Chapter 7

General Observation and Conclusion

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CHAPTER – 7
General Observation and Conclusion

This research is an attempt to establish that there is an ever-growing trend of westernisation in the social and cultural areas of the Kerala society. Research findings show that traditional indigenous characteristics of our society are fast disappearing in the overpowering tide of change. Western forms of life adopted by a section of the society have developed frictions in the society. This is evident from the sample study analysis. Social, cultural and economic variables tested in the study support the general understanding that new generation is adopting a new social pattern of life, which resembles the features of western societies.

7.1 Findings of Study

The findings of the study have helped to unravel the process of westernisation in Kerala society. The following are main findings of the study.

1. The study points out historical factors such as European Colonialism and Christian religious missionary activities have accelerated the pace of the westernisation in Kerala’s social structure.

2. The study shows that socio-cultural dualism exists in the Kerala society as a product of the ongoing process of westernisation juxtaposed with inherent traditionalism in the society. Findings based on the analysis of the study substantiate the hypothesis that the growth of westernisation has triggered dramatic changes in the socio-cultural spheres of the Kerala society and that there exists a clash between the two systems-to be more specific, between the elements of western social system and those of the traditional indigenous system. The sample study analysis
points out that socio-cultural dualism in Kerala are the outcome of pro-western attitude of the present generation. Socio-cultural variables tested in the study explicate western social characteristics in many segments of the Kerala society. Findings of the study testifies that social and cultural factors like family, marriage, divorce, sexuality, ageing generation, feminism, tourism, education, migration, media, language, literature, food and beverages, dress, fashion, habits and hobbies are rapidly drifting towards the western pattern from the traditional way of life.

3. One of the key findings of the study is that the growth of westernisation has initiated economic changes in the Kerala society both in positive and negative ways. The growth of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), foreign remittance, foreign exchange, foreign trade, deposits and savings, employment etc. are positive economic effects of western interaction. On the other hand the growth of facilities for credits and borrowing, modern consumerism, inflation, financial dualism and economic imbalances are the negative results of this influence.

7.2 Summary of the Study

We have seen in the foregoing chapters and especially in the sample study analysis a changing face of Kerala. The fractured and fragmented society of Kerala is in a transitional stage on the way to westernisation. The study has proved that process of westernization has manifested changes in the institutions, technology, beliefs, faith and moral values in Kerala society. Indian sociologist M. N. Srinivas in his book ‘Social Change in Modern India’ says westernisation subsumes changes in occurring in different levels: technology, institutions, ideology and value. It resulted not only in the
introduction of new institutions like newspapers, election, Christian missions, but also fundamental changes in old systems and institutions.

One of the laudable effects of westernisation is that it has dealt a crushing blow at the dismal customs of feudalism especially at gross inequality and discrimination that were vogue in Kerala society. Srinivas continues: westernisation always implies value preference. An important value which in turn subsumes several other values is what is broadly characterised as ‘humanitarianism’, which means an active concern for the welfare of the entire humanity irrespective of caste, creed, economic and social status, religion, age and sex. ‘Egalitarianism’ and ‘secularization’ are both included under this humanitarianism. Historical studies for the thesis substantiated the theory of colonial influence in Kerala played a memorable role in eradicating or at least in controlling the social inequality in the society. It promoted urbanization, changes in infrastructure, growth of English education, spread of literacy and modern education in Kerala. An intellectual boost evidenced in the forms of excellence in higher education, civil services, foreign education, language, literature and publications has had a lasting impact on the society.

