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EXPLORING AND RE-ENVISIONING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AGRARIAN
CONSCIOUSNESS IN THEOLOGY WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO KERALA

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of McAnulty Graduate College of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of
the degree of Master of Arts

By

Jinto George

May 2020

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Jinto George

2020

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CONSCIOUSNESS IN THEOLOGY WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO KERALA

By

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING AND RE-ENVISIONING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AGRARIAN CONSCIOUSNESS IN THEOLOGY WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO KERALA

By

Jinto George

May 2020

Thesis supervised by Dr. Gerald Boodoo, Ph.D

Globalization has a great impact in the present-day society. Everything and everyone relate to each other on the basis of market value. The commodification of agriculture and food has led the world into a situation where one lack intimacy and bond in the relationship. The impact of globalization has influenced the present Kerala community. The monocultural systems of the globalization has influenced the community which has led the Kerala society into a commodified society. The commodification of agriculture and food has influenced the patterns of relationship in the Kerala society especially in their ecological, human and spiritual relationship.

Everything and everyone that we encounter, relate to and experience is unique. God created everything in this universe in its integrity and fullness, and the diversity and uniqueness of creation is the beauty and life that we see in this universe. As a result, human beings experience

God in the universe through its diversity. God did not create a world that is uniform and monocultural. The universe that God created is diverse and multicultural. However, a person who is born and brought up in a particular place and culture can experience God in its fullness in that place and culture in its unique diversity. Unfortunately, there is a glorification of monoculture evident in present societies through globalization and its glorification of monoculture, which have a great impact on contemporary Indian society, especially in the state of Kerala. The agrarian consciousness which was central to the social, religious, cultural, spiritual, and psychological life of Kerala society is declining. However, it is essential to re- envision the agrarian consciousness in Kerala society that can help to develop a theology based on the indigenous epistemologies and practices of the region and thereby help to support a society based on an agrarian living eco-system.

We can experience God where we have life. The trends in Kerala society reveal a threat to a life where we do not have an ecosystem that is healthy, safe, and eco-friendly. The human responsibility to serve and preserve the creation is often forgotten in Kerala society and there has been neglect of their land and of an agricultural-based economy. Historically, the society of Kerala found their God-experience through their relationship to their agrarian eco-system and this relationship is key to both the agrarian eco-system and the relationship to divinity. This also had a profound impact on how people understood their relationship to the land and to the community in which they lived. The land they cultivate, the family they are born and brought up within and the society where they interact are all crucial in the life of Kerala society. The loss of their direct relationship to the land, the family concepts that derived from that, and the lack of interaction that resulted in society as a result, gradually led the Kerala community into a self-centered, commercialized, and money-oriented culture. We can see a culture developing in the

society, which is utilitarian and commercialized, where other human beings, as well as nature, has no value other than a mere commodity. Commodity culture is wrapped in the beautiful covers of globalization where they argue for one world and one culture. Through this thesis, I try to focus on the importance of regaining the lost values of the agrarian eco-system of Kerala where they valued life in the living organism and related to everyone and everything with love. It is an attempt to delink the principles of monoculture and commercialized consciousness of Kerala society and to relink to the agrarian consciousness where they understand life in its particularity and fullness. The globalized monoculture commodifies human beings and places whereas the agrarian consciousness respects and interacts with other human beings and places. I am critically evaluating the globalized monoculture which is the dominant culture of the present world by making a cross-evaluation of the global culture and local culture.

DEDICATION

My Parents who are farmers and all the farmers in Kerala

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Being a member of Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and born and brought up in an agrarian context, it was my great ambition to think of a theology that is relevant to the community of Kerala. I am thankful to God for the Divine providence throughout my work. Engaging in this type of work required the support and cooperation of many parties. It was a pleasure and honor to have been able to work with others throughout the writing stages of this project.

I would like to thank my thesis director, Dr. Gerald Boodoo. Dr. Boodoo's knowledge, kindness, encouragement, and thoughtful feedback undoubtedly supported the growth of this work and cultivated my skills in developing the necessity of a theology of a place. I would like to thank my thesis reader, Dr. Sebastian Madathummuriyil. I am very thankful for the time and thoughtfulness Dr. Sebastian put into reading and providing me with feedback on this work. I will forever be grateful for their interest in this work. I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Marinus Iwuchukwu and Dr. Elizabeth Cochran for their encouragement and support throughout my thesis work. I cannot but remain thankful to Allison, Sarah, and Laura at the writing center who helped me to improve the quality of the text with proof reading.

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Chapter One

The Phenomena of Monoculture and Its Impact on the God-human-Land Relationships

Introduction

God's creation is intense with diversity. Everything and everyone that we encounter, relate to, and experience is unique. God created everything in this universe in its integrity and fullness, and the diversity and uniqueness of creation is the beauty and life that we see in this universe. As a result, human beings experience God in the universe through its diversity. God did not create a world that is uniform and monocultural. The universe that God created is diverse and multicultural. Christianity teaches about triune God. The very uniqueness in the triune God in Christianity is the diversity in the Trinity. The uniqueness of Trinity is expressed in the creation through the diversity in creation. The diversity in the creation makes the universe beautiful and unique. We can experience this beauty in the universe by observing the realities around us. There are seven colors in the rainbow, four seasons, different cultures, multiple species, etc. Each human person is unique and different. There are differences in gender. However, a person who is born and brought up in a particular place and culture can experience God in its fullness in that place and culture in its unique diversity. A place has a central role in the development of a person's consciousness. This development occurs in a place one is interacting with others, building up a personal relationship, and encountering God. However, whatever goes against the diversity and multicultural nature of the universe hinders human beings from encountering God. Western world view highlighted time and space rather than a place which helped the western world to grow faster towards globalization. There are so many positive sides of globalization. However, negation of the importance of place in the life of a human person has negatively affected the community. The concept of place according to John Inge is affected by our

experiences and by traditions of thought and practice of the society.¹ God-experience in a place is God's action in the place and human beings' response to the action of God. This chapter explains the impact of globalization on the relationship of human beings towards the place and God. Globalization has influenced the pattern of relationships. The cross-evaluation of globalization can provide a better understanding of the impact of Globalization upon the social, psychological, cultural, and traditional aspects of a community. It is essential to explain the impact of globalization on human beings' relationship to the land. Globalization has influenced the human-human relationship and the God experience as well.

1.1. The Phenomena of Monoculture

The developing culture of the present world context is a universal and globalized culture. The socio-cultural-economic boundaries are opened to anyone. The principle behind the new culture is uniformity, where "one world and one culture" is the motto. Globalization and its monocultural systems promote "bigger is better principles." For instance, there was a time when people went to local grocery stores to buy their groceries. But the local stores are replaced with the supermarkets which are run by giant corporates. However, the world is moving towards a glorified concept of uniformity, where it seems that everyone can enjoy equality and development.

Does the concept of globalization bring development to everyone? Unfortunately, globalization failed to bring development to everyone. The development has to be defined from the perspective of the people who experience it. Unfortunately, the development is explained from the viewpoint of governments and corporate giants. "Real development only happens when

¹ John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 13.

people exercise their rights. We shouldn't have to give up our rights for someone else's benefits. We want development, not destruction."² The farmers who are producers of the land do face challenges in multifacetedly. The phenomena of the monocultural systems are the impact of globalization and the uniform tendency. There is a shift in the cropping system from multi-culture to monoculture. Industrial farming is the result of globalization, where single cropping is promoted as a result of the diversity in farming being lost. There is a shift in the economy—local to global. The local markets are replaced with supermarket giants. There is a shift in food systems. The local community began to depend on the other states and countries for their food security. There is a shift in relationships. The other human beings and nature are looked after as a commodity. Peace and cooperation have lost their importance and have then replaced with conflicts.

1.1.1. Localization vs. Globalization

Helena Norberg-Hodge argues in her book “Local is our Future” that “globalization is an out-of-control man-made creation—the product of systematic blindness and narrow, specialized knowledge.”³ Globalization is generally understood as a world where there are no barriers in trading, relationships, technologies, innovation or creativity, and information. The world is considered one village where there are peace and cooperation.⁴ Globalization is the norm and culture of the present society. It is a human-made concept where they argue that development can be achieved only in a globalized world. Globalization often stresses the factor of development. When we analyze the definitions of globalization, we can identify the stress given

² Vandana Shiva, *Soil not Oil: Environmental Justice in a Time of Climate Crisis* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2008), 14.

³ Helena Norberg-Hodge, *Local is Our Future: Steps to an Economics of Happiness* (USA: Local Futures, 2019), 26.

⁴ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is Our Future*, 21.

to development, broader outlook, openness, and movement towards a global village. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines globalization as “the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets.”⁵ Whereas, the business dictionary defines globalization as a movement that opens the local economy to the global economy, “globalization implies the opening of local and nationalistic perspectives to a broader outlook of an interconnected and interdependent world with free transfer of capital, goods, and services across national frontiers.”⁶ Norberg-Hodge defines globalization as “an economical process. It’s about deregulating trade and investment—primarily through trade treaties that free up big businesses and banks to enter and extract wealth from local markets worldwide.”⁷ The global world promotes and values what is bigger and better. However, the concept of globalization insists that we think of a world as a whole or in a totalitarian perspective.

Localization is a strategic movement to defend against the man-made process of globalization. Localization is an alternative to globalization. Helena argues that the images of globalization are overly glorified because “they originated in corporate-friendly think tanks.”⁸ Helena argues, “for our species to have a future, it must be local.”⁹ The globalized world creates needs before us which are not actual needs of the world rather than created needs. The corporates giants create the need in the human mind through the use of media and advertisements. However, localization reminds us to reflect upon the real needs of the locals. “Real economy is the natural world, on

⁵ Merriam-Webster.com, Dictionary, “globalization,” accessed April 8, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/globalization>.

⁶ Business dictionary.com, Web Finance, “Globalization,” accessed April 6, 2020, <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/globalization.html>

⁷ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is our Future*, 21.

⁸ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is our Future*, 21.

