CHAPTER - VII

CONCLUSION

The present study is an analysis of ambivalent situation of women teachers caught between tradition and modernity which is not a dichotomy but rather two poles of a continuum. Tradition is defined as validation of current behaviour by reference to immemorial prescription norms while modernity presupposes a much more remote relationship between antecedent values and new goals (Apter 1969. p.83).

Tonnis’ theory of tradition and modernity continuum is used here as it was found suitable for this study. It implies that no tradition or modern society is exclusively traditional or modern. There are elements of modernity in traditional society and vice versa. Similarly Yogendra Singh, Giddens, Mead, Ulrich Beck, Ritzer and Wilbert Moore’s theories related to tradition and modernity and Merton’s theory of ambivalence are found useful in the analysis of this study. In the shift from traditional to modern society, women are placed in an ambivalence situation to adopt the established code of the past or the practical realities of the present in order to find the way to the beckoning expectations of the future. This state of uncertainty prevents women from taking right decisions. For this study the women in teaching profession, the teachers in co-educational colleges were selected because they have the advantage of dealing with younger generation who are in the crucial stage of transition from tradition to modernity. Besides, these women teachers are the ones who update their knowledge according to the present trend and lead a modern way of life in the eyes of the society. As high income group, they can afford to take up certain modern aspects related to various social institutions since modernity and these institutions are affiliated to each other.

Economic dependence of women on men has been a dominant feature of traditional Hindu society. They were treated like a commodity or possession and governed by the patriarchal value system. But education has changed the situation altogether. From the study it was found that many women (82.2%) are taking teaching profession and they have taken up teaching profession in coeducational
colleges and university in Madurai District. Following this Christian women teachers are higher in the social and educational ladder compared to Muslims. Analysing various caste groups it is noted that there is no representation from scheduled tribes and maximum representation is found among the backward castes that were once socially, economically and educationally lagging behind. Along with religion and caste, age is also considered to be an important variable since the views and opinions differ according to the age of the individual concerned. The number of young women are lower than that of the middle aged and old because only a very few get appointment in colleges before 30. Supporting this fact maximum number of respondents fall under the age group of 35-55. In order to meet the challenging society the teachers are expected to qualify themselves in research oriented education and hence, 50.4% acquired doctoral degrees. Among the respondents 88.9% are married and 67.4% are with urban background as they have born and settled in urban areas. Also the study shows that 5.9% of women teachers are unmarried, 3% are separated and 2.5% are divorced. It was surprising to note that inspite of religious restrictions in Hinduism 7 women have decided to remain single due to reasons like male chauvinism, health problem and considering marriage as a barrier to development.

As far as marriage is concerned the women teachers are conservative and prefer only arranged marriages. Likewise, traditionality is also observed in adopting family planning programme. It is only the women teachers who undergo family planning and not their husbands. But women teachers have a say in limiting family size and they adopt small family norm. Preference to preserve tradition is observed among the women teachers regarding belief in horoscope, and auspicious time. They also give importance to keeping sindhoor on forehead and wearing metti for conventional reasons. The respondents avoid visiting temples during menstruation as it is related to purity and divinity, though they accept it is biological as per scientific view. Similarly the rate of traditionality is high regarding the importance given to thali and religious marriages. In matters concerning children, the women teachers insist on parental socialization rather than putting them in boarding schools in the initial stage of education as the children get their first lessons in cooperation, tolerance, self sacrifice, love and affection in the family of the parents.
On the basis of the study it is observed that higher education has least impact on modern aspects related to motherhood. The women teachers are against the concepts of unwed motherhood and surrogate mother as it is against Indian culture. They are also reluctant to accept cloning child as it is against nature. Due to burden of dual work there is a felt need among women teachers to possess gadgets as they serve both as labour and time saving device.

The women teachers are less traditional towards cleaning the entrance of house with cow dung because of its non-availability, time constraint and new pattern of flooring in the present day houses. Taking food only after husband’s arrival is considered to be an unnecessary traditional behaviour as it would affect the health of women. Use of plantain leaves for providing food to guest is also slowly disappearing due to impact of western practice of eating on dining table using plates and spoons.

The age-old practice of staying separately during menstruation and using separate vessels are out of scene today. Though they consider menstruation as a biological change and puberty ceremony as an embarrassing act, they celebrate the occasion at least in the presence of family members. They also avoid visiting temples during menstruation as they relate it to purity and divinity.

As ear boring ceremony is considered to be an unnecessary expense, it is not preferred by majority of the women teachers. Even if such a ceremony is conducted, only the family members participate in it. From the study, it is clear that majority of women teachers do not approach Godmen during any crisis. They only offer prayers to God. But three women teachers have belief in Godmen inspite of higher education and exposure to external world. They convince themselves telling that they would approach only highly religious and spiritually oriented Godmen. Majority of the respondents have positive attitude towards learning computer, driving vehicles, attending parties on one’s own and going abroad for higher studies and this shows that women are progressive and development oriented with respect to academic and career based activities. The rate of modernity is high among the women teachers with respect to divorce and widow remarriage. It indicates that women are gradually shattering the traditional chains hindering their freedom. Due to increasing rate of divorce and separation
of couples, the women teachers opined that they would consult their children in fixing marital alliance.

