid points out that there is a problem in the approach of some feminists who point to Jesus' approval of Mary as a great stride for upholding theological education for women. These feminists opine that it is portrayed as though Jesus approves Mary's abandonment of the traditional domestic roles of women as she assumes the position of a disciple and Therefore, Mary is like Paul, who was educated in the Law at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). However, according to Reid, the notion that these boundaries were never crossed or that Jesus was the first to do so cannot be substantiated.²⁴⁰ With regard to men speaking to women, it is generally held that Jewish men did not speak to women in public, as reflected in the disciples' amazement over Jesus' talking to the Samaritan woman in John 4:27. Such an assumption is a stereotypical notion and Malina too comments that even in the private sphere of the household, the space of women and men being separate further reflects this stereotypical notion.²⁴¹

The liberative approach to the text with the interpretation of 'Mary at the feet of Jesus' as implying an opportunity to learn as a student/disciple from Jesus, has been strongly criticised by Jewish feminist scholars like Brooten, Ilan, Kraemer and Levine.²⁴² For Instance,

²³⁵B. Witherington, 1984, 101; also J. M. Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity. Models from 'Luke-Acts'*, Peabody 1997, 138; W. Wiefel, 1988, 212.

²³⁶B. Witherington, 1984, 100–103.

²³⁷*Ibid.*, 100.

²³⁸M. R. D'Angelo, *Women in 'Luke-Acts'. A Redactional View*, in: *JBL* 109 (1990).

²³⁹Schaberg, *Luke*, in: *NEWSOM/RINGE* (Ed.), *Women's Bible Commentary*, Louisville et al. 1998.

²⁴⁰B. E. Reid, 1996, 150.

²⁴¹B. J. Malina, R. L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels (SSC)*, Minneapolis 1992, 348–349.

²⁴²B. Brooten, *Early Christian Women and their Cultural Context. Issues of Method in Historical Reconstruction*, in: *YARBRO* (Ed.), *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship*, Chicago et al. 1985; B. Brooten, *Jewish Women's History in the Roman Period. A Task for Christian Theology*, in: *HTR* 79 (1986); T. Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine. An Inquiry into Image and Status*, Peabody 1996; R. S. Kraemer, *Jewish Women and Women's Judaism(s) at the Beginning of Christianity*, in: *D'ANGELO/KRAEMER* (Ed.), *Women and Christian Origins*, New York 1999; A.-J. Levine, *Gender, Judaism, and Literature. Unwelcome Guests in Household Configurations*, in: *BibInt* 11, 2 (2003).

Schaberg argues:

*Jesus' action is often contrasted incorrectly as denial of the right of Jewish women to study Torah. But no such rule existed in Jesus' days, and to bring Jesus into opposition to Judaism in this way is simply inaccurate.*²⁴³

These Jewish feminist scholars claim that to understand and glorify Jesus as the only male Jew to liberate Jewish women places Judaism in a negative light.

b) Interpreting the text as restricting the role of women

The approaches to the text eulogising that it promotes equality of women, that Jesus as a male Jew made a daring move to liberate women and that Mary had an exceptional opportunity to learn only because of Jesus – all came to an end when feminist New Testament studies expanded the understanding of the text beyond the canon. Some feminist critics researchers delved into Gnostic materials and found evidence of women's leadership suppressed by the Great Church. This led them to concentrate on the Lukan redactional level. For the interpretation of the role of women during the formation of early Christianity, they took as the background, an image of the early Christian communities and missionary activities in which women played an active role in proclamation, worship and leadership.²⁴⁴ In such a context, Schüssler Fiorenza claims that the story in Lk 10:38-42 is designed to restrict women's ministry and authority and particularly to silence women leaders of house-churches.²⁴⁵

In 1980's, following Schüssler Fiorenza's introduction of Paul Ricœur's 'hermeneutics of suspicion' into feminist New Testament discourse, feminist readers began to question the teachings, which they received from both the church and through academics. With a view that Jesus and his earliest companions created a 'community of equals', selected pericopes like the accounts on Martha and Mary were adduced as evidence of women's leadership in the initial movement.

Schüssler Fiorenza employing the method of 'feminist critical hermeneutics' to analyse the New Testament's patriarchal representation of Christian origins underlines the androcentric dynamic of Lk 10:38-42. She focusses on the nature of the contacts between Jesus and each

²⁴³Schaberg, 1998, 377.

²⁴⁴Cf. T. K. Seim, 1994, 75. B. Broton, Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue. Inscriptural Evidence and Background Issues, (BJS 36), Atlanta 1982, 28–32.

²⁴⁵E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1993, 175.

of the sisters.²⁴⁶ She considers the relationship between Martha as host and Jesus as guest to be one of independent equals. This egalitarian relationship is rejected, however, by the Lukan Jesus in favour of one of dependency such as the one he has with Mary ‘who chooses the position of a subordinate student’ dependent on her master. According to Schüssler Fiorenza, in this text, **“Mary is silent and Martha is silenced by Jesus”**.²⁴⁷

Schüssler Fiorenza suggests that for Luke, Martha and Mary represent women engaged in two different activities: Martha is actively engaged in preaching the word in the house church; Mary listens passively to the teaching of Jesus. Her reconstruction Therefore, presents the sisters as examples of women who were not only members of the church, but also leaders and preachers in their own right. As such, they were thorns in the sides of some of the male members of the church hierarchy. Luke, a member of this hierarchy, sought to alter the situation by presenting the silent, sitting Mary as a behavioural model preferable to that of the active and assertive Martha.²⁴⁸ This, she argues, is not descriptive of the actual place of women in the time of Jesus. Rather, it represents the evangelist’s own (androcentric) notions of what the role of women should be. The text does not describe an actual situation. Rather the narrative is prescriptive, pitting sister against sister in order to make a point.²⁴⁹ Seim also notes that this story is not portrayed as a conflict between men and women, but as a conflict between two sisters.²⁵⁰

Although the third Gospel is known as the ‘Gospel for women’ because of numerous references to women in comparison to other Gospels, feminist exegetes have been suspicious about the portrait of women in the Gospel. One of the critical suspicions led them to question whether Mary really ‘chose the good part?’ Was she really presented as the disciple of Jesus or was she presented as a silent woman learning in all submissiveness (I Tim 2:11f.)? Thus it depends on the reading perspective to decide whether the Gospel is friendly or hostile to women. These questions raised by feminist exegetes are based on the redactional approach in which the intention of the author is analysed and questioned. It is more productive to analyse

²⁴⁶E. SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA (Ed.), *But She Said. Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation*, Boston 1992a.

²⁴⁷Schaberg, 1998, 377; see also E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1986, 21–36.

²⁴⁸E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1992a; Luz is of the opinion that the interpretation of Schüssler Fiorenza is probably a hypothesis. He claims she only says what Luke has hidden and not what Luke wants to say. U. Luz, *Theologische Hermeneutik des Neuen Testaments*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2014, 300.

²⁴⁹E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1992a, 60–62; Schaberg in her commentary on Luke is in agreement with Schüssler Fiorenza, who reflects over the emerging offices from women in the house churches of the first century C.E. See Schaberg, 1998, 363.

²⁵⁰T. K. Seim, 1994, 104–105.

the Gospel stories based on literary criticism that deals with the question of Jesus and women not historically but literally.²⁵¹

In 1990, Mary Rose D'Angelo proposed that Luke's editing served to restrict women's public roles in conformity with Hellenistic moral views and so limit their prophetic ministry. Therefore, in this period Luke was no longer seen as a feminist patron, but a patriarchal pawn. Luke undercuts the authority of women who support Jesus by describing them as erstwhile demoniacs; they receive no special commission as do the (healthy) male disciples. Martha's *διακονία* is dismissed in favour of Mary's better portion: submissiveness, servility and silence.²⁵² D'Angelo sharpens her focus and extends Schüssler Fiorenza's analysis by suggesting that Martha and Mary behind the stories in Luke and John were a missionary couple. According to D'Angelo, just as a pair like Paul and Sosthenes, in which Paul designated himself 'apostle' and Sosthenes 'brother' (1 Cor. 1:1), so Martha was designated 'minister' and Mary 'sister'.²⁵³ Schüssler Fiorenza explains that the terms 'minister' and 'sister' function as titles of the early Christian mission and has suggested that the stories in Luke and John simultaneously conceal and reveal the functions of Martha and Mary in the mission.²⁵⁴

Thus the argument revolves around the roles of the characters: Was Martha a homemaker or a church leader? Was Mary a silent or dynamic woman? Warren Carter builds his argument on D'Angelo's assumption that Martha and Mary form one of the several missionary 'women partners' in the New Testament. He claims that the pericope not only evidences women's leadership but also instructs the Gospel's readers and hearers about important aspects of the task of leadership and ministry.²⁵⁵ Mary, like Martha, is among those who received Jesus. This response suggests that the term 'sister' points beyond relationship of kinship with Martha to denote their joint participation in the community of disciples of Jesus.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹For a literary approach, cf. S. Bieberstein, 1998.

²⁵²M. R. D'Angelo, Women Partners in the New Testament, in: JFSR 6, 80.

²⁵³Ibid. 78; B. E. Reid, 1996, 158.

²⁵⁴E. Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins, London ²1995, 165-73, 164-69; see also M. R. D'Angelo, 1990, 441-461.

²⁵⁵W. Carter, Getting Martha out of the Kitchen. Luke 10: 38-42 Again, in: LEVINE (Ed.), A Feminist Companion to Luke (Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings), London et al. 2002.

²⁵⁶Ibid.

c) Interpreting the text in general without a gender perspective

While certain feminist scholars are divided on their approaches to Lk 10:38-42 and in its interpretation as liberating and restricting the role of women, interestingly there are few scholars for whom the gender aspect plays no role at all. For instance, for Brutscheck, the motif of women plays a subordinate role in this narrative, and it figures only in the female proper names which were in fact already present in the tradition.²⁵⁷ Reinhartz too argues, “because Luke provides male and female examples of both serving and hearing the word, it would seem that a differentiation of gender roles is not his primary message”.²⁵⁸ Reinhartz also claims that the place of Lk 10:38-42 in the larger narrative and theological context of the third Gospel suggests that Jesus’ words to Martha convey the evangelist’s attitude towards discipleship in general, not his views on women disciples specifically. Bieberstein too in her writings presents both Martha and Mary as disciples of Jesus on the basis of the Lukan concept of discipleship.²⁵⁹

With the understanding that Jesus came to serve and not to be served in terms of reversal of roles, in which the master serves the servant, the concept of discipleship is further elaborated. In this context Rengstorf expresses: “Jesus preferred to serve Mary (with his words) than to be served by Martha.”²⁶⁰ This understanding is reflected also in the works of Reinhartz, when she analyses Lk 10:38-42 citing Lk 22:26-27, in which the Lukan Jesus inverts the conventional relationship between master and servant:

Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, one who sits at the table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

For Reinhartz Lk 10:38-42 provides a graphic illustration of the inverted master-servant dichotomy. Though Martha is called upon to serve the Lord, it is Mary who provides him with an opportunity to serve her.²⁶¹ For others, this story is an example or foreshadow of how the travelling apostles and missionaries are supported through hospitality.

E. Laland comments:

²⁵⁷J. Brutscheck, 1986, 109.

²⁵⁸A. Reinhartz, From Narrative to History. The Resurrection of Mary and Martha, in: LEVINE (Ed.), Women Like This. New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World (Early Judaism and its Literature), Atlanta 1991.

²⁵⁹S. Bieberstein, 1998.

²⁶⁰K. H. Rengstorf, Das Evangelium nach Lukas (NTD 3), Göttingen⁵ 1949.

²⁶¹A. Reinhartz, 1991, 163.

*The story was used in the early church to give instruction to women entertaining travelling missionaries that they must show hospitality but not to excess. The story was intended to regulate the extent of work implied for the hosting house, especially the women of the house.*²⁶²

A group of other scholars read this text in the context of meal setting or table-fellowship with Jesus.²⁶³ Feminist thinkers have argued that the ‘house’ of Martha and Mary resembles or happens to be the ‘house church’ where missionaries were entertained during the formation of the early church. However, this story is more likely linked to the pre-Lukan tradition than the theory that the original *Sitz* of the story was the hospitality offered to itinerant preachers in the early church.²⁶⁴

The term ‘feminist criticism’ does not refer to one methodological approach but to a plethora of criticisms. Within the feminist approach, some held this pericope as one that liberated women from their traditional household duties, while others strongly denied this and argued that Mary was only made to listen and was never allowed to preach as male disciples were. They Therefore, held that this text does not bring any liberative message for women. The influential feminist understanding grounded on Schüssler Fiorenza’s interpretation is from a redactional point of view, that the Lukan Jesus discriminated both Martha and Mary and made them submissive. In contrast, Spencer interprets this passage by comparing it with several Old Testament household rival characters and appropriates the concepts of ‘capability’ and ‘motility’ from the feminist philosophers Martha Nussbaum and Iris Young.²⁶⁵

The women in this text are identified with their proper Jewish names. The usual question called for is whether the representation of these women sends out the message for emancipation or oppression of women. Based on different interpretations, this text is seen as either liberative or oppressive. This text is seen as liberative when it is viewed in the light that the Lukan Jesus, with the character Mary, opens the way for learning and thereby liberating

²⁶²E. Laland, 1959, 80ff.

²⁶³J. Bolyki, *Jesu Tischgemeinschaften* (WUNT 96), Tübingen 1998, 106–117; K. E. Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals. Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition*, Peabody 1993.

²⁶⁴E. Laland, 1959, 72.

²⁶⁵F. S. Spencer, 2012.

women from their traditional roles.²⁶⁶ It is oppressive when the androcentric move of the author puts clichés about women into action. In yet another view, both the roles of the women—as homemakers and as co-workers in the community—are maintained. This too is rightly criticised by Schottruff as a double-burden for women.²⁶⁷

It is important to note that gender is to be understood as the classification of people based on masculinity and femininity which are ‘performative actions’. This means that gender roles and identity are acquired and practised in a given situation which is revived from time to time.²⁶⁸ Gender is used as an appropriate strategy for understanding this text. In using gender as a key concept, the popular exegetical assumption should be distinguished from the feminist critical strategy of foregrounding gender for specific ideological purposes. It is fine to use the gender if one wants to see the text from that perspective and I agree with the argument by Alexander that,

*We are of course entitled as readers to focus on the gender issue if we want to, whether or not it was part of the agenda of the implied author or for earlier generations of readers. But we are equally entitled to ask as exegetes, whether the foregrounding of gender is an appropriate strategy for understanding this particular text in its own terms and in this particular case the selective nature of the foregrounding renders it suspect.*²⁶⁹

2.4 Conclusions

The multiple approaches and interpretations of Lk 10:38-42 reveal the richness of the text and the dexterity of the interpreters. It also shows that there is no one way of reading a text and that every interpretation is subject to the interest and the context of the interpreters. Each interpretative act is bound to a certain perspective and some preconceived positions. The interpretative interest dominates the understanding of the text. From the above discussion, one could say that the reception of the text has been deeply influenced by changing historical situations, social changes and theological thinking.

Synman rightly points this out saying:

²⁶⁶J. Blank, 1992, 57. Often such an interpretation is seen as portraying Judaism as a highly patriarchal society in order to obtain a liberating message for Christianity.

²⁶⁷L. Schottruff, *Frauen in der Nachfolge Jesu in neutestamentlicher Zeit*, in: SCHOTTRUFF (Ed.), *Befreiungserfahrungen. Studien zur Sozialgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (Theologische Bücherei), München 1990, 129–130.

²⁶⁸C. Opitz-Belakhal, *Geschlechtergeschichte*, Frankfurt am Main et al. 2010 cited in U. E. EISEN, C. GERBER, A. STANDHARTINGER (Ed.), *Doing Gender - Doing Religion. Fallstudien zur Intersektionalität im frühen Judentum, Christentum und Islam* (WUNT 302), Tübingen 2013, 5.

²⁶⁹L. Alexander, 2002, 208, f.n.18.

In the reading process not all the signs are deemed by the reader as equally important. Only some will provide interpretative keys to the text. The question as to which signs will be the key factor will depend on the ideology the reader is using in the reading process.²⁷⁰

Based on this understanding and the examples of the reception of Lk 10:38-42 in church history we can infer that every interpreter interpreted the text to suit his/her own interest and concerns.

During the patristic period, the gender of the characters, Martha and Mary were not the main concern, instead these two women were reduced to theological principles, types or symbols such as active/contemplative life, worldly/ spiritual life by presenting Martha as the less spiritual, active one and Mary as the pious, prayerful, contemplative one, emphasising a context where Christians are expected to dissociate from or to be critical of one way of living over the other. In the Middle Ages, the fact that Martha and Mary were related as sisters was more important than that they were women, and their models were applied to men as well as women. It was within the ascetic movement, that the term ἀδελφὴ was given importance for a community way of living and it was interpreted that both the roles of Martha as ‘serving’ and ‘praying’ women were taken as role models. During the Reformation period, Martha and Mary represented justification by works/justification by faith, love for neighbour/love for God. It was later when the feminist critical way of reading become immensely popular among Western interpreters that this text among the other texts dealing with women were read and interpreted from a gender perspective.

The Western feminist interpretations of this text which are quite recent and modern emerged in two different streams: One interpretation, maintaining the dualistic antagonism, still saw a liberation aspect within the story by elevating Mary and asserting that Jesus accepted Mary as his disciple just like any other male disciple. The other feminist reading identified the androcentric dynamics in the text and interpreted it in a church leadership context by identifying Martha and Mary as church leaders. These feminist readings were either accepted or criticised but were never left unnoticed. An overview of different interpretations indicates that there has always been a dualistic approach in evaluating the roles of Martha and Mary in the story. However, it was not always the gender aspect that played a strong role in the interpretations until the emergence of feminist interpretations. In order to attain a certain goal, methods are intentionally chosen and used. The examples of different interpretations of the text reveal that every interpretation is context-bound.

²⁷⁰G. Synman, Who is Speaking? Intertextuality and Textual Influence, in: Neotest. 30, 2 (1996), 443.

Speaking of the context, the following chapter presents examples of the reception and interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 in the Indian context to highlight the fact that one's own cultural context plays a dominant role in the interpretation of the biblical text.

Chapter 3. Interpretation of Luke 10:38-42 in the Indian Context

In the Indian context, the understanding of the submissive roles of Christian women has much to do with the understanding of the roles of Martha and Mary as interpreted from their portrayal in Lk 10:38-42. As this being a familiar passage in Christian preaching, it is understandable that every preacher or pastor would have dealt with this text on various occasions. In this chapter, the interpretations of Lk 10:38-42 by Indian writers from selected books and articles are cited as examples to understand the impact and the nature of these interpretations. A survey of the maximum number of articles, sermons and expositions of this passage is beyond the scope of this study.²⁷¹ The purpose of the selected example-interpretations in this chapter is to show the existing diversity in interpretations of this passage by the Indian scholars and thinkers when they interpret it for lay Indian Christians.²⁷²

3.1 In Christian Writings

As examples for interpretations, select writings of Indian authors and scholars are cited in this chapter. There are currently only two commentaries on Luke by Indian authors.²⁷³ The views of scholars in these commentaries on Lk 10:38-42 are included in this section. The interpretation of the passage in the work of Varghese on *Women in the Gospel of Luke*²⁷⁴ is one of the examples selected along with articles written by Hnuni²⁷⁵ and Irene Paul.²⁷⁶ A few sermons from the sermon book designed for pastors of the Church of South India ('*Predigthilfen* ') are also cited as examples.

²⁷¹The materials collected are a random selection depending on the availability. It would be too exhaustive to include all the preachers and writers who have dealt with the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42. Moreover, there are hardly any written scripts of sermons available as Indian preachers mostly opt for an extempore style of preaching. Fortunately, the sermons published in the CSI sermon guideline book have been helpful for this study.

²⁷²The examples of interpretation cited here do not represent the views of all Christians in India, but they reflect some of the common ways of interpreting Lk 10:38-42, especially the views expressed in the sermons indicate the influence of preaching on the congregation.

²⁷³T. K. JOHN, J. MASSEY (Ed.), *One Volume Dalit Bible Commentary. New Testament*, New Delhi 2010; Z. Mattam, *The Gospel According to St. Luke. The Voice of the Beloved*, Mumbai 2008. These commentaries lack analysis of the textual variations from the original biblical texts. Indian biblical scholars refer to the already available commentaries from the English-speaking countries and the most commonly referred commentaries are Word Biblical Commentary and New International Biblical Commentary.

²⁷⁴B. Varghese, *Women in the Gospel of Luke. The Role of Women in the Portrayal of Salvation in the Gospel of Luke*, Delhi 2005

²⁷⁵R. Hnuni, *Vision for Women in India. Perspectives from the Bible, Church and Society*, Bangalore 2009.

²⁷⁶W. I. Paul, *Women's Walk*, Delhi 1999.

3.1.1 Examples from Books and Articles

As there are overlaps in the interpretations of the passage in the commentaries, books and articles, only the important aspects of these writings that could impact on the Indian Christian thinking are highlighted. The intent of the Christian writers in their interpretation of the roles of Martha and Mary has been one of religious education, particularly aimed at Indian women. Thus such interpretations on the role of the characters in Lk 10:38-42 could bring much impact on the Indian Christians.

(i) Interpreting the Role of Martha

In Lk 10:38-42, Martha could be said to be active in two places: First, when she receives Jesus into her house and second, when she complains about her sister Mary not helping her in the household work. Among the Indian writers' interpretations, the first act of Martha receiving Jesus into her house and getting herself busy as a host is appreciated as an act of providing the best hospitality. Martha's attitude in this context as host in expressing her love for Jesus and readiness to serve Jesus is not at all debated. For example, Hnuni remarks that "Martha, being the head of the household, felt more responsible for household work, and she represents the traditional role of a woman engaging in household work."²⁷⁷

But Indian writers have differing views on the second act of Martha, the request of Martha to Jesus in v.40. Hnuni, in her interpretation justifies the complaint of Martha saying,

*What is important to note is that the complaint of Martha is justifiable in that she does not conform to patriarchal expectation that a woman has to be confined to household chores. She dares to raise her voice for her freedom. She freely and frankly speaks out her problems.*²⁷⁸

In my opinion, Hnuni who sees Martha as a bold woman speaking out her problems, fails to give a convincing justification for Martha's boldness. The text does not indicate that Martha wanted to give up her traditional role and that Martha showed disinterest in the household chores nor does she indicate an interest in listening to Jesus, as interpreted by Hnuni. Another interpreter, Alexander, does not see the request of Martha to Jesus as a bold approach. She takes a redactional approach by comparing the roles of Martha and Mary as presented in the Gospel of Luke and in the Gospel of John (chapters 11 and 12). She points out that Martha as presented in Luke is not as bold as the Martha presented in John. In other words, Luke's Martha fits the stereotype of the traditional housewife whereas John's Martha makes a bold

²⁷⁷R. Hnuni, 2009.

²⁷⁸Ibid.

affirmation of her faith. Alexander compares the faith confession of Martha to that of Peter in Matthew 16:16.²⁷⁹

Mattam, another interpreter, sees Martha's complaint to Jesus as a disrespectful act. He says, "... surprisingly her (Martha) impatience is directed to Jesus himself, complaining to him without much respect."²⁸⁰ In Mattam's interpretation it is not clear what 'disrespectful' means for him. Does he mean that Martha, being a woman, posing questions to a man was unacceptable? Or does Mattam infer disrespect only because she raises this question to the 'unquestionable' Jesus?

These examples show that the role of Martha in Lk 10: 38-42 is understood differently by each of the three cited authors whose interpretation of Martha's act ranges from boldness to submissiveness and even to being disrespectful.

(ii) Interpreting the Role of Mary

The role of Mary is perceived as a liberative gesture because Jesus gives Mary an exclusive opportunity to listen to him—an opportunity usually denied to women at that time. Mattam comments that, "in the Jewish tradition women are excluded from the inner synagogue and they are not to be taught the Torah... Jesus makes use of the occasion to reveal to Mary the mysteries of the Kingdom."²⁸¹ According to Mattam, Mary's reception of Jesus has to be seen in a spiritual sense. He adds that "Mary welcomed him not only into the house like Martha, but also into her heart."²⁸² He further elaborates that, "What Jesus needed more than food was someone who understood his anguish and showed him love. Mary gave him precisely this." According to Mattam, it is Mary, who, unlike Martha gives comfort to Jesus by listening to him.

Irene Paul comments that, "Mary received spiritual food with great emergency."²⁸³ Another writer, Alexander, combines different episodes and concludes that every time Mary met Jesus, she was at his feet: "In one, she sat at Jesus' feet to hear him teach; in another, she fell weeping at his feet in grief for her dead brother, and in the third, she anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair."²⁸⁴ Alexander says that twice Mary did an unwomanly thing, once

²⁷⁹A. V. ALEXANDER, S. FARIA, J. B. TELLIS-NAYAK (Ed.), *Biblical Women. Our Foremothers Women's Perspectives*, Indore 1997, 41.

²⁸⁰Z. Mattam, 2008, 275.

²⁸¹Ibid.

²⁸²Ibid.

²⁸³W. I. Paul, 1999, 127.

²⁸⁴A. V. Alexander, S. Faria, J. B. Tellis-Nayak, 1997, 38.

by sitting at Jesus' feet and the other time when she anointed Jesus feet with an expensive ointment.²⁸⁵ It is not clear from Alexander's interpretation what is unwomanly about these actions of Mary. In summary these writers other than Alexander understood the role of Mary as an act of spiritual submissiveness.

(iii) Interpreting the Role of Jesus

Jesus is interpreted as a person of authority who uses a corrective measure and disciplines Martha by rebuking her. In Hnuni's words, "Jesus corrected her saying that she is preoccupied with so many things that she misses out one important thing, that is, 'hearing the word'". According to Hnuni, in rebuking Martha, Jesus affirms the discipleship of women: "not only men, but women have the right to discipleship."²⁸⁶ Hnuni further adds, "Martha is right (in complaining) but she has to set her priority. Earthly cares and pleasures should not carry away Christians from paying attention to what is the will of God."²⁸⁷

Mattam, on the other hand, argues that "Jesus is not finding fault with Martha's service as such, but for her agitation and worry, which prevents her from doing the one thing necessary, i.e. seeking the kingdom of God."²⁸⁸ Accordingly, 'the one thing necessary' indicated in the response of Jesus, is interpreted as 'hearing the word' and 'discipleship',²⁸⁹ and as 'the personal relationship with Jesus Christ; to love Jesus Christ and live for him',²⁹⁰ In my opinion the different views given by these scholars on the 'one thing necessary' mentioned in the response of Jesus in v. 42 are quite baffling. The 'one thing that is necessary' is interpreted as 'the will of God', 'seeking the kingdom of God', 'having personal relationship with Jesus Christ' and to 'live for Jesus'.

(iv) Interpretation of the Text for Practical Application

The message that Hnuni brings out from this passage is that it is always important to set priorities, and in this, Martha failed. Mattam expresses: "Mary's attitude of sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to his words is what should be the attitude of every true disciple of

²⁸⁵Ibid. see also W. I. Paul, 1999, 127.

²⁸⁶R. Hnuni, 2009.

²⁸⁷Ibid.

²⁸⁸Z. Mattam, 2008, 275; cf. T. K. John, J. Massey, 2010, 586

²⁸⁹R. Hnuni, 2009.

²⁹⁰Z. Mattam, 2008, 275.

Christ...”²⁹¹ He clearly points out that Martha’s role is not to be followed. For Mattam, “Activity is necessary, but what is more important is that it should be done in Christ and out of love for him.”²⁹² Alexander’s interpretation that Mary was revolutionary is not clear when she invites other Christian women to be like Mary saying: “All women, who like Mary, have been silenced and suppressed by their churches, families and society can do the same through Jesus’ liberating love.”²⁹³ Irene Paul invites people to “give priority to God, first things first. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and God will speed to finish your worldly duties... In other words, do not deprive yourself of ‘private devotions’ and ‘church attendance’ and ‘ministry’.”²⁹⁴ She also says, reading Christian literature and the Holy Scripture is a must for a woman.”²⁹⁵ Therefore, citing Mary as an example, Alexander emphasises the religious expressions of women as necessary for her liberation.

These interpretations reflect the complexity in interpreting Lk 10:38-42, especially when interpreted in a spiritual sense with jargon which are complicated to understand. In most instances the views of the interpreters were hard to grasp, and they remain quite unsubstantiated. Such interpretations have a strong pietistic approach. From the views of these writers interpreting in the Indian context, both the roles of Martha and Mary - their acts of ‘serving’ and ‘listening’ are understood as essential roles of every Christian woman. In my understanding, these role expectations are forced social and religious expectations and become hurdles for progressive thinking among both men and women.

3.1.2 Examples from Sermons in the Church of South India (CSI)

In the context of CSI, it has been a tradition to include the story of Martha and Mary in the lectionary of the church.²⁹⁶ July 29 is a fixed date in the church calendar to commemorate the lives of Martha, Mary and Lazarus of Bethany. The prescribed theme to be preached on this day is “Martha, Mary and Lazarus of Bethany: Companions of our Lord.”²⁹⁷ The texts chosen for the sermon are Lk 10:38-42 and John 11:1-27.²⁹⁸ The CSI which provides sermon-outline book for pastors, is although titled as ‘sermon-outlines’, these books infact contain complete

²⁹¹Ibid. also B. Varghese, *Women in the Gospel of Luke. The Role of Women in the Portrayal of Salvation in the Gospel of Luke*, Delhi 2005, 43

²⁹²Z. Mattam, 2008, 277.

²⁹³A. V. Alexander, S. Faria, J. B. Tellis-Nayak, 1997, 40.

²⁹⁴W. I. Paul, 1999, 129.

²⁹⁵Ibid.

²⁹⁶ The Pastoral Aid Department has been publishing Sermon-Outlines for the pastors of CSI every year with sermon guidelines and mostly theologians and pastors contribute to this book.

²⁹⁷ In the context of Church of South India “Lord” is always equated to “God” in regional languages.

²⁹⁸The text is also read and preached on other occasions as well.

sermons. These complete sermons are helpful for this research to analyse the views of different preachers on the text. In a way the views expressed in these sermons represent the views of pastors and bishops of the CSI.

Since the sermons are thematically focussed on ‘Companions of our Lord’, the information from both the texts in the Gospel of Luke and John are used. The conflated reading of Luke 10:38-42 with John chapters 11 and 12 provides the reader with the understanding that this event took place in Bethany. (The names Lazarus and Bethany are not mentioned in the Lukan text). The title itself is interpretative, where the three siblings, Martha, Mary and Lazarus are presented as close companions of Jesus (Lord). But for our analysis of the different interpretations through the sermons, the references related to the Lukan text will be given importance (for example, the discussions on the resurrection of Lazarus or the role of Martha and Mary as bereaved sisters in the Johannine text are not discussed in this section).

The Book of Common Liturgy of the CSI also provides a special standard prayer to be made on this particular day.

The prayer begins with the sentences:

*O God, who gave us the gift of home and family, come and stay with us as you did through your son in Bethany with Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Help us experience your abiding presence, loving kindness and the power of your resurrection...*²⁹⁹

This prayer is an invitation to God to be the guest in every Christian family through the presence of Jesus. Here Jesus is the incarnated God, whose presence is longed for and believed to be present in Christian households. This prayer is expected to be offered in all CSI churches on this particular day.

(i) Interpreting the Role of Martha

Here are some of the views on Martha expressed in the sermons: Martha is seen as the eldest sister of the family taking the burden to care for her younger sister, Mary and her younger brother Lazarus. She is appreciated for her role as a loving host.³⁰⁰ Martha’s devotion to Jesus was to make him feel comfortable by preparing a number of delicious dishes for him rather

²⁹⁹‘Special Days-Fixed Dates’ in the Church of South India, Book of Common Worship, Chennai: Church of South India 2006, 313.

³⁰⁰Usha Rani, Sermon Outlines, CSI, 2008-2009, 115; S. Jayaseelan, Sermon Outlines, CSI, 2013.

than sitting and listening to him.³⁰¹ “Martha showed her interest in household things rather than heavenly things.”³⁰² Martha missed her priority in life because she was tricked by the tempter (Satan).

(ii) Interpreting the Role of Mary

The confusion regarding the identification of Mary in different traditions is expressed in different sermons. Rani in her sermon, mentions that “Mary is identified as being at the feet of Jesus thrice: In Lk 10:39, she sits at the feet of Jesus; in Jn 11:32, she falls at the feet of Jesus, when her brother is dead and in Jn 12:3 she anoints the feet of Jesus with expensive ointment.”³⁰³ Others identify Mary as the woman in Luke who was privileged to anoint Jesus. (Jn 12:3).³⁰⁴ Sarojini interprets that because of such an attitude, Mary is known ‘as the apostle of love and a symbol of the believers’.³⁰⁵ Some preachers see Mary, the sister of Martha and Mary Magdalene as one and the same person. Mary’s silence is interpreted as a sign of inner strength, “When her sister remonstrated her openly for leaving her to serve alone, she answered not a word. Is not this a sure sign of an inner strength and calm she had gathered at the feet of the Lord?”³⁰⁶

(iii) Interpreting the Role of Jesus

The response of Jesus to Martha is interpreted as Jesus not condemning her household work, but urging her to something better.

Here are some of the views on the response of Jesus:

Jesus was not condemning Martha for what she was doing but correcting her to know what is better. Jesus does not state that caring for physical need is not important, but he drew a line in comparing what is better ... Jesus’ rebuke led her to the highest understanding about Jesus for which he was incarnated, ‘I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world’. Jn 11:27.³⁰⁷

³⁰¹SM, Sermons, Pastoral Aid Department, CSI, 2001, 156. (In this book, the names are abbreviated and the page on the details of the full names is missing.)

³⁰²S. Jayaseelan, Sermon Outlines CSI, 2013.

³⁰³Usha Rani, Sermon Outlines, CSI, 2008-2009, 115.

³⁰⁴ S. Jayaseelan, Sermon Outlines, Pastoral Aid Department, CSI, 2013, http://www.csisynod.com/Admin/sermonoutlines/7_Sermon%20Outline%202013%20Full%20Year.pdf (Accessed on 03-01-2016).

³⁰⁵Prime Sarojini, Sermon Outlines, 2012.

³⁰⁶Usha Rani, 2008.

³⁰⁷SM, Sermons, Pastoral Aid Department, CSI, 2001, 156.

“From the response of Jesus, it is emphasised that ‘loving relationship is much more important than food or house work.’³⁰⁸ In one of the sermons, ‘the one thing that is necessary’ is interpreted as the need to accept ‘Jesus’ - an understanding that Christians should accept Jesus in their hearts. Sarojini expresses: “‘But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her’. So, we need Jesus from whom the life-giving words would flow.”³⁰⁹

(iv) The General Message of the Text

The message that the preachers wanted to communicate to the congregation appears to carry a spiritual meaning. The message of the text is cited here as given by the preachers in their sermons:

*Martha, Mary and Lazarus understood Jesus better than the other male disciples that Jesus would relieve all pains and grief from their life ... Let us love Jesus, understand him, believe in him and become his companion.*³¹⁰

Although, Martha is not completely at fault, she lacked something and therefore, let us serve the Lord as Mary.³¹¹

*Excessive attention to temporal things will occupy a person’s mind and physique that reduces the spirit to work for one’s soul ... Worrying about many things in life leads persons away from God. Martha took Jesus’ rebuke seriously and patterned her life accordingly, which helped her to gain full knowledge about who Jesus is and put her full trust in him during the crisis of Lazarus’ death... Our true devotion to Jesus demands us to listen to his word.*³¹²

It is difficult to give explanations on these statements of the above-mentioned preachers as these messages are quite misleading when they attempt a conflated reading of Lk 10:38-42 with the other texts in the Gospels.

(v) Another Example of Reconstructing the Story in Lk 10:38-42 with Extra-biblical Information

A former bishop of the Madras Diocese of CSI, in his sermon interestingly uses extra non-biblical background information about the sisters in order to strengthen the reasons for

³⁰⁸S. Jayaseelan, Sermons, Pastoral Aid Department, CSI, 2013.

³⁰⁹Prime Sarojini, 2012.

³¹⁰Usha Rani, 2008.

³¹¹S. Jayaseelan, Sermon Outlines CSI, 2013.

³¹²Sermons, Pastoral Aid Department, CSI, 2001, 156.

commemorating these sisters as saints in the church.³¹³ The bishop introduces the story of Martha and Mary citing information from the ‘Golden Legend’ and reconstructs the story with strong social, historical and geographical background. Such theories offer a reconstruction of the story that enhances and broadens the reader’s view beyond the text.

In his sermon, he connects the Lukan episode with the surrounding episodes. He sees the preceding Good Samaritan passage, Lk 10:25-37, dealing with the horizontal relationship (human-human) and the succeeding passage, Luke 11:1- 4, as a prayer dealing with the vertical relationship (God-human) and the text, Luke 10:38-42, on Mary and Martha dealing with the balance between these two relationships. Based on this structure, he makes his point that, “Compassion is important and so is prayer, but all is lost if you do not keep your priorities straight.” In his interpretation of the text, he sees Martha as a model of activism and Mary as a model of contemplation and emphasises that these women should not be seen as competitors but as partners. He cites a pastor from the Reformation period who said, ‘Martha and Mary in one life make up the perfect vicar’s wife’. He sees Martha’s reception of Jesus into her house as a sign of a very close relationship. He says, “When you are welcoming someone into your home, you are telling that person that he is allowed into the most intimate place of our lives.” He further says, Martha’s frustration and anger may not be excusable, but it is at least understandable. Martha may well have been faced with entertaining a sizable group.” And while talking about Jesus’ response, he says that “Jesus rebuke was gentle. He is very tender and affectionate here.” In his sermon, he understands the one thing necessary as ‘faith’.

He interprets that Martha lacked faith and this resulted in anxiety in her. He says, “where faith grows, anxiety lessens.” From Jesus’ point of view, he sees Martha to be wrong, “as she worked for the Lord, her work became more important than the Lord himself.” “Jesus knows that neither Mary nor Martha can live by bread alone (Matt 4:4). Now it was time to digest some spiritual bread and feed the soul.” He sees the distraction of Martha in the light of Lk 8:14 from the parable of the sower, where the seeds that fell among thorns are likened to people preoccupied with the cares and riches and pleasures of life. This distraction of Martha, according to the bishop, led to her complaint, and he sees Martha as breaking the rules of hospitality in this distraction:

³¹³ Unpublished sermon by Bishop Devasahayam, preached on July 29, 2014 in St. George’s Cathedral, Chennai.

She breaks all the rules of hospitality by trying to embarrass her sister in front of her guest, and by asking her guest to intervene in a family dispute. She even goes as far as to accuse Jesus of not caring about her. Martha's distraction prevents her from being truly present with Jesus and causes her to drive a wedge between her sister and herself, and between Jesus and herself.

He says, “a careful reading of the context shows us that Mary had been in the kitchen with Martha until Jesus started teaching. Note Martha said that her sister had left her alone to do all the serving.”

So we see that the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 through the sermons in the CSI clearly presents the view of a dualistic antagonism. The sermons are intended to communicate the message that the role of Mary as a pious woman remains an ideal example for Christian women in India. The sermons as part of religious education tries to impart the message through Lk 10:38-42 that one needs to keep one's priorities right just as Mary did.

3.2 Interview Among Tamil Protestant Readers

3.2.1 Procedural and Methodological Considerations for the Interview Analysis

The core element of qualitative content analysis is the category system. The analytical categories are formed after an intensive and repeated reading of the material, the researcher's own theoretical prior knowledge and by the research questions.³¹⁴ The analytical method is inductive, where the reasoning works from specific observations leading to broader conclusions that are considered probable, giving room for the fact that the conclusion may not be accurate.³¹⁵ The biblical text used for the interviews also implies certain categories. The so-called “anchor examples” (i.e. quotations) are selected from the interview material and analysed.³¹⁶

A new analytical method has been tried in this research because the intention of this short empirical study aims to answer two questions, “With what knowledge, the Indian readers approach Lk 10:38-42?” and “how do they develop the understanding process in interpreting the text?” One could answer the first question from the content of the interviews but the answer to the second question is a difficult task because it is impossible to completely

³¹⁴C. Schmidt, 2004, 253; P. Mayring, *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken* (SBLSP), Weinheim ¹¹2010; The term ‘material’ refers to the fully and literally transcribed interviews.

³¹⁵Cf. P. Mayring, *Qualitative Content Analysis*, in: FLICK/KARDORFF/STEINKE (Ed.), *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London 2004, 268.

³¹⁶See Appendix IV for interview transcripts.

comprehend the mind of the reader. But both these questions are addressed with the help of the two aspects of cognitive turn: (a) The description of the pre-stored knowledge (*Beschreibung des Vorwissens*) and (b) the description of the understanding processes (*Beschreibung des Verstehensprozesses*). The analysis of the pre-stored knowledge of the interview participants and the methods they use to interpret Lk 10:38-42 will be helpful in this research to understand how the actual readers in an everyday context in India interact with biblical texts. The following section discusses the two aspects and their relevance for the analysis of the interviews.

(a) The description of the pre-stored knowledge: The patterns of human understanding are often separated and are distinguished as “frames and scripts.”³¹⁷ A short re-cap on Frames, the declarative knowledge and Scripts, the procedural knowledge: “Frames” help to identify certain prototypical understandings of an expression like, bird, dessert, chair, pilot and so on, and their semantic understanding is modified or intensified, when used or mentioned in a text. This declarative knowledge is usually cultural-bound, and the meaning is built from one’s own life experience. Based on this pre-stored knowledge, a reader reconstructs the setting and the characters in the story. Besides the “frames”, the declarative knowledge, the readers also use the “scripts”, which is a procedural knowledge. There are three different types of scripts: ‘situational’, ‘instrumental’ and ‘personal’. Situational scripts contain our knowledge of what to expect in everyday situations, (e.g. going to a restaurant, taking the bus, visiting a doctor). Instrumental scripts are about how someone does something (e.g. driving a car, interpreting a text). Personal scripts are about how a person adopts a character role in a particular situation (e.g. loving mother, jealous brother and so on).³¹⁸ Such scripts explain how a respective reader connects different sentences logically and creates the narrative world.

The interviewees in the process of interpreting the text used certain frames and scripts. The setting of the story and the characters in the story are understood based on a particular culturally pre-stored knowledge. Since the interviewees as Tamilians belong to a similar socio-cultural background, the frames that they used to derive the semantic meaning for certain expressions in the text were quite similar, but they showed differences in the process of understanding the text.

³¹⁷S. Finnern, 2010.

³¹⁸Cf. J. Gavins, Art. Scripts and Schemata, in: RENT.

The *first* frame, where they all had a similar view is about the house in an Indian village context. This was important for them to understand the setting of the story. According to the Tamil Bible, Martha welcomed/received Jesus into her house, which was located in a village.³¹⁹ The interviewees with the mental picture of a house in an Indian village could relate well to the setting of the story. A typical village house will have a small living space. In many instances, the living space is uncomfortably small or restricted and a portion of the living room is used for cooking. Similarly, the setting of the house of Martha and Mary living in a village where Jesus was received was imagined as a small space. One of the interviewees, Priya, said: “Martha could have listened to the Lord simultaneously while she was cooking” (Interview 7). This statement reflects that the interviewee had in mind a picture of her own house with limited space where one can hear another person from any corner of the house.

The *second* frame is associating women with the preparation of meals in the context of hospitality. In the Tamil Bible, the *διακονία* of Martha is described as Martha being involved in many works. The interviewees had no confusion over the description of Martha and it was understood that Martha was busy preparing meals, having received Jesus as her guest.³²⁰ Here the interviewees had the pre-stored knowledge of their own cultural set up where women at home usually engage themselves with the task of cooking for the guests as part of their tradition.

