MALABAR MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT UPON THE LAND UTILISATION PATTERN IN KERALA

Dr. Jaison V Joseph

Assistant Professor, Department of Economics,

EKNM Government College, Elerithattu, Kasaragode (dt)

Kerala, 670511.

Abstract

Migration is as old as the history of mankind. The farmers of southern districts of Kerala, especially from Kottayam district migrated to Malabar region (Kannur and Calicut districts) in search of fertile agricultural land for their livelihood and survival as early as 1930s and came to end in mid 1970s. The various indicators used for the study are Total Cropped Area (TCA),Net Area Sown (NAS), Area Sown More than Once (ASMO), Cultivable Waste Land (CWL), Barren and uncultivable land, Fallow land and Current fallow land and land put to non-agricultural uses and analysed the changes occurred in the land utilisation pattern between 1957-58 and 1973-74 in the erstwhile Kannur district. The paper reveals that migration is a reality as the land put to non-agricultural uses have increased and the area under cultivable waste land, barren and fallow land decreases tremendously due to the migration of peasants. The net area sown and total cropped area has increased while comparing to state and the area sown more than once decrease by 10.35 % in Kannur where as in the state it increases by 111.55 % stems the existence of migration.

Index Terms: **migration, net area sown, peasants, wasteland, barren land.**

I Introduction

Migration has been a major source of human survival, adaptation, and growth across the centuries and millennia. In the early days, human migration was accompanied by anticipation, excitement and fear, the fracturing of long-standing social relationships, heartaches, tensions, and even bloodshed between the migrants and the local populations, and the willing or unwilling exchange of ideas, skills, attitudes, and genes. The overwhelming majority of people who move do so inside their own country and data reveals that internal migration is four times higher than international migration. (*http://hdr.undp.org, (accessed on 25/07/2010)* And when it comes to internal migration, case of Indian economy is of particular interest because of the strong heterogeneity across states in their levels of per capita income, and demographic characteristics *(Cashin, P and R. Sahay)* The importance of migration in developing countries cannot be overemphasised and it has acquired special significance in the context of commercialization of agriculture, development of economy of the settled area, increase of population etc. The pulls and pressures in the agricultural sector continue to exert their influence on the overall course of economic activity.

1.1 Peasant Migration in Kerala –A Historical perspective

The Jews, the Arabs, the Syrian Christians, the Konkani Brahmins, the Tamil Brahmins and a host of other ethnic groups have come and settled in Kerala on various occasions in the past. Similarly people of Kerala are now moving to different parts of the world in search of jobs. The two important streams of migration that the 20th century Kerala witnessed are 1) migration of farmers from Travancore to the highlands of Malabar and 2) migration of semiskilled and unskilled labourers to the Gulf and Arabian countries. Now a day's second stream of migration is experienced in Kerala as, a) The migration of second generation peasants from Malabar region to Shimoga region and b) Increased number of migrated labourers from North India to Kerala.

The movement of peasants took place without any design or organization or leadership. The migration of the people from central Travancore to Malabar was invariably related to their issues of livelihood and existence as well . The proverb 'necessity is the mother of all inventions' really motivates the people to migrate to Malabar . A large number of people treats Malabar migration as more powerful and adventurous than even the discovery of U. S by Columbus and they believes that Malabar migration is the summation of their industriousness, persuasiveness, mental and physical power, will power, perseverance, grit, tears and sacrifice. The Syrian Catholic Christians were the largest section among them, their settlements led to the establishment of churches and schools, which became torches of learning in the jungles of Malabar. The migrants are hardworking , enterprising and dynamic who work hard from sun rise to sun set without food and sleep. After sustaining, the migrants by competing to weather, animals, diseases, famine and soil, they began to cultivate long term commercial crops like rubber, areca nut, coconut, cashew nut etc. It creates a gigantic jump in the economic development of the Malabar area respectively in Kannur and Calicut Districts.

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of the present study are

1. To examine the factors contributed to the Malabar migration.
2. To examine the changes occurred in the land utilization pattern in the Malabar region.

2.2 Methodology and data sources

The narrative part of the analysis is obtained from the Government records, land records. District wise data on land utilization pattern in various year are taken from Agricultural statistics of Kerala–Various years, Department of Economics, Trivandrum, Panchayath level statistics of Kannur District of Various years – Department of Economics, Trivandrum and Agricultural

Statistics on Kerala – 1975.The Secondary data were analysed by the percentage method by examining the changes happened on various indicators in 1973-74 over 1957 in erstwhile Kannur district.

