

**MALABAR MIGRATION: A CASE STUDY OF KANNUR DISTRICT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO TALIPARAMBA BLOCK**

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**Abstract**

*Migration is a complex component of population change. It provides an important network for the diffusion of ideas and information, and indicates symptoms of social and economic change and it can be regarded as a human adjustment to economic, environmental and social problems. The study of internal migration assumes special importance in the process of development, as it is related to a process of change occurring within the social system. Migration has been the salient feature of Kerala society. According to the studies in Kerala migration, it is noted that Malabar migration had been an important phenomenon of internal migration which started in 1920s and continued up to late 1980s. People migrated from land scarce region of Travancore to Malabar region in the search of vast cultivable land. The present Kannur district was a part of erstwhile Malabar district which witnessed Malabar migration and underwent agricultural transformation and socio-economic development. This study is an attempt to analyse migration trend from the census year 1961 to 1991 for Kannur district with secondary data of migration tables for the Census of India. In the backdrop of this, a reference study has been conducted for Taliparamba block. Two Panchayats from mid land and high land was selected for the sample survey to get information about migrant's past experiences, for this a oral history method has been adapted. Information has been summarized and presented with tables and flowcharts.*

**Key Words:** Migration, Malabar, Oral History, Development.

**1. Introduction**

Migration is a general social phenomenon that often appears as an inevitable part of life in the history of mankind. It is a spatial mobility of people, with change from their place of residence and socio-cultural environment. Migration usually involves abandoning one's social setting and entering into another. It is usually described as a movement over a significant distance.

Zelinsky, W (1966), explains that migration is any permanent or semi-permanent change of residence, more meaningfully; perhaps it is a spatial transfer from one social unit or neighborhood to another, which stains or ruptures previous social bonds. Ogden P. E (1984) interprets

migration as a part of the wider study of population geography and as an important element in the understanding of the geographical organization of human society. Considering the overall concepts of migration, it can be generalized that migrants are those who move between the political units and movers are those who move within the political units. Thus at any given point of time the total population of a region can be divided into migrants and non-migrants, movers and non-movers. This classification establishes the mobility status of the population.

## **2. Theoretical background**

A number of approaches have been developed in the past for analyzing the various dimensions of migration. The first study on migration was conducted by E.G Ravenstein in the 1880s. He introduced the "law of migration" that people usually move from rural areas to neighbouring urban centers seeking better and more employment opportunities. After a long gap, Everett Lee, (1960) put forward the general and well known law of "push" and "pull" factors of migration. Gustav Ranis and John Fei (1961) had given another remarkable study on migration, they have proposed the concept of a "dual economy system", in which he states that migration takes place from low productive (rural) sector to high productive (capitalist) sector in the modern world.

Michael P. Todaro (1970) pointed out that the decision to migrate depends on anticipated wages or income from modern employment sector and cost and benefit possibilities in the existing urban conditions. Stouffer (1940) introduced the concept of intervening opportunities as an attempt to improve upon Zipf's principle of least effort, to establish that the actual distance between two places is less important as a determinant of migration than the nature of space. He argued that the numbers of persons migrating from a given distance was directly proportional to the number of opportunities at that distance and inversely proportional to the number of intervening opportunities.

According to Wolport (1965) migration occurs "when the place of utility", in a new location becomes greater than that of the present location. This is based on the behavior theory. He argues that the pattern of migration is a composite expression of human aspirations, needs and perceptions. He considers that human mobility behaviour as one of the several means for individuals seeking maximization of utility and wellbeing. On the basis of the place utility the individual develops an action space consisting of all places to which he can move.

On the other hand migration system theory discusses that migration alters the social, cultural, economic and institutional conditions at both the sending and receiving ends-that is, the entire developmental space within which migration processes operate. The Neo-classical theory with its underlying assumptions that migration is stimulated primarily by rational economic considerations of relative benefits and costs, mostly financial but also psychological form the base for current migration theories.

These approaches summarize the concepts related with migration and its various dimensions in time and space.

The nature and purpose of migration differs for different groups and individuals. Based on the

purpose of migration, the period of stay and the place of destination will vary. There are various kinds of migration based on the nature, purpose, distance, period of stay, boundary and direction but most studied migration forms are Internal migration and International migration.

Internal migration refers to a change of residence within national boundaries, such as between states, provinces, districts, cities or villages and an internal migrant is someone who moves to a different administrative territory. On the other hand International Migration, refers to change of residence over national boundaries.