Excursus I: The Concept of “Hospitality” in Tamil Culture

Some of the cultural factors such as language, food, clothing, adherence to social norms (e.g. caste system, practice of dowry system (Mitgift), male child preference etc.) remain strong among the Tamilians irrespective of their religious affiliation. One important cultural aspect which is relevant for analysing the interviews is to know the importance of hospitality among the Tamilians and the role of women in particular. Hospitality in Tamil is “Virunthombal”, which means the “act of offering food.” A famous couplet from a first-century Tamil poet is always remembered and reminded among Tamilians. It says, “the purpose of nurturing wealth and leading a family life, is to be able to be hospitable to guests.”³²¹

³¹⁹The Greek text that I am using for the exegetical study does not include the phrase “into the house.” For discussion on this textual variant see 4.2.2.

³²⁰The interviewees were not aware of the other semantic meaning of “serving” used by feminists in the official sense. See 2.3.1.

³²¹Thiruvalluvar, Thirukkural 9:81, <https://thirukkural133.wordpress.com/2011/11/26/chapter-9-hospitality> (Accessed on 02-10-2015). In German it is translated by Karl Graul as: “Alles Beharren im Haus und Warten des Haushalts hat zum Zweck Gast-Pfleg und Almosen-Spende.” See K. Graul, *Der Kural des Tiruvalluver. Ein gnomisches Gedicht über die drei Strebeziele des Menschen*, Osnabrück 1969, 18.

The term “Virunthombal” implies a strong obligation to offer sumptuous meals. It is considered highly impolite to send away guests without offering them something to drink or eat. The offering of food to strangers and guests is an age-old tradition and is still an integral part of Tamil culture. It is customary to ask the guest, if they would like to have some food before they leave. It is popularly believed and practiced even today that on receiving guests, the host is supposed to prepare many varieties of dishes in order to honour the guests. It is also widely in practice that some guests are even honoured with gifts by the hosts. Hospitality as a cultural phenomenon among the Tamilians is an honourable and a magnificent act, especially when it comes to hosting important guests. In the Tamil context, women play an important role as hosts in shouldering the responsibility of preparing and serving meals for the guest, a strong stereotypical expectation ascribed to women by society.

The *third* frame is the concept of master-student relationship in the Indian context. The description of Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to him, is understood as an act of a master-disciple relationship. This understanding is based on the ancient Indian guru-shishya tradition, where the students (*shishyas*) learnt from the teachers (*gurus*). While learning, the students were usually positioned at the feet of their gurus as a sign of obedience and submissiveness.³²² This pre-stored knowledge about teacher/master-student/disciple relationship helped the interviewees imagine Mary at the feet of Jesus as a disciple of Jesus. This picture of Mary with Jesus is interpreted as an act of spiritual exercise. In an everyday context in India, the act of meditation and prayer is usually expressed as spending time at the feet of God. So, the phrase ‘Mary, sitting at the feet of the Lord’ is understood by the interviewees as ‘Mary sitting at the feet of *God*’.

Excursus II: The Concept of “Gurukula” Method in the Indian Education System

One of the ancient systems of education in India is known as Gurukula, where the students learnt from the *gurus* (teachers) in a *kula* (home). This was the popular educational system in India until the beginning of the British colonial rule in India in 1858.³²³ In the Indian context, the teacher-student relationship is held in high esteem, even today. In an Indian village context, a pastor or a preacher or a missionary, as a teacher of religious education visiting a family is well received and is treated as a special guest. Gurukula system was a very strong hierarchical system where the students sat at the feet of the master and had their education. It was traditionally boys who were at the feet of the male teacher. The hierarchical part of this relationship is still maintained and accepted in the Indian context. Because of the influence of Western education girls are now included in this model of learning.

³²²See Excursus II.

³²³Cf. <http://www.theindianhistory.org/gurukul-system-in-ancient-india.html> (Accessed on 20-08-16); One of the historical theological colleges in Tamil Nadu is named after this concept as Gurukul Lutheran Theological College. Interestingly, the institution was named “Gurukul” in 1931 by the first principal of the college, Johannes Sandegren, from the Leipzig Evangelical Lutheran Mission. Cf. <http://www.gltc.edu/overview> and <https://www.lmw-mission.de/missionar-186.html> (Accessed on 20-08-2016).

Even today with the modernized schooling system, this concept of teacher-student hierarchy is strongly internalised. In the context of Christianity, there is space for both boys and girls in receiving religious education in the church Sunday schools. But when it comes to socialisation, the gender discrimination is practiced. In the present Indian context, in a class room situation at schools, women teachers outnumber male teachers and the same hierarchical structure is in practice, where both boys and girls are expected to be obedient and submissive to their teachers. In a religious context in India, women leaders and priests are highly recognised in Protestant Christianity in comparison to other religious faiths. In today's modern context, although 'sitting at the feet' is not literally practiced, the idea of being submissive to the teacher is still a strong cultural practice. But it is difficult to answer whether men express an attitude of submissiveness to women pastors when gender and caste intersect. E.g. it is very unlikely that men from an oppressive caste would be submissive to a woman pastor from an oppressed caste.

The *fourth* frame is the canonical knowledge of the interviewees. The interviewees revealed their canonical knowledge on biblical verses by referring frequently to other texts in the Bible with which they filled the gaps in Lk 10:38-42. They relied on other biblical verses and formed a hypertext to construct the meaning of the text.

The *fifth* frame is the knowledge about Jesus, which is based on a strong traditional belief which makes them see Jesus as 'God' and 'Saviour of humanity', who interacted with Martha and Mary. Interviewees' understanding of Jesus plays a vital role in the interpretation of the text. Jesus is seen as a fatherly figure with authority over the whole family. He is seen as a figure who dictates their path through his teaching. They were comfortable in addressing Jesus as God, Lord and even 'Papa Yesu'. The acceptance of Jesus as God in the story makes the reader hesitant to read the text critically or question the role of Jesus although they feel his behaviour appears to be unjust towards Martha. They read the story not as a narrative through the eyes of the external narrator but place themselves in the context of the story and read the story from the point of view of Jesus.

(b) The Description of the Process of Understanding: Text-understanding always combines top-down processing in which the reader's pre-stored knowledge structures are directly activated to incorporate new items of information, and bottom-up-processing, in which bits of textual information are kept in working memory separately and integrated into an overall representation at a later point in time. Top-down and bottom-up processing continually interact in the reading process at all levels: from the decoding of the graphic signs

to the understanding of the words, sentence structure and the contents of longer sections.³²⁴ The differentiation between top-down and bottom-up processing is of major importance for character-reception by the interviewees. On the textual side, all direct or indirect sources of characterising information can lead to the integration of new aspects into the model or to the modification of existing ones. On the reader's side, practically everything he/she knows about the world can be used in reception.³²⁵

Every society or group within a society, has a set of assumptions about human behaviour that meet with a high degree of agreement and may lead to social stereotypes. Such assumptions function as personality theories.³²⁶ The interviewees have applied personality theories to the understanding of the literary characters Martha and Mary because they found that the character's traits agree with their social knowledge structures. They were able to understand the setting of the story quickly and effortlessly because it resembles a stereotypical social scene or "script." The social interaction which creates schematic structures of knowledge allows us to understand situations, but they may also create social stereotypes that can have negative effects on social life.³²⁷ Besides the knowledge-related structures, emotions play a crucial role in text-understanding and especially in character-reception.

Some relevant information about the different versions of Tamil Bible used by the Tamil Protestant Christians and the relevance of the Bible in their day to day life will be helpful for the analysis of the interviews.

3.2.2 The Bible Among Tamil-Speaking Protestant Christians

In Tamil, '*Parisutha Vedagamam*' literally means 'Holy Bible'. The history of the translation of the Tamil Bible began with the arrival of the German missionary, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg in 1706.³²⁸ His translation work was completed by another German missionary, Benjamin Schultze and the first Tamil Bible was published in 1728 and it was later revised and published as a standard Tamil version in 1777. Later, with the establishment of the Bible

³²⁴R. Schneider, 2001, 611.

³²⁵Ibid.

³²⁶Personality theories provide both knowledge for efficient top-down processing and labels for the designation of person types or psychological dispositions.

³²⁷Cf. Ibid. 612.

³²⁸U. Sandgren, *The Tamil New Testament and Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg*, Uppsala 1991; S. Kulandran, *A History of the Tamil Bible*, Bangalore 1967. For an updated information see the official web page of the Bible Society of India, http://www.bsind.org/tamil_bible_translations.html (Accessed on 20-06-2017).

Society in India, a revision committee was appointed with Henry Bower as the chief translator in 1857. After prolonged negotiations, a mutually accepted version of the whole Bible was published by the Bower committee in 1871. This version of the Bible known as the “Bower translation” is presently used widely among Tamil-speaking Protestant Christians. A common language translation, ‘*Thiruviviliyam*’, another expression for Holy Bible, was brought out in 1995 which is in circulation now but is not widely distributed.³²⁹

As a pastor, who has been in dialogue with lay people and making regular visits to Christian families in my congregation, I would like to highlight some of the interesting and strong ways in which devout Tamil Christians relate themselves to the Bible in their everyday life. The common belief among lay people is that every word in the Bible is holy and by reading, meditating and following the verses, one can lead a holy life. The common belief is also that any critical approach to the Scripture is profane. Various portions of the Bible are memorized by heart and can be recited by many at any occasion. As a pastor, I was often amazed by the quick reference made to biblical verses by lay people in the congregation. When the preacher makes some Scriptural references, most of the time, it would be the women who turn the pages of the Bible at a lightning-speed and read it aloud. Some of the occasions where the Bible is most intensively used are in study groups, cottage prayer meetings, daily family prayers and in personal devotion.

There are some persons who are criticised for leaving the Bible on the shelves of their houses untouched and only removing it during the visit of the pastor. A few others see the Bible as a lucky charm and randomly refer to biblical verse when making a crucial decision. At such occasions they even quote verses literally to substantiate that the will of God is known to them through the said verses. In some cases, for example, at the time of sickness, the Bible is held and placed on the body of a person to acquire a miraculous cure. Among Protestant Christians, the Bible as the word of God plays a vital role in liturgical use. Although, we have innumerable examples of transformations of lives through the reading and reflection of the Bible, some interpretations have also led to superstitious beliefs, as some believe that taking the Bible literally has magical powers. Some believe in promise texts and hang selected verses on the wall and paint them on the windscreen of their cars to be protected from evil.

³²⁹It was for the first time that all the members of the revision committee appointed by the Bible Society of India, involved in Translation comprise of native Tamil speakers.

Most of these attitudes could be viewed as a naïve or superstitious way of relating to the Bible.

3.2.3 Background of the Interviewees

The interviewees from the Diocese of Madras include both lay persons and theologically trained women. The interviewees belong to the age group between 25 to 50 years. They are all from the same socio-cultural Tamil-speaking background. Out of the ten women, five are homemakers, one a college student, one a missionary, two are in their first year of theological studies and one is a pastor. The ten participants can be grouped into five categories based on their career because their career background affects the way they approach and understand the text.

- a) Homemakers – Chandini (Interview 1), Cynthia (2), Elizabeth (3), Kavya (4), Silvia (5)
- b) College student – Latha (6)
- c) Missionary - Priya (7)
- d) Pastor – Salomi (8)
- e) Students of Theology – Esmara (9) and Thamarai (10)

Some of them are first generation Christians, which means the family members of that particular generation are the first converts to Christianity from Hinduism. When the interviewees were questioned, they were specifically asked in which context they had heard the story or the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 for the first time. If they had heard it from Sunday school (children Bible school), it is taken to mean that they have been reading the Bible from their childhood. In some cases, although some of them have had an exposure to Bible reading, they have not received any religious teaching from their parents who were new to Christianity. The others follow Christianity for quite a few generations and have had possibilities for religious teaching at home and in the church. Thus, Christians from the same church background show differences in the understanding of the Scripture based on the time they started their religious education.

In Tamil society (and in India in general), the argument that women are disrespected, marginalised and treated lower than men, will be refuted by many Indians in the present context, where number of women gaining economic independence is on the rise. There is a tendency to give examples of women holding higher positions in the society although these numbers remain significantly low in a male-dominated society. It is always difficult to clearly

categorise the discrimination of women based on gender, caste, creed, economic dependence and literacy level. Therefore, the concept of intersectionality can be used to demarcate how various categories of women face multiple conflicting experiences of subordination.³³⁰ Instead of examining gender, ethnicity, class, age and sexuality as separate categories, intersectionality explores how these categories mutually construct one another.³³¹ It is important to understand how gender intersects with other categories. Intersectionality helps us to focus on those who are at the bottom of various hierarchies. By use of intersectionality it also becomes clear that not all men are better off than women.³³² Since the interview process has to do with the reading and interpreting of the text, the women who were interviewed are all literates. Although the interviewees are mainly Dalits from the villages,³³³ it is important to note that all the participants, irrespective of their caste background had a formal education, especially the lay women were able to read and interpret a biblical text.³³⁴

3.2.4 Interpretation of Luke 10:38-42 by Tamil Christian Women

The interviewees were made to read the text aloud and after having read the text, they either summarised what they read, or they began to explain what they understood from the reading. Their responses are presented based on their views of the roles of Martha, Mary and Jesus in the story and their understanding of the dialogue between Martha and Jesus.

³³⁰Intersectionality has its background in feminist approaches to counteract discrimination and inequalities. The main advancement of this approach is that instead of looking at various sources of discrimination separately, intersectionality will grasp the relationship between socio-cultural categories and identities; for instance, gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion and age. M. B. Kratzow, H. Moxnes, Introduction. Cultural Complexity and Intersectionality in the Study of the Jesus Movement, in: *BibInt* 18 (2010), 309; The subsequent essays in this issue use intersectionality as an analytical perspective.

³³¹See E. Schüssler Fiorenza, Introduction. Exploring the Intersections of Race, Gender, Status, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies, in: NASRALLAH (Ed.), *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings. Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies*, Minneapolis 2009, 4–5.

³³²See for detailed discussion M. B. Kratzow, Asking the Other Question. An Intersectional Approach to Galatians 3:28 and the Colossian Household Codes, in: *BibInt* 18 (2010), 388.

³³³Dalit women belong to the lower rung of the Indian society and face multiple discrimination based on caste, class and gender. Although there are women of other castes, it is predominantly Dalits who are members in the Diocese of Madras. It is important to note that the identity of a Dalit woman is determined based on intersectionality. It is to mention that there are other groups who are discriminated and ostracized in the society irrespective of the caste. The worst discriminated in the societal hierarchy are the illiterate, economically poor Dalit women and when I tried to interview these women, they had difficulty to relate their thinking to the text.

³³⁴As per the Tamil Nadu Social Development Report (2000) released by Social Watch - Tamil Nadu, nearly 80% of Dalits in Tamil Nadu still live in villages. While overall, in Tamil Nadu 40% of the total population remain illiterate, as high as 60% of Dalits remain illiterate. Again, when compared to a nearly 50% literacy rate for Non- Dalit women in Tamil Nadu, not even 30% of Dalit women have become literate. See http://dotcue.net/swtn/upload_newfiles/7.a.Dalits_in_Tamilnadu.pdf; <http://swtn.org/public.php> (Accessed on 06-09-2016).

The interviewees attempted to visualise the characters with the available information from the text by associating the characters to their own social and cultural set up. The interviewees as women exhibited a personal and emotional bond with the characters Martha and Mary while reflecting on the meaning of the story. In a real sense, they were reading their own situation in the text. The 'traditional homemaker' identified herself with Martha and understood her difficulty with household chores, whereas Priya, the missionary who spends more time in evangelical work outside the house, expressed that the role of Martha as secondary. All the interviewees explained that the actions of Martha and Mary are in opposition to each other: worldly vs. spiritual; 'serving food' vs. 'sitting at the feet'. Priya expressed the following view distinctly: "Mary sat at the feet of the Lord and gave importance to spiritual things. Martha gave importance to serving food and she was worldly."

Some, like the missionary Priya, found fault with Martha's request which did not give priority to listening and critiqued her for disturbing her sister Mary. Other respondents like the homemakers expressed Martha's request in asking for assistance in her house work to be quite normal. Cynthia for example, found Martha's anger to be just. Latha as the eldest daughter in her family identified with Martha who expressed the difficulty in dealing with the household chores alone. She said: "The elder sister (Martha) is working alone and the younger sister (Mary) is relaxing. I am an elder sister and I know how difficult it is to do the household chores alone." One of the informational gaps in the text, filled by the interviewees with their own ideas, is the content of Jesus' conversation with Mary. Chandini said: "The biblical text says, Mary was listening to Jesus and this listening is interpreted as Mary and Jesus talking about eternal life."

The twist in the story occurs with the response of Jesus, where Jesus instead of obliging to Martha's request points out to Mary and affirms that Mary has chosen the 'good portion' and that only 'one thing is necessary'. Other than the missionary and the student of theology, the rest of the respondents found the phrases, 'one thing is necessary' and 'Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her' as important phrases in the text. The missionary found the words of Jesus to Martha as important: 'Martha, Martha you are worried about many things'. She found these words of Jesus consoling her at her times of distress. So, Jesus as God understands her worries. One of the student theologians preferred the same phrase but for a different reason, where she sees that "Jesus communicates to

Martha saying, why you take up the entire burden on yourself? Allow God to work in your life!”

Esmara expressed the struggle in accepting Jesus’ response to Martha:

I always felt that Martha’s role was acceptable, and she was right in her attitude because when we have guests in our house, hospitality is our first preference, be it a known person or a stranger. We receive them and offer them first water to drink and we will not immediately sit down to chat with the guest, without serving them. According to me, serving the guest should be the first priority.

The same opinion is also expressed as follows:

For me Martha is important. Mary might have sat at the feet of Jesus, but it is not clear whether Mary has really learnt something from Jesus.

Priya found Jesus to be a saviour in the story. According to her,

The Lord is concerned that her (Martha’s) soul should not get lost and saves her soul.

Latha saw Jesus as a solution to all our problems. She said,

Mary was not worried about anything because she believed that Jesus will take care of everything.

The missionary interpreted the response of Jesus as,

What the Lord means here is, ‘seek me first and importance to food is secondary’. ‘Man, shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord’. We can eat or do what we want later but the priority should be given to God’s kingdom and God’s verses for our spiritual life. But sometimes we think in a worldly way that we must serve the guest first and then sit down to talk. According to me, one of us in the family should give complete priority to God, as I do (as missionary).

She further says: “The Lord is concerned that her (Martha’s) soul should not get lost and saves her soul.”

For other interviewees the ‘good portion’ and ‘the one thing necessary’ meant: Bible verses; message about the kingdom of God; faith in God; life after death. Chandini expressed: “Mary has chosen the good portion, it makes me to self-examine and see whether I have made mistakes by not giving priority to God. I have guilty conscience for not being like Mary.” According to Chandini, Mary was the one looking for the good portion, but Martha was living a worldly life. Mary was talking with Jesus about eternal life. Here she strongly confirms the dualism of “wordly life” and “eternal life.” The two ‘spheres’ are completely separated for her. This is an interesting and even problematic theological interpretation which - according to my understanding displays a typical naïve confidence in the future; that God somehow will care for the people, even if they are not caring for themselves.

Here is how some of them judged the response of Jesus.

Elizabeth: “Martha asking for help is right, but God cannot be wrong. So, his response has to be accepted.”

Kavya: “His response is not appropriate in this context. If the Lord says, he must be right.”

Latha: “Jesus is right when he means that household job is not important when it comes to listening to him.”

Claudia: “Jesus is right because he is the Lord.”

This is a very interesting statement! Some of the interviewees use it – and it clearly shows that they don’t really like the answer and the behaviour of Jesus, but they don’t dare to criticise him. Because he is God, he must be right – and it seems that they don’t reflect on what it would really mean to them, and whether they would follow what they express here.

Chandini: “I see Jesus is giving a positive response. I think that Jesus communicated to Martha, saying, Martha, ‘you are confused and troubled with many things’, but Mary is not bothered about anything. Mary is sure that the living word is important and for those who seek that living word, all other things in life would get easier.”

Some were not happy with the response of Jesus. The theological students were not comfortable in saying that Jesus’ response to Martha was acceptable. They felt that Jesus was judging Martha from his point of view and not from the point of view of Martha.

Esmara: “Martha is right in her attitude, but I see Jesus expects a spiritual attitude from Martha. What Jesus expects is to search for food for the soul. He meant not to give importance for physical needs.”

Thamarai: “What Jesus means here is that all what is of concern to Martha is not of any importance to him. Jesus is speaking from his perspective that what Martha is doing is not right but for Martha from her perspective, what she was doing was right. I see that Jesus is degrading Martha, which I see as inappropriate.”

Some expressed that the response of Jesus is not clear:

Esmara: “Martha requests for help and expects a positive response but Jesus gives a contrary response and that is disturbing. Why didn’t he send Mary to help Martha? The confusing part is ‘one thing is necessary’. It is not clear, what that ‘one thing’ could be. I am not sure for which I need to give importance in my life.”

Priya questioned: “Why is the Lord not understanding the role of Martha? Hospitality is also important. In another instance in Simon’s house, he is not happy that Simon did not treat him properly as a guest. The Lord complains that Simon has failed in his duties as host – that Simon failed to wash the feet of the Lord.”

The women who fully understood the burden of household work and found the request of Martha as just, were compelled to accept a response which did not match their expectation as readers. But the character Jesus is the ultimate authority (Lord) and the readers’ focus moved from Martha to the response of Jesus. Except for one theological student, all others read the story from the point of Jesus and the narrator and said what Martha did was not right! They used terms like ‘complaining’, ‘hurting Jesus’, ‘disturbing Mary’, that devalue the role of Martha. While interviewing Thamarai, I see a shift in her thinking, when she saw the whole event from Jesus’ and Martha’s perspective. According to her, from Jesus’ perspective, “what Martha was doing was not right and from Martha’s perspective what she was doing was right as a host.” Towards the end of the interview, she changed her opinion and said, Jesus may not be wrong though he appears to give an ‘unacceptable’ response.

(i) Relevance of the Text for Practical Living

One of the guiding questions which I found to have cultural relevance is Jesus’ visit to the two women. There were differing views from the respondents about receiving Jesus into a house of two women. One of the theologians justified Martha’s reception of Jesus saying, “as a regular visitor of the family, it is acceptable for Martha to receive Jesus into her house”, whereas another theologian expressed that “Martha should not have received Jesus.” The home makers (respondents) unanimously agree that this act of Martha is quite right because, “she receives God into her house and not a human person”, or “papa Jesus can be accepted into the house.” Latha opines that “when the Lord visits our home, it is important to talk to him, more than cooking. It is an opportunity to know more about spiritual things, when we talk with the Lord.” Esmara too felt that “It is acceptable in the case of Jesus visiting Martha and Mary because he must be a regular visitor. It is also because as a friend of Lazarus, he became close with that family.”

Interestingly, the respondents showed hesitation in receiving a man into a house where two women are living with no male counterparts. The fear is that the neighbourhood would speak badly of the women in such a situation. One homemaker said, “if a man visits with brotherly

affection, it can be accepted.” For example, it is acceptable for other men involved in ministry, such as pastors, bishops, missionaries and so on to visit. Although it is not plausible in their community for women to receive a man as a guest, Jesus and other religious persons, however, are seen as exceptional as they would not misbehave with women! However, Cynthia felt otherwise: “No, it is not acceptable. The society will speak badly of the women. But it is acceptable here (*in the story*) because Martha and Mary are children of God and therefore, they will not do anything wrong. Even when other men visit them, they will pray and talk about God.” Esmara felt, “It is acceptable when it is a known person. Women allow only persons known to them.” Priya reflected that “If the women in the house are of good characters, even if a man visits them, they will not be spoken badly of by the neighbours. If a man is a Christian, he would behave well with the women and if at all he happens to be a bad person, God will protect the women in the house.”

Some scholars have interpreted Jesus’ visit as a questionable behaviour in a Palestinian village. For instance, Witherington has written:

[...] being alone with two women who were not one’s relatives was considered questionable behaviour by the Rabbis. Thus, not only the role Mary assumes, but also the teaching task Jesus performs is in contrast to what was expected of a Jewish man and woman.³³⁵

For Chandini Jesus’ words to Martha seemed to resonate with her own distraction with personal activities which makes her postpone her time for God:

We should not postpone our time when it comes to praying and listening to the word of God. For example, when it comes to Sunday service, we should attend regularly. We should not postpone things related to spirituality. First, we need to seek Jesus, we have to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto us. Our life and everything will be perfect when we listen to the word of God.

(ii) The Aspect of the Faith in God

The following are the statements in which the interviewees expressed their faith in God with the belief that God is authoritative in solving their problems and in caring for all their needs and thus they expressed the need to give priority to God.

³³⁵B. Witherington, 1990, 100.

Kavya: “Mary was free of worries and she believed that Jesus will take care of everything.”

Priya: “The Lord is concerned that her soul should not be lost and saves her soul.” ... “Lord feels bad that Martha was not ready to taste the love of God and is concerned about worldly things. If I backslide in my life and go away from the Lord, I personally realise that God is hurt by my behaviour.” ... “God understands me and these words that he spoke to Martha are consoling for me. God knows my weakness and understands us, and he will take care of everything. At the same time, we should make efforts to choose the best portion just as Mary did by sitting at the feet of the Lord.” ... “We must quickly finish our cooking and then listen to the word, sitting at the feet of the Lord. She argues on the “double-burden” of women.

(iii) Other Scriptural References for the Understanding of the Text

Chandini interpreted ‘the good portion’ with reference to Psalm 34:8: “taste and see that the Lord is good”. For Chandini, “If Martha had known what the good portion is, she would not have done her work, whereas Mary had that awareness and longing, she was keenly listening to Jesus to receive the good portion.” She also referred to the verse in Matt 6:33: “We need to seek Jesus, we have to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto us. Our life and everything will be perfect when we listen to the word of God. “

As a missionary, Priya was well-versed in keeping in memory several biblical verses and for the understanding of Lk 10:38-42, she referred to several biblical verses randomly. For example, referring to the passage where Simon, the Pharisee fails in his duty as the host and was questioned by Jesus, she raises the question that if Jesus expected proper hospitality, why was he not accepting Martha’s hospitality? Priya understood this story in relation to three other passages in the New Testament. One is the mention of Martha and Mary in John 11 and 12. The second reference is Matthew 6: 33 ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God’. The third reference was ‘Man shall not live by bread alone but by the word of God’ (Mat 4:4). Priya also quoted several biblical references at various stages of the dialogue. For instance, she refers to the resurrection of Lazarus and identifies him as the brother of Martha and Mary from the Gospel of John. Quoting from the Gospel of Matthew she expressed that when it comes to preference, it should be in search for spirituality, which is ‘seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added to you’. She even quotes who an ideal woman is from Proverbs - ‘The wise woman builds her home’. (Proverbs 14:1); ‘a wise woman is a crown to her husband’. (Proverbs 12:4). She also refers to Simon, who fails

in his responsibility as a host to wash the feet of Jesus. She sees that Jesus contradicts himself because on the one hand he is not happy with Martha who gives preference to hospitality and on the other hand he is also not happy with Simon's behaviour who fails to show gestures of hospitality. She then quotes a verse from the letter to Thessalonians, 'Pray without ceasing'. And from the letter to the Philippians: 'I have learnt to be content in whatever situation' (4:11). She moves on to also quote 'Blessed are the humble in spirit' (Matt5:3) and 'Blessed are those who thirst for righteousness' (Matt5:6); and phrases like 'God is not an angry God', 'taste and see that the Lord is good'. At the beginning of the interview, Priya was comfortable with the response of Jesus but later she started wondering. She said: "Why does the Lord not understand the role of Martha? Hospitality is also important." She also concludes that "It is because of the importance given to the Lord and because they loved the Lord that he brought their brother Lazarus back to life. When the Lord himself comes looking for us to our homes, he should be given importance."

3.3 Evaluations and Conclusions

The pre-stored knowledge of the interviewees in terms of frames and scripts helped them to picturize the narrative world of Lk 10:38-42. The socio-cultural, canonical and Christian traditional background served as a common background for the interviewees to interpret Lk 10:38-42. The semantic understanding of certain words and phrases is also culturally bound. But the interviewees differed in their interpretation of the text and the way they oriented themselves with the roles of the characters in the story.

Although the women were convinced that what Martha did was right, and the response of Jesus was surprising, they could not say outright that Jesus was wrong. The response of Jesus was uncomfortable to most of them, but they forced themselves to accept the response of Jesus. In accepting Jesus as God the interviewees showed hesitation to read the text critically or question Jesus' answer, although, to them, his behaviour appeared to be unjust towards Martha. The interviewees as readers identified Jesus as God because of the christological confession in the letter to the Philippians (2:10-11): "that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

During the interviews, one could sense the struggle of the respondents in prioritising 'listening' to 'serving'. When they responded saying, the role of Mary represented spirituality, they had their own definitions of what is expected from a person to be more spiritual. The answer was, spending more time in prayer, reading the Bible, being active in the church, not uttering abusive words, listening to the word of God and so on. However, at no point of any interview, did they mention that women can give up their traditional roles as homemakers or that men can share household responsibilities. They felt that for women both attitudes are necessary, and the priority is to be more spiritual. The results of the interview strongly point to the importance of the context of the reader, in serving as the backdrop for the perspective of each interviewee. The interviewees conceived the literary characters as a mental model in the reading process through a combination of information from textual and mental sources. The dynamic reading effects of character-reception involve their social cognition and emotional response.

The interviewees in the first place unanimously distinguished two realms of life, worldly and spiritual. They differ in their responses in prioritising and evaluating the conflicting roles of Martha and Mary. As the story unfolds, they quickly identify with Martha and understand her need for assistance. My observation during the process of interviews is the struggle of the women to make choices for their own lives. Surprisingly, towards the end of the interview, some of them showed their hesitancy to see the role of Martha positively because of the response of Jesus.

The interviewees are aware that as women they cannot escape household tasks and dedicate themselves completely to spiritual affairs. They find that Martha is right in asking for assistance. But they are puzzled with the response of Jesus. Although the response of Jesus does not match their expectation as well as Martha's, they still accept the response of Jesus, claiming that Jesus is God and his response can never be wrong.

The interviewees believe that the story in Lk 10:38-42 is a real historical incident. They believed that the sequence of the chapters and books of the Bible are an orderly account of a historical event. Their belief is also somehow prophetic as there is an expectation that something similar to what is narrated in the Bible will happen in their life at some point of time. In one of the responses, an eschatological claim was made when Jesus is expected to physically visit one day—that Jesus will personally and physically visit someday in future.

Mary is taken as the best example of being applauded by Jesus for silently listening to his teachings. So, women in the church and at home as well as in society are expected to practice the virtue of silence. The example of Mary is often quoted to encourage women to aspire for ‘higher goals’. At the same time, women who are engaged in household chores are usually neglected and not recognised for their efforts in caring for the family. Therefore, women bound with traditional roles are expected to strive hard to be more like Mary and not like Martha.

In people’s exegesis the theological meaning is not usually the focus; it rather informs the reading process on a more general level. The focus is on using the Bible to interpret present life situations. As Mesters points out, the Bible is used as “an image, symbol, or mirror of what is happening now.”³³⁶ Thus the Bible acts as a mirror for life, that is, people compare it with their own life circumstances. Some of the interviewees were first generation converts, which implies that they did not have religious education from their parents. They listened to sermons and instructions for a Christian way of life from male pastors, missionaries and catechists. The responses of the interviewees amply illustrate that the influence of Christian doctrines and ecclesial traditions on biblical interpretation cannot be denied.

The interviewees have a structural approach to the text and placed the two women in strong contrasts. The women are seen as types representing worldly and spiritual things. ‘Serving’ by Martha is seen as a worldly affair and ‘sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to him’ as a spiritual affair. During the interview, one could realise how the women pictured a busy traditional homemaker in their own context and fitted that picture to Martha. They strongly associated themselves with the character Martha which mirrored their own efforts in the household tasks. Just as the medieval writers did not doubt the historical or literal truth of the story, the interviewees believed that what Jesus physically did in a small town in Palestine, he would do one fine day in their everyday life.³³⁷

The interviewees could not find fault with Martha when she asked for assistance. It is quite understandable that Martha asked for assistance. But some expressed shock with the response of Jesus who turned down the expectation of Martha and the reader by not sending Mary to

³³⁶C. Mesters, 1993, 70.

³³⁷This reflects the thought of the eleventh century commentator Bruno of Segni, referring to Lk 10:38-42. “Whatever He does anywhere is done with meaning. For what He did physically at that time in a certain town, He does every day in the holy church.” Bruno of Segni, *In Lucam*, I 10, 22 in: *Patrologia Latina*, 165, 390c, cited in: G. Constable, 1995, 4.

assist Martha. But in no time, they accepted the response of Jesus as right although they are not convinced with his reaction towards Martha. Interestingly few of them mentioned that such a response is quite unacceptable from any man other than Jesus!

The results of the interview reflect that the dichotomised interpretation of Lk 10:38-42 created a sort of a trap for the behavioural attitude and this trap was well represented in the interviews. On the one hand the women felt obliged to agree with the 'traditional' interpretation of the pericope that a 'good' and 'pious' woman should give priority to the 'hearing'-role, i.e. spending more time for praying, going to church, attending prayer meetings etc. On the other hand, their common sense tells them that this is not 'realistic', as they have to also prove to be a 'good' housewife by caring for the whole family and of course, also for guests and being submissive to their husbands.

My observation during the process of interviews is the struggle of the women to make choices for their lives. The role representations of Martha and Mary are seen as essential characteristics for an ideal woman in a patriarchal society. These role concepts according to them are powerfully expressed in this text because it is endorsed by Jesus himself by acknowledging the role of Mary. The analysis and the interpretation of the interviews reflect the social pressure with which a woman has to live. The cultural expectations are so strong that she is constantly under pressure to prove herself that she could excel in the qualities of both Martha and Mary simultaneously. Most of them have heard this story in forms of sermons in the church and the tendency of the preachers and pastors to use this story to define an ideal woman. According to them, an ideal woman should serve the men like Martha and also be pious like Mary.

Only one interviewee seems to be on her way to transcend the usual interpretation of the story and transgress the traditional boundaries in which this pericope is trapped. She actually comes very near to the interpretation which is advocated for in this thesis. Salomi argues:

“The lesson that we learn from Martha is that we should not compare ourselves with anybody and we should be ourselves. If you want to do some job, just do it and if you don't want to do, don't do. Don't compare with others saying, I am doing so much, and the other person doesn't do as much as I do. If you want to excel at something, just go ahead and don't land up comparing with others, if you are not duly acknowledged for your work. I see this aspect in Martha, i.e., comparing herself to her sister, as negative. When it comes to Mary, I see her

total passiveness as a negative aspect of her behaviour. Jesus Christ has come to their house as guest and if the sisters had good understanding among themselves in sharing the work, there wouldn't have been any complications”.

These deliberations made me wonder, if there is an alternative to the dichotomic interpretation of the pericope. It became evident for me that it is of utmost importance for the interpretation of the Bible to always reflect on the kind of “Lebenswelt” into which we interpret. If the society is still quite patriarchal and dominated with stereotypical roles as it is the case with the Indian society, it is important to question the kind of pre-stored knowledge used in the interpretation of the text. The analyses of the interviews show that the pre-stored knowledge of the lay people is romanticised or idealised. They use a pre-stored knowledge, where the understanding regarding their own social context, their biblical knowledge and their traditional knowledge is internalised without being critically analysed. Especially lay women do not reflect critically on either the textual or the interpretative context.

The above analysis indicates that the text is received in a context of subordination. The understanding of the text is further strengthened and justified with the existing religious and cultural values ascribed to women. It cannot be denied that the understanding of the text as it comes across in these interviews represent the struggle of Christian women at large in India irrespective of caste and class. Although these women are identified as Dalits, their reading cannot be judged as a particular way of Dalit reading. As a researcher, I sense the impact of the text in the lives of women, who are discriminated in the church and in the society. Women who are put in the lowest level of the caste hierarchy are even more discriminated by the impact of the text. For instance, this enforces and normalises a double-burden for a poor Dalit woman put under constant pressure to fulfil the household tasks and at the same time to enrich her pious way of living. From the interview analysis, one could infer that they have internalised the subordinate role of women and find justification for this in biblical texts. This text serves such an intention at its best. What I find disturbing is that women try to shift the roles of Martha and Mary in their lives. On one hand, they find that Martha is involved in something which does not serve a spiritual cause and on the other hand they know for sure that the role of Martha is an inescapable task for any woman who shoulders the responsibility of the families at home.

When I look back at the reception of the text in the past, the Indian understanding of the text comes closer to views reflected during the medieval period. In the first chapter while reviewing the reception of the text in the past, the most prominent phases were the patristic period, the medieval and Reformation period and the impact of the text in the feminist debate. It was during the medieval times that much emphasis was given to the worldly and spiritual lifedichotomy in this text. Furthermore, as it is exclusively about two women, it was easier for women readers to determine how they evaluate their worldly and spiritual lives in the light of this text. The active and contemplative way of living which was expected in the monastic life is also expected in the lives of women, especially homemakers. However, even the interpretation of the text in feminist circles does not seem to have a liberating impact on these women. The interviewees showed no indication of influence by the alternative interpretation of the text suggested by feminists. Feminists claim Martha and Mary were the leaders of the early Christian community whose leadership is suppressed by the male leaders. In the Indian context, the Lukan text on Martha and Mary is received positively without much critique. However, I have tried to critically analyse the reception of the text in the Indian context.

Chapter 4. Exploring the Literary Context of Luke 10:38-42

4.1 Probable Greek Text and English Translation (own)

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, one of the main problems for an exegetical study is finalising an appropriate Greek text. This needs careful consideration of the textual variants in the critical apparatus of a recent edition of a Greek Bible. Therefore, the Greek text for the present exegetical study is finalised by carefully analysing the text critical problems of Luke 10:38-42 from the 28th edition of Nestle-Aland (NA²⁸) Greek Bible.³³⁸ In the 28th edition, the critical apparatus of Lk 10:38-42 shows two changes that significantly affect the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42. Both the changes can be noted in v. 39b.

- (i) the inclusion of ἥ (ἥ καὶ)
- (ii) the replacement of τοῦ Ἰησοῦ for τοῦ κυρίου in the same verse.³³⁹

For a detailed analysis of the text, Luke 10:38-42 has been divided into three parts based on the voice of the narrator and the active role of characters in the story. The first part comprises of the introduction of the event and introduction of the characters as presented by the narrator which is in *indirect speech*. The second and the third parts constitute the dialogue between Martha and Jesus, which is in *direct speech*.

- (i) the introductory scene (vv.38a-40a)
- (ii) the request of Martha (vv.40b-40d) and
- (iii) the response of Jesus (vv.41a-42b)

I Introductory scene

| | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 38a | Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτοῦς | And it happened, as they were travelling, |
| b) | αὐτὸς εἰσῆλθεν εἰς κώμην τινά· | he (Jesus) entered into a certain village. |
| c) | γυνὴ δὲ τις ὀνόματι Μάρθα ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν. | And a certain woman named Martha received him (as her guest). |
| 39a | καὶ τῆδε ἦν ἀδελφὴ καλουμένη Μαριάμ, | And she had a sister called Mary, |
| b) | ἥ καὶ παρακαθεσθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου ἤκουεν τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ. | who (Mary) was also sitting at the feet of Jesus and listened to his word, |
| 40a | ἡ δὲ Μάρθα περιεσπᾶτο περὶ πολλῶν | while Martha was busy with much |

³³⁸See Appendix 1 for a scanned format of NA²⁸ with critical apparatus.

³³⁹The reason for these changes is discussed in detail in 4.2.4 under the analysis of textual variations.

διακονίαν· service.

II Request of Martha

- 40b ἐπιστᾶσα δὲ εἶπεν· And then she (Martha) came up and said,
 c) κύριε, οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἡ ἀδελφή μου “Lord, is it not concerning you that my
 μόνην με κατέλιπεν διακονεῖν; sister left me alone to serve?
 d) εἰπέ οὖν αὐτῇ ἵνα μοι συναντιλάβηται. Therefore, speak to her so that she may help me.”

III Response of Jesus

- 41a ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ ὁ κύριος· But answering, the Lord said to her,
 b) Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and
 περὶ πολλὰ, troubled about many things.
 42a ἐνὸς δὲ ἐστὶν χρεια· But one thing is necessary.
 b) Μαριὰμ γὰρ τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα For Mary chose the good part,
 ἐξελέξατο
 c) ἥτις οὐκ ἀφαιρεθήσεται αὐτῆς. which shall not be taken away from her.”

4.1.1 Comments on the Translation

Some parts of the Greek text are quite challenging to translate because in the process of translation there are many probabilities to translate one particular Greek word or phrase. A careful choice of the textual variants and its translations play an important role in determining the meaning of the text. Some nuanced variations that impact the meaning of the text which the process of translation has to take into account are highlighted below:

1. V.39b: The translation of ἡ καὶ as ‘who also’ brings a totally different scenario in the text indicating that Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus was ‘not alone’ because ‘who also’ implies the possibility of the presence of others who were there to listen to Jesus. The inclusion of ἡ καὶ is found only in NA²⁸.
2. V.40a: The translation ἡ δὲ as ‘while’ instead of ‘but’ avoids the tendency to see the roles of Martha and Mary as contradicting to each other. δέ is placed between two actions happening parallelly and not in opposition to each other: “Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, *while* Martha was busy with much service.”
3. V.40a: περιεσπᾶτο when translated here as ‘busy’ indicates that Martha was busy as a host and the same word if translated as ‘being distracted’ (or) ‘burdened’, pictures Martha in a slightly negative light.

4.2 Analysis of Textual Variations from NA²⁸

A detailed analysis of all the textual variants is helpful in determining the appropriate Greek text for a proper exegetical study. There are nine textual variations for Lk 10:38-42 in NA²⁸. Out of the nine textual variations, only four textual variations, which are crucial in affecting the meaning of the text, are discussed in detail. The other five variants are of less significance and do not affect largely the reading of the text.

- (i) The first problem and the biggest uncertainty which received considerable scholarly attention is the variant in v.42, ‘the response of Jesus to Martha’ (the controversial phrase “one thing is necessary”)³⁴⁰.
- (ii) The second uncertainty is in the inclusion/omission of the phrase ‘in the house’ in v.38.

The other two critical problems which did not receive much scholarly attention, but are found important are:

- (iii) The possibility of the inclusion/omission of the relative pronoun ἥ (v.39)
- (iv) The uncertainties in using the term “κύριος” for Jesus (vv.39 and 41).

4.2.1 ἐνὸς δέ ἐστιν χρεία - “one thing is necessary” (v.42)

This particular phrase which is the response of Jesus to Martha, is clouded with large textual difficulties. There are four possible versions supported by various manuscripts in v.42 following ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ ὁ κύριος· Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά,

| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 | ἐνὸς δέ ἐστιν χρεία | P ^{45.75} C* W Θ* lat sy ^{(c).p.h} sa bo ^{mss} | you are anxious and troubled about many things, <i>but one thing is necessary.</i> |
| 2 | ὀλίγων δέ ἐστιν χρεία ἢ ἐνός. | P ³ κ ² C2 L 070 ^{vid^f} 33. (579) (sy ^{hmg}) bo; Bas | you are anxious and troubled about many things, <i>but few things are necessary or one.</i> |
| 3 | ὀλίγων δέ ἐστιν ἢ ἐνός. | κ* | you are anxious and troubled about many things, <i>but few things are (there) or one.</i> |
| 4 | ὀλίγων δέ χρεία ἐστιν ἢ ἐνός | B (only transposition χρείαἐστιν) | you are anxious and troubled about many things, <i>but few things are necessary or one.</i> |

³⁴⁰Every commentator and exegete on this text has tried to resolve this issue, as the whole meaning of the text lies in the choice of the particular variant. For a critical discussion, see G. D. Fee, One Thing Needful? Luke 10: 42, in: EPP/FEE (Ed.), New Testament Textual Criticism. Its Significance for Exegesis. Essays in Honour of Bruce Metzger, Oxford 1981; A. Baker, One Thing Necessary, in: CBQ 27, 2 (1965).