On the other hand, heterogeneous socio-cultural situation created tensions in the society. Commoditization and modern consumerist behaviour are largely the results of this tension. Arjun Appadurai is of the opinion that the central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogeneity. The twofold prevalent atmosphere in the society will have wider future implication in many areas of Kerala society. The upcoming generation may have to live in imported social atmosphere where no human being has got commitment or cooperation with anybody in the family, community or society as whole.
Modern technology, industrialisation and urbanization will sprout the chance to develop an alienated community in our neighbourhood; with no or less people participate in village or family gatherings like marriage, burial and festivities etc. is not far away from our social spheres. To be more specific we become members of a mechanised society where everything is based on appointments or timetables for leisure or social activities which in turn result in unnecessary mental pressure and depression consequent on our inability to cope with such situations. It has identified an emerging nuclear family situation in the state lasting dark shadows on salubrious social habits of the society. This forced the vulnerable people of our society both children and aged to rely on childcare centres and old age homes to spend precious times of their life. Most young married couples of our society face this challenge and they have no other alternative when both husband and wife work. Just like in western societies with less interaction in the society and family, young families often spare few days in a year for package holidays and tour in order to divert their mindset from growing pressures of life. This phenomenon is not only seen in urban cities but also in rural areas of life. It has become absolutely a socio-cultural shock in emerging economic societies where people a section of society even now find difficulty to carry on their life without basic necessities. The peculiar commoditisation of the society is the heart of consumer debt, which is intimately tied to the structure of modern merchandising, fashion and fantasy. A revolution in the consumption similar to that advanced culture disoriented the families and societies. Modern materialism leads to individualism and selfishness and gradually spoils socio-cultural values in no matter of time. Now the question is are we capable enough to cope with such social and economic changes in the society?
Now the question is whether globalisation or modernisation impart elements of westernisation in the society and are we face the challenge poised by this process? This is where socio-cultural dualism propagates its breed. According to this research socio-cultural dualism can appear in two forms in developing societies. The first one is a group or section of the society that has a sound economic background follows the ways of western civilisation. On the other hand there is another section in the society that has little or no economic achievements in the society, follows a traditional pattern of life with limited resources and wants. There is yet another segment, spread over the upper, the middle and the lower classes which follow the western and the traditional patterns of life in an indigenous society. This research has identified these two forms of socio-cultural dualism prevalent in the Kerala society. The inevitable result is the absence of a homogenous process of social development in Kerala society. Globalisation in the form of westernisation and modern market economy has accelerated economic development, thereby transmuting a varied civilization in the eastern or the aboriginal societies.

7.2.1 Traditionalism and Westernisation: Conflicting Elements

We have seen in our discussions that there are self-contradicting social conditions in Kerala society. The sample study analysis highlighted many of the dichotomous characteristics of our society in its varied segments. There exists clash between the two, i.e. traditionalism and westernisation. But the enticement towards modernisation has minimised the clash between these two elements in the society. The silent socio-cultural transformation in Kerala elucidates elements of duality in its nature. We have seen heterogeneous elements in the social, cultural and economic activities of the people. And in the discussion and analysis we have noticed conflicting
rudiments and the leanings of the society are towards pro-westernisation. If you consider the issue in a broader canvas, the growing elements of fundamentalism and nationalism in the society are nothing but a revolt against westernisation. The mounting spirit of nationalism in the form of religious fundamentalism is a reaction to the growth of western elements in the society. This clash often assumes the form of violent defiance. If you analyse the political and ideological notions in the society or the growing xenophobia the clash between religious fundamentalists represents a dichotomy between modernity and traditionalism. We have identified in our studies that religion fumes the fire of hatred, which eventually flares up in the form of revenge and retaliation.

Let us now focus our attention on the Hindu fundamentalism in Indian societies. The recent reactions of pro-nationalism to counter western trends in the society are found manifested in various forms, ranging from secret intrigues to open confrontations. A few years ago Hindu nationalists agitated against Miss World contest in Bangalore and we have also seen open antagonism expressed against western ideas like the celebration of Valentine’s Day. Most recently open kiss acts of Richard Gere with Shilpa Shetty in a stage show in New Delhi was also condemned and attacked by pro-nationalist movements in the country. These open reactions in the society cannot be addressed as religious fanaticism and in wider perspective this should be seen as a conflict between traditionalism and westernisation. These are obvious expressions of an enduring opposition between the two approaches.