### **3. Background of the study**

Migration is the third important demographic factor after fertility and mortality for population dynamics. Its multidimensional impact over the society in general and for individual in particular has moulded migration as an interdisciplinary subject. The present study deals with the trend of internal migration in Kannur district in the state of Kerala which has witnessed population mobility for a very long time, for example, migration from Travancore to Malabar area, high land migration, and migration to other states of India and the gulf boom.

Internal Migration has been an important aspect of Kerala history which has significantly affected society, culture, demography and economy of the state.

Kannur had been the part of erstwhile Malabar district of Madras Presidency during British rule and got its separate identity as a district in 1957. Migration from Central Kerala to Malabar region (high land migration) in early 1920s which continued up to late 1980s has impacted Malabar area in all dimensions. The search for vast cultivable land propelled such kind of migration. Present Kannur district being a part of the earlier Malabar district also contributed in this mobility and high /mid lands of the region were settled by migrant farmers. This study tries to focus over the past migration trend using census of India migration tables. With special reference to Taliparamba block, Primary survey is been conducted taking samples of 60 households from the mid-high land area to get the details about Malabar migrants.

### **4. Study area**

Kannur district is a beautiful miniature of the picturesque state of Kerala. Kannur district is carved out from the portions of Malabar district and the Kasargod Taluk of the Madras state, linked to Kerala as per the state reorganization Act. In 1<sup>st</sup> January 1957 it was bifurcated for administrative convenience into three districts namely Kannur, Kozhikode and Palakkad. Present Kannur district has three Taluks, Taliparamba, Kannur and Thalassery (Fig.1). Kannur is located between 11<sup>o</sup>40' to 12<sup>o</sup>48' N latitudes and between 74<sup>o</sup>52' to 75<sup>o</sup>56' E longitudes (Fig.2). Kannur District has the total area as 38863 km<sup>2</sup> and according to 2011 census the total population is 333.88 lakh.