It is probable that option three could be a scribal mistake. It could be argued that the variants two and four are the products of a conflated reading and that the original text read either, ‘few things are necessary’, or ‘one thing is necessary’. In all the variants ἐνός is present and ὀλίγων is missing in two very early papyri (from the third century and numerous other witnesses). Since variants 3 and 4 are weakly attested, they most likely represent a late corruption of either readings of variants 1 and 2. The textual variation boils down to a choice between two readings (variants 1 and 2): the shorter reading ἐνός δέ ἐστιν χρεία and the longer and difficult reading ὀλίγων δέ ἐστιν χρεία ἢ ἐνός.³⁴¹

The shorter reading, ἐνός δέ ἐστιν χρεία ‘one thing is necessary’, which is a *lectio brevior* can be judged as the best of the other variants. However, Variant 2, ‘a few things are necessary, or only one’ (found in two prominent codices κ and B, from the fourth century) is also seen as capable of explaining all the others. Since the latter reading has considerable external support, as it includes the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus and witnesses from different areas of the Roman Empire, it cannot be easily dismissed.

Applying the external criteria, Fee and Baker argue that both the versions have a strong attestation, quantitatively speaking: “Both variants existed as far back as the second-century in Egypt; both existed frequently outside of Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries and in either case, there is no accident involved and one is clearly the deliberate revision of the other.”³⁴² Since the external evidence is simply indecisive, the critics were led to decide on the probably original text-form from the internal evidence. They had to either opt for the short version for textual reasons³⁴³ or the long version for exegetical reasons.³⁴⁴ It is possible that this textual problem arose because the shorter reading might have appeared too radical to some as it seemed to call for women to put away traditional household chores completely to have the good portion that Mary had. Seim expresses that the longer version might have been preferred because,

... the choice of the variants could have been influenced by the question of whether Martha’s activity can be totally dismissed as devoid of value and unnecessary. For those who cannot bring themselves to sweep Martha aside completely, the longer version with ὀλίγων was the

³⁴¹For an historical overview of this problem, cf. Ibid. 135; G. D. Fee, 1981, 75.

³⁴²See A. Baker, 1965, 135; G. D. Fee, 1981, 75, Fee claims that both variations ἐνόςδέἐστινχρεία and ὀλίγωνδέἐστινχρείαἢἐνός existed.

³⁴³Cf. Ibid. J. Brutscheck, 1986, 5–12.

³⁴⁴Cf. E. Laland, 1959, 74ff.

*most comfortable. They imply that something is said in favour of Martha; her mistake is simply that she bothered with much more than what is necessary.*³⁴⁵

Metzger’s argument is quite convincing that “the absoluteness of ἐνός was softened by replacing it with ὀλίγων (preserved today only in codex 38 and several versions).”³⁴⁶ The replacement or the inclusion of ὀλίγων could be an attempt to show that Martha’s choice is not totally ruled out, but Mary’s is presented as preferable. Based on the semantic argument of Metzger, one could say that the shorter reading ἐνός δέ ἐστιν χρεία is most likely to be the original³⁴⁷ and for theological and literary reasons, it is more likely that Luke balanced πολλά with ἐνός rather than ὀλίγων.³⁴⁸

4.2.2 εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν - “in the house” (v.38)

Although v.38 says that Martha received him (Jesus), it is not specified where she received him. The text has three possible variations. The first variation from NA²⁸ favours the shorter text, which is above all substantiated by the old Egyptian papyri P^{45.75} and important manuscripts such as B

| | | | |
|---|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Μάρθα αὐτόν. ὑπεδέξατο | P ^{45.75} B sa | Martha received him. |
| 2 | Μάρθα αὐτόν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν. ὑπεδέξατο | P ^{3vid} κ*. ¹ C L Ξ 33. 579 | Martha received him into the house. |
| 3 | Μάρθα αὐτόνεις τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς. ὑπεδέξατο | A D K P W ΓΔΘΨ 070 f ^{1.13} 565 ^s . 700. 892. 1241.1424. 2542. / 2211 M lat sy bo; Bas | Martha received him into her house. |

The external criticism stands good for all the three readings. The first reading is supported by the old Egyptian papyri, the second variation is supported by the Alexandrian text types as attested in P^{3vid} κ C L and in minuscule 33 among others, and the third reading is well documented and shows how widespread the witnesses were geographically.

Some scholars note that a possible omission of “into (her) house” might be explained by a hesitation among copyists to attribute leadership of house churches to women, as the longer reading strongly shows Martha as the head of the household. Hentschel claims:

³⁴⁵T. K. Seim, 1994, 104.

³⁴⁶B. M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament. A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament, Stuttgart⁴ 2006, 129.

³⁴⁷I agree with other exegetes and commentators who opt for the shorter reading, although I differ in their interpretation of the text. See J. Brutscheck, 1986, 5–12; H. Schürmann, 1994, 159–160; F. Bovon, 1996, 110–111; Wolter prefers the shorter reading based on the external evidence, see M. Wolter, 2008, 401.

³⁴⁸A. Baker, 1965, 137; Contra: Fee suggests the longer reading to be original.

Angesichts der Beobachtung, dass im Laufe der Entwicklung des Urchristentums die Rolle der Frauen eher begrenzt als gestärkt wurde, geht die Ergänzung vermutlich auf Lk selbst zurück, der Frauen in seinem Evangelium gerne als relativ wohlhabend darstellt, ihr Weglassen entspräche späteren Tendenzen, eine Frau nicht mehr so deutlich als Hausbesitzerin zu charakterisieren.³⁴⁹

Hentschel’s opinion indicates that in early Christianity in the course of time, the role of women was limited rather than strengthened. Since Luke likes to portray women in his Gospel as relatively wealthy, omitting them could be attributed to later tendencies that supported the view that a woman could no longer be clearly characterised as a house owner. Metzger also indicates that there is no apparent motive for the deletion of the phrase “into her house” if it were present in the text originally. On the other hand, ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν seems to call for some appropriate addition, which copyists supplied in various forms, some introducing οἰκίαν or οἶκον, and each with or without αὐτῆς. The full phrase could probably be a scribal completion.³⁵⁰ Since there is no good reason why ‘into her house’ would have been omitted if it was a part of the original document, the shorter reading, Μάρθα ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν, which is both a *lectio brevior* and a *lectio difficilior* is preferred.

4.2.3 The Relative Pronoun [ἧ] (v.39)

The textual status of the relative ἧ is insecure. In v. 39, the critical sign shows that the editors of NA²⁸ are not sure whether to include the relative pronoun ἧ. The possibilities of including or omitting ἧ are shown in the following variants.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ἧ καὶ παρακαθεσθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου | κ ¹ A B* C D K P W ΓΔΘΨ ^{f1.13} 33.565 ^s . 700. 892. 1241.1424. 2542. l 2211 M sy ^h | who was also sitting at the feet of Jesus |
| 2 | καὶ παρακαθεσθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου | P ^{45.75} κ*B ² L Ξ 579 | and she was sitting at the feet of Jesus |

³⁴⁹A. Hentschel, 2007, 239-240, n. 274; K. E. Corley, 1993, 135, n.142; These exegetes also claim that such a reading supports the social context of itinerant preaching and house churches in early Christianity; others who support the longer reading and do not see it in the context of house church are F. Bovon, 1996, 104, n.16, 105 n.18; J. Brutscheck, 1986, 18; G. Theissen, J. Bowden, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, Philadelphia 1982, 8–16; the shorter reading is supported by S. Bieberstein, 1998, 131, Bieberstein finds the shorter text appropriate as it suits her interpretation in the context of acceptance-rejection motif and this passage is seen in opposition to 9:53; T. K. Seim, 1994, 98.

³⁵⁰B. M. Metzger, 2006, 129.

The relative pronoun ‘who’ for Mary is missing in Variant 2 in important manuscripts. However, Variant 1 shows that it has a larger geographical distribution with the inclusion of ἥ. Therefore, it is hard to decide the choice of the variant based on the external evidence that even Nestle-Aland could not decide, and hence they have put it in parenthesis. Probably a decision may be possible based on internal reasons. It is important to decide on one of the two variations, as the inclusion or omission of ἥ affects the translation of καί in the text. When ἥ is included in the text, the following καί is translated as ‘also’ and by the exclusion of ἥ, καί is translated as ‘and’. One could argue both ways. ἥ with καί is translated as ‘who also’. Based on internal criticism, I prefer to include ἥ in the text. I prefer it because it is more probable that with the inclusion of ἥ, it implies that there were others present along with Mary, gathered to listen to Jesus. So, the possible translation of the Greek text is “Martha had a sister called Mary, *who also* sat at the feet of Jesus and was listening to him.”

4.2.4 κύριος/Ἰησοῦς (vv.39,41)

In the opening verse, in v.38 Jesus is referred to with a pronoun and later in the text he is referred to as ‘κύριος - Lord’ thrice (NA²⁸) and without his proper name. But some important manuscripts show that in the place of κύριος, the name Ἰησοῦς was used in vv. 39 and 41. It is important to pay attention to this problem because the way Jesus is presented in the narrative impacts the understanding of the story. There are no problematic variants mentioned in v.40 for Jesus.

10:39: Mary sat at the feet **τοῦ κυρίου**

10:40: Martha said, **κύριε**.

10:41: **ὁ κύριος** answered and said to her.

The text critical difficulties surrounding these verses have not received much scholarly attention until recently.³⁵¹ Most commentators who were aware of these variations, did not give reasons for their choice but followed the usual text (e.g. NA^{25,26,27} etc.), where Jesus is mentioned thrice as ‘Lord’.³⁵² The change from κύριος to Ἰησοῦς and vice versa is both possible. It may be either that the scribes had the tendency to add κύριος later for reasons of reverence or they may have introduced Ἰησοῦς in either 10:39 or 10:41, or in both, to avoid the repetition of κύριος, κύριε, κύριος. It is also possible, as Kilpatrick argues, “on the one hand, the scribes wanted to avoid repetitions and introduced Ἰησοῦς and on the other hand,

³⁵¹For discussion, see C. K. Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology. The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (ZNW), Berlin et al. 2006, 142–151.

³⁵²D. L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (BECNT 2), Grand Rapids 2007, 1043; H. Schürmann, 1994, 156; J. A. Fitzmyer, 1985b, 893.

they might have found such repetition aesthetically attractive and so added κύριος in one place or the other.”³⁵³ Although it is difficult to arrive at a conclusion, the above discussions support the view that κύριος/Ἰησοῦς could have been used interchangeably through the time.

The occurrence of κύριος in vv.39 and 41 is treated as follows:

10:39 Mary sat down at the feet of ... (the Lord/Jesus)

| | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου | P ³ κ B ^{*.2b} D L Ξ 579. 892 lat sy ^{c.p.hmg} sa ^{ms} bo | at the feet of the Lord |
| 2 | πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ | P ^{45.75} A B ^{2a} C ² K P W ΓΔΘΨ ^{f1.13} 33. 700. 1241.1424. 2542. / 2211 M vg ^{ms} sy ^{s.h} sa ^{mss} bo ^{mss} | at the feet of Jesus |
| 3 | πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ | C* | at his feet |

10:41 (The Lord/Jesus) ... answered and said to her,

| | | | |
|---|--------|--|-------|
| 1 | κύριος | P ^{3.(45).75} κB ² L 579.892 lat sa bo ^{mss} | Lord |
| 2 | Ἰησοῦς | A B [*] C [*] P W ΓΔΨ ^{f1} 700.1424. 2542 (C ³ D K Θ ^{f13} 565 ^s 1241 pm) M it sy ^{s.p.h} bo; Bas | Jesus |

It is difficult to solve the problem from external evidence. The MS support for the reading κύριος/Ἰησοῦς in the above-mentioned two verses (vv.39 and 41) is complex to decide. For example, in 10:39 the old Egyptian papyri, P⁴⁵ and P⁷⁵ favour the reading τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, whereas in 10:41, P⁴⁵ and P⁷⁵ favour the reading κύριος.

Some argue based on internal grounds that it is most likely that the text would read κύριος, κύριε, κύριος in all verses mainly because of the christological judgement about Jesus as κύριος in his earthly ministry in the Gospel of Luke.³⁵⁴ But Fitzmyer expresses the difficulty that, “during the course of the ministry of Jesus many persons address Jesus with the vocative kyrie ... In these instances, it is not easy to decide how one should translate the title, ‘sir’ (in a secular sense) or ‘Lord’ (in a religious sense).”³⁵⁵ The ambiguity of both the meanings

³⁵³G. D. Kilpatrick, ΚΥΡΙΟΣ in the Gospels, in: KILPATRICK (Ed.), The Principles and Practice of New Testament Textual Criticism, Leuven 1990, 209, but he believes κύριος to be probably original.

³⁵⁴While discussing on internal grounds, Rowe claims that based on the compositional procedure (unique Lukan material with κύριος), style (alternative use of the non-vocative and vocative), and Christology, it is most likely that Luke wrote κύριος in all three places in 10:39-41 but he still finds that this would not settle the dispute because it is also likely that Luke would not have opposed to write Ἰησοῦς, Rowe, 2006, 149.

³⁵⁵J. A. Fitzmyer, The Semitic Background of the New Testament, Grand Rapids et al. 1997, 128.

echoes in this Lukan passage. When we consider another example within the Gospel of Luke - the lack of a clear threefold κύριε in 9:57-62 - illustrates that the narrator may not have been strictly concerned to use κύριος all three times here in 10:39-41.³⁵⁶ It is more likely that ‘Jesus’ was replaced with ‘Lord’ by later editions to ascribe more authority to Jesus as a person.

Culpepper also mentions that, “since the narrator’s speech patterns carry great authority, it is significant that while the narrator refers to Jesus as “the Lord”, the narrator does not commonly call Jesus “the Messiah” (see 2:26; 4:41), “the Saviour”, or “the Son of Man” (see 5:24).³⁵⁷

Schreiber too acknowledges:

Der Titel ‚Herr‘ wird im LkEv und der Apg zur geläufigen Bezeichnung Jesu. Im LkEv bewegt er sich semantisch zwischen der respektvollen Anrede Jesu, wie sie in der Antike bei höhergestellten Persönlichkeiten verwendet wird, und der Implikation von Hoheit und göttlicher Vollmacht, wie sie der urchristlich geläufige Titel enthält. In der Apg, die auf das Geschehen von Ostern bereits zurückblickt, wird der Titel für den Erhöhten in seiner himmlischen Machtposition verwendet (Apg 2, 34-36 und 7, 55-59).³⁵⁸

From the argument, it is more plausible that “Jesus” was the probable original reading in 10:39. So, it is difficult to go with the choice of the Nestle-Aland text in presenting Jesus as ‘Lord’ in all three occurrences being mindful that this choice for κύριος is made intentionally to ascribe more authority to Jesus.

4.3 Syntactic Analysis

4.3.1 Grammatical Analysis

Words and sentence arrangements contribute to the narrative unity of the text. Subordinate clauses with coordinating conjunctions and other connectors contribute to the coherence of the text. The important coordinating conjunctions that contribute to the linkage of the clauses in this text are δέ (occurs 6 times - vv.38a, c; 40a, b; 41a; 42a) and καί (occurs 3 times

³⁵⁶Rowe comments, “The lack of a clear threefold κύριε in 9:57-62 illustrates that Luke is not necessarily concerned with perfect symmetry at every point in the composition of his narrative and points clearly to the possibility that Luke would not have written κύριος all three times here in 10:39-41.” C. K. Rowe, 2006, 149, n.75; see *ibid.* for a complete discussion on the textual problems of the term.

³⁵⁷R. A. Culpepper, 1998, 16.

³⁵⁸S. Schreiber, *Die Anfänge der Christologie. Deutungen Jesu im Neuen Testament*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2015, 179.

vv.39a, b; 41b). The conjunctive particle *δέ* may be variously rendered as: but, on the other hand, and, also, while, now etc.³⁵⁹

The most important means of connection includes the use of proforms in the text. On the surface level structure, the subjects are mentioned through names, partly through pronouns while some subjects are part of the verbs. The change of subject in a structure contributes to the closeness and coherence of the text as a unit, especially when the subject of a sentence becomes the object or an attribute in another verse. The change of subject is seen between three persons in the text, ‘the Lord’, ‘Martha’ and ‘Mary’. Besides the conjunctions and the personal pronouns which are often repeated, the following words occur twice or more: The proper name *Μαριάμ* (vv.39a, 42b) and *Μάρθα* (vv 38c, 40a, 41b), the verb *λέγω* (*εἶπον* - vv.40 b,d; 41a) and the word *ἀδελφὴ* (vv39a and 40c), *κύριος* (vv.40c and 41b). Repetitions can take place through verbal or periphrastic resumption of elements also as in *περιπολλ-* (vv 40a, 41b) and *διακον-* (vv 40a, 40c). The last two are close to each other (compare v.40a: *περιπολλὴν διακονίαν* with v.41c *περιπολλά*) and there is a partial recurrence of v.40a in v.41c and they are significant for the meaning of the text. One characteristic feature of this pericope is its preference for certain words which are used only once in the Gospel of Luke (*hapax legomena*): *παρακαθεσθεῖσα*; *τῆδε* (10:39); *περιεσπᾶτο*; *συναντιλάβηται* (10:40); *θορυβάζη* (10:41); *μερίδα* (10:42).

This text opens with a temporal infinitive construction (*Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι* v.38a) and has two aorists - *εἰσῆλθεν* (v.38b) and *ὑπεδέξατο* (v.38c), which indicate that the following actions occurred only once (Jesus entered a village and Martha received him), whereas vv.39 and 40 have two imperfects - *ἤκουεν* (active, indicative) and *περιεσπᾶτο* (passive, indicative), indicating continuous action: “Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus and Martha was being burdened with much service.” The narration continues in past tense, except for the direct speeches of Martha and Jesus, which are in present tense.

Alexander makes an interesting observation on the transitivity patterns within the text and concludes that the grammatical patterns in the text show Mary’s activity is grammatically subordinated to Martha’s. She describes that Martha is the subject of three finite verbs in main clauses in the narrative with one participle. The two verbs describing Mary’s activity in

³⁵⁹W. D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, Grand Rapids 1993, 132.

Lk 10:39 are grammatically subordinated to the main clause of this verse, which uses an impersonal idiom to describe the relationship between the sisters: ‘there was to her a sister’, which is properly translated as ‘she (Martha) had a sister’. Mary gets one finite verb in Martha’s speech subordinated to the impersonal ‘does it not concern to you that...’, and one more finite verb in Jesus’ reply. The two other clauses ostensibly relating to Mary in 10:42 use impersonal verbs. These patterns serve to foreground Martha as the active partner with Jesus in the scene. Mary is a background character, of whom we are told (in a relative clause) only the bare minimum necessary to explain the dialogue that forms the culmination of the scene.³⁶⁰

4.3.2 Direct Speeches in the Text

One characteristic feature of this passage is the dialogue between Martha and Jesus in direct speeches.

Martha: κύριε, οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἡ ἀδελφή μου μόνην με κατέλιπεν διακονεῖν;
εἰπὲ οὖν αὐτῇ ἵνα μοι συναντιλάβηται.

Jesus: Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά,
ἐνὸς δέ ἐστιν χρεία·
Μαριάμ γὰρ τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα ἐξελέξατο ἣτις οὐκ ἀφαιρεθήσεται αὐτῆς.

The indications for the direct speeches correspond to the figure of the speech-act.³⁶¹ For example, in the phrases, ‘Martha said to Jesus’ and ‘Jesus answered Martha’, the terms ‘said’ or ‘answered’ do not define precisely the influence of the speaker on the receiver. In both the instances, the intentions are not clear. Martha could have requested or demanded of Jesus or the answer of Jesus could be a refusal/reprimand to Martha. The implied meaning of these “verbs of saying” is difficult to determine unless the story is analysed.³⁶²

These direct speeches, when grammatically analysed, show that the first main sentence is a rhetoric question (οὐμέλεισοι) supported by a subject sentence (ὅτι ἡ ἀδελφή μου μόνην με

³⁶⁰Cf. L. Alexander, 2002, 206.

³⁶¹Speech act defines more precisely the influence that the speaker has on the receiver. The verbs of saying which introduce the direct speech, as a means of interpersonal influence, imply action. In order to make implicit the active nature of verbs of saying fruitful for narrative text analysis, the verbs of saying, together with the subsequent direct (or indirect) discourse, is replaced by a “doing” word that expresses the corresponding speech. Such speech acts can be: asking, answering, commanding, appointing, advising, warning, promising, rebuking, etc., W. Egger, 1996, 118.

³⁶²Refer 5.1.2.

κατέλιπεν διακονεῖν) and the second sentence is an imperative (εἰπέ οὖν αὐτῇ) and it adds an indirect imperative sentence (ἵνα μοι συναντιλάβηται). The direct speech of Jesus contains three statements and the last one is a relative sentence which is a dependent clause (ἥτις οὐκ ἀφαιρεθήσεται αὐτῆς v.42c), with the future tense, which is the last verb form in the text. Salient are the conjunctions (οὖν, γὰρ, ὅτι, ἵνα), which are used once in the direct speech. ὅτι as causal (v.40c), “that my sister left me alone”; οὖν in a consecutive sentence, “Therefore, speak to her” (v.40d); ἵνα is final, “so that she may help me” (v.40d); γὰρ as causal, “for Mary chose the good part” (v.42b).

4.4 Semantic Analysis

Lk 10:38-42 is analysed within the literary context of the Gospel of Luke and with the encyclopaedic competence of the implied reader. The concept of encyclopaedia is an important aspect in the cognitive narratological approach. This concept is already used in semiotic exegesis based on Eco’s definition of Encyclopaedia.³⁶³ The production of any text and any reading of the text is culture-bound. As Alkier states: “*Jede Textherstellung und jede Textlektüre muss auf eine Enzyklopädie kulturell konventionalisierten Wissens zurückgreifen.*”³⁶⁴ Cognitive approach explains this concept in detail in terms of “Frames and Scripts”. Therefore, the reading of a text is not a passive experience but involves a creative participation of the readers.³⁶⁵

A text as a work of complex verbal signs can say more than one supposes, precisely because signs are the starting point of a process of interpretation which leads to an infinite series of progressive consequences. For instance, the translation of the selected Greek text into another language, in itself is interpretative. To support this claim, here are some interesting translations of διακονία from Lk 10:40 in German, English and Tamil. This shows how the same word is understood differently in different languages, and how it can be understood differently within the same language.³⁶⁶

³⁶³S. Alkier, 2001, 72–74.

³⁶⁴Ibid.

³⁶⁵Cf. U. Eco, *The Role of the Reader. Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, Bloomington 1984.

³⁶⁶Wolter has used different German words for διακονέωκτλ in his commentary. As examples, we can refer to his translation of the texts in Luke’s Gospel, where he uses terms like versorgen (4:39), unterstützen (8:3), arbeiten (10:40), bereiten (17:8), Dienende (22:26-27), whereas the Luther Bible (1984) in all these instances, has used only the term ‘dienen’, implicitly referring to ‘Tischdienst/waiting at the table’, leaving less scope for other possible meanings.

a) Διακονία in German translations

| | |
|--|--|
| Marta aber machte sich viel zu schaffen , ihm zu dienen . | (revidierte Luther Bibel, 1984) ³⁶⁷ |
| Marta aber war ganz davon in Anspruch genommen , für ihn zu sorgen . | (Einheitsübersetzung, 1980) (Zürcher Bibel, 2008) |
| Marta aber war ganz mit der Bewirtung beschäftigt. | (Schürmann) ³⁶⁸ |
| Marta aber ließ sich ganz davon in Anspruch nehmen , ihn zu bedienen . | (Kremer) ³⁶⁹ |
| Marta aber war ganz davon in Anspruch genommen , für ihn zu sorgen . | (Schmithals) ³⁷⁰ |
| während Martha alle Hände voll zu tun hatte , um ihm das Essen zu bereiten . | (Grundmann, THKNT) ³⁷¹ |
| Martha aber war völlig in Anspruch genommen durch den vielen Tischdienst . | (Petzke, Züricher Kommentare) ³⁷² (Klein) ³⁷³ |
| Martha aber machte sich viel zu schaffen mit der Bedienung . | (Bibel in gerechter Sprache, 2006) |
| Marta aber war voll beschäftigt mit viel Aufwartung . | (Bovon) ³⁷⁴ |
| Marta aber war vom vielen Dienst beunruhigt. | (Wolter) ³⁷⁵ |
| Marta aber wurde von vielem Dienst in Anspruch genommen . | (Hentschel) ³⁷⁶ |
| ...während Martha von vielerlei Arbeit in Anspruch genommen war. | (Lutherbibel Revidiert 2017) |
| Martha aber war völlig beschäftigt mit viel Διακονία . | |
| Martha aber machte sich viel zu schaffen, ihnen zu dienen . | |

b) Διακονία in English translations

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing . | (New Living Translation) |
| Martha, burdened with much servicing . | (African Bible) |
| But Martha was cumbered about much servicing . | (King James Version) |
| But Martha was distracted with much servicing . | (ESV) |
| But Martha was preoccupied with details of servicing . | (Fitzmyer) ³⁷⁷ |
| But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. | (New International Version) |
| But Martha was distracted by her many tasks . | (New Revised Standard Version) |
| Martha was distracted with great deal of domestic work . | (Nolland, WBC) |
| But Martha was distracted by her many tasks . | (Green, NICNT) ³⁷⁸ |

³⁶⁷Cf. M. Böhm, "Schaffe mir Recht!" Frauen im Lukasevangelium, in: MBFSJ 18/19 (2001), 25.

³⁶⁸H. Schürmann, 1994, 153.

³⁶⁹Kremer, 122; see also R. Dillmann, C. Mora Paz, Das Lukas-Evangelium. Ein Kommentar für die Praxis, Stuttgart 2000, 218.

³⁷⁰W. Schmithals, 1980, 129.

³⁷¹W. Grundmann, 1978, 211; see also W. Wiefel, 1988, 211.

³⁷²G. Petzke, 1990, 112.

³⁷³H. Klein, Das Lukasevangelium, Göttingen ¹⁰2006, 395.

³⁷⁴F. Bovon, 1996, 101.

³⁷⁵M. Wolter, 2008, 398.

³⁷⁶A. Hentschel, 2003, 170; Later she interprets διακονία of Martha as "Engagement für die Gemeinde", 189.

³⁷⁷J. A. Fitzmyer, 2005, 891.

c) *Διακονία* in Tamil Bibles

(Bower Translation/Union Version, 1863): மார்த்தானோ பற்பல வேலைகளைச் செய்வதில் மிகவும் வருத்தமடைந்து,

Trans: ... whereas Martha being upset with many **tasks**,

(Common Language Translation, 1995): ஆனால் மார்த்தா பற்பல பணிகள் புரிவதில் பரபரப்பாகி,

Trans: ...but Martha being restless by doing many **works**,

In the first nine translations in German it is quite obvious that *διακονία* is understood in terms of ‘serving meals’. Following the lexical understanding, the *διακονία* of Martha in Lk 10:40 is understood in the sense of ‘waiting at the table’. The other translations are relatively open to a wider meaning as they are translated as ‘Dienst’, which has the scope of a meaning beyond ‘waiting at the table’. Similarly, in English translations, it is obvious that in the first five translations, *διακονία* refers to ‘preparing and serving meals’ and in the other translations there is room to understand the term in a broader sense, beyond “serving at the table.” In the Tamil translations *διακονία* has a general reference to ‘task’ or ‘work’ but it strongly implies the ‘preparation of meals’ because the term is associated with a woman in a household context. The different understandings in the meaning of the words show that the reader plays an active role in a textual interpretation because signs are constructed according to an inferential model. Different text interpretations are possible because even linguistic signs are not ruled by sheer equivalence; they are not based upon the idea of identity but are governed by an inferential schema.³⁷⁹ So, the semantic concept is not bound to one lexical meaning alone but has to do with the encyclopaedic knowledge of the reader.³⁸⁰

The semantic analysis explores the meaning of the words in a sentence. As Alkier explains the semantic analysis: “*Die semantische Analyse fragt nach der Bedeutung einzelner Zeichen aufgrund ihrer Position im jeweiligen Syntagma.*”³⁸¹ Here the concept of *Diskursuniversum* (die Welt des Textes) plays a fundamental role. A particular word gains a potential meaning only within the universe of the discourse. Pierce’s concept of *Diskursuniversum* is well defined by Liszka: “The universe of discourse is what an utterer and interpreter must share in

³⁷⁸J. B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke (NICNT)*, Grand Rapids 2007, 433.

³⁷⁹Cf. U. Eco, 1981, 44.

³⁸⁰As Eco puts it: „Die Enzyklopädie ist ein semantisches Konzept, und das Wörterbuch ist ein pragmatisches Mittel.” U. Eco, 1990, 95.

³⁸¹S. Alkier, *Neues Testament (UTB 3404)*, Tübingen 2010, 157.

order for communication to result.”³⁸² The semantic meaning of a word or a phrase does not rely only on its lexical meaning nor does it completely deal with the encyclopaedic understanding of what the term meant in the ancient texts, but it is finally generated by the reading activity. The important verbs of action such as ὑποδέχομαι/διακονεῖν (Martha) and παρακαθίζομαι/ἀκούειν (Mary) are also analysed for such possible meanings.

4.4.1 ὑποδέχομαι (v.38c)

A significant term in v.38 is the verb, ὑπεδέξατο - ‘to receive’, signifying hospitality.³⁸³ It is a compound form of the verb δέχομαι. Δέχομαι with its derivatives is seen as a term for hospitality in Luke.³⁸⁴ Although δέχομαι and ὑποδέχομαι in Luke carry a similar meaning as ‘receiving’, δέχομαι is used not only to refer to welcoming a person, but also to speak of receiving, hearing, or understanding a word,³⁸⁵ whereas the compound form ὑποδέχομαι carries only one meaning of ‘receiving someone as guest’. The term ὑποδέχομαι occurs only twice in Luke. The other occurrence is used in the context when Zaccheus received Jesus into his house (καὶ ὑπεδέξατο αὐτὸν χαίρων, 19:6). The verb ὑποδέχομαι is always used with the accusative of the person received, as in Lk 10:38 (Martha receives Jesus) and in 19:6 (Zacchaeus receives Jesus).³⁸⁶ It occurs altogether four times in the whole of the New Testament.³⁸⁷ Every time it is understood as a host ‘receiving’ a guest. In the other Greek references, it is used with a similar meaning, ‘to receive someone hospitably’ (P Oslo 55,8; Test Abr 2 p. 78, 20; Jos., Ant. 1, 180 al.).³⁸⁸

This verb of action is associated with Martha and she is the one who welcomes Jesus in her village - γυνὴ δὲ τις ὀνόματι Μάρθα ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν. Although the text does not specify that

³⁸²J. J. Liszka, A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce, Bloomington et al. 1996, 92.

³⁸³The other lexical meanings of ὑποδέχομαι are to ‘accept’, ‘welcome’, ‘entertain as a guest’, ‘receive in a hospitable fashion’. W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, F. W. Danker, W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur, Chicago ²1979; W. Bauer, Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur, Berlin et al. ⁶1988, 1682; J. P. LOUW, E. A. NIDA (Ed.), Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Based on Semantic Domains, New York ³1989, 453; In German, it is understood as ‘*gastlich aufnehmen*’, see H. G. Link, O. Becker, Art. δέχομαι, in: TBNT, 589.

³⁸⁴Cf. E. Laland, 1959, 72.

³⁸⁵Eg. 2:28 ‘to take into one’s hands’ in the context of Simeon receiving Jesus in his hands; 16:6,7 ‘to take’ in the parable of the dishonest manager; 9:53 to receive in hospitality; 8:13 ‘to receive’ the word in the parable of the sower.

³⁸⁶H. Giesen, Art. ὑποδέχομαι, in: EDNT 3, 402.

³⁸⁷The other two occurrences are in Acts 17:7 οὗς ὑποδέδεκται Ἰάσων; James 2:25 ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους.

³⁸⁸J. Moulton, G. Milligan, Art. ὑποδέχομαι, in: DANKER (Ed.), A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Chicago et al. ³2000, 1037.

Martha received Jesus ‘into her house’,³⁸⁹ the use of ὑποδέχομαι in Luke implies that she received him into the house.³⁹⁰ The theme of hospitality, which receives special emphasis throughout Luke’s Gospel, is central in Lk 10. The verb δέχομαι and not ὑποδέχομαι is used with the meaning ‘to welcome’ especially within the chapters 9 and 10 (ἐδέξαντο 9:53; δέχονται 10:8,10). The verb δέχομαι is used not only to refer to welcoming a person, but also when speaking of receiving, hearing or understanding the word. In Lk 8:13, it is used in the context of receiving the word. Again in 18:17, Jesus instructs his disciple, “who does not receive (δέχομαι) the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.”

But this text has no reference to a meal setting. The context of Lk 10:38-42 reveals that the hospitality scene has not exclusively to do with the serving of meals but includes other activities related to hospitality. The first one to receive Jesus in Luke is Simeon (2:28). The other two individual characters who do receive Jesus after the Samaritans refused to receive him are Martha (10:38) and Zacchaeus (19:6). Among the four Gospels, hospitality is most frequently referred to in the Gospel of Luke. For instance, in Luke, Jesus instructs the twelve apostles (Lk 9:1-6; see also Matt 10:1-14; Mark 6: 6-13) and the seventy-two messengers (Lk 10:1-20) to rely upon hospitality for their provision and protection. Jesus accepts such hospitality in the house of Martha and Mary. In the Gospels, there are also social expectations associated with the custom of hospitality.

4.4.2 περισπάω (v.40a)

In v.40a, this verb is used by the narrator to describe the activity of Martha - Μάρθα περισπᾶτο περὶ πολλὴν διακονίαν. The verb is a *hapaxlegemon* and occurs only in Lk 10:40 in the imperfect passive form (περισπᾶτο).³⁹¹ The choice of the meaning affects the way the activity of Martha is understood. This verb is often constructed with the preposition περί, which means ‘about’ or ‘concerning’. The general lexical meaning of περισπάομαι is given as

³⁸⁹ A number of other manuscripts read “Martha received him into her home.” See discussion in 4.2.2.

³⁹⁰ Omanson remarks, “the variant readings of ‘into her house/home’ surely represent the implicit meaning of ‘she received/welcomed him’, and translators may decide to make this explicit.” R. L. Omanson, B. M. Metzger, A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament. An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators, Stuttgart 2006, 129.

³⁹¹ K. Aland, Vollständige Konkordanz zum griechischen Neuen Testament. Unter Zugrundelegung aller modernen kritischen Textausgaben und des Textus Receptus, Berlin et al. 1978, 1119.

‘to be distracted’, ‘to be busy’, ‘to be overburdened’.³⁹² Besides these lexical meanings, this verb is used in other Greek texts in the sense of ‘being pulled away from a reference point’ (the passive form occurs in Cebes 33, 3; PTebt 124, 39 εἰςέτεραςλειτουργίας).³⁹³ The meaning of the verb with περί is expressed as “to have one’s attention directed from one thing to another”; “be busy” (περίτι with or by something [Polyb 3, 105,1; Diod S.1,74]; περίτὸνπλουτον [Hermas, Similitudes] Hs 2:5; περίτὰςπραγματείας 4:5).³⁹⁴

In ancient Greek and Roman societies hospitality transpired whenever a person (or group) provided provisions and protection for a traveller. Most often, the traveller was a complete stranger. Yet, if two people had previously forged a permanent guest-friendship, the traveller was virtually assured of a hospitable welcome.³⁹⁵ Hosting a traveller was also considered to be an honour. By doing so, the hosts typically increased their honour among their own people.³⁹⁶ We see a basic expression of ancient Greek hospitality in Homer’s *Odyssey*, when Diocles hosts Telemachus and Peisistratus [Od. 3.487-493; 15.:185-191]. The host welcomes the travellers, provides food and lodging for one night, and then aids his guests as they depart at dawn.³⁹⁷ In Greco-Roman antiquity, ideal hosts are expected to offer guests a bath, clothing, lodging, extravagant meals, protection and an escort out of the region.³⁹⁸

In the context of hospitality, when the sentence is translated as ‘Martha was busy with much service’, it implies that Martha was busy with multiple tasks of hospitality. Martha being busy as a host implies that she chose to fulfil the expectations related to hospitality.

4.4.3 διακονέω/ία (v.40a, c)

The words διακονέω/ία are associated with the character of Martha in the story. The meaning of this expression can be derived from the literary context of the text and from the encyclopaedic knowledge of the implicit reader. Although, διακονέω/ία as a term occurs only twice in Lk 10:38-42, its essence is expressed thrice: First, as a common noun - διακονία in

³⁹²P. HOFFMANN, T. HIEKE, U. BAUER (Ed.), *Synoptic Concordance. A Greek Concordance to the First Three Gospels in Synoptic Arrangement. Statistically Evaluated, Including Occurrences in Acts. Introduction A - D (1)*, Berlin et al. 1999, 158.

³⁹³J. Moulton, G. Milligan, Art. περισπάω, in: DANKER (Ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago et al. 2000.

³⁹⁴Ibid.

³⁹⁵A. Areterbury, Art. Hospitality, in: *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* 12 (2016), 450.

³⁹⁶Ibid. 451.

³⁹⁷Ibid.

³⁹⁸Ibid.

v.40a; second, as a verb in the infinitive form - διακονεῖν in v.40c; and third, as πολλά in v.41b - somewhat equivalent to the term διακονία.

Narrator: ἡ δὲ Μάρθα περιεσπᾶτο περὶ πολλήν διακονίαν (v.40a)

Martha: ἡ ἀδελφή μου μόνην με κατέλιπεν διακονεῖν (v.40c)

Jesus: Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά (v.41b)

The noun form is used in a descriptive situation, where the narrator describes the activity of Martha as διακονίαν (v.40a) and the verb form is used in expressing one's state of being, where Martha's own words expresses her own action as διακονεῖν (v.40c) and for the third time the activity of Martha is indirectly mentioned by Jesus, as πολλά (v.41b). Interestingly, Jesus does not use the word διακονία. Both the narrator and Jesus refer to the activity of Martha following περὶ. This allows one to conclude that Martha's action is expressed thrice as πολλή διακονία (by the narrator), διακονεῖν (by Martha) and περὶ πολλά (by Jesus).

(i) Lexical Meaning of διακονέω κτλ.

The verb διακονέω has the following lexicon meanings: 'serve; wait on; care for; see after; provide for', while διακονία has the meanings 'service; office'; διάκονος means 'servant', the one who executes the activities designated by διακονέω,-ία.³⁹⁹ The claim that the basic meaning (*Grundbedeutung*) of the term is 'wait at the table', from which the extended meanings ('to care for' and generally 'to serve') are derived, has been challenged in New Testament scholarship, especially in the works of Collins and Hentschel.⁴⁰⁰ Collins and Hentschel in their works have re-defined διακονέω κτλ as an 'intermediary act'.⁴⁰¹ Collins defines it as 'go-between' (*Vermittlungsfunktion*) and Hentschel as 'commission' (*Beauftragung*). Their main argument is that διακονέω κτλ should not be seen as a lowly job in the present ecclesiastical context but as a mode of activity.⁴⁰² Collins' and Hentschel's focus was mainly on the Pauline use of the term and its relevance in the diaconal work of the

³⁹⁹See H. W. Beyer, Art. διακονέω κτλ., in: TDNT 2, 81–88; A. Weiser, Art. διακονέω κτλ., in: EDNT 1 (1994), 302–306; W. Bauer, 1988, 367–370.

⁴⁰⁰Cf. J. N. Collins, *Diakonia. Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources*, New York et al. 1990; A. Hentschel, *Gemeinde, Ämter, Dienste. Perspektiven zur neutestamentlichen Ekklesiologie* (BThSt), Neukirchen-Vluyn 2013.

⁴⁰¹See J. N. Collins, 1990, 335; Hentschel understands διακονέω κτλ similar to Collins as „Beauftragung.” See A. Hentschel, 2013, 433.

⁴⁰²The shift in the meaning of διακονέω κτλ from 'waiting at the table' to 'an intermediary act' is added in the recent Greek-English Lexicon as well. F. W. DANKER (Ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago et al. ³2000, 229–231.

church. An overview of the usage of these words in the ancient literary sources might illuminate for our understanding.

(ii) Διακονέωκτλ. outside New Testament

In secular Greek διακονέωκτλ is used by writers in various contexts although it was never too common.⁴⁰³ At least during the time of Herodot, it is understood in terms of serving/waiting at the table. It is also understood in the sense of caring for a livelihood.⁴⁰⁴ The spectrum of the meaning is also found in the writings of Philo (VitCont 70.75) and Josephus. Josephus uses the term for table-service of Nehemiah before the king Artaxerxes (Ant XI5, 6 § 163). The expression is also used in the nightly “sexual” service of women in the temple of God - Anubis (Ant XVIII 3, 4 § 74). Again the term is understood as carrying the command of a king (Ant IX 2,1 § 25) or for the service of the priest in the temple (Ant Vii 14, 7 § 365).⁴⁰⁵

The term is used for different persons irrespective of their status. For example, in Dio Chrysostomus’ 10th Speech, the term which is usually associated with the task of the servants and slaves is also used for the other members of the household who carried out similar tasks of the servants and the slaves in the absence of the latter (Dio 10:10,12,13). He even says that by carrying out these tasks by oneself, one can be more independent and by self-learning one’s life turns out to be better in the absence of slaves and servant.⁴⁰⁶

It is striking to note that the LXX never used the verb διακονέω in its translation of the Hebrew equivalent and there are only seven instances of the common noun διακονος, mainly in the book of Esther and three of the abstract noun διακονία. It was also rare in inscriptions and in the papyri.⁴⁰⁷

In the book of Esther, the word is used indiscriminately of attendants and of the more highly situated advisors in the court of Ahasuerus. διακονέωκτλ is found in the Testament of Job

⁴⁰³The examples are mainly taken from the works of Collins and Hentschel, who have done intensive study on the use of διακονέωκτλ in the ancient sources.

⁴⁰⁴H. W. Beyer, 81.

⁴⁰⁵Cf. L. Schottroff, Dienerinnen der Heiligen. Der Diakonat der Frauen im Neuen Testament, in: SCHÄFER/STROHM (Ed.), Diakonie - biblische Grundlagen und Orientierungen. Ein Arbeitsbuch zur theologischen Verständigung über den diakonischen Auftrag (Veröffentlichungen des Diakoniewissenschaftlichen Instituts an der Universität Heidelberg), Heidelberg²1994, 59.

⁴⁰⁶A. Hentschel, 2013, 46.

⁴⁰⁷W. Bauer, 1988, 368–370; Cf. J. N. Collins, 1990.

mainly in the context of serving the poor (διακονῆσαι τοῖς πτωχοῖς ἐν τῇ σῆτραπέζῃ, 12:2). But other references seem to be broader than service at the table, because those who wanted to join Job in helping the poor, also proposed to raise funds. (ὕπηρετῆσαι τῇ διακονίᾳ 11:2 and ταύτην ἐκ τέλεσαι τὴν διακονίαν 11:3). Because of the spectrum of the meaning of διακονέω κτλ., it is necessary to analyse the meaning of the term in the context in which it is used.⁴⁰⁸ A cursory look at the occurrences of διακονέω κτλ in different contexts of the New Testament challenges the interpretation of διακονέω/ία in the context of Luke.