⁹ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is our Future*, 9.

which we ultimately depend for all of our needs.”¹⁰ The process of globalization brought us to a point where we are forced to rethink and restore the lost values and quality of life that had been lost. We cannot regain the lost quality of life from a global point rather we can do it only locally. “If we are to restore the planetary system to ecological health, we cannot do it on a global scale because there is no global ecosystem, only local ecosystems. The only way we can have a healthy global environment is by restoring the health of a lot of local environments.”¹¹ David Korten in his book “When Corporations Rule the World” expresses the importance of local ecosystem for a healthy society. “Healthy societies depend on healthy, empowered local communities that build caring relationships among people and help us connect to a particular piece of the living earth with which our lives are intertwined.”¹²

1.1.2. Diversity vs. Uniformity

Monoculture propagates for uniformity rather than unity in diversity. The propagation of one and only ideology, culture, religion, and spirituality as the norm for all can be called uniformity. Diversity is central to the very existence of the world. There is a unity in diversity that is divine. “How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!” (Ps: 113:1) Unity is divine and uniformity is a human creation. God created the universe in its unity and uniqueness. Even though there are differences in the creation, when they all come together there is a beauty in the creation. However, the sameness or uniformity cannot be identified with unity. Unity implies maintaining the existing culture, tradition, religion, and spirituality of a place rather than reducing the culture, tradition, religion, and spirituality of a place. God looks down the human

¹⁰ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is our Future*, 9.

¹¹ Frederick Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience: Essays from a Farmer Philosopher*, Edited by Falk Constance L. (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 49.

¹² David Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1995), 234.

beings in their uniqueness and distinctiveness of creation such as languages, cultures, nations, tribes, and peoples. “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands.” (Rev 7: 9) The monoculture identifies uniformity with unity. The propagation of uniformity can be an extreme right movement or fascism which is a dangerous position for peace and solidarity.

1.1.3. Co-operation vs. Conflict

The world economic scenario, as well as relationships, has changed. John Paul II, in his encyclical letter *Centesimus Annus* speaks about the changing scenario in the world context. He mentions these changes as “new things.”¹³ The changes in the economic scenario of the world context have led the society into conflict. Cooperation is a salient feature of a local economy. The interaction and relationship in the living ecosystem promoted cooperation among themselves. That is why they could think about themselves as Helena quotes about the people of Ladakh before the globalized economy. “We are *tung-bosza-bos*, which means we are self-sufficient, we have plenty to eat and drink.”¹⁴ They spoke in this way in the midst of their inadequacy of drinking water, shelter, and hunger.¹⁵ The reason behind this kind of approach would be their experience of peace and solidarity among the community in spite of the basic needs. However, the changes that happened in the community due to globalization directed the community from cooperation to conflict. The globalized market brought the availability of the food products at a low price that may result in a decrease in depending on the local food system.

¹³ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, No. 3, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html

¹⁴ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is our Future*, 37.

¹⁵ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is our Future*, 37.

The replacement of the local food system with global food products creates tension in the local farmers who earned their livelihood from farming. The shift in the educational system also intensified the conflicts. The educational system of the globalized world provided the skills for urban life rather than the skills needed for survival. The school system did not teach about the local system rather a global system. As a result, the new generation began to look at the local system as undeveloped and underdeveloped. There is a conflict in the political and economic realm as well. The locus of power changed from the household economy to the global economy. The political power concentrated on the city. The local community had no role in the decisions taken for them. The loss of jobs for the local community also led the local community to conflict.¹⁶ Helena argues that the reasons for the present conflict in the local community are the forces of globalization. She suggests a reverse in the structural forces to solve the conflict in the local community. “We need to fundamentally change the structural economic forces at the root of the problem. Those forces are the engines of globalization, and reversing that process is our best hope for peace and stability.”¹⁷

1.1.4. Relationship vs. Commodification

A shift in the relationship of the human person is evident in globalized society. It is essential to the nature of human beings to relate to other human beings as well as the ecosystem. There is a shift in the way one relates to other human beings in the new culture of globalization. The commodification of the human person as well as nature is one of the characteristics of monoculture. “In this way, labor became a commodity to be freely bought and sold on the

¹⁶ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is our Future*, 39.

¹⁷ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is our Future*, 39.

market, its price determined by the law of supply and demand, without taking into account the bare minimum required for the support of the individual and family.”¹⁸ The other human person and nature are considered as a commodity to be used. One can continue to work for a corporate company if one is eligible to produce the maximum production for that business entrepreneur. However, there is a fear of losing jobs and thus livelihood in the newly defined terms of relationship on the basis of maximum production. Natural resources are also used for the benefit of the few. The majority spend their ability, skills, and time for the benefit of the few corporate giants. What would be the reason behind the changed understanding of relationships? Money was not the major medium for the local economy traditionally. The relationships in traditional society were not defined in terms of the money they earned through their jobs. Unfortunately, money became the medium of the economy that defines the relationship standards in the community in the globalized society. The land has been substituted with money.

1.2. Breakdown in Relationship to the Land

The land is a physical, social, cultural, and spiritual symbol. The land has a dominant role in the construction of a context or place. “Public ideas and images about land, whether traditional or contemporary, influence the way we understand our world and interpret the land on which we live.”¹⁹ The land was central to economic activity in the past. Human beings depended on the land for daily living and food. We have a different situation in the present society. The human person himself claims to be the means of production. John Paul II explains:

¹⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, No. 4.

¹⁹ Norman C. Habel, *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 2.

Whereas at one time the decisive factor of production was *the land*, and later capital — understood as a total complex of the instruments of production — today the decisive factor is increasingly *man himself*, that is, his knowledge, especially his scientific knowledge, his capacity for interrelated and compact organization, as well as his ability to perceive the needs of others and to satisfy them.²⁰

The shift in the decisive factor of production led the human person to the breakdown in their relationship to the land. The land became a commodity for the use of human beings. Can human beings claim themselves as the means of production? The whole living ecosystem is a natural source of production. The ecosystem that includes renewable and non-renewable sources, living and non-living beings, ecological systems and services can be called the natural means of production.²¹ Human beings use their skills and knowledge to make use of natural resources. However, we cannot deny or commodify those things that are not created or invented by us. There is a necessity to rethink the attitude of human beings towards nature. “Modern man does not experience himself as a part of nature but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer it.”²² In this process of conquering nature, human beings often forget to distinguish between loss and profit. Natural capital is an irreplaceable capital which has to be managed very carefully. If not, we will profit for the short term and there will be a great loss for the whole ecosystem that is not destined for a few people. The misuse and abuse of the land lead to so many crises such as environmental concerns, food security, a decrease in the natural resources, and a decline of farmlands.

²⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, No. 32.

²¹ E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, (Heartly & Marks, 1999), 5.

²² Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, 4.

1.2.1. Environmental Crisis

The commercialization of land intensifies the environmental crisis. Environmental issues such as floods, landslides, hurricanes, etc. are becoming very frequent. We experience drastic climate change all over the world. Global warming is a major concern to be addressed. The consumption of a human being in a globalized society is more than what they need. One of the recent studies from NASA says that the intense and frequent rainfall due to climate change causes landslides in the High mountain Asian regions of China, Tibet, and Nepal.²³ The reason for the frequent and intense rainfall is the warming temperatures. The study says that more than seven million people were displaced due to the landslides in Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.²⁴ Extreme events are the result of the destabilization of the environment due to the abuse and mismanagement of the ecosystem. The present society defines the development from an external viewpoint that deepens the environmental crisis through the use and abuse of the land and natural resources. The development of a society has to be defined from within, that means the conservation of natural resources and energy should lead to the development of human welfare.²⁵ Vandana Shiva argues in her book *Soil, not oil*: “In economics, development is an externally driven process. It refers to the self-organizing, self-regulating system as “undeveloped” and “underdeveloped” and suggests that they should be made dependent on external inputs—external resources, energy, and money.”²⁶ She continues that globalization intensifies the non-stability of the world because of

²³ Jessica Merzdorf, “Climate Change Could Trigger More Landslides in High Mountain Asia,” NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center, Last modified February 11, 2020, <https://climate.nasa.gov/news/2951/climate-change-could-trigger-more-landslides-in-high-mountain-asia/>

²⁴ Merzdorf, “Climate Change Could Trigger More Landslides in High Mountain Asia.”

²⁵ Vandana Shiva, *Soil not Oil*, 13-14.

²⁶ Vandana Shiva, *Soil not Oil*, 14.

its “globalization of energy-intensive, resource wasteful, fossil fuel-driven industrialization of our production and consumption patterns.”²⁷

1.2.2. Food Security

Good food is essential for a healthy life. A shift in the food system from local to global takes place in the monocultural system. Traditionally, most of the food products were produced in the farmlands of a given place. The shift in the economy from local to global promoted the dependence of food on the global market. The industrial farming decreased the cost of production and the cost of human labor. Frederick Kirschenmann compares agriculture and agribusiness to explain the shift in the understanding of the food system. In ancient society, agriculture was a sacred obligation to take care of the community. It was a way of life for the farmers, whereas modern society converted the sacred obligation into a business action namely agribusiness.²⁸ The introduction of agribusiness leads to a global food system. As a result, local food systems were replaced with the global food system. Agribusiness is, “in fact designed to legitimize the industrial agricultural paradigm. That paradigm included a productionist ethic that made maximum production the single goal of farming and introduced a global food and agriculture infrastructure based on specialization, uniformity and centralized control.”²⁹

1.2.3. The Exploitation of the Natural Resources

E. F. Schumacher discusses the “natural capital” in his famous book “Small is Beautiful.” The real and larger capital of the economy of the world is the capital provided by nature. Schumacher

²⁷ Vandana Shiva, *Soil not Oil*, 15.

²⁸ Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*, 51.

²⁹ Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*, 52.

accuses us that we do not even recognize this fact. There are scientific, technological, physical, and other labor forces that are the capital created by human beings.³⁰ Nevertheless, “all this is but a small part of the total capital we are using. Far larger is the capital provided by nature and not by man—and we even do not recognize it.”³¹ The use and abuse of natural resources gradually endanger the very existence of the world. The danger of globalization is in the exploitation of natural resources in a non-sustainable way. Who is acting behind all the non-sustainable use of natural resources? The local people or local community has a little role in the extreme use of natural resources. Vandana Shiva argues that “the players are global corporations who move production of goods around the globe to where they can obtain the highest profit margins by bearing the lowest cost.”³² She calls this process as eco-imperialism where the corporate globalization exploits the natural resources. “Eco-imperialism is a complex dynamic. It includes control over the economics of the world through corporate globalization and transforms the resources and ecosystems of the world into feedstock for an industrialized globalized economy.”³³ Privatization of the natural resources which is meant for the whole humanity is the danger of eco-imperialism. The atmosphere is common for the whole living organism. “What was once a resource available to all, the atmosphere, has been privatized by the oil and coal companies, the automobile and power companies, as a place to dump their pollutants.”³⁴

1.2.4. The Decline in Agriculture and Farmlands

Urbanization and commercialization of land accelerated the decrease in agriculture and farmlands. The agricultural lands are converted into commercial and residential buildings.

