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Pattern of occupational shift among Malabar migrants: a case study of Kallar grama panchayath in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

The impact of the migration on the economy of Kerala in general and of Malabar in particular needs special mention. Large scale production of commercial crops like rubber, ginger, pepper, arecanut and coconut, advanced methods of cultivation and the introduction of new agricultural crops are some of the aspects to be highlighted. Migration to Malabar turned out to be a mass movement, as migration of half a million people took place without any design, organisation or leadership. Famine was a driving force behind large scale migration. Land prices were very low as compared with Travancore. The increasing tendency of cultivation of commercial crops helped the migration. It is a form of agriculture to agriculture migration, anticipating a long run improvement and can be perceived as a human capital decision. This often leads to change of traditional occupation to other and substantial socio economic development. The immigrant people change their occupation from agriculture or agricultural labour to industrial labour or some other jobs. The present study focuses the changes that take place in the occupational pattern of the Malabar migrants in Kallar Grama Panchayath in Kasaragod district of Kerala.

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1. Introduction

Movement of people from one place to another for temporary or permanent settlement is due to social, economic, political, religious or other reasons. Although migration is as old as human history, it has wider social, economic, political, demographic and ecological implications. It has multi faced and varies from one to another. Losses of resources, diffidence to the resources, and lack of employment, are main reasons.¹ The impact of it on the economy of Kerala in general and of Malabar in particular needs special mention. This often leads to transform of traditional occupation to other. Large scale production of commercial crops, advanced methods of cultivation and the introduction of new agricultural

crops are some of the aspects to be highlighted. Special mention should be made of the introduction of tapioca, a food crop.² The presence and the influence of the Travancore migrants altogether changed the cultural, social, educational, religious political and economic conditions of the existing society and produced a mixed culture. Along the routes, migration settlements were started, roads and bridges followed them.³

Migration of farmers from central Kerala to Malabar region is unique. It's a community or cluster in nature; where in a group of homogeneous people along with their close kin migrated together for a better livelihood. Most of them sold away their entire property in the motherland and settled in several parts of Malabar. In the initial phase they faced hurdles and constraints. And made a significant addition to the agricultural labour force. Gradually they flourished in this new land. There have been substantial

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changes that have taken place in the economic sphere of the region. This boosted agricultural sector, involved a revolution of great magnitude and formed an important phase in the social, economic and cultural history of Kerala. It is a form of agriculture to agriculture migration, anticipating a long run improvement and can be perceived as a human capital decision. The socio-economic conditions of the settlers were generally very backward during the initial years. The migrants disposed whatever possessions they were having at the original land, which varied from few cents or few acres of land plus cattle and a small house.

2. Objectives

Primarily, the study intends to get an understanding of the socio-economic advancement and occupational transformation of the farmers who have migrated from Travancore to Kallar Grama Panchayath, Kasaragod district. The specific objective of the study is, to understand occupational shift among the Malabar migrant farmers in Kallar grama panchayath.

3. Materials and Methods

Life history method was used to trace the entire process of migration and the changes that are noted. The study is non-qualitative, historic and descriptive in nature. The first-hand and in-depth data was collected from the older members of the farming households through informal and intensive personal interviews, discussions and interaction. Life history approach was used to understand the occupational changes in the migrant farming households. 42 farmers were selected for the study through simple random sampling from 14 wards of Kallar grama panchayath. Details regarding the occupational aspects of the sons of the respondent as well as his siblings were collected from him. All the respondents were Roman Christians. The study is basically two-generational which attempts to trace the occupational details of the father (First generation) and the sons (second generation).

4. Results, Analysis and Discussion

4.1. History of migration

The migration to Malabar started from early decades of the 20th century, and continued up to the 1970s and 1980s when almost the whole area of the uncultivated wastelands were occupied.^{4,5} The first organized migration to Malabar was by the Knanaya Catholic Diocese of Kottayam in 1943.⁶ Two settlements or colonies were started; first the Rajapuram Colony at Chullikara, Kallar and Malakkallu in the Kasargod district.. The second was in Madampam, settled at Madampam and Payyavoor of Kannur district. This had a significant demographic and social impact; as the Christian population of Malabar increased 15-fold between

1931 and 1971.⁷ The huge majority of the migrants were Syrian Christians, mainly (Syrian Malabar Nasrani). Several Hindu Nairs also migrated.

4.2. Occupational shift

The shifts in occupation over the two successive generations of the study area were conducted.

a. Two –generational occupation shift: Here principal occupation followed by the father and that of his sons is analyzed, shows a clear shift of occupation from agriculture to non-agriculture over two successive generations.

Table 1: Two –generational occupation shift

Generation	Agriculture	Non-agriculture	Total
I Generation	30 (71.42%)	12 (28.58%)	42 (100%)
II Generation	4 (9.52%)	38 (90.48%)	42 (100%)

Source: Sample survey

Data regarding the pattern of occupation (Table 1) indicates that there is a clear shift of occupation from agriculture to non-agriculture over two successive generations. While most of the first generation respondents were depending on agriculture, 90.48 % of their sons (2nd generation) have moved to non-agricultural occupations. Further analysis indicates that majority of the non-agriculturists follow agriculture as their supplementary occupations. But very few of the agriculturists ensure non-agriculture even as supplementary occupations.

b. Pattern of occupation: Tables 2 and 3 indicate the intensity of the occupational shift over two successive generations. The occupational diversity is highly pronounced among the sons of first generation respondents. The improved educational status also impacted on the occupational pattern of second generation.

Table 2: Occupational categories of first generations

Sl. No	Occupation	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Farmer	30	71.42
2	Coolies	5	11.9
3	Small business	4	9.52
4	Pensioners	2	4.76
5	Govt. Job	1	2.38
	Total	42	100

Source: Sample survey

From Table 2, it is clear that apparently an overwhelming majority (71.42%) of the first generation respondents is engaged in agriculture and agriculture labour occupations. 11.9% of migrants are coolie workers and 9.52% doing business. 4.76% of respondents are pensioners. Only 2.38%

of respondents have Government job.

Table 3: Occupational categories of second generation

No	Occupation	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Farmers	4	9.52
2	Nurses	9	21.42
3	Business	26	61.9
4	Govt. Job	2	4.76
5	Engineers	1	2.38
	Total	42	100

Source: Sample survey

The current occupational profile of the household members is much more diverse as evident from Table 3. While a larger proportion of the second generation are engaged in business (61.9%), about 21.42% members are working as nurses; 2.38 % working as engineers and about 4.76% is government employee. Only 9.52% of second generation followed agriculture as their occupation clearly demonstrates a major shift in occupational pursuits.

5. Conclusion

Migration of farmers from central Kerala to Malabar region is unique while considering any other migration. It's a community or cluster migration; wherein a group homogeneous people along with their close kin migrated together for a better livelihood. One of the striking impacts of migration is the socio-economic development it had brought about in Malabar. The fearful forest region was transformed into agricultural lands and later became semi-urban centers or village towns. The migration of peasants and the new land use pattern introduced by them could lead to the development of Malabar region in general and of the centers where migrants settled down in particular. The roads, schools and hospitals constructed by them could contribute to the progress of the region. There is significant change in the socio-economic condition of migrated farmers in the study area. They are socially and economically well developed. Education has been a major factor in improving the socio-economic status of the households, which in turn, enabled them occupy lucrative jobs outside the villages or even outside the state or country.

The first generation respondents are less educated. The second generation members have reportedly attained higher educational qualifications. Education has been a major factor in improving the socio-economic status and change in occupation of the households in the study area.

6. Source of Funding

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7. Conflict of Interest

None.

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