(iii) Διακονέω κτλ. in the New Testament

In the New Testament, διακονέω κτλ is commonly seen in three forms: διακονέω (the verb), διακονία (the abstract noun), διάκονος (the common noun). A glance at the table of frequency of διακονέω κτλ in Luke compared with other New Testament writings gives an interesting picture:⁴⁰⁹

| | Lk | Acts | Mt | Mk | Jn | Pauline Epistles | NT-rest |
|----------|----|------|----|----|----|------------------|---------|
| Διακονέω | 8 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 7 |
| διακονία | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 23 | 2 |
| διάκονος | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 21 | 0 |

The overview shows that in Luke, the verb διακονέω is used rather often when compared to the other Gospels and the abstract noun διακονία has been used only once and there is no single occurrence of the common noun διάκονος. However, there is a broad attestation of the verb διακονέω in all writings of the NT and especially in Luke. A much debated form in contemporary research is the noun διακονία and its usage in ecclesial and non-ecclesial contexts.

The meaning of διακονέω κτλ in terms of table-service is clear in Lk 12:37 and 17:8, and as a task of caring for others in Mk 1:13 (par. Mt 4:11) and Phil 13. In Mk 10:45, it could be understood in the context of following Jesus. In Rom 15:25, it refers to the collection by Paul. In later New Testament writings it is understood as an official term (I Tim 3:10-13; 2 Tim 1:18; I Peter 1:12; 4:10,11). So διακονέω κτλ is understood differently in different contexts in various passages in the New Testament.

⁴⁰⁸Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹Cf. P. Hoffmann, T. Hieke, U. Bauer, 1999, 923–925.

(iv) Διακονέω κτλ. in Luke

The verb διακονέω occurs within Luke eight times in five different contexts: In narrative descriptions: (4:39; 8:3; 10:40); in parables: (12:37; 17:8); and in the sayings of Jesus: (22:26, 27 [x2]). Out of these eight occurrences, four occur only in Luke (8:3; 10:40; 12:37; 17:8).⁴¹⁰

(a) The first reference is in 4:39 παραχρῆμα δὲ ἀναστᾶσα **διηκόνει** αὐτοῖς. Here the verb διακονέω is used in the context of Jesus visiting Simon's house (4:38-39), where he heals his mother-in-law who is ill with fever. The term in this context is usually understood as 'table-service'.⁴¹¹ The 'getting up' and 'caring' of Simon's mother-in-law is seen as an immediate reaction to her healing because of the connection to the adverb παραχρῆμα, meaning 'immediately' (Lk 4:39 par. Mk 1:31). It is somewhat strange to understand the sequence of actions in this context, when the reference to serving appears too quickly. Someone who has recovered from sickness gets active immediately and has no time to rest! The act of 'caring' conveyed by the conjugated verb with the participle ἀναστᾶσα is central to the narrative and represents more a reaction to the visitors rather than a reaction to the healing. The personal pronoun in dative plural implies that Jesus was not the lonely guest and there were others besides him who were being cared for by the host (Lk 4:39 par. Mk 1:31). Therefore, in a household context, the imperfect verb form 'διηκόνει' can be understood as a continuing action denoting any activity related to hospitality.

(b) The second reference is in 8:3 ἕτεροι πολλαί, αἴτινες **διηκόνουν** αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς. The verb διακονέω occurs in a passage with women as subjects. The interpretation of 8:1-3 is problematic because of the sentence construction. The construction makes it difficult to ascertain the association of these women with Jesus. If καὶ γυναῖκες τινες is read with καὶ οἱ δώδεκα σὺν αὐτῷ, it indicates the presence of some women with the twelve disciples.⁴¹² If not the women listed in this pericope can be understood as a separate

⁴¹⁰ Ibid. 923f.

⁴¹¹ But some understand it as a term for "discipleship" (Nachfolgebegriff) especially with the Markan reference. Cf. K. Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament), München 1970, 62; L. Schottroff, *Maria Magdalena und die Frauen am Grabe Jesu*, in: *EvTh* 42 (1982), 10–12; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1995, 320; Kertelge understands διηκόνει as a specific form of following by women. Cf. also S. Bieberstein, 1998, f.n. 181.

⁴¹² Cf. Mk 15:40-41. In Mark, the reference to the women who served Jesus occurs in a different context, in the context of the crucifixion of Jesus. The place Γαλιλαία and the verb ἠκολούθουν is not mentioned in Luke.

group who supported Jesus and the twelve with their resources.⁴¹³ The textual variant in v.3 is problematic in deciding whether these women served only Jesus or all the male disciples with him.⁴¹⁴ Further because of the sentence structure in 8:2-3 where the serving women and the healed women are understood as two different groups ‘serving’ is not to be understood as in 4:39 as a reaction following a successful healing. As mentioned in 8:3 the women providing out of their resources (ἐκτῶν ὑπαρχόντων) could most probably mean that they extended financial support. Therefore, the verb διακονέω in this context is surely not understood in terms of ‘serving the meals’ but in a much broader sense. So, it is evident that διακονέω with women as subjects is not to be confined to the act of serving meals.

(c) The third reference is in 10:40 μόνην με κατέλειπεν **διακονεῖν**: In this context, Martha is complaining to Jesus that she is left alone to ‘**διακονεῖν**’. The usage and the meaning of this verb in this context will be discussed later in detail from the view point of the persons associated to the term in the narrative.

(d) In the following two references (12:37; 17:8), the verb διακονέω is used in parables of Jesus. It occurs in the sense of service at the table on the part of a slave in relation to his master (17:8 καὶ περιζωσάμενος **διακόνει** μοι), and on the part of a master in relation to his slaves (12:37 καὶ παρελθὼν **διακονήσει** αὐτοῖς). Both these parables are read in a metaphorical sense. The latter reference mirrors the reality in a household context, where serving the master is a daily activity and is the duty of a slave. In terms of superiority, it affirms the social hierarchy where the master is superior to the slaves. The reference in 12:37 reverses the understanding of διακονέω from a lowly job to a dignified act, where the master not only invites the slaves to the table but also plays the role of the slaves by serving them. In v.35, the addressees are invited by Jesus to be like these slaves who are counted as blessed both for waiting on their master and also being served by their master. The question in 17:7 is answered in the pericope following 12: 35-38 that identifies the master with the act of serving when the master invites the slaves to the table. The reversal of hierarchy is an underlying

⁴¹³See discussion in A. Hentschel, 2013, 217–235; S. Bieberstein, 1998, 25–75; H. Melzer-Keller, 1997, 194–212; B. E. Reid, 1996, 124–134; B. Witherington, On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Other Disciples. Lk 8:1-3, in: ZNW 70 (1979), 243–248.

⁴¹⁴Look for the text variant in Luke, where the important manuscripts have both the forms (dative as singular and plural). In Mk 15:41, the dative is in singular (διηκόνουναὐτῷ).

motive in Luke which is evident in the Magnificat that speaks of exalting the humble and feeding the hungry (Lk 1:46-53; also in 14:13f).⁴¹⁵

(e) The last three references (22:26, 27 (x2)) in Luke occur in a single text (22:24-27) in the participle form. This passage becomes significant as the main theme is about ὁ διακονῶν and also because of Jesus' affirmation, "I am among you as one serving."⁴¹⁶ This statement is related to the tradition recorded in Mark 10:45.⁴¹⁷ The term ὁ διακονῶν is used in the context of a meal-scene of Jesus with the disciples and in the context of conflict among the disciples, where they dispute about the greatest among them. Jesus responds to them that the greatest and the leader is 'the one who serves' (v.26). He reverses the existing understanding that it is the slaves who serve the master. In v.27 Jesus poses again a rhetorical question with the verb διακονέω: 'Who is greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? The answer is obviously the one who reclines. But Jesus counters that understanding by using the participle form of διακονέω for the third time to refer to himself and affirms that 'he is the one who serves'. He uses the picture of a master serving a slave with the emphasis on the role reversal.

From the analysis of the eight occurrences of the verb διακονέω in Luke, one could argue that the term is used largely in a household context. The above discussion indicates that there is no basic meaning for διακονέω κτλ. and the specific meaning of the term entirely depends on the context in which it is used. It is evident from other Greek literature that this term is used at different occasions with several meanings. However, in the Gospel of Luke, the term is understood in a household (non-ecclesial) context. It is evident that the words are equally applicable to positions of authority and dignity as well as to those of low esteem.

(V) Διακονέω κτλ. in Lk 10:38-42

The argument of Collins and Hentschel in defining διακονία as 'an activity of in-between' is on the one hand convincing because they challenge the narrow understanding of the term as meaning 'to wait at the table'. On the other hand, their new definition of the term again poses a challenge in terms of its use in the context of Lk 10:38-42. In my opinion, διακονία as 'an activity of in-between' is problematic because Martha in the story is neither commissioned

⁴¹⁵See C. Gerber, Wann aus Sklavinnen und Sklaven Gäste ihres Herren werden. (Von den wachenden Knechten) Lk 12, 35-38, in: ZIMMERMANN (Ed.), Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu, Gütersloh 2007, 577.

⁴¹⁶Here I use the English equivalent "serving" beyond the sense of 'table service' or 'serving the meals'.

⁴¹⁷See M. Stare, »Ich aber bin in eurer Mitte wie der Dienende.« (Lk 22,27), in: HARTENSTEIN/PETERSEN (Ed.), "Eine gewöhnliche und harmlose Speise"? Von den Entwicklungen frühchristlicher Abendmahlstraditionen, Gütersloh 2008, 222; A. Hentschel, 2013, 286–289; J. N. Collins, 1990, 245–247.

nor instructed by someone to carry out a task. Although Collins and Hentschel agree basically on the general meaning of διακονέω κτλ they have different emphases when it comes to the interpretation of Lk 10:38-42. Hentschel reads διακονία in 10:40 as a ministerial role in a community,⁴¹⁸ whereas Collins in his work claims that διακονέω κτλ in the Gospels mainly designates menial attendance of one kind or another.⁴¹⁹

In translating the terms διακονέω/ία, I have used the term ‘serving’ and ‘service’ neither in the sense of ‘serving at the table’ nor as ‘go-between’. The meaning of the term is determined from its literary context. In this particular context διακονία is to be understood together with the words ὑποδέχομαι and πολὺς.⁴²⁰ The noun διακονία is qualified with the adjective ‘πολύς’. Πολλή in v.40c is in an attributive position as fem.sg and πολλά in v.41b is in neut.pl. Both the expressions, ‘much service’ and ‘many things’ clearly mean the multiple hospitable tasks that Martha chose to do. While serving meals could be the major part of Martha’s ‘welcoming’, the works could be combined with many other common gestures of hospitality including greeting, anointing, food preparation and table-service.⁴²¹

There are two strong inferences regarding the activity of Martha. One is based on the lectionary understanding of διακονέω/ία as ‘serving at the table’, and Martha is assumed to be busy with meal preparations. The other is based on the transposed meaning from the Acts of the Apostle as ‘service in the Christian context’, where Martha is assumed to be the leader of a household church.⁴²² Both these assumptions are not convincing. While the former assumption is too narrow to understand the term ‘service’ in the given text, the meaning of ‘much service’ may include activities other than meal preparations or just serving the meal. The latter assumption seems to be an imposed meaning from the early church context. One could, Therefore, conclude here that in the text Martha is presented as one who is busy with many activities related to ‘hospitality’ and entertaining a traveller in a normal household context.

⁴¹⁸See A. Hentschel, 2007, 246–258; J. N. Collins, 1990, 245; see also Collin’s critic on Hentschel’s interpretation in: J. N. Collins, Re-Interpreting Diakonia in Germany. Article Review, in: Ecclesiology 5, 69-81 (2009), 69–81; Carter adopts the meaning from Collins and interprets Martha’s διακονία as an activity of a “go-between.” W. Carter, 2002, 222.

⁴¹⁹Collins in his work claims that διακονέω κτλ in the Gospels mainly designates menial attendance of one kind or another. J. N. Collins, 1990, 245 and in the Gospel of Luke διακονέω κτλ had a reference beyond table service. See J. N. Collins, 2009, 76.

⁴²⁰Cf. S. Bieberstein, 1998, 136; see also J. N. Collins, 1990.

⁴²¹See F. S. Spencer, 2012, 170.

⁴²²See Excursus III.

Excursus III: Διακονία as Technical Term

Διακονία in Luke 10:42 is seen as strongly analogous with Acts 6:2 by feminist writers. In Acts 6:2, διακονία is expressed twice as ‘διακονία of the word’ and ‘διακονία of the table’.⁴²³ Many feminist scholars see διακονία as a technical term among the early Christian community.⁴²⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza argues that the term διακονία appears only once with a woman as the subject in the Gospel of Luke, and in the Acts of the Apostles the verb has men as the subject to show them as leaders of the Christian community and above all as preachers.⁴²⁵ Seim is of the same opinion; however, she interprets the term differently when used with men and does not see it as the reversal of roles but as the reversal of values.⁴²⁶ This difference is a challenge to the interpretation of διακονέω/ία in Luke.

In Acts, διακονία is understood as a qualified “job”, in an ecclesial context.⁴²⁷ Bieberstein differentiates the use of the term in the Gospel of Luke and in the Acts of Apostles. She does not agree with the use of the term in an official sense in Luke unlike the other feminist scholars who claim that Martha’s διακονία is an official job.⁴²⁸ She writes: “ ... dass die Art und Weise der Verwendung in der Apg nicht unbedingt der des (zeitlich früheren und anders konzipierten) Lk-Evs entspricht. Darüberhinaus ist jede Stelle in ihrem Kontext zu untersuchen und auch die Art und Weise der Näherbestimmung im Satz zu prüfen.”⁴²⁹

Διακονία is used in a special, almost technical way in Acts, different from Luke but in accordance with the development of the early church. Dawsey, while discussing the christianised vocabulary of Acts, recognises a few words like ‘μαθητής’ (disciple), which in the Gospels specifies that the disciples are Jesus’ disciples. There is a sharp reversal of this pattern in the Acts of the Apostles whereby it is used as a technical term meaning ‘follower of Jesus’.⁴³⁰ The other word which has a specialised Christian meaning in Acts and is used in a different way from Luke is the word ἀδελφός (brother). ‘Αδελφός’ is commonly used in Acts as a designation for ‘fellow Christian’.⁴³¹

In reading Lk 10:38-42, one may generally arrive at a quick conclusion that διακονέω means ‘serving/waiting at the table’. One could argue that there is no reference to a ‘kitchen’ or to a ‘meal preparation’ in the text. While feeding a guest is obviously a major part of hospitality, Martha’s ‘much service’ would mean a combination of many

⁴²³E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1988, 36f; T. K. Seim, 1994, 111; V. Skemp, Lk 10:38-42 and Acts 6:1-7. Lukan Diptych on Diakonia, in: GIGNAC/CORLEY (Ed.), Studies in the Greek Bible. Essays in Honor of Francis T. Gignac, S.J., Washington 2008. The view of Schüssler Fiorenza is expressed in other writings with little difference, see M. R. D’Angelo, 1990, 454–455; Schaberg, 1998, 288–289; K. E. Corley, 1993, 136–144.

⁴²⁴For the discussion among the feminist scholars, see A. Hentschel, 2007, 246–252.

⁴²⁵E. Schüssler Fiorenza, The Practice of Interpretation. Luke 10: 38-42, in: SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA (Ed.), But She Said. Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation, Boston 1992a, 72; B. E. Reid, 1996, 98–100; K. E. Corley, 1993, 140–141; T. K. Seim, 1994, 252–253.

⁴²⁶Ibid.

⁴²⁷See the comparative study of διακονία in Luke and Acts in: S. Bieberstein, 1998, 135.

⁴²⁸Ibid.

⁴²⁹Ibid.

⁴³⁰J. M. Dawsey, 1989, 54.

⁴³¹Ibid. D’Angelo sees Martha and Mary not as biological sisters but as “sisters” in a community. M. R. D’Angelo, 78.

other common gestures of hospitality.⁴³² Nor is the meaning of διακονία as an ‘official job’ convincing when its meaning is transposed from Acts to Lk 10:40 to project Martha as the leader of a household church.⁴³³ The meaning cannot be mechanically transferred from the book of Acts to the Gospel because the usage of διακονέωκτλ has different connotations in pre and post-Easter narratives and it is clear from the discussion that διακονία has a specialised Christian meaning in Acts.⁴³⁴

4.4.4 μεριμνάω and θορυβάζω (v.41b)

These words are found in the response of Jesus to Martha: “Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά”, meaning “Martha, Martha you are anxious and troubled about many things.” In Lukan context, as given in Luke 8:14, ‘anxiety’ chokes the growth of the word and in Lk 12:11, 22, 25, there are assurances to the disciples not to worry. In Lk 21:34 Jesus warns his disciples against the ‘anxieties of daily life’ that can prevent them from being vigilant.

A table of frequency of μεριμνάω in Luke compared with other New Testament writings:

| | Lk | Acts | Mt | Mk | Jn | I Cor | Phil |
|----------|----|------|----|----|----|-------|------|
| μεριμνάω | 5 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 2 |

The verb θορυβάζω occurs only in Luke in the New Testament (Lk 10:41). The passive meaning of θορυβάζω is ‘to be troubled/distracted’ about/by something. In other Greek texts, it expresses a state of confusion, unrest (I Cl 57:4).⁴³⁵ The cognates θορυβέω and θόρυβος have similar meanings as ‘being upset or being in a state of confusion’ and they occur always in the context of a disturbance made by a crowd.

⁴³²F. S. Spencer, 2012, 170, f.n. 53.

⁴³³E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1992b, 52–76; M. R. D'Angelo, 1990, 441–461; B. E. Reid, 1996, 197–198; Schaberg, 1998, 363–380; A. Hentschel, 2003, 185–189; R. J. Karris, Women and Discipleship in Luke, in: CBQ 56 (1994), 1–20.

⁴³⁴For further arguments on the usage of διακονία see S. Bieberstein, 1998, 136; A. Reinhartz, 1991, 161–184; J. N. Collins, 1990, 110.

⁴³⁵J. Moulton, G. Milligan, Art. θορυβάζω, θορυβέω, θόρυβος, in: DANKER (Ed.), A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Chicago et al. ³2000, 458–459.

A table of frequency of θορυβάζω and its word groups in Luke compared with other New Testament writings.

| | Lk | Acts | Mt | Mk | Jn | Pauline Epistles | NT-rest |
|----------|----|------|----|----|----|------------------|---------|
| θορυβάζω | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| θορυβέω | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| θόρυβος | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

As Reid suggests, Martha's anxiety should not be equated with that which is denounced in other Lukan texts. In Lk 8:14 it is anxiety about riches and pleasures of life that chokes the growth of the word. In 12:11 it is the worry about what a disciple would say when brought before synagogues, rulers, and authorities that is allayed. In 12:22 and 21:34 the admonition focusses on worries about daily life: what to eat and what to wear.⁴³⁶ In his response, Jesus with the term μεριμνάω, acknowledges and mirrors the worry of Martha, and with θορυβάζω, he criticises her complaining attitude. A similar understanding of the two-fold response of Jesus is found in Kahl's explanation:

In der Antwort Jesu auf die Klage der Marta (Lk 10, 41) könnte μεριμνάς 'du sorgst dich' noch anerkennend gemeint sein, die Fortsetzung mit θορυβάζω gibt dem Satz jedoch einen abwertenden Sinn ('du regst dich auf' oder ähnlich).⁴³⁷

In this context, it is probable that μεριμνάς καὶ θορυβάζῃ with their meanings as “being anxious and troubled” is used in a way not to criticise the διακονία of Martha but she being worried.⁴³⁸

4.4.5 παρακαθεςθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ

The narrator introduces Mary as being seated at the feet of Jesus - ἡ (Μαριάμ) καὶ παρακαθεςθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου ἤκουεν τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ.⁴³⁹ The form παρακαθεςθεῖσα from παρακαθέζομαι, ‘to sit down near to’, the aorist passive with active reflexive sense (as Jos., Ant 6, 235) means ‘have seated oneself beside/have taken one's place beside’, with dative of the person beside whom one sits (as Jos., Ant 6, 235 αὐτῷ).⁴⁴⁰ The

⁴³⁶B. E. Reid, 1996, 146.

⁴³⁷W. Kahl, Art. θορυβάζω, in: TBNT, 1512.

⁴³⁸Cf. S. Bieberstein, 1998, 137; also H. Melzer-Keller, 1997, 238.

⁴³⁹See 4.2.4 for the replacement with τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

⁴⁴⁰J. Moulton, G. Milligan, Art. Παρακαθέζομαι, in: DANKER (Ed.), A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, Chicago et al. ³2000, 764.

verb παρακαθίζομαι occurs only once in the New Testament with the meaning to ‘sit beside’ (Lk 10:39).⁴⁴¹

Mary is said to have been seated at the feet of Jesus and this special description signals the reader to look for instances in the Gospel of Luke, where people sat at the feet of Jesus. Mary is not the only one to appear at Jesus’ feet in Luke’s larger narrative. Elsewhere in Luke’s story, a weeping woman whose sins are forgiven (v. 38 in 7:36-50), a man healed from demons (v. 35 in 8:26-39), and a healed leper (v. 16 in 17:11-19), all take up a position at Jesus’ feet. There is no indication in the text that Mary was at the feet of Jesus expecting a favour nor is there any indication that it is an act of gratitude for a favour received from Jesus such as healing. In all other references in Luke’s Gospel, people were at the feet of Jesus expressing gratitude, having been healed. The posture of Mary at the feet of Jesus expresses that she positioned herself close to Jesus in order to listen to him attentively. The meaning of this phrase is complete and effective when read together as παρακαθεσθεῖσα (Μαριά) πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου ἤκουεν τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ. Mary’s position at the feet of Jesus is qualified with her act of listening.

Although the word παρακαθεσθεῖσα gives the meaning of sitting beside in Lk 10: 39b, it is expressed as παρακαθεσθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου, which means Mary was not sitting beside Jesus but at his feet.⁴⁴² The position at the feet of a teacher is understood as typical of students.⁴⁴³ The phrase ‘sitting at the feet’ is used as a technical formula indicating one ‘to be a disciple of a teacher’.⁴⁴⁴ Some have argued that for Jesus, a rabbi who taught women, there would be an exception to traditional and expected practices since the Jewish

⁴⁴¹P. Hoffmann, T. Hieke, U. Bauer, 1999, 41.

⁴⁴² Corley describes this as a particular scene of a meal setting in a Greek context and that Mary’s role is compared to women being seated at the feet of their husbands during the meal and remain silent. Cf. K. E. Corley, 1993, 137–138.

⁴⁴³ See Acts 22:3, where Paul describes himself as being educated at the feet of Gamaliel.

⁴⁴⁴ This concept is very well noticed in older literature, cf. A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, Edinburgh 1981, 186; E. Laland, 1959, 73; C. Parvey, *The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament*, in: RUETHER (Ed.), *Religion and Sexism. Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, New York 1974, 141; B. Witherington, 1984, 101: 101; J. E. Via, *Women, the Discipleship of Service, and the Early Christian Ritual Meal in the Gospel of Luke*, in: SLJT 29 (1985), 39; J. Brutscheck, 1986, 124–126; L. Alexander, *Sisters in Adversity. Retelling Martha’s Story*, in: BROOKE (Ed.), *Women in the Biblical Tradition (Studies in Women and Religion)*1992, 168–169; F. Bovon, 1996, 105; H. Melzer-Keller, 1997, 232; For more literature references, Cf. S. Bieberstein, 1998, 138, f.n. 459.

teachers were generally opposed to this.⁴⁴⁵ Regarding this understanding, Arlandson makes a distinction between the Jewish and non-Jewish women saying:

*... the Jewish Lukan audience hearing of Mary sitting at Jesus' feet may have been surprised, since it was indeed rare for women to do this. But a non-Jewish audience hearing of Mary would not have been surprised, since in their social experience women followed itinerant philosophers.*⁴⁴⁶

The argument that a woman listening to a rabbi was either unusual or a liberated role is irrelevant because within the Gospel of Luke there are references that Jesus spoke publicly to both women and men listeners.

As Davies expresses,

*... one must overlook the fact that listening to a man is far from an unusual or liberated role for a woman; and one must regard as irrelevant the fact that in each of the Gospels Jesus speaks publicly to crowds of male and female listeners.*⁴⁴⁷

This phrase, 'sitting at the feet' can be understood as ordinary words and as a concept deployed for cultural analysis. This action is called 'oppressive' in some cultures while not in others. As a cultural phenomenon, in some cultures it is accepted as a reverential position.⁴⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that the inclusion of 'also' in v.39b indicates the possibility that Mary was not alone at the feet of Jesus and there were other men and women.⁴⁴⁹ In such a situation, there is hardly any possibility that she exclusively opted for a submissive position before Jesus. The following excursus on Jewish women in antiquity presents the difficulty in defining the social roles of women.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁵ L. J. Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Woman*, Philadelphia 1979, 154–157; C. Parvey, 1974, 141–142; Some have refuted this argument but with unconvincing reasons. For instance, Davies argues that since Luke does not present Jesus as a rabbi, the argument does not hold, which means that if Jesus was presented as rabbi then it could be seen as an unusual act. S. Davies, *Women in the Third Gospel and the New Testament Apocrypha*, in: LEVINE (Ed.), *Women Like This. New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World (Early Judaism and its Literature)*, Atlanta 1991, 187.

⁴⁴⁶ J. M. Arlandson, 1997, 138.

⁴⁴⁷ S. Davies, 1991, 186; similarly, E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1992b, 59.

⁴⁴⁸ For example, it is a cultural phenomenon in India that people who are said to be in inferior status like women, children, people with less paid jobs and people from an oppressed caste to give such reverence to those above them and in many instances, it is not admitted as an act of "oppression" but considered as a mere cultural expression.

⁴⁴⁹ A. Destro, M. Pesce, *Fathers and Householders in the Jesus Movement. The Perspective of the Gospel of Luke*, in: *BibInt* 11, 2 (2003), 226.

⁴⁵⁰ The detailed excursus on the Jewish women in antiquity challenges the attempt of many scholars who try to re-construct the social identity of Martha and Mary in the story.

Excursus IV: Jewish Women in Antiquity

The reconstruction of the history of Jewish women has been quite challenging for scholars in Jewish and New Testament studies in the past decades. The role and life of the women in the time of Greco-Roman rule over the Mediterranean world is an ongoing debate but it became obvious that it was futile to generalise the social realities of Jewish women in antiquity. Primarily, the study on the Jewish women has yielded diverse results based on the materials used to describe them. These materials ranged from the literary to non-literary documents and several methodological and analytical problems arose in various research works indicating the complexities involved in the research.⁴⁵¹

Jewish men and women in Palestine during the time of the second temple lived a different life from the ones after the temple destruction. Being a religious Jew became a complicated affair and there were Jews both within and outside Palestine in places such as Alexandria in Egypt, who had very different ideas about what being a good, devout Jew meant.⁴⁵² Gerber discusses the differences among scholarly views in understanding the life of Jewish women in antiquity. She summarises that although these Jewish women belonged to different ages, marital and familial status, and religions, their roles are basically determined by their gender because they bore the same gender identity.⁴⁵³ However, it is insufficient to use gender as the only analytical category that shapes the lives of Jewish women in antiquity and it is important to understand how gender intersects with other categories. The ‘gender identity’ and ‘role’ are of paramount importance and other categories intersect in the construction of one’s gender identity; gender has to be understood as a social construct in a particular situation, in a particular period, produced amidst societal interaction and communication.⁴⁵⁴

An analysis of a society must consider different kinds of identities: at the very least it must include ethnicity, class and gender. And most significantly, these should be analysed not as separate identities, but in their intersection, i.e., when they come together and are interrelated.⁴⁵⁵ The concept of intersectionality has been used to highlight how various categories of women face multiple conflicting experiences of subordination. Instead of examining gender, ethnicity, class, age and sexuality as separate categories, intersectionality explores how these categories mutually construct one another.⁴⁵⁶ Such an analysis does not limit itself to binary opposites rather it opens up new and complex ways to think about identities. Intersectionality helps us focus on those who were at the bottom of various hierarchies. In using the intersectionality approach, it also becomes clear that not all men were better off than all women.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵¹Some of the methodological problems in studying the social reality of the Jewish women are discussed in: A.-J. LEVINE (Ed.), *Women Like This. New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (EJIL), Atlanta 1991; For the historical development on the role of women in early Christianity and within Judaism and in the Graeco-Roman world, cf. M. R. D'ANGELO, R. S. KRAEMER (Ed.), *Women and Christian Origins*, New York 1999.

⁴⁵²Cf. D. Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels. The Story of the Jewish Christ*, New York 2012, 5.

⁴⁵³C. Gerber, *Vom kleinen zu den großen Unterschieden. Neue Literatur über das Leben jüdischer Frauen in der Antike*, in: *EvTh* 59, 2 (1999), 158.

⁴⁵⁴U. E. Eisen, C. Gerber, A. Standhartinger, 2013, 5.

⁴⁵⁵S. Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity. Constructing Identities in the Past and Present*, London et al. 1997, 85.

⁴⁵⁶See E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 2009, 4–5.

⁴⁵⁷See for detailed discussion M. B. Kratzow, 2010, 388.

Since this study reflects the experiences of cultural complexity in the early Christian texts, an intersectional approach may be a fruitful way to investigate.⁴⁵⁸

With regards to the status of women in the Jewish society in the first-century, it should be emphasised that most of these statements refer to women in their capacity as spouse and mother, almost never to women as female beings per se.⁴⁵⁹ The argument that women were disrespected, marginalised and held a low status has been refuted by many scholars and many examples to show women were treated with dignity have also been cited by various scholars as summarised below:

1. The widespread scholarly and popular view is that the Jewish society had a low view about women.⁴⁶⁰ Witherington in his works states that, “the Palestinian Jewish culture was one of the most patriarchal in the Mediterranean crescent. The home and family were basically the only spheres where women could play significant roles in early Judaism. Furthermore, there is no evidence that prior to Jesus’ ministry Jewish women were ever allowed to be disciples of a great teacher.”⁴⁶¹ This view has been strongly criticised by Jewish scholars, claiming that Christian scholars have intentionally presented such a biased view to project Christianity as against Judaism.⁴⁶² Brooten strongly criticises that, “on the question of women, Judaism is regularly used as a negative backdrop against which to view early Christianity.”⁴⁶³ She further complains that most scholars did not show interest in the history of Jewish women, but rather in comparison between Jewish men and Christian men and their attitudes towards women.⁴⁶⁴

2. Myers’ study of gendered space in excavated Galilean houses from the Roman period questions a previously widely held image of Jewish women as strongly oppressed. Myers found that in houses and courtyards in Galilee there did not seem to be any divisions between men’s and women’s spaces and no confinement of women to specific areas: “women participated far more fully in crafts, daily household labours and management, and hence had a much higher degree of recognition and responsibility

⁴⁵⁸Intersectionality has its background in feminist approaches to counteract discrimination and inequalities. The main advancement of this approach is that instead of looking at various sources of discrimination separately, intersectionality will grasp the relationship between socio-cultural categories and identities; for instance, gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion and age. M. B. Kratzow, H. Moxnes, 2010, 309.

⁴⁵⁹P. W. Van der Horst, *Images of Women in Ancient Judaism*, in: KLOPPENBORG (Ed.), *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions (Studies in the History of Religions)*, Leiden et al. 1995, 43.

⁴⁶⁰B. Witherington, 1984; Other scholars with similar view are R. Scroggs, *Woman in the New Testament*, in: CRIM/BUTTRICK (Ed.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Supplement*, Nashville 1976; R. Edwards, *Woman*, in: BROMILEY (Ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Grand Rapids 1988; J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus. An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, Philadelphia ³1981, 359–376; L. J. Swidler, *Women in Judaism. The Status of Women in Formative Judaism*, Metuchen 1976; E. Moltmann-Wendel, *Liberty, Equality, Sisterhood. On the Emancipation of Women in Church and Society*, Philadelphia 1978, 9–21.

⁴⁶¹B. Witherington, *Women (NT) in Early Judaism*, in: (Anchor Bible Dictionary), New York et al. ¹1992, 958.

⁴⁶²Adele criticizes that Witherington’s statement about women appear to be the product of his apologetic interests in A. Reinhartz, 1991, 166; see also Kraemer’s criticism on Witherington’s view in: R. S. Kraemer, 1999.

⁴⁶³B. Brooten, 1985, 72; see also R. S. Kraemer, 1999, 50–51; A.-J. Levine, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, New York et al. 2011, 502–503.

⁴⁶⁴B. Brooten, 1985, 72; German Christian scholars along with other feminist scholars have come forward to study the problem of anti-Judaism with sensitivity and attentiveness. See M.-T. Wacker, *Feminist Theology and Anti-Judaism. The Status of the Discussion and the Context of the Problem in the Federal Republic of Germany*, in: JFSR 7, 2 (1991); cf. C. Gerber, 1999.

than one might infer from literary sources alone.”⁴⁶⁵ The trend to see the New Testament texts in the context of “Judaism” as a religion and in contrast to Christianity creates problems when identities become one-dimensional and when a religious marker alone determines the identity of a person or a group. This approach does not take the ethnic categories in early Christian expressions of identity into consideration. The result is that complex identities are reduced to a single one-dimensional factor.⁴⁶⁶ I agree with Jewish scholars that a one-dimensional approach is not plausible to reconstruct the history of Jewish women. Jewish scholars in their works indicate multiple forms of dominance that shaped women’s lives. Kraemer in her analysis says that Jewish women’s lives during this period were similar to non-Jewish women. The lives and opportunities of Jewish and non-Jewish women alike were affected by factors such as family and social class, free birth and enslavement, diet, demographics and geography. There is no question that for the vast majority of women in Greco-Roman antiquity gender, qualified by these other factors, imposed all sorts of limitations on their lives, which was true for most Jewish women as well.⁴⁶⁷

3. The other criticism was against the biased approach to the textual resources to suit one’s own discipline. Popular sources to study the history of the Jewish women are the rabbinical writings⁴⁶⁸ and the works of some historians.⁴⁶⁹ One major problem that Brooten observes is the confusion of prescriptive with descriptive literature; that is, one takes rabbinic sayings about women to be a reflection of Jewish women’s reality.⁴⁷⁰ Schottroff has criticised such generalisations about Judaism on the basis of individual rabbinic statements.⁴⁷¹ Levine also criticises that describing women as oppressed by Judaism was done based on very selective citations of rabbinic statements, ignoring significant counterexamples and ignoring the role of patrons and guests in private homes. She points out that the New Testament as well as other Jewish literature of the period, from the Deuterocanonical texts to Josephus and Philo to inscriptional evidence to early rabbinic sources, tell us that Jewish women owned their own homes (Lk 10:38 (Martha); Acts 12:12 (Mary, the mother of John called Mark)); served as patrons (Lk 8:1-3); appeared in the temple (which had a dedicated ‘court of the women’) and in synagogues; had use of their own property (from the poor widow who puts the coin in

⁴⁶⁵E. M. Myers, *The Problem of Gendered Space in Syro-Palestinian Domestic Architecture. The Case of Roman-Period Galilee*, in: BALCH/OSIEK (Ed.), *Early Christian Families in Context. An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, Grand Rapids et al. 2003, 68.

⁴⁶⁶H. Moxnes, *Identity in Jesus' Galilee. From Ethnicity to Locative Intersectionality*, in: *BibInt* 18 (2010), 398.

⁴⁶⁷R. S. Kraemer, 1999, 72.

⁴⁶⁸Various rabbinical statements have been referred to by scholars to portray women as less intelligent than men, the source of sexual temptation, being frivolous, greedy and gossipers. In the rabbinical thanksgiving prayer, women were classified together with heathens and illiterates. “Blessed be he who did not make me a Gentile, blessed be who did not make me a woman, blessed be who did not make me an uneducated person.” These women in rabbinic Judaism were regarded as being much inferior to men. On the influential rabbinical views on women, see W. C. Trenchard, *Ben Sira's View of Women. A Literary Analysis* (BJS 38), Chico 1982; C. V. Camp, *Understanding a Patriarchy. Women in Second Century Jerusalem Through the Eyes of Ben Sira*, in: LEVINE (Ed.), *Women Like This. New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World (Early Judaism and its Literature)*, Atlanta 1991.

⁴⁶⁹Beside epigraphical evidences on women in antiquity, two works of historians were seen as reliable primary source to characterise Jewish women in the centuries just preceding and following the emergence of Christianity: Flavious Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews and Jewish War*) and Philo (*On the Contemplative Life*), but they say little about ordinary Jewish women but provide important information about aristocratic women and women philosophers, cited in R. S. Kraemer, 1999, 50–51.

⁴⁷⁰B. Brooten, 1985, 73.

⁴⁷¹L. Schottroff, 1982, 10 f.n. 26.

the temple treasury (Mk 12:42; Lk 21:2) to the rich woman who anoints Jesus, whether on the head (Mt 26:6-13, Mk 14:3-9) or on his feet (Lk 7:36-50; John 12:1-3); had freedom of travel (as with the women from Galilee who accompany Jesus to Judea); appear in public, and so on.⁴⁷²

4. Further, the literary sources used mainly to acquire knowledge of Jewish women's lives are unquestionably the work of male authors. The majority of research does not focus primarily on women but rather on what men thought about women.⁴⁷³ Certainly, it is not possible for male authors to transit reasonably reliable representations of women's lives and experiences. Ancient male authors often displayed hostile attitudes towards women. They may well have been hampered by a true ignorance of the realities of women's lives. Since many men and women in antiquity spent much time in the company of other members of their sex, male authors might have had little opportunity to observe, let alone participate, in women's activities to obtain insight into their experiences and worldviews.⁴⁷⁴ And indeed it cannot be denied that in early Jewish literature, from Ben Sira till the time of the final redaction of the Talmud, that is in the approximately eight centuries of the Hellenistic-Roman period, a great number of passages can be found in which very unfavourable images of women and their position in the Jewish religious community is expressed.⁴⁷⁵ But orthodox Jewish scholars repeatedly point out that in the same writings one can also find a great many positive statements about women. But it should be emphasised that most of these statements refer to women in their capacity as spouse and mother, almost never to women as female beings per se. That is to say, as long as women acquiesce to the subordinate roles that their patriarchal society imposes upon them, they are praised in these writings written by males, otherwise they are not.⁴⁷⁶

5. Jewish women in Palestine and in Diaspora: Kraemer claims that rabbinic writings have led many scholars to conclude that Jewish women led restricted, secluded lives and were excluded from much of the ritual life of Jewish men, especially from the study of Torah. For Jewish women in certain Jewish communities, including later communities that adhered to rabbinic principles, these constraints took particular forms. Rabbinic principles limited women's participation in the temple cult, their access to higher Jewish learning and probably their ability to act autonomously with regard to divorce, property transmission, and so forth. However, evidence from Greco-Roman diaspora suggests that at least some Jewish women played active religious, social, economic, and even political roles in the public lives of Jewish communities.⁴⁷⁷ In diverse Jewish communities in the Greco-Roman diaspora, Jewish women were active participants in communal life, contributing financial resources and serving as synagogue officers and benefactors.⁴⁷⁸ Jewish women also benefitted from the economic and legal changes of the Hellenistic world. There is evidence that some Jewish women had the right to divorce their husbands as did their Roman counterparts;

⁴⁷²A.-J. Levine, 2011, 502–503.

⁴⁷³B. Brooten, 1985, 65, Kraemer also endorses such an approach, see R. S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings. Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World*, New York 1992, 3; B. Brooten, 1985.

⁴⁷⁴R. S. Kraemer, 1999, 53.

⁴⁷⁵P. W. Van der Horst, 1995, 43.

⁴⁷⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷R. S. Kraemer, 1992, 93; see also A. Standhartinger, *Das Frauenbild im Judentum der hellenistischen Zeit. Ein Beitrag anhand von "Joseph und Aseneth"* (AGJU), Leiden et al. 1995.

⁴⁷⁸R. S. Kraemer, 1999, 72; B. Brooten, 1982, 103–138.

some were leaders and patronesses of their synagogues, and some were educated in philosophy. Some girls in Palestine even received a Greek education, though certain rabbis found this objectionable.⁴⁷⁹

6. Regarding theological education for Jewish women, Rabbi Eliezer's opinion is often quoted: "If any man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law it is as though he taught her lechery" (m. Sota 3:4); "Better to burn the Torah than place it in the mouth of a woman" (t. Sota 21 b). Reid finds such an approach problematic. For instance the above quote of Rabbi Eliezer dates around the year 200 CE some 175 years after Jesus' ministry and Therefore, one cannot say with certainty that these rabbinic materials reflect the situation of Jesus' day.⁴⁸⁰ According to her such an approach is being very selective because in the same tractate of the Mishnah (m. Sota 3:4) the opinion of Ben Azzazi can also be found, who says: "A man ought to give his daughter a knowledge of the Law." Another such text is (m. Ned. 4:3) which declares that it a righteous duty to educate both sons and daughters. She points out that although there are a number of reasons why women were exempt from studying Torah, there are no legal injunctions against women studying Torah in Judaism.⁴⁸¹ Safrai writes: "During the second temple period and even more after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE the entire Jewish community, from its public institutions to individual families, developed into an education-centred society that paid particular attention to the education of children."⁴⁸²

7. Women and class: Some scholars express that the analysis of the lives of women based on class is important. For example, it may turn out that a wealthy female land owner enjoyed more favourable legal rights, stronger political power and higher status than a male peasant or an artisan.⁴⁸³ Schüssler Fiorenza too in her work mentions that "women's actual socio-religious status must be determined by the degree of their economic autonomy and social roles."⁴⁸⁴ Another scholar, Mayer Schärtel, is convinced that the role of these women should be determined by the social class.⁴⁸⁵ The social class of women is again debatable. For instance, Corley divides the women into four classes: aristocrats, freed women, free women and slaves. Arlandson argues that Corley's choice of classes of women does not at all account for women who are in many other classes in Greco-Roman society. For example, a free woman might be a wealthy purple-merchant, an artisan or a common day labourer.⁴⁸⁶

8. Women and social role: Scholars mostly describe the social roles of women with a biased approach. For instance, the stereotypical roles assigned to men and women were

⁴⁷⁹K. E. Corley, 1993, 66–67.

⁴⁸⁰B. E. Reid, 1996, 152.

⁴⁸¹Ibid. cf. also R. S. Kraemer, *Women's Authorship of Jewish and Christian Literature in the Greco-Roman Period*, in: LEVINE (Ed.), *Women Like This. New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World (Early Judaism and its Literature)*, Atlanta 1991; T. Ilan, *Mine and Yours are Hers. Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature (AGJU 41)*, Leiden 1997.

⁴⁸²Safrai, in his article, "Education and Torah Study", 946 cited in T. Ilan, *Erziehung und Bildung von Frauen im antiken Judentum*, in: *Zeitschrift für Neues Testament* 21, 11 (2008), 40–41.

⁴⁸³J. M. Arlandson, 1997, 6, Arlandson criticises the work of a few scholars as either ignoring the class structure or giving less importance to the class structure. His survey includes the work of E. Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*, Philadelphia 1978; L. J. Swidler, 1976; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1995; J. A. Fitzmyer, 1985b; R. C. Tannehill, 1991; B. Witherington, 1984; R. S. Kraemer, 1992; K. E. Corley, 1993, 123–143.

⁴⁸⁴E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 1995, 123–143.

⁴⁸⁵B. Mayer-Schärtel, *Das Frauenbild des Josephus. Eine sozialgeschichtliche und kulturanthropologische Untersuchung*, Stuttgart 1995; cited in C. Gerber, 1999, 158.