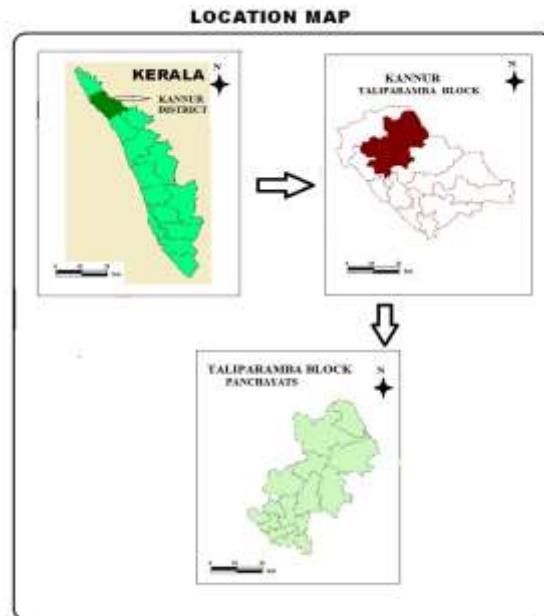


Fig. 1 Location map of study area

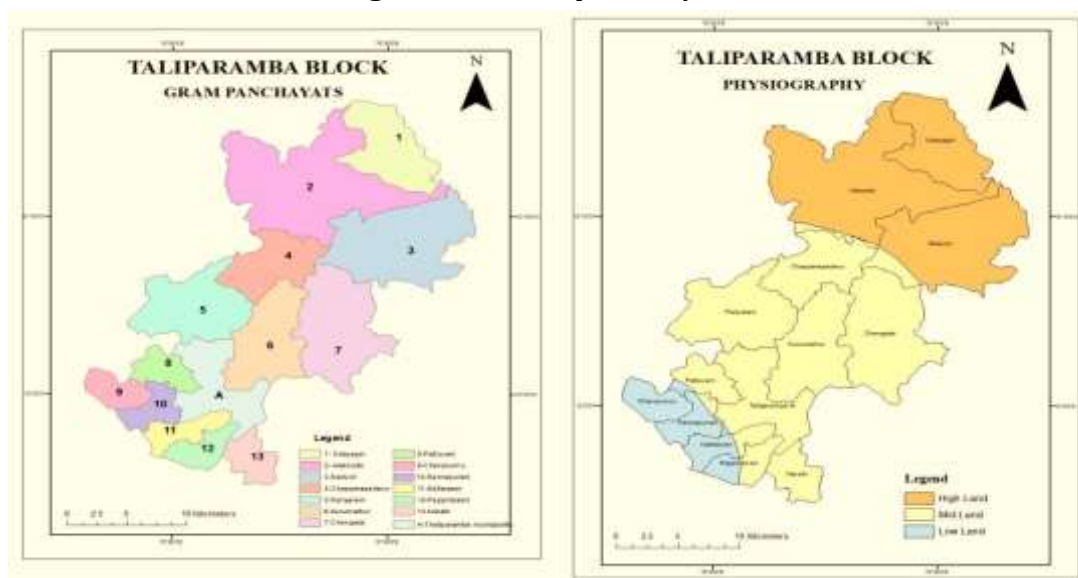


Fig. 2 Administrative and physiographic division of Study area

## 5. Objectives

- To Analyze the migration trend in Kannur district from the census year 1961-1991
- To understand the associated phenomena of migration with special reference to Taliparamba Block.

## 6. Data sources and methodology

Migration data from the census of India for the period 1961 to 1991 forms the data base for the study. Kannur district was formed in 1957 and hence the migration data for this district is been

available since 1961. Migration table D-1 dealing with the population classified by place of birth and sex shows the pattern of migration based on place of birth at state and district level. From this table data has been sorted out for the Kannur District and tabulated under the different sub categories for extracting information.

Migration data is processed using MS EXCEL and they are illustrated using tables and graphs. These processed data are interpreted and major findings have been arrived. For further understanding of the process of migration, 60 households from Taliparamba Block representing two Panchayats of mid and high land area were surveyed. Oral history method has been adapted to know the significance of temporal context and memory by interviewing people about their past experiences. Information gathered is been interpreted.

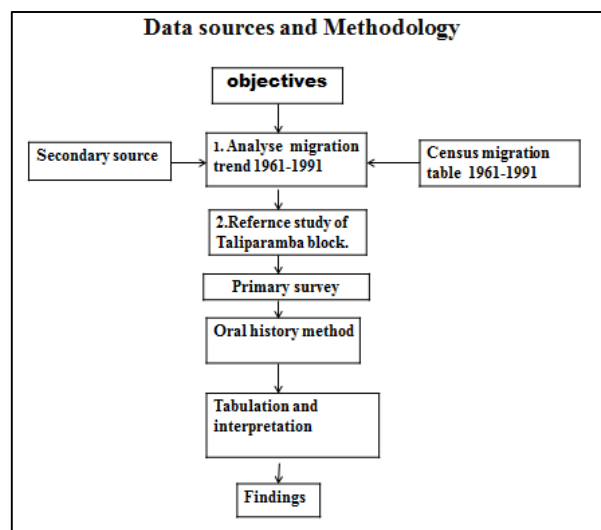


Fig.3 Methodology Chart

7. Results and Discussion

Table-1

Inter- district migration pattern

Kannur district, census year (1961-1991)

Census year	Inter- district migration to Kannur district							
	Life-time migrants	Percentage	Total	Percent	Male	Percent	Female	Percent
1961	490014	27.88	129531	7.37	71215	54.98	58316	45.02
1971	567024	24.28	197882	8.47	106832	53.99	91050	46.01
1981	754139	27.32	203438	7.37	108388	53.28	95050	46.72
1991	654511	29.45	180186	8.12	92186	51.16	88000	48.84

Since the study focuses over Malabar migration, in which people migrated from central Travancore to Malabar area in search of land, this inter district migration pattern has been considered and

Census of India migration tables (1961-1991) for the Kannur district has been analysed and data have been tabulated.

**Source:** Migration Tables, Kerala, census of India (1961-1991)

**Note:** *life time migrants are in respect to state of Kerala only. Life time migrants are those persons whose place of residence at the census /survey date differs from his place of birth.*

The Table-1, illustrates that male migrants show the higher percentage share than female migrants for Inter district migration pattern because of the long distance factor.

