CHAPTER VI

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'Physical Quality of Life' (PQL) is a very wide concept which relates to much of our day today life. The minimum that is included in it is good and reasonable food and clothing on the one hand and education, health, sanitation and reasonable living standard on the other. Energy consumption, pure environment and general consumption levels are also included in finding out the Physical Quality of Life. Since all these are dependent factors, their measurement is very difficult.

The concept of PQL varies from society to society; the affluent societies and developing societies view this concept differently. Most of the third world countries are faced with problems of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, hunger, ill-health, lack of medical facilities, inadequate sanitation and housing problems; as such for them to think of PQL is only a far fetched idea. As many of the people in these countries live below the poverty line, adequate food, minimum clothing and roofs over their heads is more than sufficient for them.

6.1 PQL in Developed Economies

The concept of PQL is the contribution of advanced economies. These countries have reached an economic level where they can provide to the people food, clothing and shelter; where education is made compulsory for all; where natural resources are exploited to their advantage due to industrialisation and
modernisation. There is considerable occupational mobility. Some minimum living standard is enjoyed by all. Their energy consumption is very high. They are in a position to enjoy good sanitation system. These countries provide medical insurance facilities to all and practically everyone gets free medical aid; the hospitals are well-equipped. Moreover, illiteracy has been wiped out. Because of affluence, each one has reached certain living standard and the society as a whole is able to maintain that. The concern of developed economies is to maintain that level. In fact, they think in terms of betterment of the PQL by ensuring pure environment, balancing eco-system and general consumption level.

6.2 PQL in Developing Economies

The developing economies think in terms of the minimum living standard because they are the victims of poverty and ill-health. Vast majority of them do not have the minimum food, clothing and shelter. Their PQL is adversely affected by poverty. Medical facilities in these countries are absolutely inadequate. Because of their orthodoxy and superstitious nature, they create many social problems like child marriage, lack of interest to modern medicine and customs which prevent economic development, which further lower down their standard. Due to unemployment and occupational immobility, their living standard is low and the family cannot afford proper food, education and health for its members. The developing economies, due to their other priorities and lack of political stability, are not in a position to spend much on developmental activities, which are indicative of PQL. On the other hand, the developed economies can spend much on developmental
programmes and activities, which further raises their physical quality of life. Thus the approach to the issue of PQL is altogether different in both the economies and they are nowhere near each other. The concept of PQL has more economic relevance in developing economies since it is very much related with providing necessary living standards to the masses.

6.3 PQL—A Socio-Economic Indicator

The term 'PQL' has secured socio-economic significance as it takes into account people's welfare, their living and working conditions and their attitudes towards work and recreation. Hence this term can be used as a socio-economic indicator of the general welfare of the people of developing economies.

6.3.1 Features of Social System

A social system, in general terms, denotes the arrangements made for the smooth functioning of the society, whereas a cultural system shows the acquired habits and the total life-style of the society.

Each social system has its own features. In a system the whole process is balanced and ordered. All units work in close co-operation with each other. It is always based on certain adjustments and this must adjust itself according to changing needs. It therefore, cannot be static but must be dynamic. It co-ordinates those activities which have the same aims and objects. The constituent units have some patterns and underlying unity. A social system must have some links with the cultural system and both are inseparable and are complementary to each other. In fact, the system as a whole tries to achieve something positive and is always influenced by the environmental conditions.
6.3.2 Growth and Development

Though we use these terms as if they mean the same thing, there are vast differences in the contents of these concepts.

The concept of economic growth refers to increases in output of goods and services of an economy over some period of time. The output is expressed as income also. Thus increases in output and income convey the same thing, namely the economic growth.

Per capita income arrived at by dividing total output of a country by its population is another way of representing economic growth. If increase in total output exceeds the increase in population, economic growth is said to take place. When economic growth continues for a long period, the level of living of the people rises.