⁴⁸⁶J. M. Arlandson, 1997, 12.

seen as ‘natural’ and it was believed that women and men are given different physique in order to carry out gender-specified roles. Men are expected to work outside the house and women inside the house. In general, women were expected to be associated closely only with family members and their association with the outside world was seen as bringing disgrace to men. Women were expected stay inside the house because they were the ‘repositories’ of the honour of the men.⁴⁸⁷ Women were also judged on their social behaviour outside the house and were considered the bearers of the honour and shame of a family. For obvious reasons, Corley describes that the term ‘prostitute’ can be seen as the ultimate term in antiquity for maligning any woman, whatever be her social status or occupation. The term ‘prostitute’, or the accusation of meretricious behaviour could be levelled against women of all classes and vocations and does not seem to have been limited to describing lower-class free women, slave women, or actual prostitutes. Furthermore, the term had strong connections with the public behaviour of women, particularly their unorthodox table etiquette or their free association with men in the public sphere.⁴⁸⁸

In conclusion, we could say that the representation of Jewish women in antiquity is so diverse that they have to be put into various categories to be analysed. Such categories could include: women in Palestine and women in diaspora; elite and non-elite women; free and slave women; women with education and no education; urban and rural women; land owners and destitute; rich and poor women and so on. But such an analysis is often limited to binary differences. In the history of research on these women there have been several criticisms on developing one particular world view about them. From the above discussions, one can understand that in some instances the lives of Jewish women in antiquity was restricted and in other instances they showed signs of active participation in socio-cultural-economic and religious activities. The lives of these women has been analysed by some exclusivist approaches, for instance, either by their Jewish identity or class identity. However, the lives of Jewish women were affected like any other women’s lives in the Graeco-Roman antiquity based on many factors besides gender. Jewish women lived in the changing environment of the Greco-Roman world and were affected by the social developments around them. A free Jewish woman could have been wealthier than a common day labourer and could even own property. Therefore, it is more appropriate to allow for the possibility of diverse Jewish women’s experiences during these centuries.⁴⁸⁹

4.4.6 ἀκούω τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ

Mary, seated at the feet of Jesus is further described by the narrator as “ἤκουεν τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ” (listening to his [Jesus’] word). What could the term λόγος possibly mean in the context of Lk 10:38-42? In the lexicon, a wide variety of meanings are attached to the term λόγος: “word, speech, talk, narration, statement, rumour, dictum, report, preaching and teaching.”⁴⁹⁰ In the Gospel of Luke, the phrase ἀκούω τὸν λόγον in some instances is

⁴⁸⁷W. Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte. Die Anfänge im Judentum und die Christusgemeinden in der mediterranen Welt*, Stuttgart et al. ²1997, 317–319.

⁴⁸⁸K. E. Corley, 1993, 63.

⁴⁸⁹B. Brooten, 1986, 22–30.

⁴⁹⁰H. Ritt, Art. λόγος, in: EWNT, 881.

associated with ‘word of God’ as in 5:1: “the crowd was pressing on Jesus to hear the word of God” (καὶ ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ), and in the parables of the seed and the sower, the seed was the ‘word of God’, ὁ σπόρος ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ (Lk 8:11). In other instances, it is associated with the ‘words of Jesus’ as in 6:47 ἀκούων μου τῶν λόγων. In Luke, λόγος is used in singular for ‘the word of God’ and in plural for the ‘words of Jesus’. It is possible that the difference could be made between preaching (sermons and exhortations) and teaching (religious instructions and ethics) or it is also possible that ‘the words of Jesus’ and the ‘word of God’ are used interchangeably in the Gospel of Luke to denote both the act of preaching and teaching. In 10:39b where Mary was listening τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ, ‘his word’ is in singular but τοῦ θεοῦ is missing. So, in this context, it is not clear whether Jesus was preaching or giving some instructions because the narrator does not make any reference to the content of Jesus’ conversation to Mary but her attentive listening indicates that she was listening to something important.

Excursus V: An Evaluation of διακονεῖν and ἀκούειν in the Gospel of Luke

In the story Mary chose ἀκούειν and Martha διακονεῖν. The way in which these terms are used and interpreted strongly affects the meaning of the text. These terms are mainly used to evaluate and judge the roles of Martha and Mary. Many read the text placing Martha and Mary against each other with antagonistic behaviours of ‘serving’ and ‘hearing’. In v.40, the διακονία of Martha appears to be seen in a negative light, when Jesus associates the act of Martha with the verbs ‘μεριμνᾷ καὶ θορυβάζει’, although he does not use the term διακονία. It gives an impression to the reader that the διακονία is not seen in a positive light against the background of the positive portrayal of the διακονεῖν role elsewhere in Luke. It is difficult to accept that it should suddenly appear to represent the mistaken choice here in this text.⁴⁹¹ How could Martha who received Jesus suddenly turn out to be an indifferent host just because she does not do exactly what Mary does, i.e., sit at the feet of Jesus? Is Jesus really criticising the διακονία of Martha? Is only hearing the word valued in this instance, while in the other places in the Gospel ἀκούειν and διακονεῖν are given equal importance (e.g. 6:47; 8:15, 21; 11:28)?

The understanding of the story mainly depends on the interpretation and evaluation of the key words διακονεῖν (serving) and ἀκούειν (hearing) ascribed to Martha and Mary. One of the common understandings is that Jesus in his response evaluates Martha and Mary by their actions, i.e., Jesus praises Mary for her act of listening and indirectly reprimands Martha for her action of serving. There is a tendency to see διακονέω as negative and as a task of lowly status because of the social associations – when the task is carried out by women and slaves.⁴⁹² But in Luke διακονέω is always seen in positive light and the act was never judged nor criticised negatively. The subjects of διακονέω

⁴⁹¹See T. K. Seim, 1994, 106.

⁴⁹²L. Schotroff explains διακονέω κτλ. in terms of “the menial labour of women and slaves.” See L. Schotroff, Lydia’s Impatient Sisters. A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity, Louisville 1995, 205.

in Luke were both men and women; slaves and masters. Luke illustrates that διακονεῖν is carried out by people irrespective of gender (men and women) and rank (master and servants) and towards the end Jesus himself affirms that, ‘he is the one who serves’. The meaning of διακονέω is challenged within Luke’s Gospel and it is seen as an act worthy of honour. So διακονέω, which was normally seen as a lowly job when carried out by women and servants/slaves, is evaluated positively in Luke.

Both the behaviours are essentially good behaviours. But as Alexander says: “In terms of Gospel discourse, however, the story offers a choice between two ‘good’ types of behaviour, listening to Jesus and serving him, and this is at the heart of the paradox.”⁴⁹³ Both are essential roles and have been greatly emphasised in the teachings of Jesus. Particularly in the parables, Jesus emphasised on hearing his words and keeping/doing it: The parable of the house built on the rock and sand (6:46-49) - καὶ ἀκούων μου τῶν λόγων καὶ ποιῶν αὐτούς’ (6:47) and ἀκούσας καὶ μὴ ποιήσας (6:49) - shows the consequences of those who hear his words and follow them, and those who do not follow them. Similarly, in the parable of the sower (8:1-15), the act of hearing ἀκούσαντες τὸν λόγον (8:15) is expected to be followed by the act of doing (8:12,13,14,15). For example Jesus says, “My brothers and sisters are those who hear the word of God and do it” (8:21).⁴⁹⁴ There is also a possibility that both Martha and Mary have integrated both these aspects.

When it comes to the hearing of Mary, some scholars view her act not as passive hearing, but as a “qualified hearing”, which is followed with doing related also with proclamation. For instance, Bieberstein claims that the hearing of Mary is a „qualifiziertes Hören” and concludes that “*dieses Hören nicht grundsätzlich vom Tun getrennt werden darf*. Das bedeutet, daß Maria hier nicht passiv dargestellt wird; ihr Hören schließt ein Tun nicht aus.”⁴⁹⁵ Bieberstein argues that ‘doing’ is implicit in the ‘listening’ of Mary. So, Mary remains the one who has chosen ‘the good part’ over and against Martha who has not done so. Bieberstein’s analysis of the ‘qualified hearing’ of Mary becomes questionable when the same logic is applied to the behaviour of Martha. Why can’t Martha’s service be seen as ‘qualified service’ as well? Martha is described by Bieberstein as an independent woman and as a ‘landlady’ who has enough self-confidence to invite Jesus into her house and could ‘afford’ to concentrate on the “*Versorgungsarbeit*”.⁴⁹⁶ Why could her service not be seen already to be the consequence of a meaningful ‘listening’?

It would be inappropriate to conclude that this text is weighed upon the aspects of hearing and doing. Both these aspects are prominent in Luke: There are verses which emphasise only ‘doing’ (Lk 6:46) and verses which stress the importance of ‘listening to the word’ (11:28), and in some places, both are combined (8:15, 21). When it comes

⁴⁹³L. Alexander, 2002, 211.

⁴⁹⁴J. A. Darr sees some strong parallelism of Lk 10:38-42 with Luke 8:11-15 (The sower parable). Mary, who sits at Jesus’ feet in receptive posture, listens to his word. Although Mary’s portrait is sketchy, enough evidence is provided for the reader to identify her as ‘good soil’ (Luke 8:15). She is attentive, receptive and retentive. Martha, on the other hand typifies the thorny ground (Luke 8:14). See J. A. Darr, Watch How You Listen Lk 8:18. Jesus and the Rhetoric of Perception in Luke-Acts, in: MC KNIGHT (Ed.), The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament, Valley Forge 1994, 102.

⁴⁹⁵S. Bieberstein, 1998, 129; C. Janssen, R. Lamb, Das Evangelium nach Lukas. Die Erdniedrigten werden erhöht, in: SCHOTTROFF/WACKER (Ed.), Kompendium feministische Bibelauslegung, Gütersloh ²1999, 522.

⁴⁹⁶S. Bieberstein, 1998, 132.

to ‘hearing’ it is frequently bound with ‘doing’ in the Gospel of Luke.⁴⁹⁷ This is important to understand if we are to avoid inappropriate contrasts between Martha and Mary. It avoids the conflict in deciding which of these two behaviours were the best according to Jesus.

This discussion suggests that Jesus in his response to Martha did not judge the roles of Martha and Mary as such. If Jesus’ response is not to be understood as an evaluation of the choices of Martha and Mary, what else does it communicate to the readers? This question will be addressed in detail in the next chapter while analysing the story in its narrative context.⁴⁹⁸

4.4.7 The Significance of κύριος

10:39: Mary sat at the feet τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.⁴⁹⁹

10:40: Martha said, κύριε.

10:41: ὁ κύριος answered and said to her.

Generally, the term κύριος (lord) in the Greek language is used to address a person of highest authority. “The title was used for rulers and masters in the Greco-Roman world, and it apparently was used as a term of respect for teachers and great men and, in an elevated sense, in reference to God in pre-Christian Judaism.”⁵⁰⁰ Κύριος in the sense of an authoritative person is well defined by Bietenhard: “Κύριος bedeutet gewaltig, mächtig; substantiviert: Herr, Herrscher; derjenige, welcher (über Menschen, Dinge, sich selbst) Verfügungsgewalt hat. Κύριος enthält immer das Moment des Rechtmäßigen und der Autorität; es steht oft neben- δεσπότης, das v.a. den Besitzer bezeichnet. Später wurde ganz allgemein der Höhergestellte als κύριος bezeichnet und mit κύριε angeredet.”⁵⁰¹

According to Bietenhard, Jesus as κύριος is understood in terms of the earthly Jesus and the resurrected Jesus.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁷See Semantic analysis on ‘hearing the word’ in Luke in section 4.4.6.

⁴⁹⁸See 5.5.2.

⁴⁹⁹In the NA²⁸ Greek text, Jesus is referred as ‘κύριος’ thrice.

⁵⁰⁰R. A. Culpepper, 1998, 16.

⁵⁰¹H. Bietenhard, Art. κύριος, in: TBNT 2, 926.

⁵⁰²This represents the classical understanding from Bousset and Bultmann of sharply distinguishing Palestinian and Hellenistic interpretation of Jesus. This has been put into question in recent scholarship. For example, Boyarin makes a suggestion that, “Jesus and Christ were one from the very beginning of the Jesus movement. It won’t be possible any longer to think of some ethical religious teacher who was later promoted to divinity under the influence of alien Greek notions, with his so called original message being distorted and lost; the idea of Jesus as divine-human Messiah goes back to the very beginning of the Christian movement, to Jesus himself, and even before that.” D. Boyarin, 2012, 7.

- a) The earthly (*der irdische*) Jesus as κύριος: “Zunächst entspricht die Beziehung Jesu als κύριος der Anrede, mit der der irdische Jesus wie andere Personen auch angeredet wurde.”⁵⁰³
- b) The resurrected (*der erhöhte*) Jesus as κύριος: “Wohl aus der vorpaulinischen hellenistischen Gemeinde stammt der gottesdienstliche Bekenntnisruf κύριος Ἰησοῦς, Herr (ist) Jesus. Mit diesem Ruf unterstellt sich die ntl. Gemeinde ihrem Herrn, sie bekennt ihn damit aber auch als Weltherrscher (vgl. Röm 10, 9a; I Kor 12, 3; Phil 2, 11): Gott hat Jesus von den Toten auferweckt und zum universalen κύριος erhöht... Der erhöhte κύριος Christus herrscht über die Menschheit (Röm 14, 9).”⁵⁰⁴

Besides the meaning in an everyday sense of ‘sir/master’, the term κύριος, if used for Jesus, also means ‘the resurrected Lord’, with the christological emphasis.⁵⁰⁵ In the lexicon κύριος has both the meanings of ‘the Lord’ (resurrected) and ‘lord’; ‘master’; ‘owner’,⁵⁰⁶ and it is impossible to decide the exact usage in respective instances when it is used for Jesus.

In the Gospel of Luke, the term κύριος is not exclusively associated with Jesus. The term occurs 103 times and in some forty of these instances it refers to God as ‘the Lord’. In another twenty-four instances, the term is used by persons besides Jesus (19:33) or characters in Jesus’ parables (12:36, 37, 42-47; 16:3, 5; 20:13,15).⁵⁰⁷ Of the remaining instances, when ‘Lord’ refers to Jesus, eighteen are in the vocative, whereas others address Jesus as ‘Lord’,⁵⁰⁸ and fifteen times it is used by the narrator.⁵⁰⁹ In all these instances, it is impossible to decide whether Jesus was referred to with reverence as ‘sir’ (*Anrede*) or as being referred to as ‘the resurrected Lord’.

Culpepper comments that

... the repeated use of ‘Lord’ to refer to God in the infancy narratives colours its use in reference to Jesus later in the Gospel.

He further says that,

... the title ‘Lord’, subtly infuses the Gospel with the church’s post-Easter confession of the risen Lord. Luke affirms the confession of Jesus as Lord and according to him, Jesus from his birth, is the Lord who would rise from the dead. By the end of the Gospel, the disciples use the term in the

⁵⁰³H. Bietenhard, 930.

⁵⁰⁴Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵See Ibid. 926–933.

⁵⁰⁶P. Hoffmann, T. Hieke, U. Bauer, 1999, 177.

⁵⁰⁷R. A. Culpepper, 1998, 16.

⁵⁰⁸Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹Cf. (3:4; 7:13, 19; 10:1, 39, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15; 17:5, 6; 18:6; 19:8; 22:61; 24:3).

absolute when they echo the Easter confession, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon'. (24:34).⁵¹⁰

Fitzmyer further suggests that the title was first used for Jesus in reference to his status as risen Lord and then retrojected back into the ministry of Jesus.⁵¹¹

Rowe argues that,

the writer of Luke has employed κύριος to negotiate narratively some of the most complex issues in early Christology: the relation of the Jewish God to Jesus, and the relation between the experience of the risen Lord in the church and the figure of the past who was born and executed in Palestine.⁵¹²

Luke's development of the identity of Ἰησοῦς as κύριος is thus dialectical in the sense that there is a single, simultaneous movement in two directions. The movement itself is Luke's consistent conceptualisation and depiction of the entirety of Jesus' life on earth (primarily Gospel) and in heaven (primarily Acts) as κύριος. The directions within this movement are, looking from the Acts to the Gospel, the portrayal of the heavenly Lord as a human figure, and, looking from the Gospel to Acts, the portrayal of the human figure as the heavenly Lord.⁵¹³

The difficulty in determining the meaning of κύριος for this text in particular is expressed in the following argument:

Besides the proper name Ἰησοῦς, ὁ κύριος is in fact the predominant way that Luke as narrator refers to Jesus. The name and the title are narratively interchangeable: in telling the story of Ἰησοῦς. Luke writes about what ὁ κύριος said or did. For Luke, Jesus is "the Lord" to the same extent that he is Jesus.⁵¹⁴

Rowe in his argument emphasises the indefinite use of κύριος in Lk 10:38-42. On the one hand, he argues that this episode in particular expresses the essence of the Lukan christological task in narrating a pre-resurrection life with post-resurrection theology and knowledge. In this perspective, the writer uses κύριος to construct a unity in Jesus' identity so that the resurrected Lord who is now worshipped is the same Lord as the Jesus of Nazareth whose earthly career ended in death. Yet this unity is fashioned in such a way as to respect,

⁵¹⁰Ibid. 17.

⁵¹¹J. A. Fitzmyer, 1985a, 203 cited in R. A. Culpepper, 1998, 17.

⁵¹²C. K. Rowe, 2006, 150: 218.

⁵¹³Ibid. Rowe claims that Luke uses κύριος to unify the earthly and resurrected Jesus at the point of his identity as Lord. There are not two figures, one Jesus of "history", as it were, and another exalted Lord, but rather only one: The Lord who was κύριος even from the womb. See *ibid.*

⁵¹⁴Ibid.

historically, the difference between pre-and post-resurrection claims. In the narrative continuity of identity as κύριος and κύριε, in joining the vocative-κύριε and the non-vocative -κύριος through the actual writing of the narrative, Luke himself gives the unity to the christological uses of κύριος.⁵¹⁵ On the other hand, Rowe expresses that such an understanding is not absolute. He says, "... however, recognising the christological unity in the narrative does necessitate the elimination of historical verisimilitude."⁵¹⁶

From the discussion above, one could say that when the narrator used κύριος for Jesus, it is not necessarily used as one of the christological titles in narrating certain events in the life of Jesus (i.e., in pre-easter narratives). Dawsey's argument is plausible, that:

...the Lukan narrator does not call Jesus "Son of Man" or "teacher", he often refers to him as "Lord" (κύριος) and in so doing the narrator associates himself with certain story-characters who are aware of Jesus' power and their dependence on that power, Jesus authority and their position before that authority.⁵¹⁷

Culpepper also adds that,

... since the narrator's speech patterns carry great authority, it is significant that while the narrator refers to Jesus as "the Lord", the narrator does not commonly call Jesus "the Messiah" (see 2:26; 4:41), "the Saviour", or "the Son of Man". (see 5:24).⁵¹⁸

Schreiber too acknowledges:

Der Titel ‚Herr‘ wird im LkEv und der Apg zur geläufigen Bezeichnung Jesu. Im LkEv bewegt er sich semantisch zwischen der respektvollen Anrede Jesu, wie sie in der Antike bei höhergestellten Persönlichkeiten verwendet wird, und der Implikation von Hoheit und göttlicher Vollmacht, wie sie der urchristlich geläufige Titel enthält. In der Apg, die auf das Geschehen von Ostern bereits zurückblickt, wird der Titel für den Erhöhten in seiner himmlischen Machtposition verwendet (Apg 2, 34-36 und 7, 55-59).⁵¹⁹

Elsewhere in Luke, it is significant that 'Lord' when used by a disciple is almost always associated with a request (Luke 5:8; 9:54, 59, 61; 11:1; 12:41; 17:37; 22:49).⁵²⁰ For Martha, κύριε remains a term for reverence followed with a request to Jesus. Therefore, in this text Jesus as κύριος is understood as a teacher of authority both by the narrator and Martha. There is no reference in the text what Martha thinks about Jesus but she knows that he has authority

⁵¹⁵Ibid.

⁵¹⁶Ibid. Schreiber too sees the difference of use in this text (κύριος als respektvolle Anrede in 10:40 und Tendenz zum Titel in 10:39,41) See S. Schreiber, 2015, 179, n.302.

⁵¹⁷J. M. Dawsey, What's in a Name? Characterization in Luke, in: BTB 16 (1986), 145; cf. 7:13, 19; 10:1, 39, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15; 17:5-6; 18:6; 19:8; 22:61; 24:3.

⁵¹⁸R. A. Culpepper, 1998, 16.

⁵¹⁹S. Schreiber, 2015, 179.

⁵²⁰J. M. Dawsey, 1986, 146.

to tell Mary what she is supposed to do. It is possible that for Martha it is an everyday term of respect and at this level it is not needed to be taken in its full christological sense.⁵²¹

4.5 The Text in the Context of Luke

Lk 10:38-42 can be read as a narrative by itself as it has been shaped into a proper unified whole. This passage is unique to the Gospel of Luke and the characters, Martha and Mary are mentioned only once in Luke among the synoptic Gospels.⁵²² The pericope 10:38-42 is placed between two short pericopes with 10:25-37 (The story of the Good Samaritan) as the preceding unit and 11:1-4 (Jesus teaching on prayer) as the following unit. The transition signal, καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ in 11:1, with the following infinitive, new place and also change in the composition of the characters must be seen as a prelude with a change in the situation (*situationsverändernde Einleitung*).⁵²³ The text begins with two pronouns in 10:38 indicating a continuation to what has been said earlier and there are no hints at the end of the pericope indicating a literary connection to the following pericope (11:1-4). As a narrative unit, Lk 10:38-42 gives clear signals as to where this particular unit begins and ends. The character, the lawyer (νομικός), who is introduced in 10:25, disappears at the end of the dialogue in 10:37. New characters (Martha and Mary) are introduced in v.38 and they disappear after 10:42. The pericope from 11:1 begins with a new theme on prayer. Besides the change in the characters, the other changes like change in action (Ἐνδὲτῷ) and place (εἰς κώμη ντινά) also signal the beginning of a new episode.

The immediate context of Lk 10:38-42 is unclear and several assumptions have been made to place Lk 10:38-42 in a context linguistically.⁵²⁴ The opening words in the narrative indicate

⁵²¹Spencer is against such a claim and argues that Martha's addressing Jesus as 'Lord' stretches beyond a conventional term of respect ('Sir') toward a conventional faith in Jesus' divine vocation. F. S. Spencer, 2012, 146.

⁵²²See John 11 and 12.

⁵²³Cf. J. Brutscheck, 1986, 31; S. Bieberstein, 1998, 127.

⁵²⁴Bendemann sees Lk 10:38-42 as a condensed summary of what has been narratively explained since 8:1, R. v. Bendemann, *Zwischen Doxa und Stauros. Eine exegetische Untersuchung der Texte des sogenannten Reiseberichts im Lukasevangelium (ZNW)*, Berlin et al. 2001, 149, f.n. 106: The other claims of contextualisation in extending the literary context of Luke 10:38-42 to earlier passages in Luke are not quite convincing. For example, structuralists like Patte argue that the literary unit begins at 10:21 and ends at 10:42 forming inverted parallelisms. He discovers an inverted parallelism between 10:21-24 and 10:38-42, which is not clear when comparing Martha and Mary to the wise and the children in 10:21. D. Patte, *Structural Exegesis for New Testament Critics*, Minneapolis 1990, 99–101; Darr sees some strong parallelism of Lk 10:38-42 with Luke 8:11-15 (The sower parable). He claims: "Although Mary's portrait is sketchy, enough evidence is provided for the reader to identify her as 'good soil' (Luke 8:15); Some scholars have identified a kind of progression from 'love of neighbour' (10:25-37) to 'love of God' (10:38-42) to 'devotion to God through prayer' (11:1-4). Cf. B. Witherington, 1984, 100; F. W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age. A Commentary on St.*

that this narrative is a continuation of a larger narrative, as the characters are introduced in pronouns (αὐτοῦσαὐτὸς). It is understandable as a Gospel narrative because the central character is Jesus and the narratives are obviously related to him and events happening around him. Since this story is not presented as a report of a systematic travel account, it is probable that this story, if placed elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke, will have the same function and the narrative stands unique by itself.

Furthermore, if Lk 10:38-42 is removed from its present literary position and is placed elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke, it will not disrupt the flow of the reading of the reader from the pericope on the conversation between Jesus and the lawyer (Lk 10:25 to 37) to the pericope on Jesus' conversation with the disciples (Lk 11:1-13). Lk 10:38-42, which ends with the climactic words of Jesus, shows no sign of being thematically connected to the passages that are after 10:42. The claim of Bieberstein is to some extent convincing to read Lk 10:38 - 42 in a thematic context of an "acceptance and rejection" motif and placing it in the literary context of Lk 9:51 - 10:42.⁵²⁵ Her argument is that Jesus who has been rejected by the Samaritan villagers in 9:53 is accepted by Martha in 10:38.

She says:

*Ein literarischer Weg von der Nicht-Aufnahme im samaritanischen Dorf zur Aufnahme durch Marta; die beiden Perikopen sind durch den thematischen Bogen des Unterwegsseins verbunden. Oder, anders ausgedrückt, in 9,56 wird ein Spannungsbogen aufgebaut, der erst in 10,38 aufgelöst wird.*⁵²⁶

This narrative indicates a thematic connection which can be identified from the context of how certain vocabulary like πορεύομαι, 'go'; εἰσέρχομαι, 'enter', and κώμη 'village' and ὑποδέχομαι are used at the beginning of the pericope. In the Gospel of Luke, πορεύομαι is usually grouped as πορεύομαι (+εἰσέρχομαι) εἰςκώμην /κώμας (9: 52, 56).⁵²⁷ These word groups show a 'journey motif'. While speaking of the immediate context, this pericope is usually placed in the context of a 'travel narrative', also known as 'the central section of

Luke's Gospel, Philadelphia 1988, 133; I. H. Marshall, 1998, 450. The most popular contextualisation of Lk 10:38-42, is to interpret this text in the context of Jesus' travel to Jerusalem beginning with Lk 9:51. This argument does not hold strong because of the inconsistency in the description of the travel route.

⁵²⁵S. Bieberstein, 1998, 124–127. While discussing on the thematic context, Bieberstein suggests the theme of followers (Nachfolgethematik), emphasizing on the key terms 'hearing' and 'doing, ibid. Schürmann read this text in the context of acceptance and rejection of Jesus and his works, H. Schürmann, 1994, 152. For others who place this text in the similar context, see J. Brutscheck, 1986, 50–51.

⁵²⁶S. Bieberstein, 1998, 124.

⁵²⁷A. Denaux, R. Corstjens, The Vocabulary of Luke. An Alphabetical Presentation and a Survey of Characteristic and Noteworthy Words and Word Groups in Luke's Gospel (BToSt), Leuven et al. 2009, 523.

Luke'.⁵²⁸ The opening phrase in Lk 10:38 *πορεύεσθαι αὐτοῦς* has directed many to fit this passage in the travel narrative. Many scholars see a redactional function of the text in the context of the travel narrative in Luke.⁵²⁹ Although the destination of the travel is not mentioned, it is assumed that Jesus and the disciples were journeying with Jerusalem as their destination (9:51, 53; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11).⁵³⁰ However, such an assumption regarding the destination is debatable because of the inconsistent chronological order of the events.⁵³¹

Jesus is portrayed as a traveller nearly from the beginning of this Gospel (4:42; 8:1-3). The 'journey motif' and the ministry of Jesus seem to be integrally linked in this Gospel.⁵³² The theme of Jesus as a traveller - who needs hospitality - emerges in the opening words of the pericope.⁵³³ Lk 10:38-42 being a narrative by itself is also the concluding section of chapter 10. Lk 10:1 and the following verses present Jesus' teaching on hospitality and instructs the seventy-two sent on mission by him about how to respond when somebody offers or rejects hospitality. Lk 10:38-42 is the first episode of acceptance after Jesus' speech to the seventy-two messengers. The context of hospitality is derived from the semantic meaning of *ὑποδέχομαι* in v. 39. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus and his disciples and those who were with him while on journey, appeared to have stopped at certain places in order to rest and receive hospitality. Some denied hospitality, (the Samaritans in 10:53), some invited him to be their guest (7:35, the Pharisee), and in some places, Jesus volunteered to be the guest (19:5, in the

⁵²⁸Cf. M. Wolter, 2008; H. Schürmann, 1994, 153; The literature on the travel narrative is extensive. See J. L. Resseguie, Point of View in the Central Section of Luke (Lk 9,51-19,44), in: JETS 41, 1 (1982), 41-47; D. P. Moessner, 1989. The length of the travel narrative is debatable because it is not clear whether the section which begins at 9:51 ends at 18:14 or 19:27. For instance, Talbert claims that the unit ends in 10:24 but Patte argues that the unit ends in 10:20, D. Patte, 1990, 100, n.3. Evans calls the section Luke 9:51-18:24 as Luke's "big Interpolation", C. A. Evans, Luke (NIBC), Peabody 1995, 167.

⁵²⁹Conzelmann sees the motif of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem as the redactional frame on which Luke hinges Jesus' discipleship teaching. H. Conzelmann, 1960, 60-73.

⁵³⁰According to Kurz, the ultimate travel destination of the journey motif is the temple (19:45-47). He says that, "the section with a frame recalling the boy Jesus with the teachers in the temple in Luke 2 and sets into motion the next phase in the plot line, the leaders' plotting to put Jesus to death (19:47-48)", W. S. Kurz, 1993, 51-54.

⁵³¹J. Marshall, Jesus, Patrons, and Benefactors. Roman Palestine and the Gospel of Luke (WUNT), Tübingen 2009; cf. I. H. Marshall, 1998, 401; E. J. Schnabel, Jesus and the Twelve, Downers Grove 2004, 257-258; J. Brutscheck, 1986; H. Melzer-Keller, 1997; also A. D. Baum, Lukas als Historiker der letzten Jesusreise (TVGMS), Wuppertal 1993; Kurz's explanation on how the narrator of Luke keeps the journey of Jesus toward Jerusalem in sight only briefly is convincing. According to him, "the narrator begins with explicit reference to a travel motif. But his references to journeying come separated by longer narrative stretches. In 10:17, the narrator reports the return of the seventy-two (whom he sent off in pairs to each town in 10:1), with little suggestion to his continued journey to Jerusalem. After several more episodes the narrator remarks in 10:38 that on their journey they came to a certain village, where Martha hosted him. The next episode on prayer begins with a vague mention that Jesus 'was praying in a certain place' (11:1), but with no reference to movement towards Jerusalem. The narrator adds further deeds and sayings with no apparent journey motif until 13:21."

⁵³²Lk 8:1, he went on to cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God; Lk 8:26 says they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.

⁵³³I. H. Marshall, 1998, 451.

house of Zacchaeus). So, Lk 10:38-42 can be thematically connected to the themes ‘travel’ and ‘hospitality’ in the Gospel of Luke. Exegetes who focus on the context of hospitality are Laland⁵³⁴, Brutscheck⁵³⁵ and Bieberstein⁵³⁶. But they support the theory that the original context of the story is the hospitality offered to itinerant preachers in the early church. Such a theory serves the purpose of presenting Martha and Mary as leaders of household churches. One could conclude that this pericope serves as an example story for hospitality to itinerant preachers during and after the earthly ministry of Jesus.

4.6 Conclusions

(i) Greek Text and Translation

An appropriate Greek text is chosen for this study with two significant changes from NA²⁸ i.e., in v.39b with ‘the inclusion of ἦ’ (3.3.3), and the replacement of τοῦ κυρίου with τοῦ Ἰησοῦ in v.39b. (3.3.4).

The translation of δὲ in v. 40a as ‘while’, does not show the roles of Martha and Mary in opposition to each other, but as two actions happening simultaneously. This translation is very crucial for the interpretation of the text because the translation of the conjunction as ‘but’ might lead to reading the text in binary opposition and the reader is oriented to read the story as a conflict between two sisters.

It is more likely that ‘Jesus’ was replaced with ‘Lord’ in later editions to ascribe more authority to Jesus as a person in v.39b. An argument based on the lack of a clear threefold κύριε in 9:57-62 also illustrates that the narrator may not be strictly concerned with the use of κύριος all three times here in 10:39-41.

(ii) Syntactic Analysis of the Text

The syntactic analysis of the text reveals that several words appear only in Lk 10:38-42 as *Hapax legomena*, such as παρακαθεσθεῖσα (10:39); περιεσπᾶτο; συναντιλάβηται (10:40); θορυβάζη (10:41). Because of their unique appearance in this particular pericope, it is impossible to derive the semantic meaning of these terms in the literary context of Luke, without being able to refer to its usage in other passages within Luke.

⁵³⁴E. Laland, 1959, 72.

⁵³⁵J. Brutscheck, 1986, 161–162.

⁵³⁶S. Bieberstein, 1998, 126–127.

Judging from the linguistic structure, what is central in this passage is the dialogue between Martha and Jesus (out of five verses, three verses are on the dialogue) along with the response of Jesus as the climax of the story. Based on the narrated speech and the direct speech in the text, the pericope is structured as

Introductory scene (38a – 40b)

Request of Martha (40b – 40d)

Response of Jesus (41a – 42c)

An interesting observation on the transitivity patterns within the text shows that Mary's activity is grammatically subordinated to Martha's with Martha as the active partner and Mary as the background character.

(iii) Semantic Analysis of the Text

In order to derive the meaning of the terms and phrases in Lk 10:38-42, the concept of intertextuality as understood in semiotics is avoided. The meanings of the terms are derived from its usage in the particular narrative context and within the literary context of the Gospel of Luke along with the encyclopaedic knowledge of the reader. This involves a creative reading process with the mental involvement of the intended reader. There is a distance of time, space, and culture between the world of the biblical text and the world of later readers. This distance could be the reason for the differences in the meanings attributed to particular words or phrases. This shows that the meaning of a word can be never understood in its full sense only with the help of dictionaries or lectionaries. The meaning is understandable to some extent only when read in a particular textual context, and it still remains hypothetical depending on the encyclopaedic knowledge of the reader.

The examples of different translations of the word *διακονία* in German, English, and Tamil translations show that the term is translated with different expressions even within the same language. This is quite obvious in the German translations. Except for few instances, *διακονία* is mostly understood in terms of 'waiting at the table' based on the lexical *Grundbedeutung*.

Based on the semantic analysis, the words and phrases associated with Martha are understood as, Martha having received Jesus into her house, then became busy with many tasks of hospitality.

Martha's reception of Jesus 'into her house' has an implied meaning, based on the meaning of the term ὑποδέχομαι in the context of hospitality. Furthermore, Martha's διακονία is understood in conjunction with the words ὑποδέχομαι and πολὺς as hospitable service in a normal household context and not in an official sense as a leader of the Christian community. There are two strong inferences regarding the activity of Martha. One is based on the lectionary understanding of διακονέω/ία as 'serving at the table', where Martha is assumed to be busy with the preparation of meals. The other is based on the transposed meaning from the Acts of the Apostle as 'service in the Christian context', where Martha is assumed to be the leader of a household church. Both these assumptions are not convincing. The former assumption is too narrow to understand the term 'service' in the given text and the meaning of 'much service'. 'Much service' may include activities other than meal preparations or just serving the meal. Wherefore, the latter assumption seems to be an imposed meaning from the early church context. One could conclude here that Martha is presented as being busy with several activities related to 'hospitality' and preparing and serving the meals could be one among many tasks.

The two-fold response of Jesus to Martha with μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ when understood as 'being worried and disturbed' shows that these words are not used to criticise the διακονία of Martha but the worry of Martha.

Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to him is understood in the context where she, along with others, sat close to Jesus and listened to his preaching or teaching (the content of Jesus' teaching is not mentioned in the text).

The use of the term κύριος for Jesus is not understood in the christological sense in this context but as an expression ascribed to a person in authority. Martha, by using the term in the vocative sense, acknowledges that Jesus has the authority to instruct Mary on what has to be done.

(iv) Text in the Context of Luke

Lk 10:38-42 can be read as a narrative by itself and the possible immediate context is more thematic and it is more convincing to place this text within the Gospel of Luke under the theme of 'hospitality' within the context of the 'travel' motif. Since travel is a dominant motif in Luke, the transition in 10:38 - Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτοῦς - simply indicates that the narrative of Jesus' ministry continues as elsewhere in the Gospel, and the discussion on the destination of the travel is irrelevant for the interpretation of the text.

By using the expressions εἰς κώμην τινά and γυνή δέ τις, the narrator does not give any importance to the specification or details regarding the place or the characters. The narrator being not specific regarding certain information such as the name of the place, where the event took place, or the lack of details regarding the social status of Martha and Mary, are the gaps in the text.

In the following chapter Lk 10:38-42 is analysed at the narrative level with the help of some developed narrative tools (postclassical narratology) and with the results of literary exploration of the text.

Chapter 5. Cognitive Narratological Exegesis of Lk 10:38-42

The cognitive approach changes the way we study the historical past. It emphasises that the text comes into existence only when read by someone, and consequently readers create text as much as authors.⁵³⁷ Therefore, Luke 10:38-42, as it stands, is understood as a coherent unity. However, narrative criticism's assumption of textual unity does not deny that a text includes a variety of elements, or that a long process of redaction may underlie the final form of the text. But this final form, which is narrative criticism's main concern, is assumed, at least initially, to have unity and coherence even though there may indeed be fissures and gaps.⁵³⁸ The task of the narrative critic is to offer an account of the text's unity and coherence which includes and attempts to explain the fissures and gaps, rather than ignoring or denying them.⁵³⁹ In the process of analysing the text, the interpreter remains as an implied reader and as one who tries to identify the narratological gaps with the help of analytical questions.

As it has been discussed in the introductory chapter, the 'implied reader' is a mere construct. But most importantly one needs to be aware that the implied reader does not exist by itself but only remains in the analysis of the interpreter. Therefore, while talking about the implied reader, the thoughts and views of the actual reader/interpreter is also involved.⁵⁴⁰ The imagination of such a reader remains hypothetical and the imaginary reader is as much a construct as a self-portrait.⁵⁴¹ The inference spots (gaps) in the narrative are identified with the help of analytical questions and these gaps are filled with the help of the so-called frames and scripts.⁵⁴²

⁵³⁷Ibid.

⁵³⁸Cf. M. Coleridge, 1993, 17–18.

⁵³⁹Cf. Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰As an example for the influence of the thoughts of the interpreter on the 'implied reader', the work of Bieberstein could be cited. S. Bieberstein, 1998; Gerber, while commenting on Bieberstein's use of 'implied reader' says: „In der Praxis hat Bieberstein also die als 'impliziten Leser' personifizierte Textstruktur bereits um die kritische Instanz einer aktuellen Leserin erweitert. Dies ist zwar methodisch nicht ausdiskutiert, aber doch sinn- und bedeutungsvoll. Denn sonst könnte ‚der implizite Leser‘ zum Trojanischen Pferd werden, in dessen vorgeblich objektiver, zumindest transsubjektiv abstrakter Hülle unbemerkt Subjektivitäten und Ideologien umso schlagkräftiger eingeschleust werden. Auch der ‚implizite Leser‘ existiert nicht an sich, sondern nur in der Analyse der Interpretin, des Interpreten.“ C. Gerber, Zur Frage der Geschlechterdifferenz und zu feministischen Diskursen in den Bibelwissenschaften, in: ThLZ 130, 12 (2005), 1384.

⁵⁴¹Kitzberger in her narrative-critical approach to the female characters in John imagines a female first reader as a reading strategy. I. R. Kitzberger, 1995, 570, f.n.28.

⁵⁴² See 1.4 in 'methodological considerations' for the explanation of technical terms used in the narrative exegesis.

5.1 Analysis of the Narrative Perspective

Based on the cognitive narratological approach, two important aspects such as ‘focalisation’ and ‘the dialogue’ in the narrative are discussed in order to analyse the narrative perspective before analysing the setting, plot and characters in the narrative.

5.1.1 Focalisation

This term, which in classical narratology is known as ‘the point of view’, has been given a new definition in post-structural analysis.⁵⁴³ Focalisation is the perspective which can be understood as seeing a story from a camera point of view, where the narrator orients the reader to follow the lens of the camera. Within the cognitive narrative two aspects of focalisation are distinguished by Finne: Fokalisierung *auf* eine Figur; hier “Innensicht” (emphasised by Genette) and ‘Fokalisierung *durch* eine Figur; hier “Wahrnehmungszentrum” (emphasised by Bal).⁵⁴⁴ In order to find the focal-point in a narrative level, the second aspect “Wahrnehmungszentrum” is taken into consideration, i.e., reading the story from the point of view of a particular character in the narrative.

Focalisation questions ‘who sees?’ and ‘from which perspective?’, and thus helps to explain the diversity of the text. At the first level of focalisation, the narrator is the focalizer⁵⁴⁵ and is external. This external focalizer delegates focalisation to the other characters in the story, who are the internal focalizers - the focalizers on the second level of focalisation. The transfer of focalisation from the first to the second level is identified through markers of shifts in level called *attributive signs*. These signs are verbs like ‘said’, ‘answered’. In two places in Lk 10:38-42, the signs which indicate the shift from one level to another are identified: v.40b ἐπιστᾶσα δὲ εἶπεν (Martha), where the external focalizer moves the focus to

⁵⁴³Focalisation is a term coined by Genette to answer the question “Who sees?” (in contrast to “Who speaks?”). The concept of focalization, introduced by Genette, is reconceptualised by Bal to answer the question “Who perceives?” (to point out that, besides Genette’s visual aspect of who sees the story, what is also necessary in understanding the term, is the emotional, psychological and ideological aspects). B. Niederhoff, Art. Focalization, in: Handbook of Narratology 1 (2014); Some argue that ‘focalization’ is a mere replacement for ‘perspective’ and ‘point of view’ and all these terms are more or less synonymous. Others find such an explanation as an underestimation of the conceptual differences between focalisation and traditional terms. B. Niederhoff, Art. Perspective-Point of View, in: Handbook of Narratology 2 (2014).

⁵⁴⁴S. Finne, 2010, 173:99-107; see 5.3.1 in the present work for the ‘development of plot’ in Lk 10:38-42.

⁵⁴⁵Focalizer: to whom the narrator delegates, an intermediate function between himself and the character. M. Bal, Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, Toronto et al. 2009, 143.

Martha and now the reader is prepared to hear something from her and similarly in v. 41a ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπεν (Jesus), where the focus is moved to Jesus.

In Lk 10:38-42, the narrator orients the reader to recognise Martha as the focal-point in the story. To get the ‘focal-point’ of the narrative, the narrator’s comments in the narrative are important.⁵⁴⁶ The way the narrator introduces Martha shows that she is the principal character in the story.⁵⁴⁷ She is introduced with an introductory phrase γυνὴ τις ὀνόματι Μάρθα, ‘a woman named Martha’, which is also used in other places in Luke to introduce the main character in a story.⁵⁴⁸ The reader is further guided to focus on this character because of other factors like description of a character at the beginning of the story following the introduction.⁵⁴⁹ Martha is described as a woman living in a village and as the one who received Jesus. Martha is not only introduced and described just at the beginning of the narrative, the whole narrative is centred around her and the story can very well be seen as being narrated through her eyes. She plays a key role in the narrative and remains mostly ‘the subject’ in focus for the reader as presented below.

v.38b,c *Martha* lives in a village. (κώμην τινά)

v.38c *Martha* receives Jesus as her guest. (Μάρθα ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν)

v.39a *Martha* has a sister called Mary. (τῆ δὲ ἦν ἀδελφὴ καλουμένη Μαριάμ)

v.40a *Martha* is busy with much service. (Μάρθα περιεσπᾶτο περὶ πολλήν)

v.40b,c *Martha* approaches Jesus and spoke to him (ιστᾶσα δὲ εἶπεν)

v.40d Jesus responds to *Martha*. (ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ)

The Lukan narrator, as the external focalizer draws the readers’ focus on Martha as the first level of focalisation, and then in the second level shifts the focus to Jesus. Therefore, the reader is made to focus on the dialogue between Martha and Jesus as the significant focal-

⁵⁴⁶As Resseguie says, “we rely on his or her (narrator’s) assessment to sort out the characters and their motivations, to clarify the theological or ideological perspective of the narrative, to understand customs that are foreign to us, and in general to shape our response to the story. J. L. Resseguie, 2005, 132.