3.1 Comparative analysis of Land utilisation pattern of Kerala

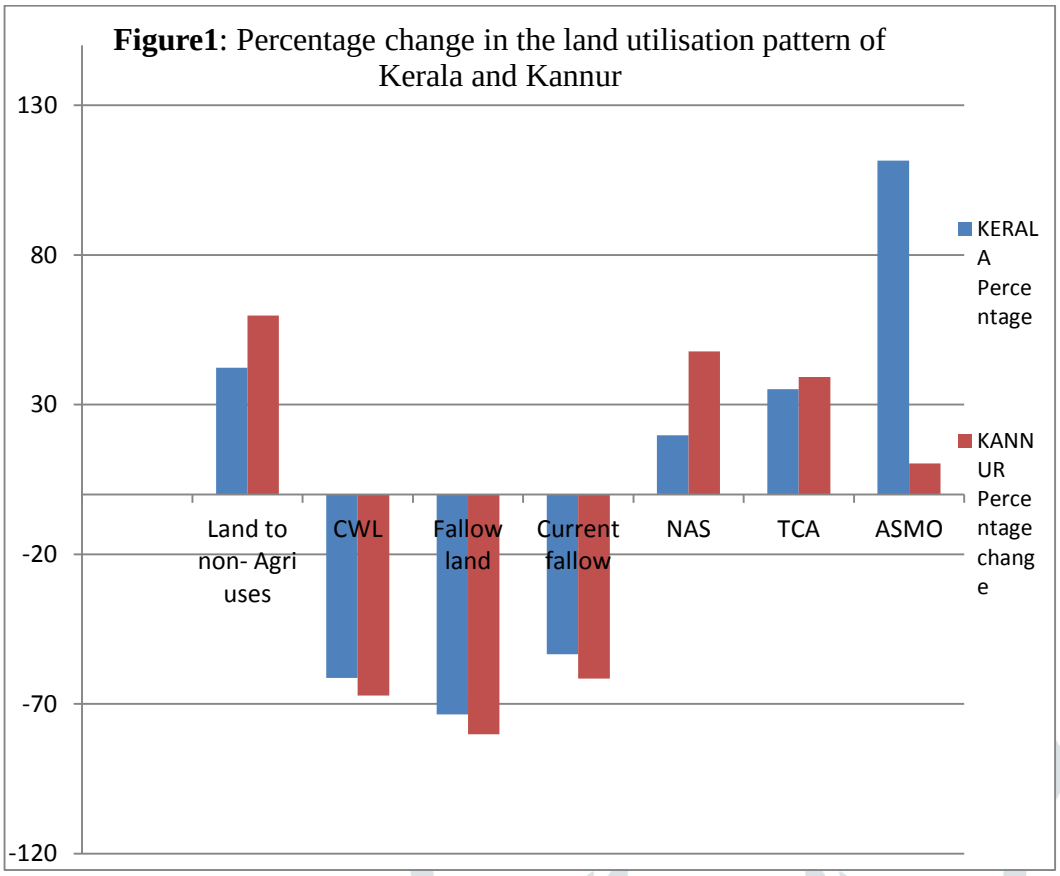
The total available land area in a country sets definite limits with in which the land base can be stretched horizontally during the process of economic development. As this process advances, the demand for land increases, new uses for land are found, land gets diverted from its existing use to the new found uses . More generally the limit from the agricultural uses to the non-agricultural uses, which my disrupt the balance of agricultural supplies and adversely affects the whole process of growth. It is in this context that statistics relating to the land utilization pattern become significant . The sharp and peculiar deviation of Kannur district to other districts in terms of various indicators - cultivable waste land (CWL) barren and uncultivable land fallow land, net area sown (NAS) total cropped area (TCA) area sown more than once (ASMO) etc. is imputed open the contribution made by the migrants in the District.

Table 1: Land utilization pattern in Kerala and Kannur (1973-74 over 1957-58)

Kerala				Kannur		
Indicators	1957-58	1973-74	Percentage change	1957-58	73-74	Percentage change
TGA	3858	--	--	--	--	--
Land to non-Agricultural uses	201	286	42.29	39.6	63.27	59.78
CWL	191	74	-61.26	51.74	16.98	-67.18
Fallow land	83	22	-73.49	41.2	8.17	-80.16
Current fallow	60	28	-53.33	11.08	4.22	-61.46
NAS	1839	2202	19.74	214.2	316.68	47.83
TCA	2211	2989	35.19	251.41	350.03	39.23
ASMO	372	787	111.55	37.2	33.35	-10.35