The concept of development contains growth and some changes in the economy which makes it a progressive one. There are economists who hold the view that for growth to be called development, the economic structure, both in respect of production and occupation should change towards the direction followed by the developed countries. Another line of thinking considers growth as development oriented which is accompanied by progrowth institutional and technological changes. It seeks replacement of growth inhibiting institutions and techniques by progressive institutions and dynamic technologies. It is also asserted that growth, unless accompanied by reduction in poverty, unemployment and inequalities, is no growth or development. Growth has to be engineered to make it pro poor and equitable.
The most comprehensive conception of development is the one that includes three basic components—life sustenance, self-esteem and freedom. Life sustenance is possible if there is provision for basic needs—food, clothing, housing and minimal education. Self-esteem involves the feeling of self-respect and independence for the less developed countries among the nations of the world. They must have the freedom from the three evils of want, ignorance and squander.

Incorporating all these strands of thought, "economic development is generally defined to include improvements in the material welfare, especially for persons with the lowest incomes; the eradication of mass poverty with its correlates of illiteracy, diseases and early death; changes in the composition of inputs and outputs that generally include shifts in the underlying structure of production away from agricultural towards industrial activities; the organisation of the economy in such a way that productive employment is general among the working-age population rather than the situation of a privileged minority; and the correspondingly greater participation of broadly based groups in making decisions about the directions, economic or otherwise, in which they should move to improve their welfare."²

Of the two concepts growth and development, the former is relevant for developed countries where economic life in various dimensions has already attained a highly developed stage and where growth alone can provide a

permanently rising base for the people to add quality and more importantly, quality to their rich lives. Here the concept of growth requires that efforts be concentrated on such factors as trade cycles, demand, science and technology and markets.

Development, which is a wider concept and which includes growth is useful in the case of less developed countries. It covers several aspects of economic life concerning living levels, employment, distribution as also institutions, technology etc. In the case of the underdeveloped countries, the problems are not only economic in nature, but also sociological and political. Hence growth has to be viewed on a broader footing than in the case of developed economies. Here development involves growth with other progressive changes.

There are two main preconditions for an underdeveloped country to develop. They are: (a) its output should grow over a long period and (b) its economic structure should change to acquire the characteristics of developed countries. It is this growth with change that constitutes development.

6.3.3 Features of Modern Economic Growth

The analysis of long term national income trends in developed nations is pioneered by Simon Kuznets. He defines economic growth as “a long term rise in capacity to supply increasingly diverse economic goods to its population; this growing capacity is based on advanced technology and the institutional and ideological adjustments that it demands.”

Three components of this definition which Kuznets projects are:

(a) Economic growth of a nation is identified by sustained increase in supply of goods.
(b) The advancing technology is the major factor in the economic growth which determines the growth of capacity in supplying diverse goods to population.
(c) For an efficient and wide use of technology and its development, institutional and ideological adjustments must be made to effect the proper use of innovations generated by advanced stock of human knowledge.

In this analysis, Kuznets has given six features of modern economic growth based on national product and its components, population, labour force and the like. Out of six characteristics, two of them are quantitative that relate to national income and population growth, two relate to structural transformation and two international spread. These characteristics of modern economic growth are interrelated to each other.

Physical Quality of Life (PQL) of the people of any economy, is judged by their socio-economic status which is the product of economic growth.

6.3.4 Forces of Growth

The forces of growth or forces that increase output are associated with factors like capital, technology and human skill. In an underdeveloped economy, these forces are inadequate and of low quality. Such an economy has natural resources, mainly land that is fixed in supply. It has few and crude
capital equipment. Its technology is given and largely primitive. If human resources consist of a large quantity of labour, mostly unskilled, both in terms of total product and per capita product, the economy has diminishing returns.

These growth hurdles can be overcome by an increase in the capital stock, an advance in technology and improvement in the skill of labour. The conditions of diminishing returns are destroyed by the dynamic forces of growth, namely additions to the capital stock, progress in techniques of production and improvements in the skills of labour.