⁵⁴⁷See above 5.4.2 for the presentation of Martha as the principal character.

⁵⁴⁸For similar expressions, cf. Lk 1:5 (τις ὀνόματι Ζαχαρίας); 5:27(τελώνην ὀνόματι Λευεὶν); 19:2(ἀνὴρ ὀνόματι καλούμενος Ζακχαῖος); 23:50 (ἀνὴρ ὀνόματι Ἰωσήφ); 24:18 (εἷς ὀνόματι Κλεοπᾶς).

⁵⁴⁹Dickerson calls this narrative device “New Character Narrative”. It consists of three elements- introduction, description and story. Such characterizations are also called block characterization in narrative theories which means a character is characterized at the very beginning of the story. Most of the characters introduced by New Character Narratives are relatively minor characters, that is, persons to be healed, or other characters who participate in one narrative sequence only. Thirty such forms of characterizations are identified by Dickerson in the Gospel of Luke. A few examples are Zechariah and Elizabeth (Lk 1:5-5), Simeon (Lk 2:25), Anna (Lk 2:36-37), the son of Nain (Lk 7:11-15), the woman who loved much (Lk 7:37-50), the Gerasene Demoniac (Lk 8.26-39), Jairus (Lk 8:41-56) and so on. See P. L. Dickerson, *The New Character Narrative in Luke-Acts and the Synoptic Problem*, in: JBL 116 (1997), 295–297; see also U. E. Eisen, 2006, 138–139.

point of the narrative. Therefore, the dialogue between Martha and Jesus gains more significance in the narrative.

5.1.2 The Dialogue Between Martha and Jesus

The dialogue between Martha and Jesus, which is the crux and climax of the narrative, creates a possible proximity between the reader and Martha, which allows the development of sympathies and antipathies.⁵⁵⁰ Since the dialogue is initiated by Martha, she remains the focus, whereas Mary by remaining silent only provokes the dialogue between Martha and Jesus and is the cause for the dialogue.

The request of Martha and the response of Jesus are detailed below:

Request of Martha

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 40b | ἐπιστᾶσα δὲ εἶπεν· | And then she (Martha) came up and said, |
| c) | κύριε, οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἡ ἀδελφή μου μόνην με κατέλιπεν διακονεῖν; | “Lord, is it not concerning you that my sister left me alone to serve?” |
| d) | εἰπέ οὖν αὐτῇ ἵνα μοι συναντιλάβηται. | Therefore, speak to her so that she may help me.” |

Response of Jesus

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 41a | ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ ὁ κύριος· | But answering, the Lord said to her, |
| b) | Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά, | “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. |
| 42a | ἐνὸς δὲ ἐστὶν χρεία· | But one thing is necessary. |
| b) | Μαριάμ γὰρ τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα ἐξελέξατο ἧτις οὐκ ἀφαιρεθήσεται αὐτῆς. | For Mary chose the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” |

The character’s opening words or words of address in a dialogue, are significant to know their relation to the one they address. Martha’s first words to Jesus were ‘κύριε, οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἡ ἀδελφή μου μόνην με κατέλιπεν διακονεῖν’(v.40c). Jesus’ first words to Martha were, ‘Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά’ (v.41b). The way they address each other shows the way they relate to each other. Martha uses a title of respect and addresses Jesus as κύριε.⁵⁵¹ For Martha, κύριε remains a term for reverence followed by a request to Jesus. Elsewhere in Luke, it is significant that the word ‘Lord’, when used by a disciple is

⁵⁵⁰S. Finnern, 2010, 170.

⁵⁵¹See above 4.4.7 for semantic analysis on κύριος .

almost always associated with a request (Luke 5:8; 9:54, 59,61; 11:1; 12:41; 17:37; 22:49).⁵⁵² Martha's address also follows a request. Jesus in turn addresses Martha by calling her by name twice, which implies that he needs her complete attention to listen to him. In the dialogue, Martha is allowed as many words as Jesus, and is accorded the unique distinction of being named by Jesus twice (10:41). When Martha addresses Jesus as 'Lord' out of reverence, Jesus responds to her as one who is already familiar to her.

As a first step, the speeches of Martha and Jesus are analysed with the help of the 'speech-act theory', an analysing tool in narrative analysis.⁵⁵³ The 'verbs of saying' in the speech of Martha are 'εἶπεν', and in the speech of Jesus, they are 'ἀποκριθεὶς' as well as 'εἶπεν'. The 'verbs of saying' by the narrator together with 'direct speeches' of Martha and Jesus, when replaced by a 'doing' word expresses the corresponding 'speech-act'.

So, in this context, the corresponding two speech acts are probably, 'demanding' and 'rebuking'

- (i) Martha's request expresses that she *demand*ed the Lord. (Martha uses an imperative while speaking to the Lord, telling him what he should do).
- (ii) Jesus' response expresses that he *rebuked* her. (It is difficult to know from the text whether Jesus rebuked her gently or harshly but what is important here is that Jesus did not oblige with the request of Martha and instead gives an alternate response with ἐνὸς δέ ἐστιν χρεία).⁵⁵⁴

In the narrative, after receiving Jesus, Martha gets busy with 'much service'. While Jesus was talking to Mary (and probably others who were present), Martha approaches him and addresses him. The verb ἐπιστᾶσα meaning 'to come up', indicates that Martha emerged on the scene, literally leaving behind what she was doing.⁵⁵⁵ The verb ἐπιστᾶσα with εἶπεν

⁵⁵²J. M. Dawsey, 1986, 146.

⁵⁵³See above 4.3.2.

⁵⁵⁴Collins calls it a 'mild rebuke', R. F. Collins, Art. Martha, in: ABD 6, 573.

⁵⁵⁵ἐπιστᾶσα suggests the meaning 'halting in her work' H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon. Founded upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, Oxford 2002. ἐπίστημι is used especially of persons coming up suddenly as in Lk 10:40; Luke 20:1.... ἐπέστησαν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς σὺν τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις; Acts 6:12 καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους καὶ τοὺς γραμματεῖς, καὶ ἐπιστάντες συνήρπασαν αὐτόν; Acts 22:13 ἔλθὼν πρὸς ἐμὲ καὶ ἐπιστάς εἶπέν μοι; Acts 23:27 καὶ μέλλοντα ἀναρεῖσθαι ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἐπιστάς, J. H. Thayer, Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Coded with Strong's Concordance Numbers, Peabody 2007, 2186.

shows the force⁵⁵⁶ of her speech. These words signal that she came up and burst out—a sudden release of an expression that she was holding to herself (hervorbrechen). These two verbs ‘ἐπιστᾶσα with εἶπεν’ bring more impact with the content of her utterance (Äußerung). Now, how do we understand what she said?

Her speech can be divided into four parts and analysed in detail. In the *first* part of her speech, she questions the attitude of Jesus, ‘οὐμέλεισοι - Is it of no concern to you? (v.40c). This is a rhetorical question⁵⁵⁷ for which she may not have expected Jesus to respond. In the *second* part of her speech, she further qualifies the rhetoric question by citing the reason why Jesus is not concerned. She states her problem. She declares that her sister left her alone to serve ὅτι ἡ ἀδελφή μου μόνην με κατέλιπεν διακονεῖν (v.40c). From the semantic analysis, one could say that the verb διακονεῖν in this context does not exclusively mean ‘serving of meals’ but it might apply to the multiple tasks involved in hospitality.⁵⁵⁸ Here, she strongly expresses that it is unjust that her sister left her alone to serve. The way Martha frames the question to Jesus indicates that she first questions the concern of Jesus and then she wants to hear from Jesus about Mary’s attitude. These two parts of her speech clearly reveal that Martha is not happy with Mary who chose not to help her.

Interestingly, in the *third* part of her speech, she even tells Jesus how he needs to respond to the situation. In εἰπεῖν αὐτῇ (v.40d) particularly noticeable is the imperative εἰπέ. She instructs him to speak to Mary. It is strange at this point that she does not address Mary directly but seeks the intervention of Jesus. There is no reference in the text to what Martha thinks about Jesus, but she knows that Jesus has authority to tell Mary what she is supposed to do. As Marshall says, “Perhaps she already tried to secure Mary’s help and now she called on Jesus to intervene.”⁵⁵⁹ In the *fourth* part of her speech: ‘ἵνα μοι συναντιλάβηται’ – she makes clear the results that she expects through the interference of Jesus i.e., that Mary would come and assist her. Martha uses possessive and personal pronouns like ἀδελφῆμου (my sister), μόνην με (left me), and μοι συναντιλάβηται (help me) to express her concern intensively. An analysis of her speech expresses the tone of her expression and intention.

⁵⁵⁶Linguists call this as illocutionary force of the utterance- A locutionary act is an act of saying something; an illocutionary act is an act we perform in saying something.

⁵⁵⁷A rhetorical question is a statement in the form of a question that does not expect a reply but is stated to achieve a greater persuasive power than a direct statement. The answer to a rhetorical question is usually obvious and is the only one available. J. L. Resseguie, 2005.

⁵⁵⁸See Semantic analysis on διακονέω/ία 4.4.3.

⁵⁵⁹I. H. Marshall, 1998, 452.

What is implicit in Martha's speech is a bit complicated to assume. What was her intention for such an utterance? Was she jealous of Mary? Was she angry that she could not listen to Jesus? Was she trying to seek more attention from Jesus? Did she want to express that Mary was doing something unconventional in the presence of the guest, by failing to provide some hospitality? Was she trying to emphasise her understanding of what good discipleship was all about? ⁵⁶⁰

As Hearon comments:

There are variety of ways in which we can hear Martha's request for help: Is it a demand? A prayer? A whine? Or a 'last resort' cry for help? Her questioning of Jesus, "do you not care?" combined with her complaint that Mary has "left me alone" reveal that Martha feels abandoned, not only by Mary but also by Jesus. It is important to Martha that not only does she have Mary's assistance, but also Jesus' concern - that he take note of her distress and her need. ⁵⁶¹

Martha acknowledges Jesus as an authoritative person and therefore, seeks his intervention. Her approach to Jesus expresses the confidence that she had in Jesus, hoping that he would acknowledge her concern and respond, the way she wanted. She most likely wanted an affirmation from Jesus that what Mary chose to do was unjust. In her complaint about Mary to Jesus, she finds fault with the attitude of both Jesus and Mary. From Martha's point of view, what she was doing to entertain the guest was absolutely fine and she expected the same from Mary. Her way of questioning Jesus shows her confidence that Jesus would approve of her point of view.

A speech also represents the thoughts of a character. A narrator can represent the thought of a character dramatically through direct or indirect speech. The speech of Martha reflects a personal narrative situation because she speaks about herself. The narrative technique in Martha's direct speech in the first place is important to understand the struggle/conflict within her. Martha's speech indicates that she is not comfortable doing what she has chosen to do. She did something that she is expected to do and may not have realised that she could have had another choice. Jesus, through his response, shows her that she would have had a choice.

⁵⁶⁰M. Böhm, 2001.

⁵⁶¹H. Hearon, *Between Text and Sermon*. Luke 10:38-42, in: *Int.* 58 (2004), 394.

Surprisingly, Jesus did not yield to the request of Martha, rather he responded in a puzzling way. He did not give a straight response but gave an ambiguous long response. Instead of speaking to Mary as Martha instructed him, Jesus directly responds to Martha. He seeks Martha's attention by calling her name twice. The tone and the temperament in his words towards Martha are not clear from the text – whether he was harsh or gentle.⁵⁶² It could probably be a gentle response because of the words that follows his address of Martha twice by her name: Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά. These words of concern appear to be in response to Martha's question to Jesus, “are you not concerned?” Jesus' answer shows that he was indeed concerned about Martha that she is anxious and disturbed about many things.

Regarding the semantic understanding of the words ‘anxious and troubled’: This pair of words means that Martha was indeed troubled in her mind, which Jesus acknowledges.⁵⁶³ But what Martha would have expected from Jesus was that he will intervene by sending Mary to help her. Although Jesus did not oblige Martha's demand, he duly addresses her inner struggle. In this context, by affirming Martha's feelings Jesus acknowledges that she is taking more efforts as a host to care for the guest. It is in fact an expected gesture, in a group oriented society, where the host is expected to express the gestures of hospitality in the best way possible in line with the cultural expectations.

Jesus continues his speech and his response gets complicated when he tells Martha that ‘one thing’ is necessary over ‘many things’. This part of the text has taken up considerable scholarly attention. The scholars who have taken the shorter reading of the text, ‘one thing is necessary’ have come up with various understandings on what this ‘one thing’ could mean. Some claim with the longer reading that Jesus was not interested in an elaborate meal but a simpler meal.⁵⁶⁴ The text does not indicate that Jesus reclined at a table to eat and it is an assumption that it was a meal setting.⁵⁶⁵ Jesus refers to Mary as having chosen the good portion, Μαριάμ γὰρ τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα ἐξελέξατο (v.42b), and he declares that it will not be

⁵⁶²Some see it as a rebuke, however, harsh or mild (see also 22:31; Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14); see F. T. Gench, 2004, 62; Schaberg calls it “a kind rebuke” or expression of “love patriarchy.” Schaberg, 1998, 289.

⁵⁶³Three Greek words are used in this narrative to express inner anxiety. μέλει (v.40), μεριμνάω (v.41), θορυβάζω (v.41): this is the only occurrence in the NT.

⁵⁶⁴I. H. Marshall, 1998, 223

⁵⁶⁵P. Thimmes, *The Language of Community. A Cautionary Tale* (Lk 10:38-42), in: LEVINE (Ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Luke* (Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings), London et al. 2002, 234.

taken away from her, ἥτις οὐκ ἀφαιρεθήσεται αὐτῆς (v.42b). What could possibly be the good part? Does this imply that Martha has taken the bad part? Most of the commentators comment on Jesus' reference to Mary as strongly upholding the 'listening' role of Mary as against the 'serving' role of Martha.⁵⁶⁶

It is argued that Jesus' approval of Mary's listening is an act of liberation for women – liberating women from the role of being men's domestic servers to the role of becoming diligent learners. Some argue that Jesus took a radical step in allowing Mary to become his disciple on par with male disciples.⁵⁶⁷ But this assumption presumes that women could not study Torah. Such an assumption is simplistic and based on inadequate historical methods.⁵⁶⁸ In fact, Jesus taught both men and women in the Gospels.⁵⁶⁹ Some see Martha and Mary as locked in competition for Jesus' attention. Wahlberg suggests that it is a sexual jealousy that underlies their strife.⁵⁷⁰ The approval of Mary's choice by Jesus could be understood in two ways: One is that Mary chose to listen to Jesus, which could be a rare opportunity to listen to a great teacher in their own home and which Martha had simply missed; the other understanding is that Mary strongly resisted fulfilling societal expectations, which Martha chose to do.

Some understand that with his response Jesus solved a conflict between two sisters. The complaint of Martha against Mary is seen as a dispute between the siblings. Jesus is understood as playing the role of a 'judge' evaluating the roles of the sisters. Especially in Luke, there are instances of sibling rivalry.⁵⁷¹ It is important to see Jesus' attitude to complaints about siblings. A close parallel to Martha's story in Lk 12:13, 14, shows that Jesus was not at all interested in solving sibling rivalry. Here an unnamed man 'from the crowd' asks Jesus to intervene on his behalf in a dispute with his brother, much as Martha asks Jesus to intervene with her sister. Jesus refuses to be cast in the role of 'judge' and shows no interest in the rights and wrongs of the case. Similarly, in this context Jesus is not

⁵⁶⁶“Jesus protects Mary and upholds her rare role - listening”, J. M. Arlandson, 1997, 138.

⁵⁶⁷For ex. see C. Parvey, 1974, 141; I. H. Marshall, 1998, 452; E. M. Tetlow, *Women and Ministry in the New Testament*, New York 1980, 104; T. K. Seim, 1994, 102; B. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches*, Cambridge et al. 1996, 128; Others who refuted this claim were B. E. Reid, 1996, 149–154; V. Kopersky, 2002.

⁵⁶⁸A. M. Ernst, 2009, 213.

⁵⁶⁹S. Davies, 1991, 186; V. Kopersky, 2002, 163.

⁵⁷⁰R. C. Wahlberg, *Jesus According to a Woman*, New York 1976, 79.

⁵⁷¹Lk 15:25-32; There is a strong condemnation in Lk 6:41-42 of noticing your brother's fault and ignoring your own. Cf. also L. Alexander, 2002, 210.

interested to judge the right and wrong of Martha but his focus was to address the conflict within Martha.

It is important to note that until Martha came up with a complaint, Jesus never intended to comment on what Martha and Mary were doing as hostesses. Interestingly he also does not use the terms ‘ἀκούειν’ and ‘διακονεῖν’ and it is hard to accept that Jesus who has been emphasising both these aspects in other places in the Gospel of Luke, suddenly appears to be negative towards the act of ‘serving’ as against the act of ‘hearing’.⁵⁷² Such an understanding contradicts his own teaching on hearing and doing and that both are essential to be his followers.

5.2 Analysis of the Setting

In the analysis of the setting, the cognitive approach helps the implied reader to paint the picture of the setting of the narrative with the help of corresponding world-knowledge. Setting is expressed through different terms and in different ways.⁵⁷³ The term ‘setting’ is better understood as ‘space in the narrative’ or the ‘narrative world’.⁵⁷⁴ The important analytical questions for the setting are raised based on the aspects of time, space, and socio-cultural background.

At the narrative level, the analytical questions regarding the setting of the time would be ‘when?’ and ‘how long?’ In Lk 10:38-42, the narrator neither explicitly nor implicitly mentions the time the event took place nor is there any indication about the duration of Jesus’ stay in that particular village or the time he spent with Martha and Mary. Although the

⁵⁷²See Excursus V on the evaluation of διακονεῖν and ἀκούειν.

⁵⁷³Among the German speaking scholarship, the single aspect of ‘setting’ is understood under the key words ‘literarischer Raum’ and ‘erzählte Welt’. Cf. S. Finfern, 2010, 79. Finfern struggles for the appropriate German equivalent for ‘setting’. He changes from ‘Umwelt’ to ‘Raum’ in his later work with Rügemeier. Cf. Ibid. and S. Finfern, J. Rügemeier, 2016, 228.

⁵⁷⁴When speaking of space in narratology, a distinction is made between literal and metaphorical uses of the concept. Many of the spatial concepts developed in literary and cognitive theory are metaphorical because they fail to account for physical existence. M.-L. Ryan, Art. Space, in: Handbook of Narratology (2014), 796–797. A well-thought-out definition has been proposed by S. Buchholz, M. Jahn, Art. Space in Narrative, in: RENT, 552: “At its most basic level, narrative space is the environment in which story-internal characters move about and live. Narrative space is characterised by a complex of parameters: (1) by the boundaries that separate it from coordinate, superordinate, and subordinate spaces, (2) by the objects which it contains, (3) by the living condition which it provides, and (4) by the temporal dimension to which it is bound.” For further reference see M. A. Powell, 1990, 70; D. Marguerat, Y. Bourquin, How to Read Bible Stories. An Introduction to Narrative Criticism, London 1999, 79–84; J. L. Resseguie, 2005, 95-120, 242; To understand ‘setting’ under cognitive narratology, Cf. S. Finfern, 2010, 78-86, 273-289; S. Finfern, J. Rügemeier, 2016, 228–235.

Gospel has some chronological references,⁵⁷⁵ it is true that many of these connections are inconclusive until now. Most pericopes are introduced by *καί* or postpositive *δέ*, or formulaic statements, such as ‘it happened that’, ‘in those days’, ‘after that’ or ‘on the Sabbath’.⁵⁷⁶ A temporal point of view encompasses two aspects of the narrator’s relation to the narrative world: the pace of the narration and the temporal distance between the moment of telling and when the narrated event took place.

The narrator of this episode uses posterior narration⁵⁷⁷ to recount events that are viewed from a post-resurrection perspective. Posterior narration can be illustrated by the way the episode begins: ‘And it happened...’. Furthermore, the story is narrated in past and imperfect tense, except for the direct speeches of Martha and Jesus which are in present tense.

The pace of the narrative is also an important indicator as to what is ideologically significant. The rather sequential way of narrating and the interrelationship between the narrated time and the time of narration are also significant. Every narrative spends a certain amount of time narrating events which themselves lasted for a certain amount of time. The interrelationship between these two kinds of time: the story time (*Erzählte Zeit*) and the discourse time (*Erzählzeit*) and (duration)⁵⁷⁸ varies, making a narrative faster or slower. Often it is practically impossible to measure the story time, and the story time is not equivalent to the discourse time. The more the two kinds of time coincide, the slower the speed of narrating is.

In Lk 10:38-42, it is not possible to infer this difference as there is no indication of time. One cannot infer the time that Jesus spent with Martha and Mary. It is probable that as part of the hospitality culture, the host let the guest stay overnight. Furthermore, it is hard to say as how

⁵⁷⁵ 1:26 In the sixth month (of Elizabeth’s pregnancy); 1:56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months; 2:21 After eight days; 2:42 When he was twelve years old; 3:23 Jesus was about thirty years old; 9:28 About eight days later; 9:37 On the next day.

⁵⁷⁶ See J. B. Tyson, *Conflict as a Literary Theme in the Gospel of Luke*, in: FARMER (Ed.), *New Synoptic Studies. The Cambridge Gospel Conference and Beyond*, Macon 1983, 312.

⁵⁷⁷ Lanser identifies four possible relationships between the moment of telling and when the narrated event take place:

1. anterior narration takes place before the events it purports to recount (e.g. prophesy).
2. Simultaneous narration takes place as the story is itself unfolding in time (narrated in present tense).
3. Interspersed narration, in which actions take place during the moments of narration.
4. Posterior narration, in which the events recounted have been wholly completed. See S. S. Lanser, *The Narrative Act*, Princeton 1981, 198.

⁵⁷⁸ ‘The story time’ - The time span covered by the events represented; ‘the discourse time’ - The time taken by the representation of situations and events; ‘duration’ - The set of phenomena pertaining to the relation between story time and discourse time. The former can be greater than the latter.

long Martha took to approach Jesus to make her complaint. It could be after a couple of minutes after she received Jesus or even after few hours of working on her own.

The *dramatis personae* are composites of historical people and must be viewed within their socio-historical context.⁵⁷⁹ The characters, Jesus, Martha and Mary represent the Graeco-Roman socio-historical context of the first-century. Social, political, religious, and cultural settings determine the socio-cultural milieu of the narrative. One can find the relevant socio-cultural frames and scripts systematically by questioning the *behaviour* of the characters in the narrative. The question for the cultural understanding of the characters in the narrative would be: “What influences the behaviour of the characters to one another?” An explicit question to the individual characters would be: “Why do they behave the way they behave?”

In Lk 10, the socio-cultural setting is not explicitly described but there are some indications to understand it. The immediate picture the reader gets about the characters is that they are women and they are not presented in relation to any male members in the family. With the limited information from the text, the assumptions about the identities of Martha and Mary are complex.⁵⁸⁰ Moreover, the characters, Martha and Mary appear only once within the Gospel of Luke. It seems to be intentional that the narrator presents Martha and Mary as women devoid of any male ties. At the narrative level, there is no indication of a strong hierarchical system within their household.⁵⁸¹ In most of traditional and peasant societies, men are the heads of households. In the absence of men, women take charge of the households. The social presence of Martha and Mary in the story indicates that they are not part of an ‘ideal’ family system, nor do that fall within relational terms like mother, daughter, wife, daughter-in-law and so on. This in itself is a challenge in a society that valued the family system highly. It is possible that the two sisters were managing the household on their own without any male counterparts, probably with Martha as the head of the household. It is possible that being the head of the household, Martha plays the lead role as the host in receiving Jesus.⁵⁸²

⁵⁷⁹C. Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative*, Minneapolis 2014, 48.

⁵⁸⁰For the complex identities of Jewish women, see Excursus IV.

⁵⁸¹D’Angelo sees Martha and Mary not as biological sisters but as sisters in a community. She is more precise in calling them a ‘missionary couple’ like Paul and Sosthenes. M. R. D’Angelo, 78.

⁵⁸²Martha is not a frequent name in the New Testament and her name appears again in the Gospel of John, along with Mary and Lazarus, their brother. Because of the reference in John, the Lukan sisters are known as the sisters of Bethany.

5.3 Analysis of the Plot

In the analysis of the plot, the cognitive approach helps in identifying the possible moves in the development of a plot. The narrative scripts enable the anticipation of the intended recipients in a plot development. In the actual progression of a plot, the reader is led to surprises and thereby the effect of the text is brought to bear on the recipient and also leads to the inclination for empathies and sympathies.⁵⁸³ Actually, for any event one can find an alternative event, which is possible in one way or the other. The problem however, lies in choosing a point in a narrative to look for relevant alternatives to the plot. Besides the explicit statements in a given narrative implicit information filled with the world-knowledge (frames and scripts) of the reader are also present.

5.3.1 Development of the Plot

The Lukan narrator invites readers to imagine a scene in which Jesus, as a guest, is entertained by the two hostesses, Martha and her sister Mary, in their house. For some, the narrative Lk 10:38-42 might have to do with a conflict between two sisters; for some it could be the appropriate behaviour of the women towards Jesus that matters; for a few others it might appear to be the story of a woman who received Jesus as her guest. Therefore, the plot-moves (*Handlungsverläufe*) are not something fixed in advance for the recipients but they develop through certain dynamics in the process combined with the expectation of the recipients. These expectations are continuously balanced with the actual and the probable or alternative processes.

The actual plot-move (*Handlungsverlauf*) is about the character Martha who receives Jesus as her guest. She and her sister Mary acknowledge the authority of Jesus and it is Martha who plays an important role and the reader follows the moves of Martha. As a good host, she involves herself in the activities related to hospitality. As she is burdened with too much service, she seeks the assistance of Mary through Jesus. Here she recognises the authority of Jesus by addressing him as 'Lord'. After receiving a guest, one is expected to show gestures of hospitality towards the guest, as Martha did. In the light of this, her demand for assistance is justifiable, as she was burdened with too much service. But what is surprising is the response of Jesus. He gives a very ambiguous response. His response is indirect, and two things are implicit in it: First he did not respond to Martha the way she wanted by sending

⁵⁸³Cf. S. Finnern, J. Rüggeleier, 2016, 175.

Mary to assist her and secondly, he acknowledges Mary positively saying that she has chosen the good part. This leaves the reader puzzled with the questions, what would be that ‘one thing’ and ‘the good part’ that Mary has chosen? The story actually ends abruptly, and the reader is left in suspense, not knowing the reactions of either Martha or Mary. Some of the crucial narratological gaps identified in the text are: First the narrator is silent about the primary details about the characters - their social status, their professions, and their role in the village.

At the beginning of verse 38 Jesus is accompanied by others, ‘As they (αὐτοὺς) were travelling’ and the second half of the verse shifts from plural to singular, ‘he (αὐτὸς) entered a village’.⁵⁸⁴ Does this shift mean that all those who accompanied him waited outside the village? A preferable solution is that in changing to the singular the narrator is highlighting the interaction of Jesus with Mary and Martha.⁵⁸⁵ Although the passage highlights that only Jesus entered the village, it is very likely that others were still around in the background. The narrator does not specify the content of Jesus’ conversation with Mary. Further the text does not specify the kind of activities that Martha was engaging herself in. Again, towards the end of the narration, the reader gets the impression that the story is incomplete. If at all the story had been continued, the reader could have been well informed about the theme and the purpose of the unit. The open-endedness of the text, although it may look puzzling, proves to be an effective tool for engaging one’s audience. As a form of narratological silence, it is up to the reader to decide what ought to be done with the narrative. Anticipations are characteristics of the response to stories.⁵⁸⁶ The point of the narrative resides in the surprise experienced by the reader.

5.3.2 Constructing a Plot Map

Narrative analysis does not deal only with the reporting of the actual events but also on how the recipients in the process of reading develop some expectations about the development of the plot. The plan of the plot is compared with a game plan where the players are placed in specific positions and are made to make different moves. On the other side are the spectators

⁵⁸⁴The change from the plural to singular is also to be noted in Lk 9: 52-56.

⁵⁸⁵A. Reinhartz, 1991, 165; see also B. E. Reid, 1996, 151.

⁵⁸⁶For anticipation and its role in constructive process, see D. S. Miall, Anticipation and Feeling in Literary Response. A Neuropsychological Perspective, in: Poetics 23, 4 (1995)

(here the recipients), who speculate some anticipated moves from the players.⁵⁸⁷ With the presence of textual gaps, a narrative sequence emerges from the interaction of a text and an audience (Reader-response-Theory). Audiences mobilize a variety of cognitive abilities in combination with a large amount of linguistic, social and cultural information, allowing them to complete perceived patterns and making sense of them in the context. Although it is generally assumed that it is the text that evolves this pattern and the reader merely completing it, it has not been easy to assess the balance of power between the text and the audience as to ‘who has the last word?’ and it remains open. The gaps or blanks in a text require an act of building a scheme adequate to the text as a whole by the readers.

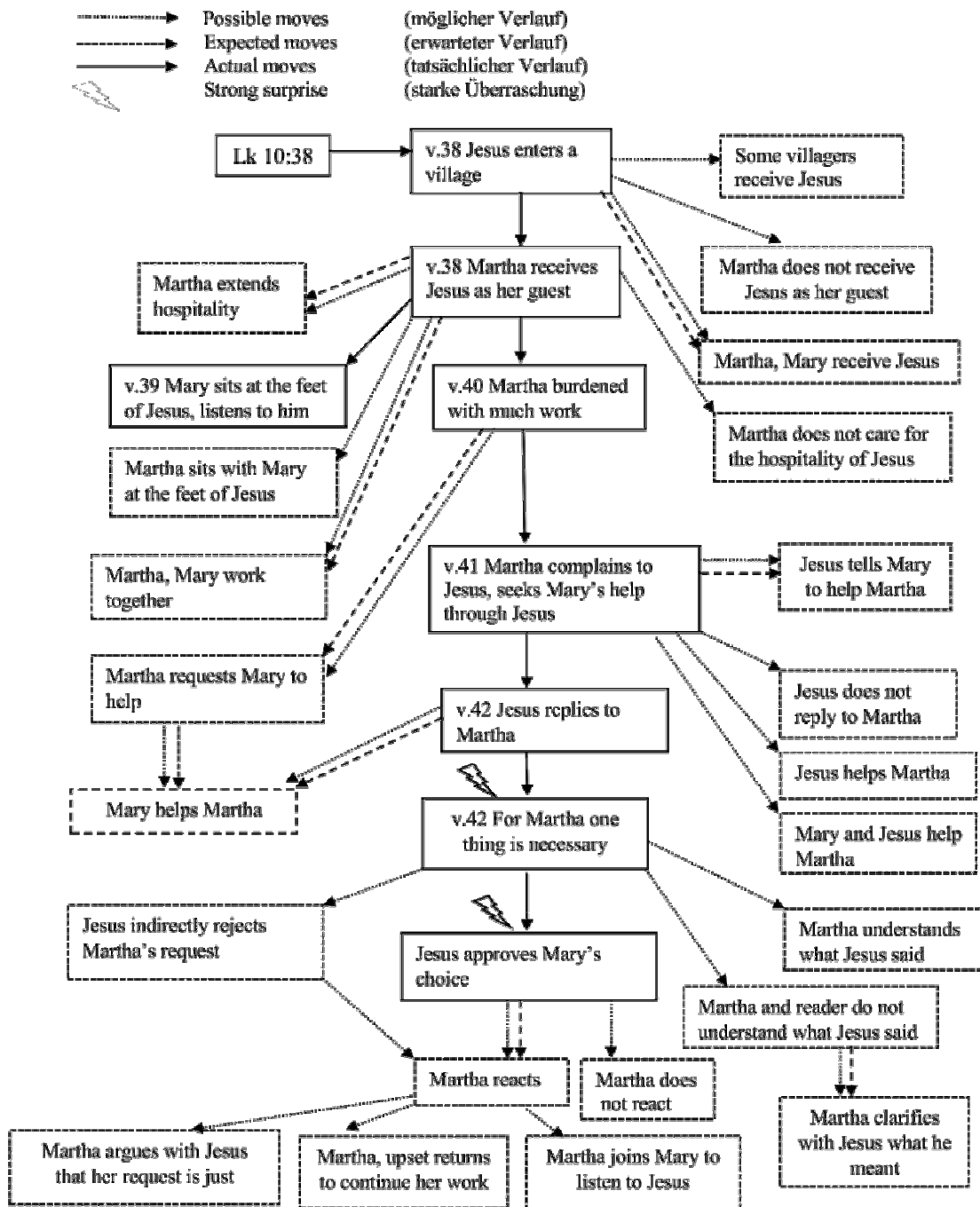
First, in order to construct a plot map, one has to identify the actual nuclei in the plot (*tatsächliche Handlungskerne*) and arrange the rest in order with the plot sequence. Second is to analyse with the selected ‘plot nuclei’ (*Handlungskerne*), whether the intended recipients could speculate other ‘plot alternatives’ (*Handlungsmöglichkeiten*). This is reconstructed with the help of certain cognitive factors such as character reading, knowledge about narrative world, and also knowledge about historical and literary world. To imagine the scenes narrated, readers have to fill in the gaps by visualising the actions. Thirdly, these gaps give rise to the ‘expectation of the recipients’ (*Handlungserwartungen*), which might turn out to be fulfilment or disappointment for the recipients. Furthermore, the narrator can also consciously play with the expectations of the recipients and lead them to strong surprises by drawing their special attention. Anticipations are characteristics of the response to stories.⁵⁸⁸ The following diagram shows how alternative courses of actions could look like.

⁵⁸⁷M.-L. Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*, Bloomington et al. 1991, 157–161.

⁵⁸⁸For anticipation and its role in constructive process, see D. S. Miall, 1995.

5.3.3 Plot Map of Lk 10:38-42

Plot Map of Luke 10:38-42



5.4 Analysis of the Characters

Characterisation of a person in a text is primarily done by looking for the information given in the text. It is done at two levels: First through the narrator, i.e., what the narrator has to say about the characters; secondly through the words of the characters, i.e., what the characters talk about themselves and about other characters. This helps the readers (here the interviewees) to visualise the characters and paint them in their mind, associating the characters to their own social and cultural set up. The characters are analysed based on reader-oriented approach to the narrative. Special attention is given to the introduction of the characters and their progressive unfolding within the narrative.⁵⁸⁹

5.4.1 Narratological Roles of the Characters

From the cognitive dimensions of the narrative, characters are mentally constructed in the course of reading between specific textual data and general knowledge structures stored in the reader's long-term memory.⁵⁹⁰ In a narrative, an author is selective in what he or she writes for only some events and speeches can be narrated. No author can give a complete record of everything that happens in a person's life. Thus, to a certain extent, literary characters are given life by an author and re-created in the reader's imagination. While classical narrative critics tend to limit themselves to the text, there is a need to occasionally go beyond the text for the reconstruction of the character. A literary character is conceived as a mental model that the reader construes in the reading process through a combination of information from textual and mental sources. In this process of character construction, mechanisms of social cognition also play a crucial role. The parameters of character-reception are described as the results from the study of discourse processing and social cognition, including emotional responses.⁵⁹¹ The moment the character name is mentioned, the reader establishes a mental picture, although the exact nature of representation in a mental model is difficult to describe.

⁵⁸⁹J. A. Darr, 1992; F. W. Burnett, Characterisation and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels, in: *Semeia* 63 (1993).

⁵⁹⁰See R. Schneider, 2001; also J. Culpeper, Language and Characterisation. People in Plays and Other Texts, Harlow et al. 2001, 57–69.

⁵⁹¹Cf. R. Schneider, 2001, 608–609.

The textual information serves as an instruction to construct mental models.⁵⁹² The four characters in this narration are

1. The disciples (v.38 αὐτοῦς)
2. Jesus (v.38 αὐτὸς; v.39 τοῦκυρίου; v.40 κύριε)
3. Martha (v.38 Μάρθα; v. 39 τῆδε; v.40 Μάρθα and v.41 ΜάρθαΜάρθα, αὐτῆ)
4. Mary (v.39 Μαριάμ; v.41 ἀδελφήμου, αὐτῆ; v.42 Μαριάμ, αὐτῆς)

As proper nouns, the name Martha is mentioned four times, Mary twice and Jesus thrice. The narrator introduces the women characters by their names as Martha and Mary. Jesus also mentions the women in his speech by their names.

The disciples disappear in the background and they play no active role in the narrative. There is no mention of ‘αὐτοῦς’ later in the story. But it is difficult to conclude that they were completely absent in the story. It is probable from the context that Jesus may not have been alone with these two women. The reading with ἠκαὶ in v.39b suggests that there could have been probably others along with whom Mary sat to listen to Jesus.⁵⁹³ The presence of the neighbours cannot be discarded either, as the story is set in a village. There might have been other people also wanting to see and listen to Jesus.

The pronoun αὐτὸς at the beginning of the story referring to Jesus, projects Jesus as the protagonist and it is a story about him and the activities around him. It has been argued that the stories about Jesus in the Gospels are marked by essential factors which constitute the genre of ancient biography.⁵⁹⁴ Jesus dominates the narrative of Luke on the whole. Beginning with Luke 4:1, he is the focus of interest, is at the centre of all exchanges, and, until the

⁵⁹²For understanding the characters as mental construct, see J. Culpeper, 2001.

⁵⁹³But D’Angelo uses this reading to suggest that both Martha and Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, as his disciples. See M. R. D’Angelo, 1990, 78–79. See text critical analysis for the inclusion and omission of the relative pronoun ἠ.

⁵⁹⁴In some of the ancient biographies, the focus of the narrative is on a principal person who is presented as an established character with a predetermined fate and with a three-part structure: prehistory, public activity and death of the protagonist. For further discussion cf. U. E. Eisen, *The Narratological Fabric of the Gospels*, in: MEISTER/KINDT/SCHERNUS (Ed.), *Narratology Beyond Literary criticism. Mediality, Disciplinarity* (Narratologia: Contributions to Narrative Theory), Berlin et al. 2005, 196.

passion narrative, is in charge as the main actor.⁵⁹⁵ In this narrative context, the term ‘Lord’ characterises Jesus as the teacher and as an authoritative person in the community.⁵⁹⁶

Although Mary does not play an active role in the story, she remains an important character in the background of the narrative. The dialogue of Jesus and Martha is centred around Mary. Of the four characters, Martha seems to dominate the whole narration.⁵⁹⁷ From the beginning to the end, she is mentioned in almost every verse. In this narrative Martha is the concrete narrative character ‘accompanied’ or ‘followed’ by the narrator.⁵⁹⁸

5.4.2 Martha and Mary

The characterisation of Martha and Mary is not detailed. Many assumptions are made regarding their identity. For instance, Martha is recognised as the older sister because the story primarily focusses on her.⁵⁹⁹ She is identified as an unmarried woman.⁶⁰⁰ However, the characterisation of Martha and Mary concerns the effect on the Gospel’s implied audience.

The name of the biblical characters also reveals information regarding the characters. The argument that Martha could be the mistress of the house is possible because the Aramaic name Martha means ‘mistress’ and her role as host implies that she had enough resources to entertain a guest. But the claim of some scholars that the naming of women in the Gospels is an indication for overcoming their marginalised status in society is not convincing.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁵D. B. Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend. Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts (ESEC)*, New York et al. 1991, 177.

⁵⁹⁶See semantic analysis on κύριος in 4.4.7.

⁵⁹⁷The repeated use of the name, description, or pronoun, the character model will be reactivated and subjected to new information processing. R. Schneider, 2001, 611.

⁵⁹⁸M. Bal, 2009, 148.

⁵⁹⁹B. Witherington, 1984, 101

⁶⁰⁰“For apparently unmarried women to have received a teacher into their home and engaged him in a dialogue represents an unusual situation in the first century Palestine.” R. F. Collins, 573.

⁶⁰¹For example, Halvor Moxnes argues that “the women who followed Jesus were usually at the margins of society. Often their identity is defined by reference to male characters - as mothers, mothers-in-law, daughters or wives. Yet there are important exceptions. There are women who are not known by the males in their lives, or women who overcome their marginalized status to gain an identity apart from others. The characters may be at the centre of power and influence or at the margins of society. When Jesus mentions them by name, the veil of incomprehension is lifted. It is a sign of recognition. Therefore, the women move out of the margin through the striking mode of the narration. One such example is seen in this narrative. Both the women are named Martha and Mary and they have no reference to any other male. These women are the central characters in the narrative besides Jesus and by being named, they overcome their marginality.” Cf. H. Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in his Place. A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom*, Louisville 2003, 99–100.

This helps the reader to identify Martha as a rich land lady who could have had enough resources to provide hospitality for travellers.⁶⁰² The role of the characters in the narrative is judged by the words associated to them. The imperfect tense used in describing the behaviour of Martha and Mary shows that the attitude of *διακονεῖν* and *ἀκούειν* was not a one-time event but a continuing event.

What a character does in action may say more than what a character says. For instance, Martha's gesture in receiving Jesus reveals her nature of friendliness and hospitality. Scholars like Reid claim that Martha's welcoming of Jesus in 10:38 indicates an act of faith, matching Mary's 'listening to him speak' (v.39) in order to make the point that there is no opposition between the two sisters.⁶⁰³ The text is not clear at this point in showing whether Martha entertained only Jesus or both Jesus and those who were with him. The missing reaction of Martha to Jesus' response in the narrative allows the reader to interpret subject to their understanding.⁶⁰⁴ Moreover, Jesus being referred to as *κύριος* shows that the sisters accepted and related with him as an authoritative person on whose words they could rely on.⁶⁰⁵ As Carter mentions, "the use of the verb coupled with the title 'Lord', suggests that Martha, like Mary, is being described in words intended to signal discipleship."⁶⁰⁶ As Hearon says, "it also avoids the conflict in determining which of these two, were the best disciples of Jesus. Martha who initially welcomed Jesus, continues to be described as a faithful follower of Jesus."⁶⁰⁷

Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus reveals her humbleness, which seems to be an acceptable posture in the context of learning.⁶⁰⁸ But this posture of Mary is heavily criticised by many scholars as an act of submissiveness of a woman towards a man. It is argued that in a Graeco-Roman setting, women were made to sit at the feet of the men in a meal setting. But this argument could be refuted for two reasons: One reason is that this narrative does not indicate that Jesus reclined at a table to eat and based on the semantic meaning of *διακονία*, Martha was involved in many things and not only with the serving of the meals. Therefore, Jesus'

⁶⁰²R. Schneider, 2001, 611.

⁶⁰³B. E. Reid, 1996, 157.

⁶⁰⁴From a redactional point of view, D'Angelo points out that Luke's purpose is to control and restrict women: Beyond the infancy narratives, no woman speaks except to be corrected by Jesus (Lk 10:41-42; 11:27-28 and 23:28. M. R. D'Angelo, 1990, 452, 460.

⁶⁰⁵See 4.4.7.

⁶⁰⁶W. Carter, 2002, 217.

⁶⁰⁷H. Hearon, 2004, 394.

⁶⁰⁸See 4.4.5.

meeting with Martha and Mary is not in a context of meal setting. Secondly, ‘sitting at the feet’ is understood here as an expression of learning, which applies to both men and women, an act of learning from a learned person.⁶⁰⁹ Such a posture is interpreted in the Graeco-Roman context as an attitude of the disciples learning at the feet of the master. So, it is not a convincing argument to say that Mary played a submissive role because of her gender in the context of learning.