Source: Agricultural statistics of Kerala – 1975

The table shows that Kannur is ahead of Kerala in all indicators except ASMO in terms of percentage changes. Land put to non-agricultural uses (towns, villages, houses, roads, railways, etc.) increased by 60% in Kannur but by only 42% in Kerala. Similarly cultivable waste land decreases by 61% in Kerala and 67% in Kannur. Similar trend is visible in case of follow and current follow land . Again NAS increases by 20% in Kerala but 48% in Kannur and TCA by 35% and 39% respectively. All these factors together exhibits the dominant role played by the migrants in the rapid increase of agricultural land in Kannur. Another notable feature is that NAS of Kerala increased by 363 Ha over this period, but Kannur itself contributes 102.47 Ha. It shows that 28.22% of NAS increase of Kerala is from Kannur alone.



To specify the unique role played by Kannur over this the contribution made by other districts in certain selected indicators are given below .

Table 2: Land utilization pattern in various Districts of Kerala (% change of 1973-74 over 1957-58)

Districts	**ASMO**	**CWL**	**NAS**	**TCA**	**Land put to Non Agri. uses**
Trivandrum	92.87	86.21	3.41	25.26	36.14
Kollam	342.9	73.86	11.56	56.17	38.18
Alappuzha	97%	80.01	3.15	21.78	18.12
Kottayam	411.49	58.28	17.1	25.97	40.9
Ernakulum	139.95	85.25	18.54	33.29	76.31
Thrissur	88.03	64.65	7.34	32.38	54.34
Calicut	97.78	59.94	23.28	31.67	30.65
Kannur	**-10.35**	**67.18**	**47.83**	**39.23**	**59.78**
KERALA	111.56	61.26	19.74	35.19	42.29

Source: Computed from Agricultural Statistics of Kerala - 1975

The table shows that the percentage change in NAS, TCA and land put to non - agricultural uses in Kannur district is more than that of other districts in Kerala during this period. It shows that people from southern part migrated to northern districts over the period. As we all know, the resourceful land is available in plenty in northern parts of Kerala, the percentage decline in CWL in northern districts (Kannur, Kozhikode &Thrissur) is less than that of Southern districts (except Kottayam).The belief of the abundant supply of fertile land in northern parts stems from the following figure. The absolute decrease in the cultivable waste land of Kerala is 117' Ha and Kannur itself is 34.76 which is 29.71 % of Kerala . Following table shows the District wise contribution to the percentage decline of Cultivable Waste Land.

Table 3: District wise contribution of the % Decline of C.W.L. of Kerala Between 1957 and 1974

District	Absolute decline	Percentage
Kannur	34.76	29.71
Thiruvananthapuram	2.44	2.09
Kollam	5.7	4.87
Alappuzha	3.34	2.85
Kottayam	21.93	18.74
Ernakulum	10.68	9.13
Trissur	3.53	3.02
Calicut	24.4	20.85
Palaghat	6.14	5.25
Others	4.08	3.49
Kerala	117	

Source: Computed from the table 2

The table shows that around 50% of the decline in C .W .L in absolute figures is from Calicut & Kannur districts. These figures emphasizes the role of migrants to cultivate hilly areas of the district. However a contrasting feature is often visible in C.W.L. i.e. relative change is high in southern Districts and absolute change in northern Districts .Why it is so? The answer to this question is the words of I.C Dhingra "In the face of increasing requirements of land, what is generally stressed is that the inaccessible waste and fellow lands and the lands which have hitherto been lying unutilized should be commissioned and made serviceable for agricultural and non-agricultural uses". It says that when the availability of land decreases the intensive utilization of available land will occur and such a situation is occurred in the southern districts of Kerala.

The barren and uncultivable land declines from 199 Ha in Kerala (ie a percentage decline of 66.54) and in Kannur from 39.996 to 19.458. Ha (ie a percentage decline of 51.35). This is the one among the two situations in which Kannur runs behind Kerala. This withdrawal is also due to the role played by the migrants and here we can see the application of an important theory in economics. i.e Riccardian theory of rent. To Riccardo, land besides being limited in quantity also various in quality. Some lands are more fertile than other. The most fertile lands are naturally the first to be occupied and cultivated. As the population increases, however, we calls must be had to inferior lands. Due to plentiful availability of land in Malabar, the people first cultivated the best land and only after a period, they turned to barren and uncultivable land.