It is essential to ensure efficiency in the use of resources through a reallocation. It is necessary that at every stages of growth, old industries and old techniques should fade out and new techniques usher in. Similarly, to meet the changing requirements of the growing economy, product mix should change continuously.

Growth to be stable and sustained over long periods, it is necessary that there is adequate demand for the output to balance the supply of goods and services.

Development is associated with changes in the structure of growing economies. These changes transform major aspects of these economies, such as productive capacity, national income by industrial origin, pattern of employment and composition of trade. These will have its effects on the distribution of income and consumption pattern of the people. All these indicate that these countries are gradually getting rid of the features of backwardness and are in the process of achieving higher levels of development.
Sustained growth over the long periods and structural changes go hand in hand, leading to the development of the economy.

6.3.5 Factors of Growth

Natural resources, human resources, capital formation and technological advance are the four factors that contribute to the growth of a country. Besides these, two additional considerations, namely, need to ensure full capacity utilisation and efficient allocation of resources also facilitate economic growth. Moreover an appropriate environment is needed for growth to take place. The organising agencies—Government, business enterprises and labour leadership can promote growth. Government can frame suitable policies, prepare right kind of plans, create opportunities for entrepreneurial abilities and ensure infrastructural and investment facilities for growth. The attitudes of the people towards work, earnings and spending are also important for economic growth to materialise.

6.3.6 Economic Development

Economic development is "the process whereby the real per capita income of a country increases over a long period of time—subject to the stipulation that the number below an 'absolute poverty line' does not increase and that the distribution of income does not become more unequal." If a rise in per capita income does not lead to an increase in the number of the poor and does not widen income inequalities, it can be understood that there is

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development in that economy. Sustainable development envisages a “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.” In a wider sense this means that while considering the benefits of development, the costs of development in particular the costs of the environment, cannot be ignored. There must be the proper management of resources, natural capital, human capital and physical capital in such a way that while we satisfy the present needs, the quality of these resources must be maintained or enhanced.

6.3.7 Factors Governing Economic Development

To accelerate economic development earnest efforts should be made to remove the bottlenecks of underdevelopment or strongly defeat the sources of stagnation. As the process of economic growth is a continuous one, it needs to create chain reactions of such forces which may set in motion the process of income generation in the economy. This gigantic task of economic development, therefore, can be influenced by a set of factors—economic, social, political, technological, cultural, administrative etc. The three principal causes of economic development are (1) efforts to economise, either by reducing the cost of any given product or by increasing the yield from any given input of effort or other resources; (2) increase in knowledge and its application; and (3) the amount of capital or other resources.6

There are six propensities that determine economic growth. They are
“(1) propensity to develop fundamental service; (2) propensity to apply science
to economic ends; (3) propensity to make technical innovation; (4) propensity
to seek material advance; (5) propensity to consume; and (6) propensity to have
children.” This is not a unified theory of economic growth as it lacks
non-economic factors. “Economic development has much to do with human
endowments, social attitudes, political conditions and historical accidents.”
“The main determinants of economic development are aptitude, abilities,
qualities, capacities and facilities.”

Economic factors are those which directly influence the development of
the country. As a result of changes in economic factors, the growth rate of the
economy rises or falls. The economic factors influencing development are the
availability of natural resources and their proper utilisation, population and
human resources, capital accumulation, availability of external resources, wide
extent of the market, suitable investment pattern, economic planning, economic
nationalism, development of science and technology etc.

6.3.8 Indices of Development

Income is considered as an index of economic growth. National income
and per capita income are the two income indices often used to test whether an

8. Ragnar Nurkse, *Problems of Capital Formation in Underdeveloped Countries*
economy is growing or not. In terms of national income index, an economy is said to be growing, static or declining when its national income increases, remains stable or decreases over a long period of time.

Per capita income as a measure of economic growth helps to measure the welfare aspects of growth and it is a widely used index.

There are non-income indices also to measure economic development. Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) and Basic Needs Approach are the major determinants of Human Development Index (HDI).

