

## **GLOBALIZATION AND WIDENING HEALTH INEQUITIES: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE KERALA EXPERIENCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The State of Kerala since its formation in the year 1956 has been doing remarkably well in the field of health with population health indicators almost at par with developed countries. However economic reforms initiated by the central government from the early 1990s, consequent to WTO Agreements have degraded the public health sector to a precarious state, with private sector overpowering it in all possible dimensions. The resultant over emphasis on profit-making medical care to the neglect of public health and the changes in the life-style ushered in by global economy, have made the state most fertile for infectious disease epidemics and for the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Discontented with the public health services people are increasingly being drawn, irrespective of their class to the highly commercialized, profit oriented private health sector. The incumbents of low socio-economic group, who already run the risk of exposure and vulnerability to health compromising conditions, by the unequal distribution of social determinants of health are the worst affected by this development. For them, there is no other alternative than become victim to the ‘poverty trap’ with greater likelihood for exposures and vulnerability to diseases and adverse health outcomes. To put it briefly, globalization has not an all positive experience for the health sector in Kerala. As the private health sector attains greater heights, the fund-starved public health sector remains as a helpless onlooker to the growing health inequities in the state.

**KEYWORDS:** Globalization, Health Inequity and Health Inequality, Social-Hierarchy, Social Position and Social Determinants