The second situation in which Kannur lags behind Kerala and other districts is in ASMO. All Districts shows a positive sign of ASMO over this period and Kannur alone shows a negative sign. The inhabitants of Kannur cultivated only a small piece of land and they cultivated only short duration crops. Attracted by the agricultural practices of migrants, inhabitants too began to cultivate annual crops. Again, the migrants in the initial stage were cultivating food crops like tapioca, paddy, elephant foot yam, etc. and so ASMO in this period is too high. But after sustaining the migrants in the land by 5-10 years, they began to cultivate cash crops. These three features explain the negative sign of ASMO of Kannur district during this period. Due to the limited availability of land in most of the southern district in this period calls for intensive cultivation which is revealed through the high ASMO in these districts. The migration of people from central Travancore more or less came to an end by the mid 1970's and the economic condition of the migrants began to improve slowly in this period.

Concluding observations

The changes in the land utilisation pattern in Kannur and Kerala over different periods shows that between 1957-58 and 1973-74, land put to non-agricultural uses have increased in Kannur. At the same time area under cultivable waste land, barren land and fallow land decreases tremendously in Kannur district and it is due to the migration of peasants. Again the net area sown and total cropped area in Kannur has increased while comparing to state and the area sown more than once decrease by 10.35 % in Kannur where as in the state it increases by 111.55 % stems the existence of Migration. It is interesting to notice the fact that the same momentum cannot sustain in these districts in the new generation era and they too began to follow the same pattern which undergoes in the other districts of Kerala. This is because, by 2000 the major portion of the migrated farmers left the scene and the third generation began to dominate the family. Their attitude towards agriculture and work culture clearly changed and the economy in general became a global one. The land put to non-agricultural uses increase both in Kerala and Kannur, but the percentage increase in this is high in Kannur District and it shows the economic improvement of the residents in Kannur District.

References

1. Cashin, P and R. Sahay , "Internal migration, centre-state grants and economic growth in the states of India" IMF Working Paper, July 1996

2. George, K.T. and P.K. Michael Tharakan (1984): `Penetration of Capital into a Traditional Economy: The Case of Tea Plantations in Kerala, 1880-1950', *Studies in History*, New Series, 2 (2): 199-230.

3. Gopinath, R (1987): Aspects of Demographic Change and the Malabar Agrarian Economy, 1871- 1921, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 (5): PE30-PE36 (January 31).
4. Human Development Report, Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development,2009 available at http://hdr.undp.org, (accessed on 25/07/2010)
5. Retna Raj. M, "Patterns of Social Change among the Migrant Farmers of Kannur District – a Case Study", CDS, Trivandrum, 2003
6. Sebastian P T "Christian migration to Malabar, 1930 - 1980 ", Department of History, University of Calicut, 2002
7. Joseph, K.V. (1988): *Migration and Economic Development of Kerala*, Mittal Publications.
8. Kannan K.P. (1988): *Of Rural Proletarian Struggles Mobilisation and Organization of Rural workers in south-west India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi.
9. Lekshmi, S. and K.T. George (2003): Expansion of natural rubber cultivation in Kerala: An exploratory analysis, *Mumbai: Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 58, 217–233.
10. Prakash, B.A. (1988): 'Agricultural Backwardness of Malabar during the colonial period: An Analysis of Economic Causes', *Social scientist*, vol. 16, Nos. 6-7, June-July.
11. Radhakrishnan, P. (1989): *Peasant Struggles Land Reforms and Social Change in Malabar 1836- 1982*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.
12. Ramachandran, V.K. (1998): 'On Kerala's Development Achievements', in Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen (eds.), 'Indian Development- Selected Regional Perspectives', Oxford university Pres, New Delhi.
13. Raj, K.N. and P.K.M. Tharakan (1983): Agrarian Reform in Kerala and its impact on the rural economy- A preliminary assessment, in Ghose, A.K. (ed.): *Agrarian Reform in Contemporary Developing Countries*, Crown Helm London and Canberra, St. Martin's Press, New York.
14. Retnaraj, M. (2003): 'Patterns of Social Change among the Migrant Farmers of Kannur District – a Case Study', Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development, Centre for Development Studies Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, 34p.
15. Sebastian, T.K. (2007): Human Development and Economic Growth: A study with respect to the migrant cultivators in Kannur District, Kerala, *Unpublished PhD thesis submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University*, Department of Economics, Sree Sankara College, Kalady, 218p (July).
16. Sreedhara Menon. A (1972): (Ed.) 'Gazetteer of India, Kerala, Cannanore', Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram.
17. Tharakan, P.K.M. (1997): 'Migration of Farmers from Travancore to Malabar 1930-1960: An Analysis of its economic causes; Unpublished M Phil dissertation, Trivandrum.