7.2.2 Westernisation and Economic Development

Does westernisation or process of westernisation promote economic development in a society? It has been always a point of discussion among development economists to analyse whether colonialism or westernisation
boosted economic development in third world societies. We have seen in the previous chapters interaction with western world generated capital investment, foreign remittance, foreign direct investment (FDI), growth in export and import, employment and promoting capital intensive technique in India and particularly in Kerala. According to United Nations development programme report in 1999, 85 percent of global foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow is concentrated in developing or transition countries. It is pointless if we do not notice the role of multi nationals in promoting economic development in developing communities. In Kerala, multinational tuned out to be mainly active in consumer product industry like soft drinks, cosmetic, automobile, electronic and software industry which in one way created employment opportunities and thereby to increase spending power and standard of living of middle and lower strata of the society. It also gained access to consume luxury gadgets or products associated with western life style such as cars, mobile phone, computers, washing machines, air conditioning and cable television in the society as a whole. In Kerala context, migration acted as a driving force to acquire foreign remittance in the country. With domestic or indigenous industrial sector inactive in its position the contribution migrant labour never can be ignored in the process of economic development.

Migration of local labour to urban cities and the urbanization of rural areas are significant changes of globalisation, which will in due course, develop infrastructural facilities both in the urban and suburban areas. In any developing country with high density of population and inadequate resources, participation of private investment from global and national background is highly imperative for economic development. No federal or State Government can achieve and ensure economic development in any
such economy. For example, China a communist country and an emerging
economic power with absolute governmental control, has opened its doors to
multi-nationals to gain rapid economic development and prosperity.
Liberalisation of trade and market provides for a competitive market to the
advantage of customers. For example, aviation industry in India is growing
at rapid pace with global and domestic companies under the pressure of
competition are now offering reduced travel fares and better amenities of
travel. The same phenomenon can be seen in the automobile,
telecommunication and electronic industries. Often, in most developing or
underdeveloped countries unorganised indigenous or family business
operates as with no competition, develops into monopoly, imposing
unreasonably high prices for goods and services. The process of
globalisation will help to utilise unused manpower and resources of
developing nations, which in return will provide competitive wages to the
workforce. Global movement of goods and services will have positive impact
on developing economies. China and India have become prime locations of
the world with large-scale production of food, consumer and electronic items
produced and transported into different developed world and in return
create employment opportunities, better standard of living and
infrastructure.

There have originated severe opposition and antagonism against
liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation in many under-developed and
developing countries. The opposition is mostly against western capitalism or
imperialism. This is not a hidden fact. Experiences of Russia and the east
European countries and even the current experience of China prove that
capital investment from the private sector is inevitable to economic
development in the third world countries. Kristoffel Lieten, Professor of
Development Sociology in the University of Amsterdam contends ‘the appearance of the colonial powers in quite a few countries which had reached a reasonable level of development—reasonable at least in comparison with the European countries of that epoch—has devastating effect on the local industries and on regional trading networks. Burgeoning local artisan production became liquidated (for example the mousse line in Bengal), a balanced trading network was replaced by a western surplus realization mechanism (for example textiles into India, opium into China and spices, tea and bullion into England), and agriculture was destabilized into plantation and tax endeavour.’ Pro-socialists dispute unbalanced economic development is main disadvantage of modern entrepreneurship and oppose investment both from domestic and foreign market. Another argument against globalisation and privatization is in future it will ruin indigenous markets and family business. In a country, where population exceeds more than one billion and with surplus labour always in hand, traditional entrepreneurial sector no longer able to offer more employment opportunities to growing generation. China with higher population than India and no democracy, has foreseen changing pattern of world economy and which in near future would enable them to emerge as a world economic power ahead of United States. Chinese economy is growing more than 9 percent every year and purchasing power of that people has grown higher than of the people of United States of America.

Development in its ordinary meaning, comprise multi-structural process with generation of investment, integration of diverse sections of economy, productive use of increasing magnitude of labour and modernised production techniques. To gain such an overall process of development, the role of multinationals is essential in any state economies. Kerala with a high
rate of unemployment needs to take immediate step to attract global investment in the state. The state with little scope for additional taxation or for raising public funds never would be in a position to provide employment, better social services and economic prosperity to its people if it shuts its doors for private investment and global multi-nationals.