³⁰ Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, 4.

³¹ Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, 5.

³² Vandana Shiva, *Soil not Oil*, 15.

³³ Vandana Shiva, *Soil not Oil*, 15-16.

³⁴ Vandana Shiva, *Soil not Oil*, 16.

Agriculture has a decisive role in building our relationship with the earth. Agriculture has a long history: The Bible speaks about farming in a relationship with the creation stories in Genesis. Human beings stepping into the land has led them to two wrong notions. Frederick Kirschenmann interprets the two wrong notions of human beings by stepping into the local ecosystems. “First, believing that we were no longer dependent on our local ecosystems, we fancied we would control or manipulate those systems with impunity. Second, we concluded that we could solve all the problems on a global scale.”³⁵ The wrong notion of human beings to manipulate the land for their commercial motives is the reason for the massive conversion of agricultural land into commercial lands. The possibility of getting solutions for food security at a low cost through technological advancement created an aversion to farming. Extreme interest in urban life is also a reason for the aversion of farming. People were attracted to urban life because of the romanticization of western and urban life as ‘development’ and agrarian life as ‘backwardness.’ There are misconceptions such as cities are more efficient or more people prefer to live in cities. Helena argues that the romanticization of urban life is a dangerous misconception that exacerbates the process of urbanization.³⁶ “Food, water, building materials and energy for cities all come from great distances via vast energy-consuming infrastructures; their concentrated wastes must be hauled away in trucks and barges, or incinerated at great cost to the environment.”³⁷

³⁵ Frederick Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*, 49.

³⁶ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is Our Future*, 87.

³⁷ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is Our Future*, 87.

1.3. Breakdown in the Relationship to the Other Human Beings

There is a breakdown evident in the human relationships in the globalized society. The major structures of the human relationships such as family, parenting, and social interactions have deviated from their original sense. The familial and cultural values are sidelined systematically. “The most important activity of human survival and well-being—parenting—has been systematically marginalized over many generations now, turning into a type of shadow work that is rated at zero in the national accounts.”³⁸ Money became the primary mode of relationships. Traditional communities valued communal relationships and interactions. The relationship to the other people is crucial in the agrarian ecosystem. It is relational because “it is bound up not just with its relationship to God the creator, but with the creatures to whom that God is bound in covenantal love.”³⁹ Jesus teaches us to love one another and to related to other human beings with love and fraternity. Jesus even taught to go further, denying one’s own life for their fellow human beings. The story of the Good Samaritan explains the importance of relating to the other and valuing the life of the other. Local culture and traditions have valued the life of other human beings beginning in the family and expanding and moving to the community.

1.3.1. Devaluing Importance of Culture and Place in the Human Relationships

Corporations can be destructive to the local culture. Globalization propagates a world of competition where people compete with each other. The corporate world has no respect for the local culture because they are looking for the market to gain maximum profit from the location. Western consumeristic lifestyle devalues the land-based lifestyle of local traditions. The

³⁸ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is Our Future*, 28.

³⁹ Igne, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 47.

corporates glorify consumerist culture as the ideal lifestyle because of their profit motive. They make use of the media and communication to promote their ideology of consumerism through advertisements and other audio-visual means. The images propagated in the advertisement give the message that “the urban life is sophisticated and the rural is backward; that imports of processed food and manufactured goods are superior to local products; that imported is good, local is crap.”⁴⁰ The philosophical framework for globalization devalues the cultural traditions of a place. The western philosophical thought process propagates placelessness. Western philosophies prioritize space and time over a place. Space is an abstract concept, and the place is more concrete because ‘space’ evokes in us a wider perception and place prompts us to think of a particular location or a particular spot.⁴¹ The place has great importance in the cosmology of Plato, whereas Aristotle views place as a container and our experience in a place as the starting point.⁴² Aristotle defines place as “the innermost motionless boundary of what contains, in other words, the innermost unmoved limit of the container which immediately encompasses each body.”⁴³ However, the notion of place as a container created a thought in the western mind that place is an inert environment in which things happen, which means the place does not influence a person irrespective of the place one lives.⁴⁴ The concept of a container in Aristotle influenced the western philosophical thought process, which caused the devaluing of the culture and tradition of a place.

⁴⁰ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is Our Future*, 30.

⁴¹ Igne, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 1.

⁴² Igne, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 3.

⁴³ Igne, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 4.

⁴⁴ Igne, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 4.

1.3.2. Psychological Breakdown

Globalization gives priority to the self-centered development of personality. There is an increase in mental instability in a person. Global rates of suicide and the global rate of depression are increasing drastically. What would be the reason for the drastic decline in the mental stability of a person or the psychological crisis? There is a shift in the lifestyle and food system in the present generation. Artificial ideals are brought into society so that they follow the artificial ideals brought by the media, which is the weapon of globalization. “No matter who you are or where you live, the global consumer monoculture imposes an ideal that is impossible to attain, fueling feelings of insecurity that make it easier for corporate marketers to sell products promising to make you more attractive, popular, and cool.”⁴⁵ The self-centered and consumeristic oriented culture broke a person’s relationship to a community and place where one develops one’s personality. The person has moved away from the personal relationship that one creates within a community. “The continual cutting of ties to community and place stunts the development of deep and lasting relationships—but since our hyper-competitive economy is treated as though it is ‘normal,’ its consequences are largely ignored.”⁴⁶

A person develops his personality from the environment one grew in. A person develops feelings and concerns for the place and community where one grew up. Unfortunately, the influence of the physical environment in the development of the personality is not given much importance. A person internalizes so many things from the place where he lives. For instance, if a person grew up in connection with an agrarian ecosystem, he develops an agrarian consciousness, which

⁴⁵ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is Our Future*, 30.

⁴⁶ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is Our Future*, 31.

enables one to relate to one's community. "Significance of locality is as important in the mind as it is in the outside world, so that place can be non-physical and yet fully count as place."⁴⁷

However, the place is more important than time or spatiality in the life of a person. Globalization tries to cut down the relationship of a human person to a place that enables him to develop personal relationships and mental stability through the support of a community.

1.3.3. Social Breakdown in Relationships

Globalization brought so many social issues to society. There is an increasing gap between rich and poor as a result of the phenomena of globalization. Globalization helped the 'haves' to gain more rather than bringing an integral development. There is an increase in extremist ideologies, communal violence based on religious beliefs, and conflict. Globalization promotes conflicts and social insecurity. "The rise of violence and civil disorder around the world is a predictable effect of an economic system that imposes monocultural stereotypes while simultaneously heightening economic insecurity."⁴⁸ The economic and social disparity between the 'haves' and 'have nots' deepen the conflict. One's identity itself is questioned through the increasing disparity and competition. The people from the agrarian sector are demoralized as backward and non-parity to the norms of the global monoculture. Religious fundamentalism is also a destructive force on social relationships. The religious solidarity maintained in the agrarian ecosystem is in danger. The young generation is in fear of loss of jobs and lack of jobs because of the increasing competition in society. The developing notion in the society where farming and agriculture is not

⁴⁷ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 17.

⁴⁸ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is Our Future*, 36.

seen as a means of livelihood increases the struggle in young minds with job security. “When corporations can roam the world looking for cheap labor, no one’s job is safe.”⁴⁹

1.4. Breakdown in the God-Encounter in the Ecosystem

Is it possible to encounter God in creation? Does one receive grace from the place or land where one relates through farming? Does a farmer encounter God in their farmland as they experience God in sacraments? Is there sacramentality involved in the creation? We have to theologically answer these questions to identify the relevance of place and land in the theological sphere of a farmer. The understanding of sacrament has gone through different stages throughout the centuries in the Catholic Church. For Augustine, sacraments were the visible signs of the invisible grace. Inge brings the argument of Elizabeth Rees to explain Augustine’s argument, where she says that all the organic and inorganic things can bear spiritual messages.⁵⁰ Later on, the Catholic Church restricted the number of sacraments into seven. There are further developments in the twentieth century that explained different sacramental experiences. Inge brings the notion of Schillebeeckx, where he explained in his book *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, Christ as the sacrament.⁵¹ The post-Vatican II era explained the Church as a sacrament. The further movements in the Church extended the notion of Sacraments to individual human beings. The notion of the sacrament had further development where the creation is seen as the sacrament. Inge explains this argument by bringing the quote of Alexander Schmemmann: “Christianity declares the possibility of living in the world and seeing everything in it as the revelation of God, as a sign of his presence, the joy of his coming, the call to

⁴⁹ Norberg-Hodge, *Local is Our Future*, 27.

⁵⁰ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 60.

⁵¹ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 60.

communion with him.”⁵² God reveals Himself in the world through different experiences and events. Inge's argument here is that the sacramentality in the world means that “the world in all its diverse aspects can be the place of God’s self-revelation to us.”⁵³ The events and experiences of a person can be a sacramental moment in his/her life when one can respond or react to the experiences or events. The events or experiences that a farmer encounter in his/her land are religious experiences because those experiences are God’s interference in his/her life. John Inge explains the religious experiences “characterized as rents in the opacity of history where God’s concrete engagement to change the world become visible.”⁵⁴ However, farmers can encounter God through events and experiences in their ecosystem because all their experiences are religious experiences where God acts in their life, and they respond to that action. Such experiences of a farmer are often undervalued in the Christian community. But, the experiences of a farmer have great value in deepening his/her faith in God. Therefore, any attempt to deviate a farmer from his land and ecosystem would hinder their God experience and sacramental life.

1.4.1. Loss of Sacramentality of a Place

God’s creation is a sacrament of God. How does God’s creation become a sacrament of God? Everything in this world is the action of God. The action of God in the creation becomes a sacrament of God through human relationship to the creation. Inge John explains this point of relationship and action as the basis of sacramentality. He says that “God, people, and place cannot be separated.”⁵⁵ He explains further, bringing the example of the Eucharist in sacramental

⁵² Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 64.