**Table-2**

Inter- district migration streams

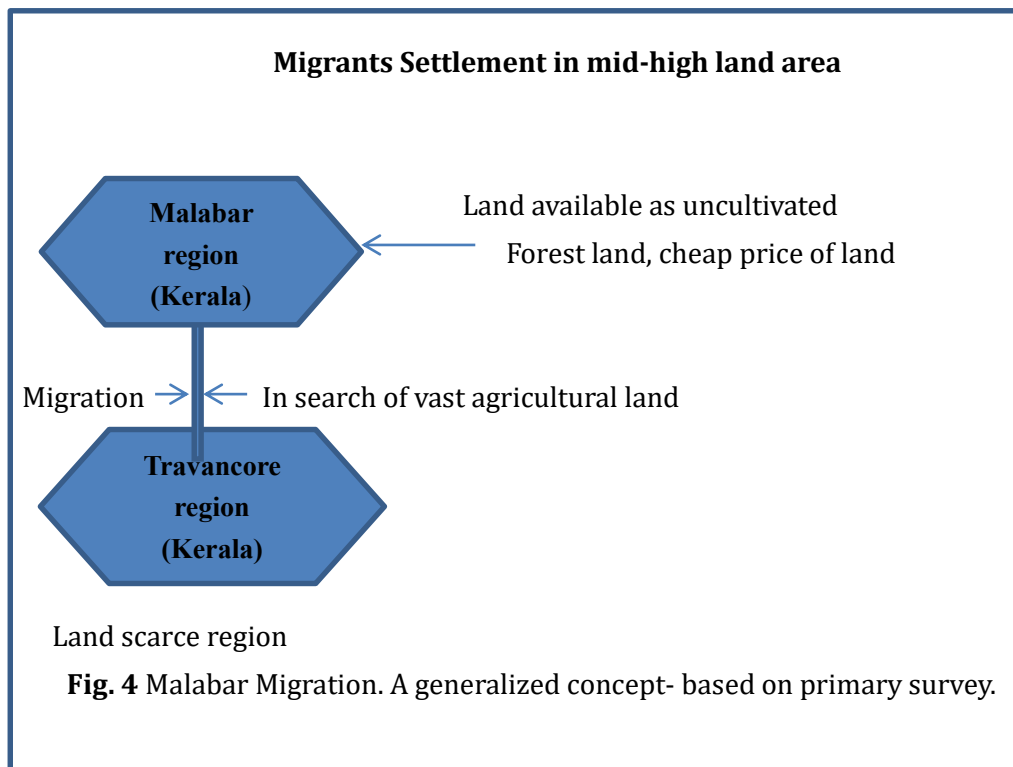
Kannur district, census year (1961-1991)

Census year	Total inter district migrants	Persons migrated to rural areas			
		Rural to rural	Percentage to total inter district migrants	Urban to rural	Percentage to total inter district migrants
1961	129531	109258	84.35	5716	4.41
1971	197882	163322	82.54	19750	9.98
1981	203438	157079	77.21	22782	11.20
1991	180186	97429	54.07	35590	19.75

**Source:** Migration Tables, Kerala, census of India (1961-1991)

The Table.2 depicts that migration from rural to rural areas has a more share than migration from urban areas. This conveys that Malabar migration rural areas were mainly focused for acquiring vast lands. Census year 1961-71 show the higher percentage share of migrants which continue to decrease in further census years.

Following the second objective of the study, Chapparapadav (mid land panchayat) and Alakode (high land panchayat) were taken into consideration for the reference study of Taliparamba block. 30 households from each of the above mentioned panchayat were selected and primary survey was conducted. Following are the results of the study conducted.



**Fig. 4** Malabar Migration. A generalized concept- based on primary survey.

Land –farmer relation is the main core of Malabar Migration as there was more cultivable land for sustainable livelihoods which attracted as the main pull factor. Based on the information gathered from the early successful migrant about the vast forest land in Malabar region, the enthusiastic small-medium farmers stepped towards better avenues. Low cost of land at destination led them to acquire more land comparable to the place of origin .Table.3 shows the comparative prices of land sold and purchased during migration process.