Rather than the quantity of national income, the use of national income is emphasised in PQLI. Three components are incorporated in this index—life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy. This approach thus measures what the individuals need and desire at the most basic level. People wish to enjoy a longer life with reduced illness and with greater opportunities in this world. If PQLI is high, it means that people have benefited in terms of increased life expectancy, reduced infant mortality and expanded literacy. While these developmental results are possible in an advanced country, with a change in the 'use pattern' of national income, these facilities can be expanded much and for many, only with a substantial growth in national income in the case of developing countries.

The Basic Needs Approach emphasised by the world bodies like the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) give priority to the meeting of the basic needs of the vast population of the poor countries. This approach
involves the provision for the minimum levels of material needs such as consumption of food, provision of clothing and shelter and access to pure drinking water, sanitation, public transport, health and education. The pattern of development must be with a composition of national product consisting mostly of necessities of life. Production must be labour intensive in the sphere of consumer goods using local resources and turning out goods demanded by the masses. The redistribution must be directed to the eradication of poverty. The public expenditure must offer services to the weaker sections of the economy. The removal of poverty, unemployment and inequality - these are the objectives to be achieved under the Basic Needs Approach.

Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite of three indicators, namely, life expectancy, educational attainment and per capita income. The first two are the social indicators and the third the economic indicator. The HDI ranks countries in relation to each other by assigning the current minimum value and the maximum desirable value in respect of each of the three elements of the index. This index is useful and meaningful, specially for the less developed economies. It stresses the significance of income as the most important factor in determining the well being of the poor in less developed countries. But it does not undervalue the significance of the social indicators. This aspect of HDI stresses the present concern of many nations for 'human development' rather than for mere 'economic growth' or 'economic development'. Moreover, by including the social indicators for measuring economic development, the HDI stresses the significance of quality of life and brings into limelight wide disparities that exist in the levels of human
development among the less developed countries and between the less
developed and developed countries. Thus this non-income index of
development becomes a measure of movement of the less developed countries
towards the desired objectives of achieving human development with improved
physical quality of life.

6.3.9 Measures for Development

In transforming a backward and less developed economy to an advanced
and high level progressive economy, various sorts of efforts are to be made.
Increasing capital formation, improving human capital, raising entrepreneurial
ability, enhancing natural resources, upgrading technology etc. are the chief
areas where changes and progress should take place. To maximise the results, it
is also essential that there is market orientation of the economy. Markets
ensure an efficient use of resources by following least cost of production.
It also brings about innovations in products and production processes.
To achieve an efficient functioning of the markets and the economy, it is
essential to provide a favourable environment.

6.3.10 Need for Planning

Along with the existence of the functioning of markets, it is important to
have plans for making the best use of the scarce resources like capital and to
achieve social objectives through expansion of education and health facilities.
Schemes or programmes to reach the poor masses and neglected regions can be
undertaken through plans and by the division of resources between public and
private sectors. The two sectors can also join hands to achieve the expected results.

The picture of development as it should be in the years to come can be outlined through the plans. Aims and means are declared. Considering the availability of resources, a comprehensive view of the economy to the various agents like administrators, entrepreneurs, labour, managers, scientists etc. is provided. Co-ordination of the roles of the different agents can help in bringing about the desired pattern of allocation and use of resources. Participation of all sections of the population can also be ensured through plans. Thus development will become a co-operative and group effort.

6.3.11 Important Role of the State

The state has a key role to play to ensure development along the desired lines. It can define objectives, set priorities and stipulate means for the development of the country which provide guidelines for the planners in preparing development plans. The state ensures the supply of adequate resources for the completion of projects and programmes of development. It supplements the resources of the private sector. Above all, the state either by itself or jointly with private sector undertakes investments in the overhead capital. The development of the social sector comprising of education, health, care of the child and the old is also the exclusive responsibility of the state. The state organises special programmes for making the poor productive and skilled. Through a market friendly approach, the state provides necessary institutions concerned with finance and laws and regulations to facilitate
smooth functioning of the market. A congenial environment is provided to private enterprises and other economic agents to foster the course of development. The balance of payments position is also kept proper by the state. It also aims at a development oriented fiscal scenario.