⁵³ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 67.

⁵⁴ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 70.

⁵⁵ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 79.

theology. He argues that the relationship of the believer to Christ is as important as the sacramental presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.⁵⁶ “If I have no real relationship with Jesus, his presence in the sacrament will not greatly impinge upon my life.”⁵⁷ He continues and brings the analogy of the passenger in a train where one can be sitting close to another person. Still, that closeness has no real significance unless one has a close relationship with that person sitting near to him.⁵⁸ Sacramentality in the creation can be experienced in and through action and relationship. The traditional society considered agriculture as a religious action because the cultivation of plants and domestication of animals was a sacred action. The farmers’ relationship and closeness to the land is a sacramental action. Farmers in the traditional community experience the sacramentality of the trees, rivers, animals, etc. through their relationship to their ecosystem. Their action in the farmland was the basis of their God-experience in the environment. “The three-way relationship of God, person, and place is of crucial importance, and there must be a response from the people if such events are to be termed sacramental.”⁵⁹ The impact of globalization brought a break in the relationship to the land. The land is considered as a mere commodity where one does not experience the relationship. The loss of relationship to the creation leads to the loss of the experience of sacramentality in creation. Inge argues that there is no sacramentality in the world in itself. Sacramentality is enabled only when human beings respond to the action of God in the creation. “The world in itself is not sacramental because sacramentality is an event that involves action by God and a response by unique human beings.”⁶⁰ The world becomes sacrament only when a unique human being responds to the action

⁵⁶ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 79.

⁵⁷ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 79.

⁵⁸ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 79.

⁵⁹ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 81.

⁶⁰ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 81.

of God in the world. The globalized society failed to create a relationship to the creation or failed to respond to the action of God. The mode of relationship in the globalized society is that of an objectified relationship, which means globalization views the land as that of an object to be used rather than an act of God that asks for a response.

1.4.2. The Negation of Sacramental Encounter in a Place

The sacramental encounter can take place in the world if human beings respond to the action of God in the world. Every action of God in the farming land and the response of the farmer to the life sprouted in the farmland can be a possible place of encounter with God. When a seed sprouts in the land, there is an action of God. Every moment in which a farmer takes care of a plant through tilling, manuring, watering, trimming, etc., it is a moment of a farmers' response to the action of God. The sacramentality of a place and the grace of sacrament actualizes at the moment a farmer develops a relationship to the life in tree, seed, or plant. It is a moment of grace for the farmer because the farmer responds to the action of God. Sacramental moments can take place either inside the church or outside the church, even in farmland. The moment at which the farmer makes a close relationship to his farmland, he/she can experience grace. "Sacrament is not a magical imposition of grace, but a free offer of grace which can be accepted or rejected by human beings."⁶¹ A farmer can look at the land that produces either as a sacramental action of God or as a source that gives profit. When a farmer responds to life in creation as a sacramental action, it becomes a moment of grace. The monocultural system of globalization encourages us to look at the land as a means of profit that leads the community to reject the action of God in

⁶¹ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 81.

creation. God reveals himself through creation always. Therefore, “the world is a possible place of sacramentality.”⁶²

Conclusion

The place has a definite role in the life of a human person. Globalization tries to suppress the importance of place through its philosophical thought process because globalization needs a society that is uniform and conflicting for economic advancement. The objectification of the land and human beings gradually leads to a monocultural system where the land and human beings have no value other than a commodity. I explained the impact of globalization on the life of a person who is born and brought up in a place. The relationship is a crucial concept in the local consciousness. God-human-land relationship constitutes a human beings God encounter in the place where one is born and brought up. Globalization was successful in bringing up the monocultural systems, which will reduce the priority of the person’s life and experiences in given places. Everyone has lots of memories about the place one is born, the school where one has attended, the teachers, the Church where one received sacraments, the festivals of the place, etc. All these memories and experiences of a human person contribute to one’s personality and consciousness towards the other. A person who is born and brought up in an agrarian background develops one’s consciousness in terms of agrarian language and experiences. An attempt to reduce the importance of one’s experience may lead a person into a conflict—conflict in God-experience in the location and conflict in making a real relationship with the other. “Any conception of the place is inseparable from the relationships that are associated with it.”⁶³

⁶² Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 74.

⁶³ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 36.

Globalization has a major role in the decline of the sense of relationship to the place that leads to the breakdown in the human-land-God relationships

Chapter Two

Exploring the Agrarian Ecosystem and Impact of Monoculture on the Agrarian Consciousness of Kerala

Introduction

We were discussing the impact of globalization on the ecosystem and relationship in general in the first chapter. Globalization could make a dramatic impact on the ecosystem and relationship pattern in the Kerala society, especially the agrarian community. Farmers were the significant economic and cultural contributors in the Kerala society. Kerala community gave prominence to a local food system from its agrarian ecosystem. Geographically, the State of Kerala is situated in the west of Western Ghats of India. One of the significant incomes for the livelihood of Kerala is from the agricultural sector. Kerala has walked miles ahead in development in all realms when compare to other states of India. Even though Kerala has achieved the socio, economic, and cultural development, the recent tragedies faced by the Kerala community invites us to rethink and analyze the development achieved by the Kerala community. Is the development that we attained sustainable? Did it affect our food culture? Did it affect our relationship pattern? There is indeed a shift in their relationship to land, and other human beings in the Kerala society. The shift in the relationship has influenced the theology of peace and solidarity of the community that is plural by nature. The simplicity and openness in the relationship and religious sensitivity have lost. The food system that is central to the tradition is also changing. However, it is essential to analyze the pattern of relationship in the agrarian society and how globalization influenced the thought process of the Kerala society.

2.1. Agrarian Ecosystem of Kerala

The ecosystem of Kerala is agrarian. The landscape and the lifestyle of the Kerala society were in terms of agrarian language. One side of Kerala is the ocean, and the west of Western Ghats covers the other side. There are 44 major rivers in Kerala, which makes Kerala a fertile land. We can also find so many freshwater lakes and backwaters in Kerala, which makes the land biodiversity-rich. Kerala is known as “God’s own country” and “the gateway of monsoon.” The state of Kerala is known for its biodiversity and tropical rain forests. It is a region with a humid tropical monsoon climate that enjoys solar radiation and warm temperature throughout the year. These aspects make the land of Kerala a paradise of farmers.

Map of India



Map of Kerala



2.1.1. Cropping System

A cropping system can be defined as “the order in which the crops are cultivated on a piece of land over a fixed period of cropping system is the way in which different crops are grown. In the cropping systems, sometimes a number of crops are grown together, or they are grown separately at short intervals in the same field.”⁶⁴ We can identify four types of cropping systems in Kerala.

1. The rice-based system in lowlands with single or two crops of paddy, summer vegetables, pulses, or oilseeds with or without aquaculture component,⁶⁵ 2. Coconut-based mixed cropping system comprising many intercrops like pepper, areca nut, cocoa, clove, banana, vegetables, green manures and cover crops, 3. Mono-crop rubber plantations, and 4. Homesteads or households, unique to Kerala, comprising a large number of components like trees, food and fodder crops, livestock, fishery, and poultry. Apart from these, there are other systems like where the rubber is the major crop with cover crops, apiary, etc. In hilly areas of Wayanad, coffee is also a prominent component in the homesteads. Other cropping systems prevalent in selected areas of the state include pepper, coffee, areca nut, and banana-based systems. The farming in Kerala traditionally was subsistence farming, where the focus of farmers was a livelihood. The traditional farming crops were food crops. Subsistence farming is the most natural method of farming where the main purpose of farming for farmers was their consumption. The crops grew in the land, depending on the rain, heat, fertility of the soil, and other climatic conditions. Hence

⁶⁴ SS Rana & MC Rana, “Cropping System,” Department of Agronomy, Forages and Grassland Management College of Agriculture, CSK Himachal Pradesh Krishi Vishvavidyalaya, <http://www.hillagric.ac.in/edu/coa/agronomy/lect/agron-511/511-Cropping-System-SSR-MCR.pdf>

⁶⁵ N.K. Sasidharan and K.G. Padmakumar, “Rice Based Farming Systems in Kerala,” *Regional Agricultural Research Station Kumarakom*, (2012), https://www.indiawaterportal.org/sites/indiawaterportal.org/files/rice_based_farming_systems_in_kerala_sasidharan_kec_2012.pdf

it is an eco-friendly cropping method. The farmers follow the swidden method or slash and down method to keep the fertility of the soil.

2.1.2. Major Crops

There are three major categories of land: The low land, the midland, and the high range. The crops that we see in these categories of land are also different. Rice and coconuts are the major crops in the lowland. They cultivated rubber, cashew, coconut, and cocoa in the midland. Tea, coffee, cardamom, cocoa, and black pepper are the major crops grown across the high range. The distribution of the crops in these categories depends on the thermal variations in these lands. Commercial crops rather than food crops dominate the agricultural sector in Kerala at present. The major staple food crop is rice. Coconut, rubber, areca nut, tea, coffee, cocoa, and cashew are the major cash crops. Black pepper, cardamom, cinnamon, clove, turmeric, ginger, nutmeg, and vanilla are major spice crops. Kerala has a substantial share in the plantation crops. The major plantation crops in Kerala are rubber, tea, coffee, and cardamom. Kerala is well known for its black pepper, which has a premium price in the international market. There is a decline in the production of black pepper due to climatic reasons. Black pepper is highly sensitive to rainfall distribution. The unusual variations in the rainfall also caused the decline of the production of black pepper. The northern region of Kerala is known for cashew nuts, which are also in a declining stage.⁶⁶ The food crops of Kerala have a major role in the food culture of Kerala society. The spices like pepper, cardamom, clove, turmeric, ginger are the ingredients to the food. Coconut plays a major role in all food products. Curry-leaves, which we see in the

⁶⁶ P.D. Jeromi, "Impact of Agricultural trade liberalization: Farmer's Indebtedness studies in Kerala," *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economy*, 62, No. 2 (April-June 2007): 159. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4419874>.

backyard of every household, is an essential part of the food. The food culture of the Kerala society is closely related to the food products produced from their land.