To compete with the challenging educational system of today 92.6% of the respondents permit their children to study in co-educational institutions. They also prefer to place their children in English medium schools for the same reason.

Higher education and choosing one’s own career are positively correlated. The women teachers stated that they have liberty to select the profession as they like. No interference is found in choosing the transport for daily conveyance. It is left to the convenience and wish of the respondents. Similarly the women teachers visit their personal friends and also invite them home but the frequency is more in the case of female friends whereas it is rare and occasional in the case of male friends.

The data on relationship between women teachers and students reveals that there is closeness only to a certain extent. They maintain distance in order to keep up discipline. But the respondents were willing to change their behaviour as per the reaction of the students. This helps them to have smooth relationship and proper understanding of students.

The women teachers prefer to preserve tradition or to adopt modernity as per the need of the situation and nature of the factor concerned. Accordingly a state of ambivalence is found in many of the factors which makes them uncertain to take right decisions.

Though the women teachers are traditional with respect to marriage in general, they are highly ambivalent regarding intercaste and interreligious marriage. When their children select their life partner outside the community, the respondents convince themselves in order to overcome the embarrassing and indispensable condition. The rate of ambivalence in interreligious marriage is 8.9% lower than that of intercaste marriage because the rate of traditionality in interreligious marriage is 12.6% higher than that of intercaste marriage. Analysing religious communities prove that the rate of ambivalence towards intercaste and interreligious marriage is high among Hindu women teachers compared to Christians and Muslims. Similarly castewise analysis shows that
MBC’s are highly ambivalent towards intercaste and interreligious marriage because of their restrictive culture. Comparing various age groups it was found that the respondents belonging to the age group 45-55 are highly ambivalent in this regard. The respondents are also not certain about the criteria of marriage arrangements. Horoscope is given importance in fixing marriage proposals while mutual understanding between couples holds the prime position in the case of satisfactory marriage.

As Indian women give more importance to marriage and family, 63.7% of ambivalence is found among the respondents regarding the variable spinsterhood. The problems in married and unmarried life make them uncertain to take decision to remain single. The practice of dowry also makes marriage a tedious task. The rates of dowry vary from religion to religion and caste to caste. It mostly depends upon the groom’s accomplishments, family status and other attainments such as education, employment, wealth or other material acquisitions. Compared to Muslims and Christians, the rate of modernity is high among the Hindu women teachers with respect to dowry. But this modernity in thought is contradictory to the reality. Dowry is given in the form of gift as a token of affection towards their daughters in order to maintain family prestige and to keep their girl children in respectable position in their in-laws’ house. A state of ambivalence is observed in this regard. Similarly among forward castes and backward castes modernity is found only in thought and not in practice because the expensive educational system induce them to pay heavy dowry both voluntarily and involuntarily in order to purchase highly profitable men for their daughter. Though cent percent modernity is found among young women teachers belonging to the age group 25-35, dowry has been given by their parents for their well being and they would also give dowry if it is demanded in case of better proposal for their daughters. Likewise the women teachers belonging to the age groups 35-45 and 45-55 have negative attitude towards dowry, but they regret their inability to practice due to various reasons. Therefore despite anti-dowry legislation in India a conspicuous increase in dowry has been witnessed.

Regarding the type of family, a state of ambivalence is found among 59.3% women teachers. Though nuclear family is considered as an indicator of
modernity, they are placed in a confused state since both nuclear and joint families serve their needs and fulfil their wishes.

Old age homes, increasing in number like mushrooms are also of no exception from ambivalence. In unavoidable condition, old age homes are the asylums for many and the women teachers are unable to reject the concept completely. So, positive and negative attitudes exist towards the presence of old age homes.

Restrictions in culture and modern education led to higher degree of ambivalence among women teachers with regard to gender and liberty related variables. Unlike traditional society, the respondents felt that the husbands’ views as well as their consent is necessary in taking certain major decisions. Though the women teachers are highly educated they are not against the concept of submissiveness as a wife. Rather, they said that certain extent of submissiveness is expected of women in order to prevent conflicts.

Socialization of children as per traditional and modern values make the respondents ambivalent. They are in confused state because the children should not be misled in any way. The respondents inspite of being professionals, are in dilemma regarding women taking up challenging professions like police, navy, army, airforce, and politics because of the problems involved in them.

Expression of ideas, food and dress habits as per one’s interest, spending leisure time etc pose high rate of ambivalence. Women teachers compromise on all the above mentioned aspects for the sake of children and family. The concepts like membership in women’s club and women returning home after dusk which were once restricted are now accepted half heartedly as a result of gradual change in traditional values. Comparison in life style depends on the mindset of women teachers.

Ambivalence in gender based segregation among highly educated women teachers indicates that education has less impact on gender issues. Thus fear towards societal blame makes women teachers to remain marginal. For the same reason, though women teachers accept the concept of divorce, they are reluctant to practice it in reality.
Thus the co-existence of both tradition and modern values are found in the life style of women teachers. The highly educated women who are rational and modern in their outlook and behaviour are mixed personalities as they are today more in an ambivalent state. They have to go a long way to also act in a rational way and to reach mental stability.