7.3 Suggestions

All social movements and all social changes have their roots first in the ideas and ideologies. Modernisation or westernisation involved a great deal of value change as well as some significant modification in the social institutions. The problem found out in the study is that traditional socio-cultural values of Kerala society got deteriorated due to the effect of westernisation. Foreign and external forces do play a very important role in this change of culture and situation. Modern factors like migration, media, tourism and growth of multinationals in domestic market are boosting this change. It is time that, we ensure that on the way to economic development, globalisation or modernisation should not be allowed to impose western socio-cultural elements on the Kerala society. Government and Non Governmental institutions should take necessary steps to teach our traditional values to our people. Role of media is a key factor to be addressed while discussing about these issues. Strict measures have to be taken to control modern media viz. television, newspaper, information technology not to convey western values in the society. Integration of regional or national economy with international economy should be carefully controlled and managed. Initiatives should be taken to teach traditional values to young generation of returned emigrants and for not to bypass western elements in our social hemisphere. The best possible thing one can do while achieving
economic gain from modern changes is to safeguard traditional social values by oneself.

While making suggestion to tackle modern social change in Kerala society, one has to understand modernisation involves value change. To ascertain that let me quote the words of Raghuvir Sinha from his book, Social Change in Indian Society”. According to him ‘modernisation involves an emergence of a new behavioural system with a certain modified characteristics. Old behaviour patterns do not conform to the new demands. The need for readjustment rises in a new context. This system also presupposes certain value change. The very concept of modernization warrants that the traditional values undergo some radical change in their original order. Without this value change, an innovative ethics cannot be created. Value change is not only important for this reasons alone. It also becomes necessary for the institutional rearrangements considered inevitable for modernization. This is in fact an assumption while analysing any modern social change in developing societies.

7.4 Further Scope of the Study

This study has got further scope for a probe into the growing social and cultural changes in particular groups and communities of the Kerala society. Further research works on the effects of westernisation on migrant communities, Christian religious groups and urban societies as a whole or a particular region and how the growing nationalism reacts to it can deliver fruitful research findings in the same area. Migration to western countries is growing at rapid pace in Kerala society especially from Christian communities and this will develop dual socio-cultural and economic situation in native land. Foreign direct investment and growth of
multinationals in Indian market and effects of global tourism on eastern societies are other areas where we can unravel further research.

7.5 Some General Observation

The effects of westernisation on indigenous society of the world have produced a strong impact on the social and economic domain of the global culture. Homogenous culture of traditional societies is facing threat from imperialistic nations and world players. The beginning of global colonialism in the fourteenth century was the initial force for spreading heterogeneous socio-cultural conditions in aboriginal societies. This is very obvious if we examine world society across the continents. Social scientists have done enormous studies to examine the influence of colonialism in world continents viz. Africa, Australia and Asia. The aboriginal cultures of Australia, Newzeland, South Africa, Caribbean Islands, Latin America and even Goa have wiped out from these societies due to global colonialism. The mightier European powers had both economic and social ambitions while launching their colonial enterprises in these parts of the world and it helped them to gain economic prosperity both in their own homelands and new settlements. Western hegemony on eastern societies was the core point of our discussion. The effects of post colonialism still raise a threat in developing diverse socio-cultural conditions in developing societies. Several contradictions have developed making social scientists to differentiate between globalisation and westernisation or modernisation. Supporters of colonialism argued it as modernisation or globalisation. The argument in this work is that if it is in that sense, it should not have made any implications on traditional socio-cultural aspects of any society. It means that socio-cultural attributes like custom; taboos, ethos, belief, religion, language or any
traditions should still prevail as they are, if westernisation affects only the economic sphere of an indigenous society.