2.1.3. A shift in Farming System

The agricultural ecosystem is going through a shift in cropping from food crops to cash crops. There was a time in Kerala farming history when the households were self-sufficient in their food security. The shift in farming from food crops farming to cash crops put the households in a crisis of food security. The farmers were least dependent on the market because they used to produce food crops like grains and pulses for them in their households. Rajamma G., in a gender study, explains the advantage of subsistence farming. She writes the story of a woman called Sakamma, who depended on subsistence farming. “In Sakamma’s family, in the past, most of their production was food grains for the family’s consumption. The food grains produced were sufficient for five months, and for the remaining months, they depend on the income from agricultural labor, which was often paid in kind.”⁶⁷ Rajamma continues, “There was almost sufficient food throughout the year. Pulses were also grown, which meant that dependence on the market was minimal. In the case of an emergency such as sickness, a portion of the existing food stocks would be sold in the market to meet the family’s needs.”⁶⁸ The introduction of a money-based cropping system in the Kerala society led the community into the danger of food security. The present Kerala community’s food culture has shifted from self-sufficiency to dependence on other economies.

⁶⁷ Rajamma G., “Changing from Subsistence to Cash Cropping: Sakamma’s Story,” *Focus on Gender* 1, No. 3 (October 1993):19.

⁶⁸ Rajamma G., “Changing from Subsistence to Cash Cropping: Sakamma’s Story,” 19.

2.1.4. Religious and Cultural Practices Related to Farming

The rituals and traditional practices in Kerala society originated from an ancient agrarian society. The community developed the belief system and rituals so that they may help them to preserve the ecosystem. Those rituals promoted eco-friendly sustainable farming. Art and culture are reflections of the fertility cult. The fertility cult and folklore have a close connection with agriculture. The North Malabar region of Kerala, which is known as *Kolathunadu*, has religious rituals and belief system that is related to agriculture. The population that depended upon agriculture for livelihood in this area did not have much knowledge about the germination of seeds, growth of plants, etc. The community developed rituals and practices which would help them to get a good yield from the land. They believed in the relationship between the fertility of human beings, and the crops are the same. They thought that the productivity of human beings and crops were influential to each other. The people of the North Malabar region believed that the fecundity of plants and trees could influence human beings too. They conducted different fertility festivals such as *Nira*, *Puthari*, *Kothaamoorippaattu*, etc. One such belief system that is still prevalent in the area is called *Uchaaral Velakal*. *Uchaaral* means the period that follows the harvest. According to this practice, they kept the land unused until the monsoon. They considered land as a mother-God or a female. The time after cultivation is the time for rest for the land. However, the land kept unplowed during the first week of *Karkkitakam* (July-August). The plowing of land was prohibited during this period since they attributed plowing implements to symbolic resemblance with male sex organs. Even though the interpretations behind this based on figurative comparisons with human activities, the rationale is that during the heavy monsoon, plowing of land may lead to severe soil erosion, uprooting of trees, etc. Another ritual practice that we see in the North Malabar region of Kerala is the worship of food grains. Paddy grains

symbolizes fertility. Sree Bhagavathi is known as the Goddess of fertility in Hindu tradition. The Paddy inflorescence represents her. The point to be noted here is the firm belief of the relationship between the productivity of human beings to that of trees and plants. The fertility potential of trees influences human fertility. Women after marriage nail metal pieces into the trunk of the tamarind tree and walk around the tree thrice. They did the ritual action to get the fertility potential of the tree imparted to them. This ritual is called *Pulinkaathal Kollal*.⁶⁹ However, the belief system and rituals that they developed in the region promoted agriculture that is an ecofriendly and religious center.

2.2. Food Systems of Kerala Culture

Food is a cultural reality. Food does not merely provide the health of the body; instead, it comprises the culture of a place. The food culture of the Kerala community is unique in comparison to the other south Indian states. The food culture of other south Indian states is more often vegetarian. However, the Kerala food culture often mixed with both vegetarian and non-vegetarian irrespective of religious beliefs and practices. Food is at the very heart of the local culture. The traditional food habits of the Kerala community are unique to them. Food is a part of Kerala culture where one shares his/her ritual memory and everyday memory.⁷⁰ “It brings ritualized behaviors into mundane situations such as the noontime meal, and it intensifies the work of ritual by bringing foodstuffs into it.”⁷¹ Hindu expressions of food values define traditional Kerala food culture. The vegetarian food system of the Kerala community based on

⁶⁹ M.P. Jayashree, F.M. H. Khaleesl and Ranjan S. Karippai, “Influence of Farming Culture on Rituals of North Malabar Region of Kerala State,” <http://www.ethnoleaflets.com/leaflets/kerala.htm>.

⁷⁰ Caroline Osella and Filippo Osella, “Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both ‘Indian Ocean’ Zone and as Agricultural Homeland,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, n.s., 23, no.1, (April 2008): 174.

⁷¹ Osella and Osella, “Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both ‘Indian Ocean’ Zone and as Agricultural Homeland,” 174.

the Brahminical food system. Even though the conventional food system is vegetarian, the Kerala food system is not a static one.

There is a drastic impact of monoculture on the food culture of Kerala. There is a noticeable shift in the understanding of food. The food became a commodity for the physiological existence. The traditional knowledge of food in Kerala society was not a mere commodity. Food was a ritual memory and everyday action. Eating was a social action and personal interaction. “People throughout the ages have loved food because of its ability to recall and reinforce family and ethnic traditions, and its power to create fellowship.”⁷² The sharing of food signifies the sharing of one’s support and love for the other human beings too. Therefore, food has a broader meaning than merely a commodity. The philosophical understanding of food in the Hindu tradition and the traditional food systems of Kerala can prove the deeper meaning of food as an action where one can share the intimacy to oneself, others, and God.

2.2.1. Hindu Food Episteme

The Indian food system differentiated the food based on *trigunas* (Three qualities) of food. *Trigunas* is the core principle to macrocosm and microcosm where macrocosm is the universe, and microcosm is the individual. The three qualities associated with food in Hindu culture are *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. “*Sattvik* is associated with ideas of whiteness, brightness, purity, coolness, and so on; *rajasik* associated with heat, vitality, energy, and the color red; *tamasik* is associated with the color black and with darkness, sluggishness, stupidity, and impurity.”⁷³ The food is termed as cold or hot based on the qualities (*trigunas*) of the food. Kerala Namboothiri

⁷² Norman Wirzba, “Food for Theologians,” *Interpretation*, 67. No. 4 (2013): 377-78.

⁷³ Osella and Osella, “Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both ‘Indian Ocean’ Zone and as Agricultural Homeland,” 177.

Brahmin communities avoid *rajasic* or spicy food. They prefer food that is sweet and bland.

“Namboodiri vegetarianism is then clearly associated both superior ritual and esoteric knowledge and also with claims to a superior *gunam* (constitution or mind-body-spirit set)”⁷⁴ Non-Brahmin Hindus diet preference differs from that of Brahmins. They eat non-vegetarian foods such as fish. They agree with Namboodiri Brahmins’ choice for *sattvic* food, which produces *sattvik* qualities in them. Nevertheless, they do not prefer to eat *sattvik* food alone. Non-Brahmin Hindus do not differentiate food based on *trigunas* in the occasions of ritual purity; instead, they separate the food based on hot: cold opposition.⁷⁵ The *tamasik* food often avoided as having negativity and *rajasic* food is also preferred for ritual actions together with *Sattvik* food.

Among Hindus, cold foods may be acknowledged as purer and productive of qualities such as calmness and intelligence. In contrast, hot foods may be ambivalent: good for some people, such as men who must labor, post-delivery women who are dangerously cold and in need of heating, newlyweds who must raise their thermostat and be ‘hot,’ desirous; and bad for others, such as widows, who must not inflame their sexual appetites or violent people—who should be seeking to calm themselves.⁷⁶

The Hindu religious tradition follows vegetarianism for religious and ritual practices such as the occasions of preparations for the pilgrimage or the ritual occasions where purity is necessary. They follow vegetarianism on the events of *pooja* and celebrations of betrothals and marriage.

⁷⁴ Osella and Osella, “Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both ‘Indian Ocean’ Zone and as Agricultural Homeland,” 179.

⁷⁵ Osella and Osella, “Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both ‘Indian Ocean’ Zone and as Agricultural Homeland,” 180.

⁷⁶ Osella and Osella, “Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both ‘Indian Ocean’ Zone and as Agricultural Homeland,” 180.

2.2.2. Traditional Vegetarian Food Preparations for Celebrations (*Sadyavattam*)

Kerala community has a typical way of serving food, especially during festivities and celebrations. Food for ritual celebrations (*Sadhya*) traditionally served on banana leaves. The major food item for the *Sadhya* is boiled rice (*Kutteri*), which is collected from one's paddy or some other paddy of the same village. If they are not able to get the rice from the village paddy, they will prefer from other villages of Kerala or outside of the state. The third choice is the least preferred. The first preference is local rice (*Nadan Ari*). They pour *Paripp* (dal) curry and ghee over the rice. Then they pour lentil and tamarind *sambar* (prepared with root vegetables and drumstick) over the rice. They place other side curries and pickles on the top of the banana leaf from left to right. They place pickles such as *inji* (ginger) *Naranga* (lemon), *Kadumanga* (green mango), and side curries such as *pachadi*, *thoran*, *kaalen*, *kichadi*, *Aviyal*, *olen*. There is also a side snack known as *Upperi* (banana chips).⁷⁷ They also add a *Pappadam* to crumble the rice. Other dishes in the *Sadhya* are mainly *Rasam*, *Pullisserry*, or *Ezhusserry*. There are also different kinds of *Payasams* (Liquid puddings) at the end of the *Sadhya*. There are different kinds of *Payasam* for a *Sadhya*: *Pal Payasam* (milk-based), *Semia* (Fragrant with cardamom and enriched with fried vermicelli), *Ada* (flat pasta sheets), *Kadala* (lentil and jaggery). They serve the guest with *moru* (buttermilk made with spicy green chilies, ginger, and curry leaves). The vegetarian food system is not a typical Namboothiri Brahmin style, which follows the *sattvic* food system; rather, it has *rajasic* flavor such as chili, tamarind, garlic, and spices.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Osella and Osella, "Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both 'Indian Ocean' Zone and as Agricultural Homeland," 182-83.

⁷⁸ Osella and Osella, "Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both 'Indian Ocean' Zone and as Agricultural Homeland," 183.

