

**ECONOMIC HISTORY OF  
KERALA FROM 1800 TO 1947 AD  
PART I : MALABAR**

**Change in Agriculture, Industry, Transport  
and Education**

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## **Preface**

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Though a lot of literature is available on political and social history of Kerala, not much attempts have been made to study the economic history. As a scholar interested in Kerala's economic studies, I made some attempts to study the economic history of Kerala during the period 1986 and 1989, when I was a visiting scholar at Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. Based on my research, a few papers were published on agricultural backwardness of Malabar (Social Scientist, June-July 1988), survey of studies on Agricultural Development from 1800 AD to 1980 AD (Centre for Development Studies, Working Paper No. 220), land tenures, agrarian change etc. Though I wish to publish my studies in a book form, it has not materialised. In this context, I publish my studies on economic history of Kerala covering the period between 1800 AD and 1947 AD in two parts viz. Malabar and Travancore in the website [www.keralaeconomy.com](http://www.keralaeconomy.com). The first part is presented here.

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# Chapter 1

## AGRICULTURAL BACKWARDNESS

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### Introduction

The erstwhile Malabar district of Madras Presidency, forming the northern region of present day Kerala State is economically backward in many respects. The region was under colonial rule since the English East India Company conquered Malabar from the Mysoreans in 1792 till attainment of independence in 1947. Though Malabar had been a major exporter of a wide variety of agricultural products to Europe for more than two thousand years and consequently exposed to influences from abroad, it still remains an underdeveloped region with a backward agricultural sector.

Except for a study by T.W. Shea, no attempts have been made to examine the causes of agricultural backwardness in Malabar. Shea<sup>1</sup> emphasises six barriers to economic growth in the region, viz. the immobility of the caste structure, the traditional occupational distribution of the elite, the absence of systematic government in the pre-British period, the pattern of land tenures, the structure of family property laws and the pattern of population growth during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In explaining the barriers to economic growth, he puts forward the hypothesis that businessmen in Malabar made no concerted, systematic attempts to rationalise agricultural production, and that because of their lack of interest in bringing about changes in productive techniques in agriculture, the development inhibiting social and economic barriers were never directly challenged. Though the study highlights a few barriers to the economic development of Malabar, a major limitation of the study is that it has completely ignored the impact of colonial policies.

In this study our objective is to present an alternative explanation for the agricultural backwardness of Malabar during the colonial period, in which we emphasise two factors, viz. (1) the unfavourable and extractive policies pursued by the colonial power in the spheres of agriculture, industry, infrastructure, trade and commerce; and (2) the caste system, and the social practices arising out of the system, that prevailed in Malabar.

## **The Causes of Agricultural Backwardness of Malabar**

### ***Agricultural Performance under Colonial Rule***

The British Malabar comprised of a vast region covering an area of about 6262 square miles. It was divided into 18 taluks and 2222 villages for administrative purposes by the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. Malabar was richly endowed with natural resources such as soil, climate, rainfall, etc., favourable to the growth of a wide variety of plants and trees. A large portion of Malabar to the east is mountainous and overrun with forests<sup>3</sup>. Some of the evergreen forests of Kerala, such as ‘Silent Valley’ and ‘Attapady Valley’ are located within the district. The climate of Malabar is also favourable to the cultivation of grain as well as plantation crops. The rainfall varies from 50 to 300 inches. The district also has a number of rivers and backwaters.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century agriculture was the chief economic activity of the people and provided the means of livelihood to the entire population except a few who engaged in trade, commerce, cotton weaving, carpentry, smithy, fishing etc. On the basis of the available information, we estimate that the population engaged in non-agricultural activities hardly exceeded five percent of the total population in 1837<sup>4</sup>. The agrarian system was characterised by a hierarchy of land rights in which agrestic slaves stood at the bottom. Except for the transactions that took place in trading centres with coins, Malabar remained a non-monetised economy. The region produced a variety of agricultural products like paddy, coconut, betel nut, ginger, pepper, cardamom and horticultural produce like jack fruits, plantains, mangoes etc. Among these products, the important items exported were pepper, coconut, coconut products, betel nut, cardamom and timber during the first decade of the nineteenth century<sup>5</sup>. Pepper was the single largest export earner among the products exported and accounted for about 45 percent of the total value of exports from Malabar in 1804<sup>6</sup>. Pepper was known as the ‘black gold’ of Malabar and the power struggles waged by the Portuguese, Dutch and English in this region were primarily with the objective of monopolising the pepper trade. Originally pepper was cultivated only in the two taluks of Malabar viz. Chirakkal and Kottayam. The composition of exports changed during the first three decades of the nineteenth century and by the end of the 1830s pepper ceased to be the largest export earner of Malabar.