The salvation of an underdeveloped economy lies in achieving development with an improvement in the quality of life of the masses.

6.4 Factors for Assessing Physical Quality of Life

The following areas can be selected to assess the Physical Quality of Life:

(a) Healthiness of life
(b) Educational standards
(c) Employment
(d) Recreation
(e) Income
(f) Housing conditions
(g) Quality of natural environment
(h) Level of exploitation
(i) Inequality
(j) Economic accessibility

6.5 Physical Quality of Life of Women Workers in the Plantation Sector

The plantation sector with its vital role as the significant contributor to state income, as the source of export earnings and as the employer of a large
number of women workers has an important place in the social and economic planning of the economy. Any improvement in the PQL of these women workers will result in improved productivity and better working conditions suitable to their interests.

6.5.1 Analysis of Physical Quality of Life

To analyse the PQL of women workers in plantations, following factors are taken into account:

1. Consumption pattern
2. Health standard
3. Educational status
4. Working conditions
5. Living conditions
6. Social and cultural activities
7. Financial position.

6.5.1.1 Consumption pattern

Details regarding the consumption pattern of women workers in the plantations of Kerala, which is the thrust area, throw more light on their behaviouristic pattern and standard of living. The direction of consumption expenditure reflects their attitudes and aptitudes.

The chief items of expenditure are classified into food, clothing, fuel and light, medicine, education and miscellaneous.
6.5.1.2 Health standard

The Plantations Labour Act, 1951 and the Maternity Benefit Act have provided women workers in plantations with some health care facilities. The PLA covers workers employed in plantations with or more than 10 hectares of land. They are provided medical care through dispensaries or Garden Hospitals as per the PLA. When these facilities are not adequate, these women workers depend on private practitioners after paying high consultation charges. For serious illness, they have to go to the nearest Medical College.

Some of these women workers suffer from typical illness due to the nature of job in plantations. Women workers employed in high altitudes in tea and cardamom plantations suffer from asthma or other allergic diseases. Many of them are being treated for backache, arthritis, headache etc. Their yearly expenditure on medicine shows their health standard. Average life expectancy, morbidity and infant mortality rate are other criteria to assess the health status of these women workers.

6.5.1.3 Educational status

Educational attainment of a person influences his/her attitude to life, career, style of living, consumption pattern, health and hygiene and physical quality of life. The educational background of women workers in the plantations reflect their outlook to life. Since majority of the plantation workers are migrant labourers, their languages, customs, habits and their aptitude and educational levels are different in the new surroundings. Many of them are illiterate; a few of them have primary education. Mothers go to work after entrusting the younger children to the care of the elder ones; hence the
chances of the siblings to regular schooling are less. These women workers are willing to send their children to school if proper supportive services are available to cater to the needs of breast-fed babies, non-school going children, for fuel and drinking water. The workers themselves are in favour of higher education for their children. Their attitude towards education shows that they expect their children to attain better jobs outside the plantations through higher educational standards.

6.5.1.4 Working conditions

Plantation work is agricultural in nature. Plucking is the chief job in tea plantations; women are preferred to men for this job. Women are also employed for weeding and in small number in factories. Nature of work is either on permanent basis or on temporary basis. Since there is settled labour force, relatives of the permanent workers are employed as casual labour in busy seasons.

Women are mainly engaged in the collection of coffee beans in coffee plantations. Weeding and picking the stalks are other jobs performed by women. During busy seasons, more labourers are employed on temporary basis.

Cardamom plantations employ women for collecting cardamom seeds, weeding, kawath and manuring. Replanting is also done by women.