In order to establish the opinion stated above let us discuss the colonial implications of global languages in some developing societies. Let us take the case of Latin American countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Chile. Spain and Portuguese were chief colonialists in Latin America beginning from fourteenth century and Spanish is widely used as the major language in Latin American society. If we analyse the cases of India, Africa, Caribbean Islands, Australia, Newzeland and Philippines where Britain and America were main colonialists we can see that in all these countries English has become the most popular language or the lingua franca. On the contrary, Japan a global player in industrialization and globalization, was an Asian country to escape colonization from the West is highly a modernized society. European nations and the United States tried their level best to subjugate Japan in many ways but could not succeed. What is more, it moved onto the same road of industrialization and modernization without any changes in its traditional socio-cultural values. Let us now examine the situation in Germany and France where modernization and economic development are far higher than in any other European societies that have never been exposed to any foreign civilization or culture. If we again analyse the implications of British colonialism in India we can find out that the dialects used in most states of North East India have had their origin in English language. China is growing faster than all other economies in the world. It has become a huge world production centre for any commodities from food to high tech video devices. But the outsourcing industry in China has very little to do compared to India. The growth of English as a major language in India favoured United States, Britain and developed countries to outsource much of their business
to India in recent times. It should be also highlighted that English has become main medium of instruction in most of all our institutions. It is also mentionable number of European and American citizens work for western companies in India and easily adapt with Indian social situation in recent time. Is it a beginning of neo-colonialism in India?

The condensation of the study is people, machinery, money, images and ideas of Kerala society follows non-isomorphic changes and how this process in the long run affects the social conditions of Kerala society. Nationalistic movement during the colonial period was to liberate the country from colonial forces and politically we succeeded; but reminiscence of colonialism still exists and continues in our social structure. M. N. Srinivas states ‘westernisation is not one-way traffic’ but it happens due to our obsessed attitude towards it. Arjun Appadurai in his book ‘Modernity at Large’ says, ‘a central challenge for current anthropology is to study the cosmopolitan cultural forms of contemporary world without logically or chronologically presupposing either the authority of western experience or the models derived from that experience.’ According to Lionel Robins, economics is the “study of human behaviour as a relationship between a multiplicity of ends and scarce means that have alternative uses.” In broad sense economic aspects of a society widely interrelated with human behaviours. As a development economic study this research highlights how human behavioural pattern change with social and economic changes in the society and the Kerala society in no exception to the rule.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

As we have seen from the comprehensive study of socio-cultural dualism from historical perspective, this phenomenon is nothing but a natural consolidation of the pluralism that had set in at the very outset of the
origin of the human species and got established with the emergence of what has come to be called civilization. The original mono-cultured tribal society, subjected to the onslaught of alien customs and manners started changing into a poly-featured social fabric in which many of the divergences got assimilated and some others defied the ongoing trend to create heterogeneity in the entire cultural situation. Nobody can stem the tide of history, for the basic principle of the cosmos is dynamism and development is synonymous with change. Man will continue to make discoveries and inventions, which in turn, are bound to accelerate the process of mutation and permutation, making the environment of human habitat all the more complex and complicated. But the future of mankind is not as bleak as it appears to be. Every cloud has its silver lining. What we need today is extreme caution and prudence and a strong will to tide over the precarious predicament. We must be ready for adjustment and adaptation, compromise and toleration but not at the expense of time-honoured norms and values. Our objective shall be refinement and sophistication, not confrontation and annihilation.

Psychologist and social philosophers believe that there is an element of inherent goodness in man, which is part of the basic instinct for survival. Though socio-cultural dualism is an inescapable reality in the present day world, it is still possible to bridge the gulf that separates the indigenous culture with its spiritual bias and global civilization built upon mundane prosperity. It is high time that we realized that we could never return to the bullock-cart age, advocating its pristine purity and simplicity. Reason and wisdom demand of us to shed such a simplistic attitude and to accept the good aspects of all the scientific and technological progress, which have the positive side of reducing the burden of existence by providing us with greater ease and leisure. But we should ensure an equitable distribution of
the benefits, accruing from modern innovations and initiatives among mankind, terminating or at least reducing to a minimum the magnitude of the inequality rampant in the socio-economic sphere in the world scenario. In spite of darkness, there is light; in spite of hatred, there is love; in spite of death, there is life.
Notes and References


-------------------, *Indian Anthropologists and Study of Indian Culture*, Economic and Political Weekly, March 16, 1976.