Coconut and coconut products like copra, coconut oil, coir and coir products were the second important set of items exported from Malabar. By the 1840s coconut and its products emerged as the largest export earner for Malabar. Coconut cultivation was largely concentrated in the coastal regions. Coconut cultivation had not spread to a significant extent in the inland regions, because of lack of adequate irrigation and the consequent lower yield from the trees.

Rice was the staple food of the people and the principal agricultural produce. Rice was cultivated mainly in low lying wet lands and cultivation was mainly dependent on the monsoon. Traditional methods of cultivation were used for cultivating paddy. The land was ploughed several times with the help of wooden ploughs and young plants of paddy were transplanted. A common wooden plough, two hoes, a rake and a leveling instrument were the typical farming implements used for farming. Ash, cow dung, leaves and grass were generally used as manure. During the first half of the nineteenth century rice and paddy were exported from Malabar.

Coffee was introduced to Malabar around the 1820s. During 1829, the East India Company formulated a policy to encourage coffee cultivation with the objective of expanding its export and directed the Madras Government to take necessary steps. The Madras Government had announced the exemption of coffee plantations from land taxes. By the 1840s coffee cultivation was being undertaken on a large scale by European planters in Waynad taking advantage of the liberal encouragement given by the Government and the suitability of the local climate and soil for coffee cultivation.

According to Buchanan<sup>7</sup>, who visited Malabar in 1800, bulls, bullocks, cows and male and female buffaloes were the important native cattle stock that existed in Malabar. The native oxen were found to be of poor breed, and smaller in size compared to the oxen of Coimbatore and Mysore. The farmers who owned cattle used to house them in small huts. Landlords possessed cows and kept them along with the labouring cattle in small sheds built for the purpose. Cattle was fed with grass for about four months and straw for the rest of the year. Buchanan says that horses, asses, swine, sheep and goats were not the native animals of Malabar. Few of the above categories of animals found in Malabar were brought from outside the region. Poultry was also not a native item of Malabar, but was brought hereby Europeans. During the early decades of the nineteenth century a large number of cattle consisting of bullocks, cows, buffaloes, goats and sheep were brought from outside through Palghat.

There was not much change in the State of agriculture during the second half of the nineteenth century except for the expansion of area under plantation crops. The cultivation of coffee steadily increased and by the 1870s coffee emerged as the largest export-earner, accounting for 33 percent of the total export earnings of Malabar<sup>8</sup>. The decline in the importance of pepper can be attributed to many factors. One reason was the spread of cultivation of pepper to other countries. The Dutch took pepper saplings from Malabar during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and planted them in Sumatra and other countries. The result was that by 1940s about 90 percent of world pepper came from Dutch India. The spread of a disease known as 'wilt of pepper' during the early decades of the present century badly affected the crop. It attacks the roots just below the ground and cuts off nourishment with the result that leaves turn yellow and drop down and the whole vine soon dries up. The fall in the price of pepper, the high tax levies and unfavourable land tenures also contributed to the decline of pepper cultivation. As a cumulative result of all these, Malabar gradually lost its monopoly in world trade and by the 1940s pepper export from Malabar came to a very low level of one percent of world trade in pepper. Coffee, which emerged as the successor to pepper as Malabar's most important export crop during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century maintained its position till the end of the first decade of the present century. But the coffee boom came to an end with the spread of coffee disease in the twentieth century.