Even though we can identify the differences in the food among different religions in Kerala, there are some common factors in all the food system. The leaves and ingredients are grown in the backyard of a household such as coconuts, coconut oil, curry leaves, pepper, chilly, spices, etc. are common to all foods in Kerala. One of the significant characteristics of the vegetarian food system is its preference for local food products. The primary ingredients of the food diet are commonly available in the locality.

2.2.3. Non-Vegetarian Food System

Kerala society has a love for non-vegetarian foods in comparison to other states of India. Fish has a significant role in the non-vegetarian food system. The reason for the love for fish dishes in Kerala is its long coastal line, rivers, and lakes. The non-vegetarian food system mainly comes from the Muslim community of the Malabar region who had a trade connection with Middle East countries. The non-vegetarian food system has some similarities with the Arabian food system. The food system of the Muslim community is different from that of traditional Kerala food style. The Hindu traditional food system has a strong preference for local food. The Muslim community does not have a strong feeling for the land and local food. There is an influence of the Arabian trade in their food system. The Muslim community is more open to the innovation in food, where they prefer the imported food products. There are differences in Muslim communities in eating style, meals prepared, and the method of serving the food from that of traditional food habits. The primary food diet for the Muslim community is *Biriyani*, ghee rice, *pathiri*, and *chappathi*. They prepare the side dishes with chicken, seafood, mutton, or beef. They also make coconut chutney, pickles as side dishes. They sit in a circle and serve by themselves, which is unlikely in *Sadhya*. The guest is served in the *Sadhya*, whereas the Muslims follow buffet-style food. “Hindu etiquette expects that a guest is honored by being seated at the

table and watched—even by three or four standing family members—while they eat; the host family’s job here is not to eat with and keep company with the guest, but to ensure that the guest is treated respectfully and well-fed.”⁷⁹ Food is central to the Muslim community because it is a social activity for them. There is a pleasure element in the food habits of the Muslim community, whereas the Hindu food system values familiarity and tradition in the food system. “Hindus’ localism encompasses strong preference for local food, even to the extent of preferring to eat rice grown on their own plots.”⁸⁰

2.2.4. Everyday Food System of Kerala Household

A *Sadhya*, normally prepared for a celebration or ritual occasion such as marriage, *Onam* festival, or a religious celebration, etc. Many of the food diet in the vegetarian food system are also part of the regular diet of a Kerala household. The ritual food prepared for a ritual celebration is also part of the everyday food of the Kerala household. A regular food diet of a Kerala household irrespective of religion is a mixed diet of both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Rice is a necessary ingredient for the regular meal. Together with rice, there will be one or two vegetable curries and fish fry or fish curry. The regular food diet does not go hand in hand with the Namboothiri food system. “The staple daily house meal of rice-*sambar* plus fish fry or fish curry is both non-vegetarian and non-*sattvic* in its spicing and sourness, and hence directly challenges Namboothiri food logics.”⁸¹ The department of preparation of food at the household is

⁷⁹ Osella and Osella, “Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both ‘Indian Ocean’ Zone and as Agricultural Homeland,” 194-95.

⁸⁰ Osella and Osella, “Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both ‘Indian Ocean’ Zone and as Agricultural Homeland,” 196.

⁸¹ Osella and Osella, “Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both ‘Indian Ocean’ Zone and as Agricultural Homeland,” 183.

typically the right of the women at home. They prepared the daily meal and served for the whole family. They prepared three meals in a day: a morning breakfast, lunch, and an evening meal.

There is a willingness to adopt the food other' food in the Kerala community. The food culture is a shared experience for the Kerala society. The food items such as fish, chicken, Parotta, stew, etc. are shared to all communities irrespective of their religious practices. There are also shared ingredients used in the daily homes of all food cultures in Kerala. Grated Coconut pounded on a large stone that is at the back of Kerala homes, is an essential part of curry preparation. They use coconut oil to prepare food because they cannot get the proper taste for the food without using coconut oil. The Kerala community uses curry leaves for food preparation, which is grown in their backyard. The food ingredients that they grow in the backyard of a Kerala household contribute to the food memory of the Kerala society.

2.2.5. A Shift from Local Food to Global Food

The preference of the Kerala community for local food has been changed drastically in the present context. A decrease in the production of food crops locally is the major reason behind this. Food products are available now in the market at a cheaper rate. The danger of dependence on the market is that the ignorance of the origination of food. The local food products in the household enable us to know the food that we eat. "A considerable amount of eating happens in a cloud of ignorance in which eaters know little about where their food comes from, under what conditions it produced, and what social, economic, and ecological conditions need to be in place to ensure the healthy production of food well into the future."⁸² The basic ingredients such as coconut, curry leaves, banana, vegetables, etc. were grown in the backyard of a typical Kerala

⁸² Norman Wirzba, "Food for Theologians," *Interpretation*, 67. No. 4 (2013): 376.

household traditionally. Nevertheless, the over-dependence on the market has caused a decrease in the food products in the household. The traditional Hindu food system preferred local food crops for their ritual celebrations and food system. The emergence of the global market reduced the dependence on local foods produced in household farms. They began to look for the food products that are available at the market at a cheaper rate. The conversion of farmlands into commercial buildings and residential buildings reduced farming and increased dependence on the market. The ignorance of the food leads us to lack of intimacy to the food because eating is not merely a physiological action; rather, it is an intimate way that connects us to the earth. The ignorance of food disconnects us from the land and other human beings as well. The consumeristic culture where the money is the ultimate value devalued the importance of intimacy to the food that we eat. David E. Sutton calls this phenomenon of commodifying food as ‘commodity fetishism.’⁸³ “Commodity fetishism is a process by which objects are compared based on a price derived from their market value rather than on the history of labor relations that went into producing them.”⁸⁴ The negligence of past, culture, and food of the place, lead the community to loss of lifestyle. It also directs towards a loss of the relationship. Sutton explains food as a memory that relates oneself to a place. He argues that food is central to the social and sensual memories. Commercialization of agriculture has led the community to an erosion of the memory that connects oneself to a place.⁸⁵

⁸³ David E. Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2006), 64.

⁸⁴ Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, 64.

⁸⁵ Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, 65.

2.3. Food as Relationship

The farmers in Kerala traditionally cultivated the food crops in their farms and households. The food that they ate together was the product of their effort as a community. “The pleasure of good eating was about much more than the taste of the food. It was about deep appreciation for and connection with everything on our plate.”⁸⁶ The food that we eat together in a family connects the members of the family closer. The food that we ate connected us to the land which produced the food. The food helped the farmer to connect to God, who the ultimate sustainer of everything. The taste of the food implies the relationship that food creates. “We need to be physically present with one another to do the intimate things that fulfill our life. And next to making love, eating is one of the most intimate things to do.”⁸⁷ Kirschenmann argues that the pleasure of eating can be experienced only by ‘being’ there. The physical intimacy with the food that we eat makes the food tastier. However, intimacy with food is an essential factor in food culture.⁸⁸ The agrarian community of Kerala had that intimacy with the food because they cultivated the food in their land with their effort. However, the Kerala community faces a shift in the food culture where the community depends on the globalized food system. The reduction in food production from their own with their effort lead the community into a situation where one does not experience intimacy with the food that one eats. The intimacy to the food that we eat is an important factor in the food culture, as Kirschenmann argues. Pope Francis brings the necessity of having the bond to nature, with others, with oneself and with God in his encyclical

⁸⁶ Frederick Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience: Essays from a Farmer Philosopher*, Edited by Falk Constance L. (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 92-93.

⁸⁷ Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*, 94.

⁸⁸ Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*, 94.

Laudato Si.⁸⁹ He brings the example of St. Francis of Assisi that “he shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.”⁹⁰ The shift in food culture where one goes for the faster and easier food brought a drastic change. We do not relate to the food that we eat, which means we lost the sense of intimacy to the food that connects us to the land and others and thus to God.

2.3.1. Food as Relationship to Land

The intimacy of the land is central to the understanding of food culture. It is essential how a farmer took care of the land where he cultivated. Farmer’s regular acquaintance with the land and the crops develops and intimacy in the farmer to his/her land. The land was not a mere ‘thing’ that gives the farmer profit; rather, the land was something that sustains the farmer by giving them the food for their existence. Farmers in the Kerala community could connect themselves to the land. The relationship that we make to the land is crucial. The globalized food system has failed to make a connection with the food that we eat. We eat the food that some unknown persons from somewhere in the world to make a profit alone. They use any pesticides or poisons to gain maximum profit, which causes damage to the soil. They do not have any connection to the land other than a commodity. Kirschenmann speaks about the loss of connection to the land and soil. “Our modern industrialized society has gone through a divorce. We have become divorced from the soil.”⁹¹ The loss of relationship to the land is the cause of many social issues such as the environmental crisis and food crisis. The Christian community in Kerala migrated to the Malabar region of Kerala from the 1930s to the 1970s. The reason for the

⁸⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, No. 11, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

⁹⁰ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, No. 11.

⁹¹ Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*, 285.

migration of the Christian community to the Malabar region was to acquire more farmlands to cultivate. They had a love for the land at that time of migration. They could make a connection to the land and produced food for sustenance. There is a shift in the cropping system in the Malabar region during the migration. A shift from food crops to cash crops and monoculture systems was evident at the time. The influence of the globalization enabled the farmers to focus more on cash crops such as rubber, areca nut, etc. The paddy culture has lost its prominence.

2.3.2. Food as a Relationship to the Other

The 21st century is an age of information and technology. We connect or relate to each other virtually. We cannot create intimacy in a relationship in the virtual world. Physical relatedness is essential to have an intimate relationship. One of the drawbacks of the information age that we live in is the loss of intimacy with each other. Pope Francis explains the danger of the 21st century, where one loses the intimacy in his encyclical *Laudate Si*. He says that “Real relationships with others, with all the challenges they entail, now tend to be replaced by a type of internet communication which enables us to choose or eliminate relationships at whim, thus giving rise to a new type of contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than with other people and with nature.”⁹² One of the major aspects of the Kerala culture that creates intimacy among the family and community is food. Food creates a personal relationship as well as a social relationship. “Offers and exchanges of food between people also internalize social relations and allegiances and hence make them at once both deeply intimate and also obligatory.”⁹³ The sharing of food can create an intimacy between the one who prepares the food

⁹² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, No. 47.