In rubber plantations, women help the male workers in tapping, collection of field latex and in processing latex to make rubber sheets. Weeding is a job done by women workers in rubber plantations.
The wages of the plantation workers are determined by the government, management and trade unions. Total income of the women workers depend on the days of employment and wage rate.

These women workers have to go to work early in the morning. Hours of work is limited to 8 hours per day. If they have no conveyance provided by the management, these workers have to walk from their houses to the places of work. Since they are paid according to the quantity and quality of leaves plucked in tea, beans collected in coffee and seeds collected in cardamom plantations, they do not take rest at all. In rubber plantations also, while men do the tapping, women have to start collection of latex to make things easy.

The Plantations Labour Act, 1951 has laid down rules regarding duration of work, weekly rest days, employment of women and children, annual and sickness leave and overtime allowances.

6.5.1.5 Living conditions

Another significant factor affecting PQL is the living conditions. The Plantations Labour Act has laid down rules regarding housing, sanitation facilities, supply of drinking water, drainage and sewage arrangements.

The houses may be thatched, tiled or concrete. Workers not covered by the PLA, do not have their own houses. They live in rented houses or in purampokku.

The number of members who reside in the houses depends on the nature of the family. If it is a nuclear family, only the husband, wife and children live

* Government owned public spaces.
in the houses. If it is a joint family, parents, relatives and children live with the workers. Then the living space is not ample in the given houses. Overcrowding is the usual scene in houses in plantations.

Source of drinking water is either well or tube wells. During summer, water has to be collected from distant places.

Collection of fuel and fodder for cattle is a job for which women workers have to find time after a day's work. Those covered by the Plantations Labour Act are provided with firewood free of cost. They have to collect fuel from neighbouring forests or properties. Few of them use kerosene also.

Some women workers grow vegetables in their houses. Some of them have cow, goat, poultry etc. to supplement the family income and for home consumption of milk and egg.

Depending on the economic background, these women workers possess television, radio, almirah, table, chair, kitchen utensils, bed etc. Subscription to newspapers, periodicals, and membership in libraries, clubs etc. are based on their level of income and number of earning members. Living conditions and quality of life depends to a great extent on the number of bread winners in the family and the dependency burden of the earning members.

6.5.1.6 Social and cultural activities

Mass media exposure and participation in trade union, political and cultural activities also influence the Physical Quality of Life of the women workers. Educated workers may subscribe to newspapers, periodicals etc. Many of the workers are members of trade unions which have political
affiliations. Women workers in plantations are interested to a great extent by social and religious ceremonies and pilgrimages. They go to their native places whenever they get holidays. They are very much interested in movies.

6.5.1.7 Financial position

Financial position of the women workers in plantations depend on their income, employment, expenditure, land ownership and indebtedness. Annual earnings of the workers depend on the number of days employed and their daily earnings.

These women spend large sums of money on movies, festivals, pilgrimage and travel to their native places. During weekends, they go for movies or attend festivals or religious ceremonies. They are illiterate and highly superstitious and spend a lot of money on customs and ceremonies. Generally these workers are recruited from distant places. Hence they spend a lot of money to go to their native places to visit their relatives or to attend some religious ceremonies. Whether they are financially sound or not, their attitude to spend money on unproductive consumption expenditure predominates.

6.6 Quality of Working Life (QWL)

'Quality of Working Life' denotes the degree of efficient performance by an individual worker which contributes to the overall production potential. All the factors determining PQL ultimately reflects the Quality of Working Life.
6.6.1 Benefits of improved QWL

The benefits of improved QWL are reflected in the following areas:

(a) Improved quality and skills
(b) Increased output
(c) Reduced absenteeism
(d) Better labour management relations
(e) Job security
(f) Job satisfaction
(g) Increased self-esteem
(h) Reduction in mental health problems
(i) Improved physical and psychological health
(j) Innovation.

6.7 Physical Quality of Life and Quality of Working Life

Physical Quality of Life and Quality of Working Life are very much related since QWL is a dependent factor of PQL and improvement in PQL of the plantation workers will make positive impact on their QWL.