As Mary is presented as showing interest in listening to the words of Jesus, Martha is also presented as showing interest to listen to his words when she approached him with her request. So, the behaviour of Martha and Mary shows that they both related to Jesus as his listeners and followers (also disciples),⁶¹⁰ and he as their teacher and as person of authority. This helps to conclude that in the narrative, they both played the role of hosts and followers of Jesus.

5.4.3 Jesus

The narrator’s choice of mentioning only Jesus is probably to project Jesus as an important character in the story but still one cannot totally ignore the presence of the disciples and others. At this point, the argument of Reinhartz seems to be quite plausible, where she mentions:

*That the disciples are not specifically mentioned as having entered the house with him does not mean that we are necessarily to understand Jesus as having entered the house alone. Rather, it could simply mean that Jesus, as the central character, is the only one who needs to be mentioned.*⁶¹¹

Jesus’ visits to households is not to be understood in the modern sense, where the guest returns to his/her own place after visiting someone for a particular time. Luke’s Jesus presents himself as someone who does not have a house (9:58), but who seeks a place where he can eat and sleep. He uses the houses of different kinds of people,⁶¹² he even sends messengers to find lodgings for himself (9:52), and he travels around preaching and asks to

⁶⁰⁹ See discussion in 4.4.5.

⁶¹⁰In the Gospel of Luke, the term disciple applies to both men and women besides the twelve men. The reference to the people whom he sent out on mission in Lk 10:1 strongly indicates the possibility that both men and women besides the twelve were sent out on a mission with equal authority.

⁶¹¹A. Reinhartz, 1991, 202, f.n.18.

⁶¹²In the Gospel of Luke Jesus has been received as guest by: the tax collectors: Lk 5:27-32 (in the house of Levi); Lk 19:1-10 (in the house of Zacchaeus); the disciples: Lk 10:38-42 (in the house of Martha and Mary); Lk 24:28-32 (with the Disciples of Emmaus); the Pharisees: Lk 7:36-50 (in the house of Simon); Lk 11:37-54; Lk 14:1-24.

be put up in private houses (19:5).⁶¹³ The οἶκος offered Jesus, the wandering preacher and his followers, the required support structure through its hospitality.⁶¹⁴ The references in Lk 8:1-3 and in Lk 10 reflect that the needs of Jesus and his followers who were on travel were taken care of by some well-wishers, both men and women.

The reader expects an element of surprise when Jesus is received as a guest. In many instances in the Gospel of Luke an element of surprise and reversal occur, sometimes for the hosts and sometimes for the guests. One good example is in Lk 7:36-50, where Simon, the Pharisee, the host, is criticised by Jesus and is contrasted with the woman whose role is appreciated. In other passages, there are also reversals of roles on who serves whom.⁶¹⁵ Further, speech is the most important form for presenting the characters. The speeches of characters shed light on themselves and on others. Verbal utterances furnish a paradigm for understanding the means by which narratives represent the character's minds.

5.5 Reception Analysis

The reception of the narrative shows the effects of the narrative on the intended readers. As the main characters were women, there is a strong tendency for women readers to identify with one of those characters. The characters in the story impact the thinking and the lives of the readers. The readers place the characters in their own social and cultural situation (frames and scripts) and draw a close proximity with the characters and get engrossed in the story. What contributes to establish a character as likable or unlikable? First the reader's own value system, which allows him/her to pass moral judgements on the actions portrayed in the story. Secondly, the likeability of a character is influenced by the narrator's evaluative comments. The third factor for the positive and negative disposition towards a character lies in other character's judgement of a particular character.⁶¹⁶

5.5.1 Empathizing with Martha

The introduction of Martha as 'a certain woman' implies that she is unknown to the audience.⁶¹⁷ The readers follow Martha closely in the story and tend to empathize with

⁶¹³A. Destro, M. Pesce, 2003, 226.

⁶¹⁴Ibid. 227.

⁶¹⁵See L. Alexander, 2002, 208–209. There is also an element of surprise for the reader of Lk 10:38-42, which will be discussed in the section under 'reception of the analysis'.

⁶¹⁶R. Schneider, 2001, 614.

⁶¹⁷A. M. Ernst, 2009, 193.

Martha when she expresses the need for assistance and complains about working alone.⁶¹⁸ In a socio-cultural context, where women are burdened with household chores, they could easily identify with Martha and find her request in asking for assistance as just. The reader tends to sympathize with her even more, when Jesus did not respond to Martha as the reader expected. “If a situation has already had negative effects on the character, the most likely emotion is pity, especially if the character is helpless against the forces of circumstances.”⁶¹⁹

When one considers the words of Martha spoken to Jesus, ‘οὐ μέλει σοι - is it of no concern to you?’, Martha in the first part of her speech, questions the attitude of Jesus. She also commands Jesus what to do, εἰπέ οὖν αὐτῇ (Mary). The audacity with which Martha poses the rhetorical question shows that she expected a positive response from Jesus, supporting her point of view. Martha’s speech indicates that she is not entirely comfortable in doing something which is expected of her. Martha uses possessive and personal pronouns to express her concern intensively. There is a strong reference to Martha’s individual personality as well (ἀδελφή μου (my sister), μόνη γινε (left me), μοι συναντιλάβηται (help me)). Martha appears to the readers to be just and it seems unfair that she should do all the work while her sister sits with Jesus. The expectation that Mary should help Martha is implicit.

In her complaint about Mary to Jesus, Martha made her request clear so that Jesus would insist that Mary assist Martha, i.e., to engage in the activities of hospitality, which from Martha’s point of view was justified. Arlandson on reflecting the first-century ethos strongly expresses:

*But one thing is certain: no woman would have been surprised to show hospitality as Martha does. Not surprisingly, then Martha attacks Mary for sitting and neglecting the hospitality that was so deeply embedded in the first-century ethos.*⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁸ In literary criticism, the term “identification” has been used dominantly to describe the way readers react emotionally to a character. Schneider suggests the term ‘empathy’ to be used in a cognitive paradigm of literary studies to describe emotional reactions towards a character’s situation. Empathy results from the capacity of the reader to feel for the character because he or she can imagine a situation and its possible outcomes, anticipate what this must mean for the character, and at the same time evaluate this outcome as desirable or undesirable. Besides the knowledge-related structures, emotions play a crucial role in text-understanding, especially in character reception. Cf. R. Schneider, 2001, 613.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid. 614.

⁶²⁰ J. M. Arlandson, 1997, 138.

Martha's request creates the primacy effect on the reader. In a group oriented community, it is in fact a good gesture, where the host is expected to express the gestures of hospitality in the best way possible in line with the cultural expectations.⁶²¹

5.5.2 Being Surprised by the Response of Jesus

The response of Jesus in vv. 41a-42b appears to be an element of surprise both to Martha and the readers causing primacy and recency effects on the readers.⁶²² It is difficult to interpret the response of Jesus. The narrator uses judgemental words (you are anxious and troubled), suspense phrases ('there is need of one', 'Mary chose the good part'), phrases with dramatic irony (Jesus' response to Martha). The dialogue, suspense, and dramatic irony in the speech of Jesus outline a difficulty in understanding Jesus. The narrator is letting the reader make possible inferences from the perspective in which the text is read.⁶²³ The point of the narrative resides in the surprise experienced by the reader.⁶²⁴

Jesus' unexpected reply functions in the first instance to frustrate Martha's expectations as well as those of the implied readers. The narrator, in order to communicate a specific message to the implied reader, uses a specific literary technique of frustrating and thereby modifying the expectations he imputes to his readership. Jesus' words serve to modify and deepen the implied reader's understanding. The reader could see the response of Jesus as counterintuitive, something that does not happen in the way one would expect it to.⁶²⁵

Would the response of Jesus to Martha be acceptable, if it is from any other person other than Jesus? Jesus is accepted by the reader as a reliable character, as a person aware of the social stigmas, social expectations and as a person of authority who intentionally treated people

⁶²¹See Excursus I for similar understanding in Indian context.

⁶²²Primacy and recency effects: The material that occurs first in a plot and affects the reader initially is known as the recency effect. The order of the material in a plot creates expectations in the reader - a primary effect - that is fulfilled, modified, or is even shattered by what comes later in the narrative -the recency effect. A different primacy and recency effect is achieved when the primacy develops commitments on the part of the reader and then overthrows, undermines, or deconstructs these firmly held commitments in the recency. The primacy invents shock responses from the readers that initially encourage them to lean the wrong way until they are unexpectedly trapped by the recency effect and forced to modify their assumptions and commitments. Caught by surprise, the reader must modify his or her prior commitments. Cf. J. L. Resseguie, 2005, 209–210.

⁶²³Schottroff points out that in today's context, the most convincing response to Martha's request would be that all three Martha, Mary and Jesus go together and prepare the meals in the kitchen. In Schottroff's words: „Die Antwort Jesu wäre für unser heutiges Empfinden noch überzeugender ausgefallen, wenn er schon gleich, nicht erst nach Marthas Beschwerde, mit Maria in die Küche gegangen wäre, und alle drei hätten das Essen zubereitet... - Aber das ist nicht der Erfahrungshorizont des frühen Christentums." L. Schottroff, 1990, 132.

⁶²⁴Cf. Plot map in 5.3.3.

⁶²⁵Many miracle stories in the gospels include a counterintuitive element.

with dignity. After being acknowledged as Lord when Jesus responds contradictorily to Martha's expectation, his response has more significance. Will such a response by other Jewish male members be accepted in a cultural context with the given dominating social expectations? The reader might slow down to ponder on the response of Jesus and try to figure out the view point of Jesus by analysing the story again. The reader is shocked at this point.⁶²⁶ As the story ends abruptly, several conclusions could be made.

Jesus, after being received by Martha, did not criticise at the outset what Martha or Mary chose to do because both the acts seem to be essential to honour the guest. If the choice of Martha according to Jesus was wrong, he might have expressed it right at the beginning. The tension and the twist in the story occur only when Martha approaches Jesus and complains. Jesus responds to her complaint. He neither ignores Martha, nor caves to her demand but responds in an ambiguous way. He takes her seriously and addresses her directly. He responds to her with a personal, double address - "Martha, Martha" - conveying both a ring of intimacy and compassion, and a sting of authority and correction.⁶²⁷ It is highly improbable that Jesus values one action over the other,⁶²⁸ and the text orients the reader to see Jesus address the conflict that Martha expressed by playing the role of a facilitator. He seems to leave the solution to Martha herself by saying that she need not be worried about many things but make a choice, which is 'identical to herself'. In other words, a choice to which she can 'adhere to'.

5.5.3 Opting for the Choice of Mary

Mary is silent, unlike Jesus and Martha but she, in a way, dominates the story by getting more attention. Sometimes what a character does may say more than what a character says. Though Mary is silent, she is provocative and for which Martha reacts. An emotional distance is created by the narrator because of the lack of insight into Mary's thoughts and feelings, which prevents an empathetic involvement.⁶²⁹

⁶²⁶Ultimately a story teller is to elicit the response "so what's the point?" Narrative points correspond to "some goal a storyteller might have in telling a story." Internal narrative points "legitimize a story from within." The internal points could be static and dynamic. "A dynamic point is one in which a story event violates a previous expectation. The violated expectations can be those of either characters or reader. Cf. M.-L. Ryan, 1991, 150–156.

⁶²⁷F. S. Spencer, 2012, 170.

⁶²⁸See Excursus V.

⁶²⁹Cf. R. Schneider, 2001, 615.

But the response of Jesus to Martha orients the reader to focus on Mary. His response tends to reverse the thinking of the reader. The reader who identifies with Martha tends to find the demand of Martha as just until Jesus remarks that Mary has chosen the good part. For some, the implicit admonition of Jesus could mean that the one thing necessary for Martha is to choose the good portion that Mary chose, which is listening. Here one could talk about ‘double-burden’ because in reality, it is highly improbable that one can give up household chores as a woman, especially in the context of hospitality.⁶³⁰

The reader is invited to evaluate the request of Martha in the light of Mary’s choice. In the context of hospitality, Martha placed herself in a situation to meet societal expectations in serving the guest. Mary however, chose to resist imposed societal expectations. She made a choice not to conform to such expectations and instead made a choice with which she was comfortable, i.e., ‘listening to Jesus’. She made this choice despite the knowledge that she might incur criticism from neighbours and even from her sister, Martha.⁶³¹ Jesus’ endorsement of Mary’s choice affirms her audacity in making a choice and holding on to it. The reader along with Martha is invited to have an attitude similar to Mary, who made a choice, stuck to it, and did not complain about what she chose to do.

5.6 Alternative Reading of Lk 10:38-42

A woman named Martha lives in a village with her sister, Mary. When Jesus visits the village along with other disciples and followers, Martha receives Jesus as her guest. Having received Jesus, Martha gets busy with many activities as the host. While she was busy doing many things, her sister chooses to sit by Jesus and listen to his teachings. This annoys Martha. According to Martha, Mary is supposed to do the activities related to hospitality and help her rather than choosing to sit at the feet of Jesus. Martha realises that both Jesus and Mary are not concerned with what she was doing. Since Mary already chose not to assist Martha, Martha seeks the intervention of Jesus. She approaches Jesus and questions him as to why he

⁶³⁰This is reflected in Schottroff’s comment: “Das gute Teil, das Maria erwählt hat, soll auch Martha erwählen, dies ist die implizite Mahnung Jesu. Jesus verteidigt hier Frauen in der Nachfolge Jesu gegen Zwänge, die sie auf die Hausfrauen- und Mutterrolle reduzieren wollen. Faktisch rechnet er nun unbefangen mit der ‚Doppelbelastung‘. Martha wird beides schaffen müssen.” L. Schottroff, 1990, 132.

⁶³¹“In social psychology, the tradition of cognitive research has described how social interaction leads to the formation of categorical and schematic structures of knowledge that create stability and reliability in dealing with others, but they may also create social stereotypes that can have negative effects on social life. Every society, or a group within a society, has a set of assumptions about human behaviour that meet with a high degree of agreement and may lead to social stereotypes. Such assumptions function as “implicit personality theories” in categorisation and attribution processes.” R. Schneider, 2001, 612.

is not concerned that she is left alone to serve. She poses a rhetorical question expecting an affirmative response from Jesus. She expresses her anger even against Jesus, the person whom she addresses as 'Lord'. Besides questioning Jesus for being unconcerned towards her, she makes a bold effort in questioning the behaviour of both Jesus and Mary.

The analysis of Martha's speech strongly reflects a conflict within herself. She is disturbed, angered, restless and helpless. It is quite probable that Martha was confused about making a choice between 'serving' and 'listening'. She might have wanted to sit and listen to Jesus and at the same time was under pressure to provide the best hospitality and oblige the social expectations. The conflict within Martha is affirmed through the words used by Jesus like 'worrying' and 'troubled'. These expressions in Greek are used for those who are 'troubled in their mind'. Jesus recognises that Martha is troubled within herself and he expresses to Martha that he is indeed concerned about her and addresses her by her name twice. He probably called her twice to get the attention of the restless Martha so that she calms down her troubled mind and listens to him. He responds to Martha instead of speaking to Mary, contrary to what Martha expected. Although the response of Jesus might have annoyed Martha, it might also have actually helped her to solve the conflict within herself.

The way Martha questions, she obviously seeks Jesus' intervention with the confidence that he would support her view and send Mary to assist her. Mary has chosen something contrary to what is expected of a host and of a woman in a household. In a social context where the host is expected to fulfil certain expectations especially as a woman in a household, Martha appears to be right in her demand. But unfortunately, Jesus turns down Martha's expectation and approves that Mary has chosen 'the good part'. Mary chose to listen to Jesus who had come to their home. The response of Jesus at this point is quite ambiguous. Jesus does not use the terms 'serving' or 'listening' in his response nor does he rebuke Martha for making a wrong choice. In addressing Martha's inner conflict, he suggests that 'one thing is necessary'. With his response, he supports Mary, citing and referring to her as having chosen the 'one necessary thing'. Is it also the good part? Is Jesus approving the act of listening over the act of serving, contradicting his own teaching in which he emphasised the importance of both these act, as seen elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke? So, it is unlikely that Jesus expects Martha to give up what she was doing and choose to sit at his feet.

After receiving Jesus as the guest, probably Martha finds herself listening to an inner voice uttering a clear imperative. The imperative that concerns Martha and the reader is to ‘be a good/perfect host’. And her subsequent behaviour shows that she found that imperative irresistible (she was busy with many things). She is conscious that as a host she is expected to make all necessary arrangements in order to make the guest feel comfortable. She even points a finger at Mary for failing in her expected role as a host and conveys her distress at Mary’s actions.

From the complaint of Martha and from the response of Jesus one can understand that Jesus’ criticism has more to do with the ‘attitude’ of Martha towards her own choice and not the choice of ‘serving’ itself. Martha complained about her choice, whereas Mary did not. Mary did not express any conflict with the choice she made even though it was a choice contrary to what was expected of her as a host. Jesus in his response did not insist that Martha ‘has to’ make the same choice that Mary made, rather he cites Mary as an example of one who made a choice and did not complain about it. The choice that Martha made ‘to serve Jesus’ as host was equally good, but what Jesus did not approve of was her complaining attitude about her own choice of activity. Jesus’ emphasis was not so much on making a choice, but one’s own attitude towards the choice one had made.

The words of Jesus mirror the inner conflict of Martha. He does not use the words ‘serving’ and ‘hearing’ and thus never indicates that one of these roles is better than the other. Jesus, by mirroring the thoughts of Martha, chides her attitude and not her action.⁶³² Therefore, this story is not a conflict between two sisters with contradictory roles nor a conflict between ‘hearing’ and ‘serving’, as both are equally essential. This is emphasised in the teaching of Jesus in other instances in the Gospel of Luke.

The dualistic antagonism, representing the behavioural roles of Martha and Mary in opposition to each other does not seem to be a convincing interpretation. Neither of these roles is superior to the other and to separate them is “lebensfremd” (out of touch with everyday life). The focus of this narrative is the dialogue between Martha and Jesus. From the analysis of Jesus’ speech, it is most probable that Jesus criticises Martha not for her hospitality activities but for her complaining attitude towards what she chose to do.

⁶³²Spencer also expresses the same opinion. See *ibid.*

Jesus compliments Mary for making a choice and not complaining about it. Therefore, that ‘one thing necessary’ and ‘the good part’ in this context would most likely mean ‘one’s attitude towards one’s own choice’. Such an attitude, i.e., being content with one’s own choice is something which shall not be taken away from Mary as a person. It can be seen as a sign of maturity of a person.

5.7 Conclusions

Primarily, as a Gospel story, Lk 10:38-42 is a story about Jesus and the events related to him during his earthly ministry. The Gospel stories are read from the perspective of the believers with an intention to learn from the teaching and the life of Jesus. The implied readers identify themselves as disciples of Jesus and are able to relate easily with the characters around Jesus.

A typical Gospel scene consists of four steps: 1) Jesus travels and encounters a person; 2) action or question of the person; 3) miracle or saying of Jesus; 4) reaction of the people. Knowing this formula, the religious reader thus anticipates an outstanding event after step 2.⁶³³ Lk 10:38-42 follows a similar pattern except for the last part: 1) Jesus travels and encounters Martha and Mary (vv. 38a-40a); 2) Martha questions Jesus; 3) Saying of Jesus; 4) reaction of the people is missing.

Although, there is no absolute way to reconstruct the contexts of the text and the reader, it still helps to construct a meaningful story. This narrative is presented in the context of discipleship, where Martha and Mary play the role of the hosts having Jesus as their guest. The story is not concerned about the number of guests and the focus of the story is Martha and her dialogue with Jesus.⁶³⁴ At the narrative level, the narrator orients the reader to see the story through the eyes of Martha, who is the focal-point. An effect of using Martha as the “Wahrnehmungszentrum” is that the reader is led to empathize with her, as this is one of the effects of following a person throughout a narrative.⁶³⁵ What is central to the narrative is the dialogue between Martha and Jesus. The discussion about the narrative analysis of Lk 10:38-

⁶³³S. Finne, Art. Narration in Religious Discourse, in: Handbook of Narratology (2014), 438.

⁶³⁴When there are more guests, it is also possible that the villagers get together and share their resources and also share responsibilities of hospitality.

⁶³⁵As emphasized in Finne’s work: „Mit ‚Empathie‘ ist gemeint, dass sich der Rezipient einer Figur kognitiv und emotional ‚nahe‘ fühlt und sich verstärkt in sie hineindenkt, also z.B. auf ihre Gefühle schließt.” S. Finne, 2010, 193.

42 points to a different direction. It is not a passage focussing on the antagonistic dualism, nor is it a passage exclusive for women disciples/leaders. This passage applies to both men and women as the implied readers are to derive a lesson from a story in which women are the main characters along with Jesus.

The purpose and the meaning of the narrative depend upon the response of Jesus. The context of the story reveals that Jesus plays an important role in handling a conflict situation and plays the role of a facilitator. In his response, he neither uses the term *διακονεῖν* (serving) nor *ἀκούειν* (hearing), which indicates that he does not intend to judge one role over the other. The moral of the story is whatever you choose to do, let it be what you are at peace with. The story reveals that Martha who chose to extend her hospitality was not at ease. The passage in 10:38-42 primarily talks about the conflict of Martha and how Jesus handles it. ‘The one thing necessary’ is not meant only for women but also for men.⁶³⁶

The liberative elements found in the alternative interpretation above helps men and women in the Indian context to be liberated from the idea that Lk 10:38-42 is not meant for women in fulfilling their roles as housewives and as pious women. The text if read differently is applicable for both men and women as followers of Christ to critically rethink the stereotypical roles thrust upon them by social and religious expectations. This research intended to re-read the story of Lk 10:38-42 from the perspective of the cognitive narratological approach. A closer reading with the help of analytical tools used in narrative exegesis revealed that this passage orients the actual reader to focus on the dialogue between Martha and Jesus and not on the dualistic-antagonistic roles of the two sisters, Martha and Mary.

This research has proven that this new approach in narrative exegesis, i.e., cognitive narratological approach in biblical scholarship will be an effective and fruitful exegetical method in the field of Indian biblical exegesis, especially with respect to narrative texts in the New Testament. This method, as a reader-oriented approach might also be appropriate for world-wide biblical scholarship to illuminate or expose the meanings of biblical narratives in particular contexts.

⁶³⁶The understanding that this text is meant only for women is also problematized by others. Cf. A. Reinhartz, 1991, 170; L. Alexander, 1992, 179–180.

Chapter 6. Relevance of the Cognitive Narratological Approach for the Understanding of Lk 10:38-42 in an Indian Context

In my reading process, literary and social knowledge are intertwined and especially with my training in literary analysis, additional schemata were acquired that influenced the understanding of the text. As a trained reader, I was able to activate certain specific literary knowledge in top-down fashion, whereas I discovered that non-expert readers rely more on structures of social knowledge.

In an Indian social context, especially among Christians, the interpretation of Luke 10:38-42 is appropriated with the understanding that an ideal woman is supposed to be the one who practices the virtue of silence. Since Mary in Lk 10:38-42 is seen as the best example of an ideal woman by most of the interpreters because she was applauded by Jesus for silently listening to his teachings, women in the church, and at home, and in society are also expected to practice the virtue of silence. Simultaneously Jesus' rebuke of Martha indicates the dominant role of Jesus in condemning Martha for being distracted, and seems to mirror the context where men exercise authority over women within the family and in religious life. In an Indian context this also implies that a woman should retreat obediently when men exercise their authority and control over women by silencing them. Also, women normally engaged in household chores are usually neglected or not recognised for their efforts in caring for the family. While the example of Martha is often quoted to teach women to aspire for higher things beyond their household chores, it also downplays the necessity of household chores. Therefore, women who are already burdened with household chores are made to strive harder to be more pious like Mary and not be like Martha.

In such a context, I find reading that narrative in Lk 10:38-42 with the cognitive approach is a helpful method as it includes both the 'text's literary context' and the 'interpreter's everyday context'. Solely relying on any one of these contexts will be problematic in interpreting the text. Most importantly, in the process of interpretation, both these contexts have to be approached critically. A reading based on the literary context of the text and on an interpreter's everyday context might open up new dimensions in understanding the narrative

or story meaning. However, an uncritical approach to the literary context of the text and one's own context has to be challenged.⁶³⁷

From the analysis of the interviews, one could agree that the interviewees had their own method of interpreting based on their cognitive schema. In biblical studies, scholars who have given importance to the interpretation by a common reader have been tremendously positive in calling such approach 'popular exegesis', '*Alltagsexegese*'. A general criticism placed against academic exegesis is that exegetes impart their knowledge to the common readers of the Bible and that it is a one-way approach which tends to ignore the hermeneutical observations in the context of everyday life. Although, this criticism holds true in many cases, there is still scope, to address it diligently. For example, as mentioned in the introduction of this work, the feminist critical interpretation of Schüssler Fiorenza was well received by women clergy and not by the common women readers because 'the frames and scripts' with which these common women used to understand Lk 10:38-42 were different from those of the clergy women. Therefore, the tension between an everyday exegete and an academic exegete is due to their 'pre-stored knowledge' and the 'frames and scripts' they use in the reading process. In my study, I found that the cognitive narratological approach, as a postclassical approach, is a more mediative approach since it integrates both the 'context of the text' and the 'context of the reader'.

Besides understanding the context of the text, a creative interaction with the text is quite challenging because of the varying contexts of the interpreters. By this, a distinction can be made between the 'reader' and the 'critic'. The reader accepts the text at face value, in a sense becoming the 'servant' of the text, whereas for the critic, reading is a reflective and an analytical activity that takes place on a meta-level and aims at an objective attitude towards the text.⁶³⁸ For the Indian context, it seems to be more appropriate when common readers educate themselves to become 'critical readers' and the exegetes as academic readers also become aware of the limitation of academic approaches. For an effective interpretation of the text, the 'cognitive narratological approach' will be a helpful method both for the exegetes and an everyday reader because it involves both the context of the literary text and the

⁶³⁷Kahl points out that the different perspectives of both the "critical" and the "intuitive" interpreters are equally valid and at the same time he insists that both these approaches are to be challenged. Cf. W. Kahl, *Growing Together. Challenges and Chances in the Encounter of Critical and Intuitive Interpreters of the Bible*, in: WEST (Ed.), *Reading Other-Wise. Socially Engaged Biblical Scholars Reading with their Local Communities* (Semeia 62), Atlanta 2007, 153–154.

⁶³⁸Cf. B. C. Lategan, J. Rousseau, *Reading Luke 12: 35-48. An Empirical Study*, in: *Neotest.* 22 (1988), 393.

context of the reader. This method helps to systematically and methodically analyse both the literary context of the biblical passages and one's own socio-cultural context in the process of evolving meanings for biblical texts.

The cognitive narratological approach which involves the context of the interpreter emphasises on the aspects of the pre-stored knowledge of the reader and the understanding process of the reader. It is possible that within a specific cultural context, the interpretations could vary as it is evident in this research. The difference between the two kinds of reader-oriented approaches: one by the readers from everyday context and the other by the researcher as an exegete has mainly to do with the pre-stored knowledge and the process of understanding. It is also necessary to be aware that the results of interpretation of biblical texts in the context of everyday life and the scientific academic exegesis are not similar. However, in the context of academic scholarship, the academic research on 'Alltagsexegesen' (everyday exegesis) is on the rise, where it has been encouraged that the lay reader must be accepted as an equal. According to me, this approach of accepting a lay reader as an equal to an academic exegete is quite challenging. In certain exploitative Indian contexts, where biblical texts are approached with an intention to justify the existing exploitative social structures like caste system and gender discrimination, the 'pre-stored knowledge' of a common reader is questionable. It is true that any reader approaches the text with a pre-stored knowledge, but the argument is that a certain pre-stored knowledge in exploitative contexts needs to be critically evaluated and exposed. Therefore, the interpretations of the texts require new methods and approaches proposed by the academic exegetes based on proper analysis of the social context and the lived realities of the people.

This research has been helpful to arrive at convincing answers for the questions that arose at the beginning of this research. The research questions themselves were context-bound, i.e. from a particular context in India. As a relevant hermeneutical approach as a heuristic method, the cognitive narratological method was employed for interpreting Lk 10:38-42. This method was found appropriate because as a reader-oriented approach, it involves the context of both the interpreter and the literary text. The very term 'cognitive' implies that the reader's mind is involved in a creative way by systematically identifying and filling the gaps in the narrative. In identifying the gaps in the text, the reader is expected to raise analytical questions, which would be helpful to derive the meaning of the text. These narratological gaps are filled with the help of 'frames and scripts' and at the same time are guided by the

narrator by the available information within the text. This approach emphasises that the pre-stored knowledge and the understanding process of the interpreter plays an important role in constructing the meaning of the text. Therefore, the cognitive narratological approach as one of the appropriate hermeneutical methods needs to be introduced in Indian biblical hermeneutics for the interpretation of the biblical texts in the Indian context.

General Conclusion

The text, Luke 10:38-42 popularly known as the story of Martha and Mary is often understood in terms of a dualistic approach, focussing on the terms διακονεῖν (serving) and ἀκούειν (hearing/listening) and associating them with the characters Martha and Mary respectively. This dualistic antagonism has its impact among the Christians in India in a context where Christian women are expected to meet the societal as well as religious expectations with their housewifely virtues combined with piety. Although the feminist redactional approach to the text appears to be liberating for women pastors in interpreting the behaviours of Martha and Mary in the story as ‘church leaders’ of the early Christian community, the same interpretation has not been helpful for the Christian lay women in a particular Indian village.

This text for the modern readers serves to be either empowering or oppressive in the present context. But during the patristic period, the church fathers in their teaching and preaching emphasised the active and contemplative role applicable for both men and women. There was no question of gender. Later in the medieval period, the focus was on the relationship of Martha and Mary as sisters. During the feminist movement in the 90’s there was a liberative approach and the importance for women gained prominence and this was again challenged by the redactional feminists, who saw the text as reflecting the suppressed roles of Martha and Mary as women leaders in the early church. There are other scholars who refuse to see any gender disparity in the text.

Since the feminist approach, that was supposedly liberative did not seem to have any impact on lay women, the researcher was challenged to search for an appropriate exegetical method(s) to challenge both the structuralistic approach of dualistic antagonism and the suspicions attached to modern feminist reading. In order to explore the role of the context of the Indian women readers in interpreting Lk 10:38-42, few women readers were personally interviewed. The results of the interviews revealed that the pre-stored knowledge that they possessed based on their socio-cultural and religious background, played a vital role in the process of interpretation. The methods of their interpretations were pietistic, canonical and more in terms of spirituality. The interpretations of Lk 10:38-42 by lay Indian women readers reflected the societal and religious expectations forced on a woman. Their responses revealed that they are obliged to fulfil the ascribed roles the society thrust on them such as housewifely

virtues and piety. During the interviews, in their responses they expressed the difficulty in prioritising the roles corresponding to Martha and Mary.

Two important challenges that arose in the context of biblical interpretation in India have been addressed in this research: One from the field of biblical hermeneutics in India, where the exegetes downplayed the literary analysis of the biblical texts; the other from the everyday context, where the cultural background of the common reader has been ignored in biblical exegesis. A narratological exegetical method, i.e., the cognitive narratological approach as a heuristic method has been used in this research to interpret Lk 10:38-42. The cognitive turn in narratology emphasises the fact that a reader of a text interprets the text with a culture specific knowledge. The term ‘cognitive’ denotes the involvement of the mind of the reader. In a more specific way, the mind of the reader is characterised as ‘frames’ (the declarative knowledge) and ‘scripts (the procedural knowledge). It is understandable that they lack the information on the literary context of the text and it is also unjust to expect the interpreters in an everyday context to possess the knowledge of the literary context of the biblical texts, which needs to be the concern of the exegetes.

A closer reading of the text with the help of the analytical tools from the cognitive narratological approach has been helpful to understand the focus of the narrative. For example, the aspects of focalisation in narratological approach orient the reader to focus on the character Martha and subsequently on her dialogue with Jesus. Although Mary as a silent character plays an important role in the narrative, the story, when read from the perspective of Martha, orients the reader to understand the conflict within Martha, for which she looks for an answer from Jesus. The key terms *διακονεῖν* and *ἀκούειν* in this text are neither in opposition to each other nor are the act of hearing/listening judged as superior over serving. The turning point in the story is the complaint of Martha and the surprise element is the climactic response of Jesus. Therefore, the reading of the text commands the attention of the reader to focus on the dialogue between Martha and Jesus where Mary is referred to as an example to address the conflict of Martha. The response of Jesus in this text gives more room for different interpretations especially with the controversial phrase ‘one thing is necessary’. It is possible that in this context that Jesus acts as both an authoritative person and as a facilitator who addresses the conflict of Martha by showing her that there are choices available. It could be argued that it is not the priority of the choice that matters but the attitude towards the choice. Jesus probably criticised the complaining attitude of Martha, who

unlike Mary, was not able to stand by the choice that she made. With this latter reading of the text one could say that Lk 10:38-42 is a text meant for both men and women and need not necessarily be read from a gender perspective. Such interpretations help Christian believers in the Indian context to understand the meaning of the text in the context of Christian discipleship.

In this research, the pre-stored knowledge of Indian readers (Interviewees) has been discussed. The points of view of these readers with which they understood the text were subjected to their socio-cultural, traditional and canonical knowledge. Of course, our horizon keeps expanding as we acquire new insights and this expansion can be triggered by literary as well as non-literary experience, and the latter may well help to have exposure to systematic inquiries into cognition and evolution. So, a significant expansion of my horizon, the way I use the literary tools and analyse the Tamil culture and the theological reflections have an impact on my understanding of biblical passages and in this context my understanding of Lk 10:38-42.⁶³⁹ In terms of expanding horizons, this research has helped me to be more sensitive to anti-Jewish statements and anti-Semitic approaches to biblical texts especially on the discussion of the Jewish women in antiquity. Such awareness seems to be lacking in Indian biblical scholarship because this issue was never a priority.⁶⁴⁰

The relationship between an everyday Bible reader and a trained or specialist reader of the Bible remains problematic. An uncritical reading of the text by lay people, and romanticising of their interpretation is unacceptable for the careful exegete, and similarly the critical reading of the exegete with scientific approaches remains unacceptable for lay people. It is important that both the exegetes and non-trained readers are aware of their limitations. It would be the task of the exegete therefore to help the lay reader by providing the necessary information about the literary context of the text that will enable a lay reader to have a fruitful interaction with biblical texts with the help of ‘frames and scripts’ which they already use to interpret the text. It is one of the submissions of this research that in this endeavour to bridge the problematic gap between the exegete and the everyday reader, the cognitive

⁶³⁹On the expansion of horizon in hermeneutical discussions, cf. P. Hernadi, *Cultural Transactions. Nature, Self, Society*, Ithaca et al. 1995, 89–95.

⁶⁴⁰See Pui-Lan’s response to Levine who calls the insensitive attitude towards Anti-Judaistic claims as a disease. Cf. A.-J. Levine, K. Pui Lan, M. Kanyoro, A. Reinhartz, H. Kinukawa, E. Wainwright, Roundtable Discussion. *Anti-Judaism and Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation. The Disease of Postcolonial New Testament Studies and the Hermeneutics of Healing*, in: *JFSR* Vol. 20, 1 (2004), 99–106.

narratological approach could prove to be a crucial hermeneutical tool in Indian biblical hermeneutics for the interpretation of biblical texts in the Indian context.

Appendices

Appendix I Luke 10:38-42 from Nestle-Aland 28

38 Ἐν δὲ τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτοὺς αὐτὸς εἰσηλθεν εἰς κώμην τινὰ· γυνὴ δὲ τις ὀνόματι Μάρθα ὑπεδέξατο αὐτόν^T. 39 καὶ τῆδε ἦν ἀδελφὴ καλουμένη Μαριάμ, ὁ[ῆ] καὶ παρακαθεσθεῖσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας τοῦ κυρίου ἤκουεν τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ. 40 ἡ δὲ Μάρθα περιεσπᾶτο περὶ πολλὴν διακονίαν· ἐπιστᾶσα δὲ εἶπεν· κύριε, οὐ μέλει σοι ὅτι ἡ ἀδελφὴ μου μόνην με κατέλειπεν διακονεῖν; εἶπε οὖν αὐτῇ ἵνα μοι συναντιλάβηται. 41 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῇ ὁ κύριος· Μάρθα Μάρθα, μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά, 42 ἐνὸς δὲ ἐστὶν χρεία· Μαριάμ ἰγάρ τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα ἐξελέξατο ἥτις οὐκ ἀφαιρεθῆσεται^T αὐτῆς.

• 38 (εγενετο δε (- / 2211) εν Α C D K P W Γ Δ Θ Ψ *f*¹⁻¹³ 565^s, 700, 1424, / 2211 \mathfrak{M} latt sy | *txt* $\mathfrak{P}^{45,75}$ \mathfrak{N} B L Ξ 33, 579, 892, 1241, 2542 *sys^c co* | αὐτόν (+ καὶ αὐτοσ *f*¹) εἰσηλθεν D *f*¹ *sa^{ms}* | αὐτοὺς καὶ αὐτὸς εἰσηλθεν Α C K P W Γ Δ Θ Ψ *f*¹³ 565^s, 579, 700, 892, 1424, 2542 \mathfrak{M} lat sy^h | / 3 2 \mathfrak{P}^{45} | *txt* \mathfrak{P}^{75} \mathfrak{N} B L Ξ 33, 1241 a *sys^{c-p} sa^{ms} bo* | ^T εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν (+ αὐτῆς \mathfrak{N}^{1a} C²) \mathfrak{P}^{3vid} $\mathfrak{N}^{*,la,1b}$ C L Ξ 33, 579 | εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς Α D K P W Γ Δ Θ Ψ 070 *f*¹⁻¹³ 565^s, 700, 892, 1241, 1424, 2542, / 2211 \mathfrak{M} lat sy bo; Bas | *txt* $\mathfrak{P}^{45,75}$ B sa • 39 Μαριάμ \mathfrak{P}^{45} A B* C³ D K Γ Δ Θ *f*¹³ 565^s, 700, 892, 1241, 1424, 2542 \mathfrak{M} sa bo^{pt} | *txt* \mathfrak{P}^{75} \mathfrak{N} B² C* L P W Ξ Ψ 1, 33, 579, / 2211 sy^h 39 $\mathfrak{P}^{45,75}$ \mathfrak{N}^{*} B² L Ξ 579 | *txt* \mathfrak{N}^1 A B* C D K P W Γ Δ Θ Ψ *f*¹⁻¹³ 33, 565^s, 700, 892, 1241, 1424, 2542, / 2211 \mathfrak{M} sy^h | παρακαθίσασα \mathfrak{P}^{45} C³ D K P W Γ Δ Θ Ψ *f*¹⁻¹³ 33^{vid}, 700, 892, 1241, 1424, 2542 \mathfrak{M} | *txt* $\mathfrak{P}^{3,75}$ \mathfrak{N} A B C* L Ξ 579 | του (- \mathfrak{P}^{75}) Ἰησοῦ $\mathfrak{P}^{45,75}$ A B^{2a} C² K P W Γ Δ Θ Ψ *f*¹⁻¹³ 33, 700, 1241, 1424, 2542, / 2211 \mathfrak{M} *vg^{ms} sys^h sa^{ms} bo^{ms}* | αὐτοῦ C* | *txt* \mathfrak{P}^3 \mathfrak{N} B^{*,2b} D L Ξ 579, 892 lat *sys^{c-p,hmg} sa^{ms} bo* | ἠκούσεν $\mathfrak{P}^{3,45}$ L Ξ • 40 κατέλειπεν A B* C K L P Γ Δ Θ \mathfrak{M} | εγκατελειπεν W | *txt* $\mathfrak{P}^{45,75}$ \mathfrak{N} B² D Ψ *f*¹⁻¹³ 565^s, 579, 700, 892, 1241, 1424, 2542; Bas • 41/42 Ἰησοῦς A B* C* P W Γ Δ Ψ *f*¹ 700, 1424, 2542 (C³ D K Θ *f*¹³ 565^s, 1241 *pm*) \mathfrak{M} it *sys^{c-p,h} bo*; Bas | *txt* $\mathfrak{P}^{3,(45),75}$ \mathfrak{N} B² L 579, 892 lat sa bo^{ms} | μεριμνᾷς καὶ θορυβάζῃ περὶ πολλά, ολίγων δε ἐστὶν χρεία (- \mathfrak{N}^{*} ; χρεία ἐστὶν B) ἡ ἐνός \mathfrak{P}^3 $\mathfrak{N}^{*,2}$ B C² L 070^{vid} *f*¹ 33, (579) (*sys^{hmg}*) bo; Bas | θορυβάζῃ D | *txt* $\mathfrak{P}^{45,75}$ C* W Θ* (τυρβαζῃ A K P Γ Δ Θ^c Ψ *f*¹³ 565^s, 700, 892, 1241, 1424, 2542 \mathfrak{M}) lat sy^{(c)-p,h} sa bo^{ms} | Μαριάμ A C D K L P W Δ Θ Ψ *f*¹³ 565^s, 700, 892, 1241, 1424, 2542 \mathfrak{M} sy^h co; Cl | *txt* $\mathfrak{P}^{3,75}$ B *f*¹ 579, / 2211 l (*incert.* Γ) | ἡ δε Α C K P W Γ Δ Θ *f*¹³ 565^s, 579, 700 \mathfrak{M} f q *vg^{ms} sy^{p,h} bo^{pt}* | - D lat *sys^c* | *txt* $\mathfrak{P}^{3,75}$ \mathfrak{N} B L Ψ *f*¹ 892, 1241, 1424, 2542, / 2211 sa bo^{pt} | ^T απ $\mathfrak{P}^{3,75}$ \mathfrak{N}^2 A C K P W Γ Δ Θ Ψ *f*¹⁻¹³ 33, 565^s, 700, 892, 1241, 1424, 2542, / 2211 \mathfrak{M} lat | *txt* \mathfrak{N}^{*} B D L 579 it; Cl Or

Appendix II Tamil Versions of Luke 10:38-42

லூக்கா 10:38-42 (Common Language Translation, 1995)

38) அவர்கள் தொடர்ந்து சென்று கொண்டிருந்தார்கள். அப்போது இயேசு ஓர் ஊரை அடைந்தார். அங்கே பெண் ஒருவர் அவரைத் தம் வீட்டில் வரவேற்றார். அவர் பெயர் மார்த்தா.

39) அவருக்கு மரியா என்னும் சகோதரி ஒருவர் இருந்தார், மரியா ஆண்டவருடைய காலடி அருகில் அமர்ந்து அவர் சொல்வதைக் கேட்டுக்கொண்டிருந்தார்.

40) ஆனால் மார்த்தா பற்பல பணிகள் புரிவதில் பரபரப்பாகி இயேசுவிடம் வந்து, ஆண்டவரே, நான் பணிவிடை செய்ய என் சகோதரி என்னைத் தனியே விட்டு விட்டாளே, உமக்குக் கவலையில்லையா? எனக்கு உதவி புரியும்படி அவளிடம் சொல்லும் என்றார்.

41) ஆண்டவர் அவரைப் பார்த்து மார்த்தா, மார்த்தா! நீ பலவற்றைப் பற்றிக் கவலைப்பட்டுக் கலங்குகிறாய்.

42) ஆனால் தேவையானது ஒன்றே, மரியாவோ நல்ல பங்கைத் தேர்ந்தெடுத்துக்கொண்டாள்; அது அவளிடமிருந்து எடுக்கப்படாது” என்றார்.

லூக்கா 10:38-42 (Bower translation)

38) பின்பு அவர்கள் பிரயாணமாய்ப் போகையில், அவர் ஒரு கிராமத்தில் பிரவேசித்தார். ஒரு ஸ்திரீ அவரைத் தன்விட்டிலே ஏற்றுக்கொண்டாள்.