⁹³ Osella and Osella, “Food, Memory, Community: Kerala as both ‘Indian Ocean’ Zone and as Agricultural Homeland,” 174.

and one who tastes the food. The preparations of food at a household are part of everyday activities, which implies an aspect of caring for the members of the family. The table where one share is the place in which one appreciate each other for the food one receives. Kirschenmann argues that the food we eat and shares on the table creates a connection among us. It is not the taste of the food on the plates; rather, the connection and intimacy among us and everything on the plate is important. They appreciated food on their plate that they developed intimacy with food on their plate.⁹⁴

Food is central to the social action of the Kerala community. Kerala society expresses hospitality to the other by serving delicious food prepared at home. The famous expression from *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 'Athithi Devo Bhava,' can better explain the hospitality of Kerala culture. *Athithi Devo Bhava* means the guest is God. It is an attitude of placing a guest above all. The guest is treated with delicious food at home as a part of hospitality. Sharing food with other persons who visit or interact with a family is a central characteristic of Kerala culture. Receiving the guest by offering food creates an intimacy between the guest and the host. Food is a powerful medium that creates a relationship among people. David E. Sutton argues in his book *Remembrance of Repasts* that "food may be a particularly powerful medium exactly because it *internalizes* the debt to the other"⁹⁵ because the food prepared for the visitor "inscribe a memorable impression on the receiver."⁹⁶ There is an interaction between the giver and receiver that creates a relationship. Treating the other with intimacy at a Kerala home is deeply imprinted in the consciousness of Kerala society.

⁹⁴ Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*, 93.

⁹⁵ David E. Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2006), 46.

⁹⁶ Sutton, *Remembrance of Repasts*, 47.

2.3.3. Food as a Relationship to God

Food has a major role in the theology of all the religions in the world. Scripture explains food as a medium of love. “The presence of food is the intimate, material, mundane sign of God’s providential care.”⁹⁷ Eating involves a thanksgiving to the blessing of God. “Enjoying ordinary food-its taste, smell, and feel, in addition to its nourishment-is the most primitive form of gratitude, and worship.”⁹⁸ Food connects us to God because food evokes in our gratitude to the one who is the creator of everything. Christian and Jewish theological thoughts express this understanding of the sacramental nature of food. “God is ultimately knowable through the tangible elements of everyday life: bread, wine, water, oil.”⁹⁹ Food conveyed sacramental grace. The world around us has a significant role in the experience of God in Christian and Jewish understanding. The Book of Deuteronomy explains food as Yahweh’s provision. Manna is given to Israel by Yahweh to fulfill their physical needs. It was an expression of God’s providence for Israel. It showed a relationship between God and his people Israel. “Yahweh is the one who created food, gave them the land, gave rain, and all conditions necessary for harvest, and prospered the work of their hands so that they might eat and live.”¹⁰⁰ Food and land, for Israelites, were more than a commodity rather than the symbolism of God’s providence for them. They responded to the gift of God with thankfulness. “Since food is sustenance, it was to remind

⁹⁷ Norman Wirzba, “Food for Theologians,” *Interpretation*, 67, No. 4 (2013): 378

⁹⁸ Thomas W Mann, “Not by Word Alone: Food in the Hebrew Bible,” *Interpretation* 67, No. 4 (2013): 353.

⁹⁹ Corrine Carvalho, “Wine, Women, and wisdom: The Sacramentality of Food,” *The Bible Today*, 48, No. 1 (2010): 23.

¹⁰⁰ Adam Warner Day, “Eating Before the Lord: A Theology of Food According to Deuteronomy,” *JETS*, 57, No. 1 (2014): 89.

the Israelites that Yahweh gives them what they need for life and, in a deeper sense, that he is their life.”¹⁰¹

Advaita Vedanta by Sankara propagates the philosophy of Advaita. According to Sankara, the world emerges out of *Brahman* (Ultimate reality). *Brahman* is the cause of all creation, and the world is the effect of *Brahman*. Therefore, *Brahman* and the world are non-different.¹⁰² “If the effect exists before its manifestation as the cause, it cannot be essentially different from that cause.”¹⁰³ The Advaita philosophy, which is very deep in the consciousness of Kerala society, understands the non-difference between the cause of all creation and the world, which is the manifestation of the ultimate reality. The ecosystem where we live and interact is the location where we encounter *Brahman* because the creation is the effect of *Brahman*.

Conclusion

The Kerala society is undergoing a transition in its agrarian consciousness. The monoculture is getting prominent in the ecosystem of Kerala. The ‘fast food’ culture, and the global market replaced the dependence on the traditional food system and the local market. There is an aversion to farming as a livelihood. The romanticization of urban culture has also influenced the Kerala society. The decline in the relationship to the land has led to many environmental crises in the community. The Kerala society is a consumeristic society where most people depend on the market for their food security. However, it is essential to re-imagine and re-envision the agrarian consciousness of the Kerala society.

¹⁰¹ Warner Day, “Eating Before the Lord, 90.

¹⁰² Richard King, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 217.

¹⁰³ King, *Indian Philosophy*, 217.

It is significantly meaningful to bring some specific points, to sum up, the agrarian consciousness of Kerala. 1. The agrarian consciousness is closely connected with the agricultural system and food system as well. The food habits of the Kerala community derive from the food system. 2. The agrarian consciousness of Kerala indicates to a relational viewpoint. The agriculture and food system of Kerala directs towards a relationship they created towards land, the other human beings in that community, and to God as well. 3. A strong feeling for local food. The food memory of the Kerala community is related to the local food and taste. The agricultural food crops of the land are necessary ingredients for the taste of traditional Kerala society. 4. There is a religious experience in everyday activities such as cultivation, eating, social interaction, etc.

Chapter Three

Re-envisioning the Agrarian Consciousness of Kerala

Introduction

We were discussing the impact of monoculture in the relationship to land, other human beings, and God in the first chapter in General. We discussed the agrarian consciousness of Kerala society and the impact of monoculture on the agrarian consciousness, in particular in the second chapter. The final section is a theological re-envisioning of the agrarian consciousness of Kerala society in three realms—Ecological, Sociological, Spiritual. The present world context and the Kerala context insists on the necessity to go back to the local culture that promotes a healthy relationship to the land, to others, and thus developing a local theology. The COVID-19 pandemic that affected the globe gives further insights to rethink and re-envision the living style, food habits, and social relationships. The floods that affected the Kerala state in 2018 and 2019 opens our eyes to re-envision the ecological relationship. Globalization has fastened the distance in human relationships. The intimacy and responsibility towards the other human beings and to the future generation have diminished. Hence, we have developed a commodified relationship in social interactions. There is no intimate relationship in the commodified relationship. The other human beings are mere objects in the globalized society. There is also a decline in spiritual relationship to the land, which was central in the episteme of Kerala society. The negation of life in the land has led to an agribusiness. We have often forgotten to experience life in an environment that is a sacramental moment.

3.1. Enhancing Ecological Relationships

The first way to regain the agrarian consciousness is by enhancing ecological relationships. Kerala society has negated the land as a source of life and God-experience. The commodification

of the land is the reason for the negation of the land. Kerala society denied land as part of their community. There is a necessity to regenerate the ecological relations in land relationships. The environment supports us for the sustenance of human life on the earth. The sense of responsibility to preserve and protect the environment has lessened.

3.1.1. Land as a Community

The land is an extended community of all individuals. We can express our responsibility towards land in terms of communitarian perspectives. Leonard Weber, a theologian of Ethics, brings the concept of Aldo Leopold and explains about the ecological responsibility in the book *Theology of Land*: Understanding of ethics includes a sense of responsibility to respect and preserve something else.¹⁰⁴ He says that the natural environment has to be respected and protected because the land is also part of the single community. All individual belongs to a community where one is interdependent each other. The community that one lives is extended not only to individuals but also to the soil, water, plants, animals.¹⁰⁵ Aldo Leopold explains in the classic work *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There*, “the land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.”¹⁰⁶ Weber explains: “The land is not just property; it is not just a commodity; it is not even just a resource. It is not just something to be used for human welfare. The land is something to be valued for its own sake.”¹⁰⁷ It is the responsibility of human beings to preserve the integrity of the land because the land is an extended community. Aldo Leopold begins his understanding of land as a community from the premise of ethics that “the individual is a member of a community

¹⁰⁴ Bernard F. Evans & Gregory D. Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land* (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 18.

¹⁰⁵ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 239.

¹⁰⁷ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 19.

of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the community, but his ethics prompt him also to cooperate.”¹⁰⁸ However, it is our ethical responsibility towards the land that prompts us to preserve and protect the land. We can overcome our instinct to compete and conquer the land by bringing the ethical responsibility to respect fellow beings. When we begin to re-envision the land around us as part of our community, there arises a responsibility to cooperate, preserve, and protect the land as part of the community. For Weber, respect for the land does not mean that the land is not to be used, rather using the land in an appropriate sense.¹⁰⁹ Appropriate use of land implies using land responsibly. He replaces the term ‘using’ with that of ‘working with’ to give a proper understanding of land ethics because *working with* implies a partnership with the land.¹¹⁰ To work with the land as a partner involves knowing the land and growing crops in harmony with nature. Commercialized farming does not have the values that go into harmony with nature. Their implication of commercial farming tends towards the maximization of profit. Nevertheless, we should re-envision the understanding of land as a part of our living community, where we work with the land to develop a relationship to the land. Frederick Kirschenmann explains the land-human relation as an awareness. “All of the members of the biotic community of which we are a part, are our “neighbors” and that eternal qualities of life await us in those relationships.”¹¹¹ Hence, what is needed is not the conquering and destructing of the land, rather preserving and caring as the members of the same community because our relationship to the biotic community around us reveals the fuller meaning of life.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 239.

¹⁰⁹ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 19.

¹¹⁰ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 19.

¹¹¹ Frederick Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience: Essays from a Farmer Philosopher*, Edited by Falk Constance L. (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 20.

¹¹² Frederick Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*, 21.