Futher, Malabar, an exporter of rice during the first part of the nineteenth century, began to import large quantities of rice after 1860<sup>9</sup>. By the 1870s, paddy, rice and other grains accounted for the bulk of the total value of imports<sup>10</sup>. This chronic deficit in food grains may be attributed to the stagnation of agricultural productivity, the slow increase in area under paddy and the steady growth of population. Due to the lack of growth of industrial or commercial activities, a vast majority of population (about 80 per cent) depended primarily on agricultural occupations for their livelihood. According to the 1881 census only 20 percent of the population was engaged in any activities outside agriculture such as in government service, army, clergy, trade, commerce, transportation, construction, metal work, weaving, clay works etc<sup>11</sup>.

The backwardness of agriculture and the lack of development of other sectors, coupled with a growing population, created a situation of chronic unemployment and consequent widespread poverty among the people. A sizeable section of the population was forced to live near famine conditions. Logan had pointed out that near famine conditions

prevailed in Malabar during the months from July to September and the victims were the poorer sections of the population. Malabar under colonial rule experienced frequent famines of a severe kind in 1865, 1866, 1876, 1877, 1878 and 1890. A severe famine which raged throughout the presidency in 1865 and 1866 made its effect felt in Malabar and a daily average of 6353 people were provided relief during the five months from July to November 1866<sup>12</sup>. During the period from 1876 to 1878, Malabar witnessed a severe famine and the Government took relief measures by providing rice *kanji* in many places in the district to the starving people. It was estimated that more than 40,000 persons were provided with rice *kanji* during the year 1877<sup>13</sup>. In 1899, Malabar faced severe scarcity of food grains and the government was forced to provide relief measures.

**Table 1.1**  
**Area Under Rice**

Year	Year under Rice	
	(Acres)	Index Number
1890-91	9,09,534	100
1900-01	7,17,051	118
1910-11	8,53,030	140
1920-21	8,88,711	146
1930-31	8,79,291	144
1939-40	8,61,744	141
1950-51	8,15,000	134

*Source:* (1) Govt. of India, Agricultural Statistics of British India, for the years 1890-91 to 1894-95, 1900-1901 to 1904-05, Vol.I and 1906-1907 to 1910-11, Vol.I (2) Govt. of Madras (Board of Revenue) Season and Crop. Reports of Madras Presidency for the agricultural years 1920-21, 1930-31 and 1939-40. (3) Govt. of Madras, Season and Crop. Report of Madras State for the Agricultural year 1950-51.

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was an appreciable change in the agricultural situation compared to earlier periods. But Malabar continued to remain an importer of large quantities of food grains. There was considerable expansion in the area under rice during the first two decades of the present century, but subsequently there was a decline in area (Table 1.1). The unfavourable land tenure structure and the low share received by the cultivating tenants may be causes for the decline in area. The productivity of land

under food grains, especially paddy was extremely also low. This low productivity was due to the lack of irrigation, non-introduction of modern methods of cultivation or chemical manures and the unfavourable structure of land tenure and land rights. The land tenure system which prevailed in Malabar offered no incentives to the cultivating tenants to increase agricultural productivity. Commenting on the low level of agricultural productivity, the Malabar Tenancy Committee had observed in 1940<sup>14</sup>; “The average multiple out turn was stated to be ten by the Joint Commissions in 1793 and it cannot be said that it is more at the present day.

**Table 1.2**  
**Agricultural Stock**

Year	Carts		Plough		Boat	
	(Nos.)	Index No.	(Nos.)	Index No.	(Nos.)	Index No.
<b>1884-85</b>	6,521	100	1,66,257	100	3,296	100
<b>1890-91</b>	8,544	131	1,69,136	101	N.A	-
<b>1899-1900</b>	10,284	157	1,65,687	99	N.A	-
<b>1909-10</b>	12,529	192	1,68,977	101	N.A	-
<b>1919-20</b>	13,720	210	1,89,739	114	N.A	-
<b>January 1930</b>	12,119	185	1,81,363	109	N.A	-
<b>January 1940</b>	10,961	168	1,73,190	104	7,860	238
<b>Census 1951</b>	10,927	167	2,47,900	149	N.A	-

*Source:* Government of India, Return of Agricultural Statistics, India for the year 1884-85; Agricultural Statistics of British India for the years 1890-91 to 1894-95, 1900-1901 to 1904-05, 1906-1907 to 1910-11. Government of Madras, Season and Crop Reports of Madras Presidency for the agricultural year 1920-21, 1930-31, 1939-40 and Season and Crop Report of Madras State for the ‘Agricultural year 1950-51