39) அவளுக்கு மரியாள் என்னப்பட்ட ஒரு சகோதரி இருந்தாள். அவள் இயேசுவின் பாதத்தருகே உட்கார்ந்து அவருடைய வசனத்தைக் கேட்டுக்கொண்டிருந்தாள்

40) மார்த்தாளோ பற்பல வேலைகளைச் செய்வதில் மிகவும் வருத்தமடைந்து, அவளிடத்தில் வந்து ஆண்டவரே, நான் தனியே வேலைசெய்யும்படி என் சகோதரி என்னை விட்டுவந்திருக்கிறதைக் குறித்து உமக்குக் கவலையில்லையா? எனக்கு உதவி செய்யும்படி அவளுக்குச் சொல்லும் என்றாள்.

41) இயேசு அவளுக்குப் பிரதியுத்தரமாக மார்த்தாளே, மார்த்தாளே, நீ அநேக காரியங்களைக்குறித்துக் கவலைப் பட்டுக் கலங்குகிறாய்.

42) தேவையானது ஒன்றே, மரியாள் தன்னை விட்டெடுபடாத நல்ல பங்கைத் தெரிந்துகொண்டாள் என்றார்.

Appendix III Guiding Questions Supporting the Semi-Structured Interview

Familiarising questions:

- Please read through the text either silently or aloud, whichever is convenient for you.
After this, please tell me in which context you have heard the text and its interpretation before?
- What were your first thoughts, when you got to know the text for the first time?

Questions supporting the cognitive understanding of the text:

- Do you find one of the woman characters or both as important?
- How do you characterise Martha and Mary?
- Which word or line is particularly important for you?
- What do you think about Martha's request to Jesus?
- What do you think about Jesus' response to Martha?
- What is, in your understanding, that 'one thing' which is necessary in v. 42?
- What makes you wonder in this passage? What confuses you?

Questions supporting the emotional access to the text:

- Do you see a connection between you and the story?
- Which character would you like to be and why?

Questions concerning the impact and contextualisation of the text:

- How do you view, in general, a man visiting two women, who stay alone in a house?
- How would you relate this text with the women in your context?

Finalising question:

- Are there any thoughts about this text left in your mind, you want to tell me?

Appendix IV Transcripts of the Interviews

Interview 1

Personal Information:

Name: Chandini

Place: Puthurai village

Age: 29 years

Familial Status: Married

Educational Background: Master's Graduate

Occupation: Homemaker

Date of Interview: 16-09-2015

Could you please read the text Lk 10:38-42 once, before I ask you some questions?

(Reads the passage aloud.)

Where did you hear this text for the first time?

In the church.

What is your impression about the text?

When I read this text, I feel that many times when it comes to sermon or other church related activities, I get distracted with my personal tasks. Sometimes I feel that I give importance to my personal activities and postpone the things related to God. When the Lord says, Mary has chosen the good portion, it makes me to self-examine and see whether I have made mistakes by not giving priority to God and I have a guilty conscience for not being like Mary. So, I think that I should make a commitment to give priority to listening to God's word and then do my personal jobs. I see this as a central message while reading this text.

Which of the two women seems to be important to you?

Mary.

How do you characterise Martha and Mary?

Martha, even though she knows Jesus, I think she was not aware of the good portion. The Bible says, 'taste and see that the Lord is good'. If she had known what the good portion is, she would not have done her work, whereas Mary had that awareness and longing, she was keenly listening to Jesus, to receive the good portion. But Martha was concerned about food and physical needs and Mary was concerned about her soul and was seeking for the living word. Mary was the one looking for the good portion, but Martha was living a worldly life. Mary was talking with Jesus about eternal life.

Which of these two characters you would like to be?

I would like to be like Mary.

How do you see Martha's asking for help?

It is quite normal that she asks for help.

How do you see the response of Jesus to the request of Martha?

(Pauses... and reads the response from the text.) He says, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried about many things’.

Yes, that is the response of Jesus. How do you react to his response?

I see, Jesus is giving a positive response. I think that Jesus communicated to Martha, saying, Martha, ‘you are confused and troubled with many things’, but Mary is not bothered about anything. Mary is sure that the living word is important and for those who seek that living word all other things in life would get easier.

Which phrase or line in the text do you find is important for you?

The line that is important for me is “one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good part, which will not be taken away from her.” This phrase is so important for me because the good portion is so important. ‘The good portion’ denotes several things. Mary must have learnt new things, good things from Jesus and listened to his words that could change her life. Many people are in a depressed state and many want to end up their life in this world out of frustration and many live with lots of difficulties. Right words at right time change the life of such people. When people listen to life changing words, they have faith and confidence to live ahead. So ‘words of Jesus’ as ‘good portion’ is so important to all of us.

How do you relate this text to women in your context?

The message that I would tell the women is that we must always give first priority to Jesus. All of us have tasks; we will have to work every minute till we go to bed. We need to take efforts to spend some time for Jesus like praying, attending prayer meetings. If we give importance to such things, God will happily make our work easier. We should not postpone our duty when it comes to praying and listening to the word of God. For example, when it comes to Sunday service, we should attend regularly. We should not postpone things related to spirituality. First, we need to seek Jesus, we have to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto us. Our life and everything will be perfect when we listen to the word of God.

Jesus says, ‘one thing is necessary’. What could be that ‘one thing’?

‘One thing is needed’ means that each of us has several needs and Jesus says that you should have only one need. Mary knows what that one necessary thing is, and she opts for it. I too pray to God seeking his help when I have a need. I think that ‘one thing’ could also be faith in God.

Yes, but it is not clear in the text, what that ‘one thing’ is, so I wanted to know how you interpret that ‘one thing’.

Here in this text when he reproaches Martha, he means, ‘Martha, you are worried about several things and you are not worried about an important thing, which is life after death, the eternal life. Martha, you failed to seek about heavenly life. If you lose that, you will lose everything in your life. You can earn money and fame any time but not that immortal eternal life. There could be doctors, engineers, lawyers and many rich people – but can they enter the eternal life? No... We can have eternal life only by knowing Jesus. I am so proud that I got to know Jesus today and now I have faith that I will live with Papa Jesus in heaven forever and ever. I need that assurance and only that. I don’t need a car, a big house or big money. His words will comfort me and renew my life and I will live here happily and God will protect my family.

Well said, now how do you see a man in your context visiting two women in a house?

No, it is unacceptable in our social context.

How do you react to Martha receiving Jesus into her home?

There are two things that we need to understand. Be it during the time of Jesus or in the present context: the neighbours will speak badly about such an instance. Martha and Mary would have known about Papa Jesus and I think they were not bothered about others in accepting Papa Jesus. He is a man of God and if we talk to him, we would receive eternal life. They knew Papa Jesus is the living water for the spiritual life and that is the reason that they did not avoid him. They happily received him and for them Jesus is more important than the views of the society about them.

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

(Pauses... and reads the text again.) Martha saw Papa Jesus as an ordinary guest and wanted to satisfy him by giving food, but Mary wanted to have the good portion and she believed that she will get it from Papa Jesus.

Are there ‘Marthas’ and ‘Marys’ in your church?

Yes, some are like Mary and attend prayer meetings on Wednesdays and Fridays regularly and are also keen to attend other church fellowship meetings; but others are like Martha and attend church services only on Sundays and give importance to their personal work.

Thank you for your time. It was nice talking to you.

Interview 2

Personal Information:

Name: Cynthia
Place: Chellancheri Village
Age: 34 years
Familial Status: Married
Educational Background: School dropout
Occupation: Homemaker
In Christianity: First generation convert
Date of Interview: 27-09-2016

Could you please read the text from Lk 10:38-42?

(Reads out the text.)

Have you heard this text before?

Yes, the evangelist in our church has read this text.

What do you understand from this text?

(Pauses and reads the text again.) This story sounds familiar and it is a story about two sisters.

Which of these two characters seem to be important for you?

Mary is important because she sits at the feet of Jesus, but Martha was busy with other things. Martha is working alone, and she requests Jesus to send Mary to help her, so that Martha can also listen to the Lord, after finishing the work.

Martha requests for help and how do you see the response of Jesus?

(Pauses. reads the response of Jesus.) It is difficult to understand.

Martha requests Jesus to send Mary to help her but Jesus does not send Mary to help Martha and gives a different response and how do you see that?

Jesus is right because he is (Lord) God.

Which of these characters you would like to be? Martha or Mary?

Martha.

Martha in what way?

No. Mary.

Are you getting confused with the names? Martha is the one who is doing other jobs and Mary is the one sitting at the feet of Jesus. Would you like to read the text on your own one more time and then we can talk?

(She reads the whole text on a low voice.) Yes, I prefer to be like Mary.

How do you relate this text with women in your context?

Actually, I am confused with this story.

Well, let us read the text together slowly and see whether you can understand it.

(Interviewer reads out the text slowly and she follows the reading.)

Tell me, which part of the text you find difficult to understand or what is confusing?

Smiles. I am not able to answer the question with which character I can identify myself. It is confusing.

Is it because that you find that both the women are doing the right thing and you are surprised with the response of Jesus?

Yes, yes, you are right, and it is difficult to understand. *(Laughs aloud...)*

Where exactly is the confusion?

Martha is working, and Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus and Martha is getting angry that she is left alone to work. She is requesting him to send Mary for help. Her anger seems to be just. But the Lord did not send Mary to help Martha nor tells he Martha to come and listen to his word.

How do you see the text now?

We have to give importance to God when God expects it from us. We should leave out the worldly desires and should not become slaves to worldly things. We should seek God and give importance to him always.

Well, if that's the way you understand the text. How do you see in your context a man visiting two women in a house?

No, it is not acceptable. The society will speak badly of the women.

Is it acceptable in this story?

Yes, it is acceptable here. Martha and Mary are children of God and therefore, they will not do anything wrong. Even when other men visit them, they will pray and talk about God.

Is there anything you want to say?

No.

Thanks for your time.

Interview 3

Personal Information:

Name: Elisabeth

Place: Chellancheri Village

Age: 30 years

Familial Status: Single

Educational Background: Diploma in teacher training

Occupation: Homemaker

In Christianity: First generation convert

Date of Interview: 27-09-2015

Could you please read the text from Luke 10:38-42?

(Reads the text aloud.)

In which context have you heard this text before?

In the church sermons.

What were your first thoughts when you heard the text for the first time?

(Pauses...) There are two sisters Martha and Mary. *(Pauses...)* Mary shows interest to know more about God, whereas Martha was keen in doing household work. She complains to God that she is working alone, and her sister is not helping. But the Lord responds, saying: 'Mary has chosen the good thing, i.e. to know about me'.

Okay, you say Mary has chosen the good thing. In what way you see a connection between you and the story?

Works are important and knowing God is more important, i.e. we should be keen to know what is good.

Do you find one of the woman characters or both as important?

Mary is important.

How do you characterise Martha and Mary?

Martha is good at household work and Mary is keen in knowing some good values.

Which character would you like to be and why?

I would like to be Mary.

Martha is asking for help. What do you think about Jesus' response to Martha?

Martha's asking for help is right, but God cannot be wrong. So, his response has to be accepted.

Is such a response acceptable from other men, other than Jesus?

No! The same response from any other man is difficult to accept. God will always think and do good for us.

Which word or line is very important for you?

The last verse. 'One thing is important. Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away'.

What is that 'good part' which is necessary in verse 42?

(Pauses and reads the verse.) The 'good thing' is showing interest to know and learn God's word.

How would you relate this text to the women in your context?

It is important to be like Mary. Works are important like household chores, but we should know what is more important for our life. There is something more important like reading Bible and knowing God just as Mary did. All this will help in our spiritual life.

What do you mean by 'spiritual life'?

Praying and reading the biblical verses. It is not only in reading but also following the ways as given in the Scripture.

How do you view in general, a man visiting two women, who stay alone in a house?

If a man comes with a brotherly affection, it can be accepted – otherwise it is not good to accept a man in the house when the women are alone.

How do you react to Martha's reception of Jesus?

It is God who visits Martha, so it has to be accepted.

What makes you wonder in this passage? What confuses you?

There is no confusion. It is clear that we should not be like Martha but be like Mary.

Are there any thoughts left in your mind, you want to tell me?

No.

Thanks for your time.

Interview 4

Personal Information:

Name: Kavya
Place: Puthurai Village
Age: 23 years
Familial Status: Married
Educational Background: B.A. Economics
Occupation: Homemaker
In Christianity: First generation convert
Date of Interview: 16-09-2015

Could you please read the text Luke 10:38-42?

(She reads the text aloud.)

Have you heard this text before?

Yes, I have heard this text in sermons.

What were your impressions when you heard this text?

It is a story about Martha and Mary. Martha *(pauses...)* had a sister called Mary. Martha was worried.... and Mary....

You please take your time and read the text again.

(Reads the text again to herself.) In a village there was a woman named Martha and she had a sister called Mary. Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus and was listening to him. Martha was busy with other jobs. *(Reads the text again....)* Mary is complaining to Jesus saying that Martha is worried about her work and for that Jesus responds saying....

Just a second, could you read the text carefully and tell who is speaking to whom? Is it Martha or Mary, who is complaining to Jesus?

Oh, it is Martha who is complaining and for that Jesus responds saying: 'Martha, why are you worried about many things. Do not be worried'. Mary was not worried about other things and she chose the good portion. Mary was free of worries and she believed that Jesus will take care of everything.

Which character in this story do you like or you see as important and why?

It is Mary, for she chose the good portion.

Which line or phrase in this text you find important?

I like the last verse: "Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her."

What do you understand about Martha and Mary as characters?

Martha was worried about worldly things, but Mary was different, and she believed that Jesus will take care of all the worries. She chose the good portion which means she chose something what is essential for her life, leaving behind all other worries.

With which of these women you would like to identify?

I want to be like Mary.

How do you relate this text to women in your context?

For other women, I would say, don't be like Martha, do not keep worrying about worldly things, but be like Mary. Mary was not worried about the worldly things and she chose the good portion. So also, women should live a life obedient to God.

How do you react to the response of Jesus, when Martha asks for help?

(Laughs and pauses.) His response is not appropriate in this context. But if the Lord says, he must be right.

Do you mean that because he is Lord, he must be right?

Yes!

How do you see in your context, a man visiting women living alone in a house?

It is not an acceptable attitude.

How do you react to Martha, receiving Jesus into her house?

It is not wrong, because we should not see the visit of the Lord in a worldly way. She receives God into her house and not a human being.

Would you like to add something to what you have said?

I just want to insist that we should live like Mary and not like Martha.

Thank you for your time.

Interview 5

Personal Information:

Name: Silvia

Place: Mathuranthagam Village

Age: 28 years

Familial Status: Married

Educational Background: School Graduate

Occupation: Homemaker

Date of Interview: 30-08-2015

Could you please read the text Lk 10:38-42?

(Reads out the text.)

Do you remember when you have heard the text for the first time?

I have heard in Sunday Class, as a child.

What were your first impressions, when you first read this text?

Since my childhood days, I remember Mary as a positive character, as she spent more time with Jesus.

Well, how important is the text for you now?

Now I see Martha also in a positive light because she has received Jesus into her house. As she has accepted Jesus in her heart, she also accepts Jesus in her house. It's a great thing.

How do you understand the two characters Martha and Mary?

Martha receives Jesus, but she doesn't seem to be wholeheartedly submitting herself to Jesus, by sitting at his feet. At the same time, she wanted to please Jesus by serving him with good meals. In the Bible we read that we have to serve our guest even if it is a stranger. Hosting a guest is a worldly affair and she seems to be good at it. She finds her work good and asks Jesus to send Mary also to join her in the work. Mary was interested to listen to the word of the Lord and she sat at his feet.

Which of these characters in this story you like?

I like Martha and also Mary. *(Laughs.)*

How do you see the response of Jesus to Martha's request?

The purpose of God creating us is to be with God all the time and to glorify him. That is the purpose of creating Adam and Eve, but Eve fell prey to worldly sin. Eve rejects God and obliges to Satan. Martha also seems to do a good job, but she does something worldly. Martha wanted both: Jesus and also wanted to live a worldly life.

Do you see that Jesus is responding to Martha in the right way?

He is right in his response. Papa Jesu can take care of himself. If he is hungry, he can get food somehow, because he has fed 5000 people with five loaves of bread and two fish. *(Laughs.)* So, he preferred Mary.

Which line or phrase in the text, do you find important?

‘One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her’.

In your understanding, what could be that ‘one thing’?

To be at the feet of the Lord and talking to the Lord.

How do you find in our context a man visiting two women living alone in a house?

In our culture it depends on the neighbours. Some see it in the wrong way and some take it in a good way.

How do you find Martha receiving Jesus?

She is right in receiving him, because he is Papa Jesus.

Is there something in the text that confuses or surprises you?

The confusion is at the point when Martha appeals to Papa Jesus, “Are you not concerned that I am working alone?” and Papa Jesus doesn’t seem to be bothered about her request and gives a very different response.

How do you relate this text to women in your context?

We should accept Papa Jesus just the way Mary did. We claim that Papa Jesus is in our heart, but we don’t spend much time for him. Whenever we get time, we need to spend time for him or else allot a particular time and speak with Papa Jesus and meditate the Bible.

Is there anything you would like to add?

(Pauses.)

Which character would you like to be?

(Laughs.) I want to be like both of them.

Do you find that Jesus is acknowledging Mary’s behaviour and not Martha’s?

I cannot see it that way because in another context, when their brother Lazarus died, Martha was the first to go to the tomb with Jesus and Mary had strong faith in Jesus. So, I find that both of them are important.

Thanks for your time and for sharing your thoughts.

Interview 6

Personal Information:

Name: Latha

Place: Karadaipattu Village

Age: 22 years

Familial Status: Single

Educational Background: Studying Computer Science Engineering

Occupation: Student

In Christianity: First Generation Convert

Date of Interview: 27-09-2015

Could you please read Lk 10:38-42?

(She reads it out.)

Have you heard this text before?

Yes.

What were your first thoughts when you heard about this text?

Mary was concerned to listen to God's word, but as soon as the Lord came home, Martha became busy with the household works, preparing meals for the Lord and she was keen that he eats something.

In what way is this text connected to you?

When the Lord visits our home, it is important to talk to him, more than cooking. It is an opportunity to know more about spiritual things, when we talk with the Lord.

Which of these women characters is important for you?

Of course, Mary.

How do you characterise Martha and Mary?

Martha was only concerned that Jesus must eat something in her house, but Mary thought she should receive good portion from the Lord.

How do you see Martha's request for help?

Martha is not wrong in asking for help, but she was not as keen as Mary to hear God's word and she was more focussed with household chores.

How do you see the response of Jesus?

Jesus is right when he means that household job is not important when it comes to listening to him.

Is such a response acceptable, if it is from another man and not from Jesus?

No, it is not acceptable, when I struggle alone with household chores.

Which of these characters would you like to be?

Like Mary, of course.

Which word or phrase do you find important to you?

The last verse. 'Mary chose the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her'.

What could be that 'good portion' according to you?

'Good portion' is listening to God's word.

Is there something that you find surprising or confusing in this text?

(Pauses and laughs.) It is confusing. The elder sister is working alone and the younger sister is relaxing. I am an elder sister and I know how difficult it is to do the household chores alone.

How do you find in your context a man visiting two women in a house?

It is not acceptable.

How do you see Martha receiving Jesus into her house?

He is God, so it is not a problem. If it is any other man, the neighbours would definitely speak badly about them.

Is there anything that you like to add to what you have said?

(Nods the head signalling no.)

Thanks a lot for your time.

Interview 7

Personal Information:

Name: Priya

Place: Chennai

Age: 36 years

Familial Status: Single

Educational Background: School Graduate

Occupation: Diocesan Missionary

Date of Interview: 03-09-2015

Could you please read Lk 10:38-42 aloud?

(She reads the text.)

Where have you heard this text before, in Sunday school or in...?

In Sunday school.

What were your first impressions when you read this text? Is it a familiar text? Have you heard it quite often?

Now I hear quite often when it is preached, and I read this text often to prepare sermons. When it comes to do with women's ministry, this passage is chosen to point out that women should lead a life like Mary.

Which part of the text you find important?

For me, Mary sitting at the feet of the Lord and listening to the word of God is important. Martha is concerned about preparing meals and it is important for her to serve the guest. Actually, I think of the situation in my own family. We are three sisters and my first elder sister and myself are quite active in the church. My second elder sister helps my mother in household jobs and is not very active in the church. This helps me and my first elder sister to freely engage in the church activities. If we all three sisters are only busy with household chores, it is not practical. Mary sitting at the feet of the Lord is aware of the verse, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added to you." Whereas Martha had a mind of hospitality, to serve the guest. Martha then complains saying, 'I am left alone to work and I need assistance.' She did not think that she should not disturb Mary who is listening to the Lord. Martha should have thought: 'Let me finish my work quickly and then join Mary to listen to the Lord'. She did not opt for it. But Martha thought, 'I am struggling alone, while my sister is relaxing'. Martha could have also listened to the Lord simultaneously as she was cooking, just as we do sometimes in our homes – we engage in household activities, while listening to some sermons in television. Martha might have even thought that the Lord would scold her for not listening to the word of God. But she grumbles that she is left alone to work....

So, you see that Martha is playing the role of the host and asks for assistance, which looks quite natural and how do you see the response of Jesus?

What the Lord means here is, 'seek me first and importance to food is secondary'. And: 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord'. We can eat or do what we want later but the priority should be given to God's kingdom and God's verses for our spiritual life. But sometimes we think in a worldly way that we must serve the guest first and then sit down to talk. According to me, one of us in the family should give complete priority to God, so do I (as missionary). I am not good at cooking and when somebody does the cooking for me, I want to spend the time listening to the word of God and eat later. When I started to live alone, after I return home from ministry, I relax a bit and then prepare something to eat.

I understand that you see two things – work and word of God. In what way you find these two women characters as important?

Mary is important. Work and food should not be the priority. We believe that God is always present with us but when we get a rare chance of God visiting us, he should be given priority and we need to listen to him. Mary and Martha had a chance to have the Lord in their house. It is because of the importance given to the Lord and because they loved the Lord, he brought their brother Lazarus back to life. When the Lord himself comes looking for us to our homes, he should be given importance.

How do you characterise Martha and Mary?

Mary sat at the feet of the Lord and gave importance to spiritual things. Martha gave importance to serving food and she was worldly.

How do you see Jesus' response to Martha? Was he angry with Martha?

It is not clear... He says: 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things'. It looks like that the Lord was hurt by Martha's behaviour. He thought, 'You are not seeking the kingdom of God and you are concerned to serve and not seeking something what is necessary for spiritual life and you are worried about worldly things'. God is not an angry God and is a loving God. So, he must not have been angry with Martha. The Lord is concerned that her soul should not get lost and saves her soul.

Which word or line is very important for you?

Lord feels bad that Martha was not ready to taste the love of God and is concerned about worldly things. If I backslide in my life and go away from the Lord, I personally realise that God is hurt by my behaviour.

Okay... I get it... but my question was: 'When you read the text, which line is important for you?'

"Martha, Martha you are worried about many things." Sometimes I also want to live a life closer to God and when that doesn't happen, God understands me and these words that he spoke to Martha are consoling for me. God knows my weakness and understands us and he will take care of everything. At the same time, we should make efforts to choose the good portion just as Mary did by sitting at the feet of the Lord.

How would you relate this text with the women in your context?

For women...?

For instance, when you preach to women, what message would you like to give to women from this text?

From this text...? Women should not be complaining like Martha that 'I could not listen to the word of God, because I was cooking'. We must quickly finish our cooking and then listen to the word, sitting at the feet of the Lord. Or we can receive the message from those who have listened already, while we were busy cooking. However, as far as possible, it is important to sit at the feet of the Lord and then cook the meals.

Do you want to say that Martha's complaint about her role is not acceptable?

Yes, Martha should have neither complained about her sister nor have disturbed her. Such an attitude is wrong. Martha thinks that she is working hard, and Mary is relaxing. She should do what is assigned to her.

Do you mean that women should be like Mary, if you find Martha was wrong?

Mary is right. Waiting at the feet of the Lord is important – at the same time household work is also important. It is not good to leave aside the household chores. It is not possible to spend the entire time at the feet of the Lord and we need to get back to other activities. We need to understand the biblical verse 'Pray without ceasing' – that our heart, our mind and our soul should be relating with God while we are busy with other activities. Who will do my household chores if I stay at the feet of the Lord all the time? If I keep saying: "Lord, Lord ." and ignore my duties at home, it is not acceptable for the family members.

What kind of life we expect of women?

'Lord' is important in our lives and also the household chores. We can also finish our household chores and then sit at the feet of the Lord to receive the spiritual favour and gifts, in order to live a witnessing life to others. Our life should reflect God. If I pray well and speak abusive words outside, it is wrong. do you agree?

Yes, it is wrong.

So, my life outside and my prayer time should reflect that I have spent quality time at the feet of the Lord by showing good behaviour.

What is the 'good portion' that Jesus is talking about? You keep repeatedly saying, 'sitting at the Lord's feet'. Is that what you understand as the 'good portion' or do you have anything else to say?

The 'good portion' also means all the other things related to the kingdom of God.

You made a difference between worldly things and spiritual life. What do you mean by 'spiritual life' and giving importance to 'spiritual way of living'?

It is on how we speak. We should speak words of love and our behaviour should not hurt others and we should be satisfied in our life with what we have and not be greedy for things. Paul says: 'I have learnt to be content in whatever situation'. When we decide to follow the Lord, we have to spend more time with the Lord to know his ways and learn to be humble as the Bible says, 'Blessed are the humble in spirit' and 'Blessed are those who thirst for righteousness'. We should reflect God in our lives by not speaking offensive words in our day to day life. When I am with God, I observe the character of God and try to adopt some of those characteristics and follow a life pleasing to God. 'The wise woman builds her home'. and 'a wise woman is a crown to her husband'. It is important how I

relate with my children, family members and it is to do with my good character. All these I consider as 'good portion'. The kingdom of God is here in us and if we understand that kingdom of God which is yet to come is a place where there are no tears and sorrow. We need to have those traces in our life here and now.

Is there something that you feel confused with this passage?

Yes, of course. Why is the Lord not understanding the role of Martha? Hospitality is also important. In another instance in Simon's house, he is not happy that Simon did not treat him properly as a guest. The Lord complains that Simon has failed in his duties as host – that Simon failed to wash the feet of the Lord.

How do you view, in general, a man visiting two women who stay alone in a house?

If the women in the house are of good character, even if a man visits them, they will not be spoken badly by the neighbours. If a man is a Christian, he would behave well with the women and, if at all he happens to be a bad person, God will protect the women in the house.

Before we close, would you like to add something to what you have shared so far?

It is important to give priority to God by listening to him and then care for food. Only such an attitude will be helpful to be a witness for Christ in the outside world by not using abusive words against others.

Thank you so much for your time. It was great talking to you.

Interview 8

Personal Information:

Name: Salomi

Place: Chennai

Age: 32 years

Familial Status: Married

Educational Background: Bachelor in Theological Studies

Occupation: Pastor

Date of Interview: 30-08-2015

Could you please read the text Lk 10:38-42?

(Reads the text.)

Do you remember when you heard this text for the first time?

I remember listening to a sermon on this text, long time back.

What were your first impressions, when you read or heard this text?

My first impression was that Martha was portrayed as a negative person. Martha made a choice on her own to work and later she complains about her work.

How do you understand the characters, Martha and Mary, in this text?

When we see this story in the Gospel of Luke, Mary wanted to listen to Jesus and she doesn't seem to care about other things, but Martha was concentrating on many things and it seems that she doesn't show much interest in what Jesus was saying. But I am not sure about that. On the other hand, she happens to be a good host and finds honouring the guest is important. This I see as a positive thing in Martha.

Which of these two women characters do you find important?

I like the role of Mary, but it is hard to accept her completely. I find her to be very passive.

Which of these characters would you like to identify with?

(Pauses.) I would identify myself with Martha, but I don't prefer one aspect of Martha, where she complains about Mary – that Mary has left her alone to work. She compares her role with Mary. I like Martha's role as being busy and active and that too she is doing something for Jesus.

How do you see the response of Jesus to Martha? Do you find it acceptable or not?

(Pauses.) Jesus' response.... *(Pauses.)* In one way it looks that he was biased... *(Pauses.)* I am not happy with his response... But the text is also not clear on what he says. His response was: "One thing is necessary, and Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away." Here comes a big question, whether the 'good portion' means only 'listening to Jesus'. Simply listening to Jesus doesn't help in any way. How could Jesus promote such an attitude for women? In all other teachings and activities of Jesus, teaching and actions go parallel. If 'listening to Jesus' is highlighted as a preferable act... There seems a sort of incompleteness in the statement of Jesus.

How do you relate this text to the women in your context?

The lesson that we learn from Martha is that we should not compare ourselves with anybody and we should be ourselves. If you want to do some job, just do it and if you don't want to do, don't do it. Don't compare with others saying: 'I am doing so much, and the other person doesn't do as much as I do'. If you want to excel at something, just go ahead and don't land comparing with others, if you are not duly acknowledged for your work. I see this aspect in Martha, i.e. comparing herself to her sister, as negative. When it comes to Mary, I see her total passiveness as a negative aspect of her behaviour. Jesus Christ has come to their house as guest and if the sisters had good understanding among themselves in sharing the work, there wouldn't have been any complications.

Which line or phrase in the text you find as important?

I don't find any line important to me and find problem with every line. I have problem with Martha's view, I have problem with Mary's view and the statement of Jesus is in itself quite complex.

How do you see in your context a man visiting women, who live alone in a house?

It is not possible in our context...

How do you see Martha receiving Jesus into her house?

Jesus was close to them and he was like a family friend. Lazarus is missing in this story, I don't know why? Anyway, they were close.

Is there anything more that you would like to say?

(Pauses.) I think Jesus should have preferred Martha to Mary because she is the one who receives Jesus. But he ends the story stating that, Mary chose the good part. Someone who received and was busy doing something for Jesus was misunderstood.

Thank you for your time.

Interview 9

Personal Information:

Name: Esmara

Place: United Theological College, Bangalore

Age: 22 years

Familial Status: single

Educational Background: College Graduate

Occupation: Theological Student

Date of Interview: 04-10-2016

Could you please read out Luke 10:38-42?

(Reads the text.)

Do you remember in which context you have heard this text before?

In a sermon in the church.

What were your thoughts when you heard it for the first time?

I don't remember exactly how I saw this text, when I first heard it. But I always felt that Martha's role was acceptable, and she was right in her attitude because when we have guests in our house, hospitality is our first preference, be it a known person or a stranger. We receive them and offer them first water to drink and we will not immediately sit down to chat with the guests, without serving them. According to me, serving the guest should be the first priority.

Well, I understand that you see Martha was right as a host in attending Jesus. How do you see the response of Jesus when Martha requested for help?

Yes, Martha is right in her attitude, but I see Jesus expects a spiritual attitude from Martha. What Jesus expects is to search for food for the soul. He meant not to give importance to physical needs.

Well, which of the two women you find as important?

It has been always Martha who has been important for me.

From this text, how do you understand Martha and Mary as characters?

When it comes to Martha, she is doing her part well and she does justice to her responsibility as host. And Mary does what is necessary for her spiritual life. Mary could have helped Martha first and then sat to listen to Jesus. Both of them are staying together in a house and it is good if they both work together. We generally think that way, when we have visitors in our own context, that we can finish the work faster, if someone helps in the domestic work. We should first satisfy the guest with food and then spend time conversing with them. Mary could have helped her sister first and then spend time together for a chat after the meals.

Well, I take this as your inference from the story. What picture do you get about the characters as you read the text?

Mary is relaxed at the feet of Jesus and Martha is restless.

How do you see the response of Jesus to Martha's request?

(Laughs.)

Just express, whatever you feel about the response?

May be from his perspective something else was important. But he could have invited Martha directly, saying, she could stop her work and join Mary in order to listen to him.

So, you seem to be not comfortable with Jesus' response...

No.... I could not accept his response. He says that Martha is worried about many things and he could have asked her to leave her work and join them (Jesus and Mary). Why did God not tell Martha directly to choose the right thing that Mary chose?

How do you connect yourself with the story?

I think, I am like Martha, always restless and concerned about many things and have no patience like Mary.

Which word or line in this text is very important for you?

(Pauses. Reads the text again.) Jesus' response: 'Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her'.

How do you relate this text to the women in your context?

Women have the tendency to do multiple jobs at the same time, unlike men who focus on one thing at a time. Women are generally multi-tasked. In that sense, Martha is a multi-tasker. Even though we are multi-taskers, we need to be like Mary, sparing some time for spiritual life. In our busy schedule, we need to take a break and use that break to spend some time like Mary at the feet of the Lord. Some women complain that they don't have time for personal meditation. When we as women are capable of undertaking many tasks, why can't we plan our time and spend time for the Lord.

How do you understand the phrase 'one thing is necessary'?

I wonder whether we need to always think about 'the kingdom of God'. In this world, we need to give importance to worldly as well as spiritual things. How is it possible to think only about spiritual life?

Have I rightly understood that according to you, 'one thing necessary' is the spiritual life?

Yes, I think, it is spiritual life...

How do you view in general, a man visiting two women, who stay alone in a house?

It is acceptable when it is a known person. Women allow only persons known to them.

How do you react to Martha's reception of Jesus?

It is acceptable in the case of Jesus visiting Martha and Mary because he must be a regular visitor. It is also because as a friend of Lazarus, he became close with that family.

You mentioned about Lazarus, but it is not there in this text.

But, I remember that he is mentioned in another place in the Bible.

Yes, he is mentioned in the Gospel of John. What makes you wonder or confuse in this passage?

The confusing part is 'one thing is necessary'. It is not clear, what that 'one thing' could be. I am not sure for which I need to give importance in my life.

Are there any thoughts left in your mind, you want to tell me?

Martha requests for help and expects a positive response, but Jesus gives a contrary response and that is disturbing. Why didn't he send Mary to help Martha?

Well, that's all I wanted to hear from you. Thanks for your time.

Interview 10

Personal Information:

Name: Thamarai

Place: United Theological College, Bangalore

Age: 23 years

Familial Status: Single

Educational Background: College Graduate

Occupation: Theological Student

Date of Interview: 04-10-2015

Please read the text Lk 10:38-42.

(Reads the text.)

In which context have you heard this text before?

In Sunday school.

What were your first thoughts when you heard this story for the first time?

First time, I saw this story as an enactment through a skit in the church. At a very young age, the message that I got through the skit was that seeking God is more important than anything else and that was also the focus of the skit. This thought stayed in my mind.

Now as a grown up, how important is this text for you?

(Pauses and reads the text again.) Now I see from this text, that anything that keeps us away from God is unnecessary.

Do you find one of the woman characters or both as important and why?

For me Martha is important. Mary might have sat at the feet of Jesus, but it is not clear whether Mary has really learnt something from Jesus. But Martha wanted to care for Jesus' needs. Food is an important aspect. We give much importance to food in our families in order to satisfy the guests. Martha has behaved like any other ordinary woman. Mary went and sat at Jesus' feet and we are not sure as how much Mary would have learnt from Jesus. The text gives the impression that what Mary did was right. But according to me what Martha did was right.

How do you characterise Mary and Martha according to this text?

(Pauses.) Martha is seen as an active person: Mary wanted to show that she is close with Jesus. Each one would like to impress the other in different ways. Mary seems to impress Jesus by staying close to him.

Which character would you like to be?

I would like to be Martha.

What do you think about Jesus' response to Martha?

(Long pause. Reads the text again.) Martha asks Jesus: ‘Are you not concerned that Mary is sitting next to you without helping me?’ For that question Jesus responds: ‘You are concerned about other things’. What Jesus means here is that all that is concerned to Martha is not of any importance to him. Jesus is speaking from his perspective that what Martha is doing is not right. But for Martha, from her perspective, what she was doing was right. I see that Jesus is degrading Martha, which I see as inappropriate.

Do you see a connection between you and the story?

(Pause.)

First of all, do you feel connected?

Yes, I compare this event to my own family practice. Our first and foremost response is to give food for the guests especially when they happened to be bishops and pastors. Giving food is a way of honouring the ministers of God who visit our families. But we also keenly listen to them when they preach. We give importance to both, serving food and listening to preaching.

How would you relate this text with the women in your context?

Women should not be overactive and anxious like Martha in order to impress others but should learn patience like Mary.

Do you want to say, one should know the right way to please others?

No... It is not to please others. We should not overact to take all the credit to ourselves, like Martha.

Which word or line is very important for you?

(Pause. Reads the text.) Jesus answering to her, said: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and anxious about many things.” He communicates to Martha: “Why do you take upon the entire burden to yourself? Allow God to work in your life!”

How do you view in your context, a man visiting two women staying alone in a house?

No, it is not acceptable.

How do you react to Martha’s reception of Jesus?

She should not have received Jesus.

What is that ‘one thing’ which is necessary in v. 42?

The ‘one thing’ could be ‘Bible verses’ and the message ‘about the kingdom of God’.

What makes you wonder in this passage? What confuses you?

I am confused about the reception of Martha. It is not clear whether she openly received in the presence of others or whether it was a private visit. I don’t find anything surprising in the text.

Are there any thoughts left in your mind, you want to tell me?

No... not really.

Thank you for your time.

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Abstract

Luke 10:38-42, popularly known as the story of Martha and Mary, is often interpreted using a dualistic approach that focusses on the terms *διακονεῖν* (serving) and *ἀκούειν* (hearing), and associating these terms with the characters, Martha and Mary respectively. This dualistic approach has intensified the stereotypical roles assigned to women in India as “serving Marthas” and “praying Marys”. This kind of narrow understanding of Martha and Mary has the potential to confine Christian women to oppressive stereotypical expectations with an emphasis on housewifely duties and virtues, and a pious and submissive spiritual and marital life. Such interpretations that reinforce oppressive stereotypes have been challenged in this study from the perspective of a cognitive narratological approach. As a reader-oriented approach this method was found appropriate because it involves the contexts of both the interpreter and the literary text. The term “cognitive” implies that the reader’s mind is involved in a creative way to systematically identify and fill the gaps in the narrative. These gaps are filled with the help of “frames and scripts” which are guided by the information given by the narrator in the text. This approach emphasises that the pre-stored knowledge and the understanding process of an interpreter plays an important role in constructing the meaning of the text. A closer reading of the text with the help of exegetical tools of the cognitive narratological approach is helpful to understand the focus of the narrative in an alternative way: by placing the terms *διακονεῖν* and *ἀκούειν* not in opposition to each other and by not judging the act of hearing as superior over serving. The aspect of focalisation in the narratological approach orients the reader to focus on the inner conflict of Martha and subsequently her dialogue with Jesus, while Mary is referred to only as an example by Jesus to address that conflict of Martha. From the analysis of Jesus’ speech it is most probable that Jesus criticises Martha not for her hospitality activities but for her complaining attitude towards what she chose to do. Jesus compliments Mary for making a choice, stand by it and not complaining about it. Therefore, that ‘one thing necessary’ and ‘the good part’ in this context would most likely mean ‘one’s attitude towards one’s own choice’. Such an attitude, i.e., being content with one’s own choice is something which shall not be taken away from Mary as a person. It can be seen as a sign of maturity of a person and particularly of a woman in such oppressive circumstances. Approaching it this way, one could say that Lk 10:38-42 is a text meant for both men and women and it does not necessarily need to be read from a gendered perspective just because the characters in the story happen to be women. The text, when read differently, is applicable to both men and women, as followers of Christ, to critically rethink the stereotypical roles ascribed to them by dominant social and religious expectations.

Zusammenfassung

Lk 10:38-42, volkstümlich auch als die Geschichte von Martha und Maria bekannt, wird häufig als eine dualistische Situation interpretiert, wobei man sich auf die Begriffe *διακονεῖν* (dienen) und *ἀκούειν* (hören) fokussiert und sie jeweils mit den Charakteren von Martha und

Maria in Verbindung bringt. Dieser dualistische Zugang hat die stereotypen Rollenmuster der Frauen in Indien als “dienende Marthas” und “betende Marias” verstärkt. Ein so eindimensionales Verständnis der beiden Persönlichkeiten hat das Potential, christliche Frauen in Indien auf bestimmte stark unterdrückerische Rollenerwartungen einzugrenzen und sie auf hausfrauliche Pflichten und Tugenden und eine fromme und den Autoritäten und der Familie ergebene Lebensführung festzulegen. Solche Interpretationen, die unterdrückerische Rollenklischees verstärken, werden in dieser Arbeit mit Hilfe der narratologisch-exegetischen Methode, d.h. eines kognitiv-narratologischen Zugangs in Frage gestellt. Diese Methode zu wählen erschien angemessen, weil der von ihr beförderte leserorientierte Zugang den sozialen und kulturellen Kontext sowohl des Interpreten/der Interpretin als auch des literarischen Textes einbezieht. Der Begriff ‘kognitiv’ selbst impliziert, dass das Vorverständnis des Lesers/der Leserin im Verstehensprozess kreativ involviert und systematisch mit daran beteiligt ist, die “Leerstellen” einer Erzählung zu identifizieren und zu füllen. Das geschieht mit Hilfe von so genannten “Frames” und “Skripts” und über die Lenkung des Erzählers/der Erzählerin durch die im Text mitgeteilten Informationen. Dieser Zugang betont also die Tatsache, dass das schon abgespeicherte Wissen und der Verstehensprozess des Interpreten/der Interpretin eine wichtige Rolle in der Bedeutungsfindung des Textes spielt. Ein ‘Wieder-Lesen’ des Textes mit den exegetischen Instrumenten des kognitiv-narratologischen Zugangs legt nahe, den Kern der Erzählung anders zu verstehen – so, dass weder die Begriffe (‘dienen’) und (‘hören’) als Gegensätze noch der Akt des Hörens jenem des Dienens als überlegen präsentiert wird. Der Vorgang der Fokalisierung im narratologischen Zugang orientiert den Leser/die Leserin, sich auf den inneren Konflikt Marthas und folgerichtig auch auf ihren Dialog mit Jesus zu konzentrieren, in welchem Jesus auf Maria nur als ein Beispiel verweist, das Marthas inneren Konflikt im Kontrast deutlich werden lässt. Die Analyse der Worte Jesu macht es ziemlich wahrscheinlich, dass er Martha nicht wegen ihrer Aktivitäten der Gastfreundschaft kritisiert, sondern wegen ihrer ‚Beschwerde-Haltung‘ gegenüber ihrer eigenen Entscheidung. Jesus lobt Maria dafür, dass sie eine klare Wahl trifft, zu dieser steht und sich nicht darüber beklagt. Deshalb meint „eins aber ist not“ und „das gute Teil“ in diesem Zusammenhang mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit ‚die eigene Haltung zu seinen eigenen Entscheidungen‘. Eine solche Haltung, also eine, die ausdrückt, dass man mit seinen eigenen Handlungs-Entscheidungen zufrieden ist, ist das, was nicht von Maria als ihr Persönlichkeitsmerkmal weggenommen werden soll, weil es als ein Zeichen für eine erwachsene Person verstanden werden kann – besonders bei einer Frau in so unterdrückerischen Lebensverhältnissen. Wenn man den Text auf diese Weise sieht, könnte man sagen, dass Lk 10, 38-42 ein Text sowohl für Männer als auch für Frauen ist und man ihn nicht unbedingt aus einer Genderperspektive sehen muss, nur, weil zwei der Hauptfiguren zufällig Frauen sind. Der Text, auf diese Weise anders gelesen, ist für Männer und Frauen als Nachfolgende Christi anwendbar und hält sie dazu an, ihre traditionellen Rollenstereotypen zu überdenken, die ihnen über die dominanten sozialen und religiösen Erwartungen zugeschrieben werden.