3.1.2. Developing an Ecological Consciousness

How to develop an ecological consciousness? The first step to develop an ecological consciousness is to understand the ecosystem as a community in the relationship. It is to recognize oneself as the plain member and citizen of the community of living organisms.¹¹³ Human beings are not the conquerors of the land; instead, they are supposed to maintain respect for their fellow members in the ecosystem.¹¹⁴ Kirschenmann calls this relationship to the biotic community as “encountering the divine in the flesh-and-blood experiences of daily life on a farm.”¹¹⁵ Leopold brings the example of Abraham, who had the exact idea about the land. “It was to drip milk and honey into Abraham’s mouth.”¹¹⁶ However, we have to relate to the land as a place of divine encounter and community experience. It is not the conquering of the land, but relating to the land as a member of the biotic community.

Another way to develop an ecological consciousness is to develop a non-economic mind. The profit motive and economic advancement dominate in the interaction with the land in Kerala society. Rock mining, on a broad basis, is destructive to the sustenance of nature, is an example of the commercial attitude of society. Aldo Leopold argues that “a system of conservation based solely on economic self-interest is hopelessly lopsided. It tends to ignore, and thus eventually to eliminate, many elements in the land community that lack commercial value, but that are essential to its healthy functioning.”¹¹⁷ Value for the land is not merely economic value.

However, a relationship to the land is impossible without love, respect, and admiration for the

¹¹³ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 240.

¹¹⁴ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 240.

¹¹⁵ Frederick Kirschenmann, *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*, 20.

¹¹⁶ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 240.

¹¹⁷ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 251.

land, which has a value beyond economical.¹¹⁸ Something or some action becomes right “when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.”¹¹⁹

A third way to develop an ecological consciousness in the land relationship is to view land as a partner. Land as a partner means to avoid the temptation of promiscuity.¹²⁰ Walter Brueggemann argues that there is a temptation to see the land as something to be dominated. The domination of land tempts us to think of land as a commodity to be used and dominated. “It can be regarded *promiscuously* as though it had no significance, and it can be bought, sold, traded, used, discarded as a convenient commodity.”¹²¹ We have to develop a consciousness of being loyal to the land where we do not reduce the land as a commodity instead of considering land as a partner to enhance life.

3.2. Nurture Human Relationships

There is a prominent role in social relationships in the ecosystem of Kerala society. The food system that was explained in the second chapter emphasizes the importance of social relations in Kerala society. Weber explains the starting point of the communitarian value system as the belief that men and women are social beings by their very nature.¹²² The communitarian value system emphasizes the common good where each human person contributes to the common goal. The intimacy in the social interactions and the hospitality in the relationship expressed through the sharing of food is central to the agrarian ecosystem of Kerala. One’s responsibility to other human beings is also prompting us to nurture human relationships. The era of media and

¹¹⁸ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 261.

¹¹⁹ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 262.

¹²⁰ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 43.

¹²¹ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 43.

¹²² Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 28.

communication has distanced intimacy among human relationships. Pope Francis says that the influence of media can lead to the loss of interpersonal relationships: “True wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data which eventually leads to overload and confusion, a sort of mental pollution.”¹²³

3.2.1. Greed, Need, and Creed Relationships

John Hart speaks about the three relations to the land that affects human relationships—Greed, need, and creed. The land is a matter of exploitation for those who follow the *greed*-relations. The *need*-based land relations primarily focus on the short-term needs of the individual and family. The use of land in *need*-based relations is not in consideration of the other humans on a long term basis.¹²⁴ Hart says: “The realization of one’s responsibilities to God and humanity occasionally intervenes in land practices, but the pressing needs of the moment override considerations of these responsibilities.”¹²⁵ The *creed*-based relations to the land insists on the principles that earth is Lord’s, and people are the steward of the earth. Some people also see the earth as sacred and as a mother provides.¹²⁶ According to Hart, this kind of relation to the land has a theistic and social approach. When we carefully look at the land relations and human relations in the Kerala community today, the greed relations are getting prominence. One’s responsibility to the other human beings and future generations has often forgotten. Conversion of agricultural land into commercial buildings has led the Kerala society into a less productive

¹²³ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, No. 47. http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

¹²⁴ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 87-88.

¹²⁵ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 88.

¹²⁶ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 88.

and more consumeristic state. However, the negligence and greed of the present generation can direct the future generation into an existential crisis.

3.2.2. Enhancing Human Relationship

How to re-envision the human relationship? Food was central to the social and interpersonal relationships in the Kerala society. The exchange of food was a means to share their hospitality and care for the other. The preference for the local food system and local food crops defined the food memory of Kerala society. The sharing of food can overcome the self-oriented culture, which is *greed*-based. Opening our boundaries to others and the needs of the others broaden our human relationships. Eating together can bring intimacy to those people we share our food. The intimacy that we develop each other is the central point in re-envisioning the human relationship. The world that we see in the 21st century is a virtual world. The medium for relationship for the present generation is media. It has advanced and fastened the world for sure. However, what we lack in the virtual world is an intimacy that one develops in the real world. We have lost the bond to the other human beings. There is a lack of love in the relationship in the virtual world. A real relationship begins at the moment we stop commodifying the other human beings for our profit. Going back to the intimate relationship to the land is a social responsibility of a human being to the other human beings in the world, as well as to future generations. John Hart argues: It is our responsibility towards God, each other, and the earth.¹²⁷ When we “turn back to the crossroads and choose life.”¹²⁸ We choose life for “ourselves, for our children, and our planet.”¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 99.

¹²⁸ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 99.

¹²⁹ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 99.

3.3. Re-Envision Spiritual and Agrarian Relationships

Religion has a significant role in the life of Kerala society. India was a fertile land for many religions. The religions of India have found a spiritual relationship to the land. The Goddess earth symbolisms are prevalent in the spiritual and religious traditions of India. Fertility cult practices in folklore traditions of Malabar have originated from the religious and spiritual relationship of human beings to the land. Biblical traditions explain the land as the property of God. The notion of the image of God in the Biblical traditions refers to human relationships with the land and living things.¹³⁰ The Sabbath law in the Biblical traditions aimed to focus on the point that the ownership of the land belongs to God. Richard Cartwright Austin argues that the Sabbath law may be enforced to constrain human greed in the agricultural society.¹³¹ He argues that “the land was recognized to have its own rights and duties before the Lord.”¹³² It is our responsibility towards God to take care of the land. We can experience God in the creation and all the living organisms on earth. How can we experience God in nature? How can the relationship to the land become sacramental? One can experience God in the ecosystem by experiencing life in the location. The moment that one responds to the action of God is the sacramental moment. The entire creation is the action of God. The moment a farmer realizes the life in the environment, it is a sacramental moment. God-experience begins from the realities and life around us. Space and place are foundational to the theological reflections. Sigurd Bergmann argues: “In accordance with the Biblical and classical theology, space could and should be regarded as the Creator’s gift to the living, and place as the foundational dimension of reflecting

¹³⁰ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 106.

¹³¹ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 106.

¹³² Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 106.

on Son's incarnation and the Spirit's inhabitation on Earth."¹³³ A place is a gift of God to the living organisms. We experience life in a place that is a gift of God. However, it is our responsibility to affirm life and enhance life in the creation by the intimate relationship to the land.

3.3.1. Encountering God in the Location

It is essential to encounter the sacramentality of a place to encounter God in the place. When farming and producing food become a business, the land becomes a commodity. The primary motive in the relationship to the land is merely a profit motive in the agribusiness. When we relate to the land as an embodiment of the Spirit, the relationship to the land becomes spiritual. The encounter of God in a place depends on our actions and relationship to the place. John Inge well explains this argument. He says that "sacramentality must be based in action and relationship."¹³⁴ Inge develops this argument based on the argument proposed by Osborne where he argues about action and reaction. There should be action and reaction to arouse an experience. The moments of life and movements take place in the universe. For example, a seed becomes a plant. It is an action of God. The growth of a tree becomes a sacred moment when one reacts to the growth of the plant by experiencing life in it. Inge argues that the framework for the sacramental moment is faith.¹³⁵ There is a two-way movement in a sacramental moment. The action from God and the response to the action from a believer. "Only when the gracing action of God is matched by the accepting faith of a believer is sacramentality enabled and grace caused."¹³⁶ However, one should respond to the action of God in creation to experience God in a

¹³³ Sigurd Bergmann, "Theology in Its Spatial Turn: Space, Place and Built Environments Challenging and Changing the Images of God," *Religion Compass*, 1, No. 3 (2007): 354.

¹³⁴ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 80.

¹³⁵ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 80.

¹³⁶ Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place*, 81.

place. The commodified relationship to land cannot bring a God-experience in the location. Instead, we have to develop a sacramental relationship to a place by experiencing and affirming life in our environment.

Conclusion

The indigenous epistemologies and practices of Kerala society that have explained in the above chapters are agrarian. The interaction of Kerala society to their land, the food system, and the belief and practices of the agricultural folklore culture can lead to a theology that is in close relation to the land and creation. The phenomena of monoculture have influenced the present Kerala society. The influence of the monocultural systems of globalization has affected the food practices, agricultural system, and social relationships. There is a tremendous change in the farming system. There is a shift from food crops to cash crops in the farming sector that affected food productivity in the local food system. There is a tremendous increase in dependence on other states for food security. All these elements made the Kerala society as a consumeristic state rather than a productive state. The aversion to farming is also another factor that led people away from the land. The change in the food system is another major shift. The Indian episteme gave priority to local food in their celebrations and everyday food culture. The deficiency of the food crops in the local farms has led to dependence on other food products. As a result, the intimacy and closeness that one had to the food they eat have lost. However, it is essential to regain the intimacy of the food that we eat, relationship to the land that produces for us. “To be fully human, we must live in communion with both God and nature.”¹³⁷ We have to re-envision a theology for the land of Kerala that is in close relations to the land. The theological reflection for the Kerala society has to base itself on their agrarian consciousness. The God-experience for the

¹³⁷ Evans & Cusack, eds, *Theology of the Land*, 106.

Kerala society is originating from their place where they have deep-rooted their memories—food memories, food crops, religious, and spiritual experiences. The theology for the land of Kerala can be re-envisioned by developing a community that has an ecological, human, and spiritual relationship to the place. It is through regaining the lost ecological intimacy to the land by experiencing life in it. It through enhancing social relationships with the other. They have to enhance their relationship with the other by realizing their responsibility to the other human beings and the future generation. It is taking care of the land, not as a commodity, but as a plain member of a living organism. They have to experience God in the land by developing a sacramental relationship to the land. It is by responding to the action of God in the creation. The response to the action of God in the creation is the sacramental moment outside of a Church setting.

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