**Table.3**

Land sales and purchases by migrant households before and after migration

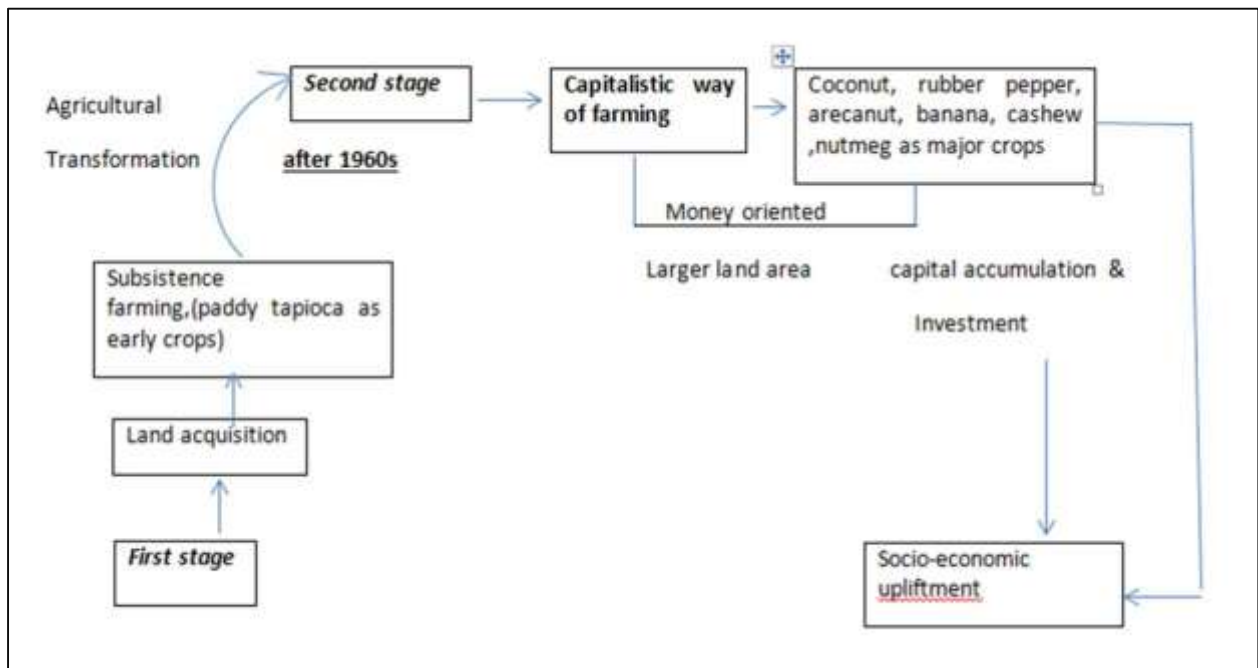
Year	No.of households	Land sold before migration at origin (acre)	Sale proceeds(Rs.)	Average selling price per acre Rs.	Land purchased after migration at destination (acres)	Price paid in Rs.	Average price per acre Rs.
1946-1950	4	6	3500	583	31	985	31.8
1951-1960	27	30.5	36350	1191.80	251	38000	151.39
1961-1970	23	36	56200	1561.11	324	64835	200.10
1970 later	6	12	36000	3000.00	165	152500	924.24
Total	60	84.5	132050	6335.91	771	256320	1307.53

**Source:** Primary survey

It is clear from the table.3 that the price of land was quite low at Malabar area than from the places of their origin .although as the year passed the prices of land increased in both the places, but still it was lesser in Malabar region than the place of origin during the whole migration process. Prosperity comes when resources are in the reach and usable. In this case, entrepreneurship of the migrant farmers to produce cultivable land from forest land is a keen factor resulting a sustainable livelihood sources for them. Some of the migrants quoted that “*they could have died of poverty if they had not migrated to Malabar. Malabar was the escape from all struggles which they were going to face in coming years at native land.*”

### 7.1 Migration as transformative process

Migration is a decision that impacts the welfare of the household and in turn for the society also. In case of Malabar migration, people land relation was the important factor to propel this whole process. Agricultural transformation was the major outcome of this migration process which is illustrated by the following flow chart.



**Fig.5** Migration as a Transformative Factor

The two stage development took place in the process of Malabar migration (Fig.5). In the early years of migration (from 1920-late 1950s) can be termed as first stage in which people first occupied forest land at very cheap prices and early settlements were created. Subsistence crops like paddy, tapioca and vegetables were grown first at this stage.

Once migrants got equipped with all necessary resources, they started looking for better avenues. It was the beginning of second stage of transformation with the advent of plantation economy during the decade of 1960s. Rubber crop was the prime focus with available resources, vast estates and suitable topography. Apart from this, coconut, arecanut, cashew, pepper were also started



grown by the migrant families. Malabar migration has impacted the Land economy of Malabar region in manifold ways specially the agricultural transformation.

Thus, this paper is an attempt to illustrate the specific kind of internal migration broadly termed as Malabar Migration .Its major features and general impact over the place of origin has been discussed using histographical analysis of available literatures and primary survey based on oral history method.

## 7.2 Findings and conclusion

Above discussion about the Malabar migration process and associated phenomena give some findings about the overall behaviour of migration which are summarized below.

- Migration can be an intrinsic part of broader development process rather than as a problem to be solved.
  - Migration as a function of people's capabilities and aspirations to move can help to achieve a richer understanding of migration behaviour.
  - The presence of spatial heterogeneity among different location is the determinant of migration.
  - Place utility and level of satisfaction is the choice among alternative destination.
- In this way, migration to Malabar areas paved a way to socio-economic development of the migrants and provided a secure future for the coming generations too.

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