Wooden ploughs and other traditional agricultural implements were in use during the first half of the present century also<sup>15</sup>. The available evidence suggests that Malabar had about 1.66 lakhs of ploughs in 1885 (Table 1.2). Ernad, Walluvanad, Palghat and Ponnani were the taluks which had a large number of ploughs. The 1940s witnessed a rapid increase in the number of ploughs in use. There were no significant efforts at introducing modern

agricultural technology till 1940, as evident from the absence of any tractors and other mechanically operated agricultural machinery (Table 1.3). During the 1950s we find a sudden shift to the use of agricultural equipment like electric pumps, oil engine pumps, tractors and sugarcane crushers worked by power (Table 1.3). This shift can be attributed to the end of colonial rule and the change in agricultural policies of the new government.

**Table 1.3**  
**Agricultural stock in Malabar**

	<b>January 1940</b>	<b>Census 1951</b>
<b>1</b> Sugarcane crushers worked by power	3	588
<b>2</b> Sugarcane crushers	202	-
<b>3</b> Oil engines with pumps for irrigation purposes	57	428
<b>4</b> Electric pumps for tube wells	8	54
<b>5</b> Tractors	Nil	21
<b>6</b> Oil Mills	2,200	N.A
<b>7</b> Looms	13,755	N.A
<b>8</b> Ghaxis	N.A	1,533

N.A. Not Available

*Source:* Government of Madras, Season and Crop Reports for Madras Presidency for the Agricultural year 1939-40 and Season and Crop. Report of Madras State for the agricultural year 1950-51.

As far as diversification of the agrarian economy was concerned during the first three decades of this century, tea, which was introduced at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century steadily gained ground and by the 1930s about 12,000 acres of land were brought under tea in the Waynad region. Rubber, a new plantation crop, also began to be cultivated in Malabar from the early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The area under rubber cultivation steadily increased to 23,000 acres by 1950<sup>16</sup>. As a result by 1950, the area under paddy accounted for 55 per cent of the total, that under coconut 25 per cent, areca nut 6 per cent, plantains 4 per cent, tapioca 3 per cent, rubber 1.5 per cent, coffee 1.2 per cent and tea 1 per cent of the total area cultivated<sup>17</sup>.

From the above review we may conclude that Malabar, a very backward agricultural economy at the inception of colonial rule, remained so till the end of that rule. Due to lack of

development of the non-agricultural sectors, these had not been any substantial shift from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations and a vast section of the population was unemployed and lived under constant poverty. Famines and situations close to famine were frequent in Malabar.

### **Reinstatement of Feudal Land Tenure System**

The British conquest of Malabar in 1792 and the subsequent policy of recognising the *Janmi* as absolute owner of land and the wrong interpretation given by the courts and administration of the three types of tenures such as *Kanam*, *Kulikanam* and *Verumpattom* had severe adverse effects on the agricultural development of Malabar. These steps had resulted in the creation of a feudal class of *janmies* who had no interest in cultivation, prevented emergence of a land market in Malabar and retarded agricultural productivity and expansion in cultivation.

The original system of land tenure of Malabar was customary sharing of produce with each customary sharer being permitted to transfer his interest in land freely. The sharing of the produce of each *janmom* holding was, in particular, a matter regulated by customary law, which the *janmi*, was not at liberty to break. The share of produce left over after providing liberally for cultivating costs was styled *pattom*, that is *pad* (authority's share)<sup>18</sup>. Long before the Mysorean invasion, hereditary property (*janmom*) was freely bought and sold in Malabar. And it was this buying and selling, and in particular the wording of the deeds in which transactions were recorded, that misled the early British administrators about the land tenure system that existed in Malabar. Without properly understanding the customary land relations that existed in Malabar for centuries, the British interpreted the *janmi*, who had no interest in cultivation and who considered farming as an inferior occupation earmarked for agrestic serfs and the lower castes, as absolute owner of land. In the words of Logan<sup>19</sup>; "The essential difference between a Roman dominus and a Malayali *janmi* was unfortunately not perceived or not understood at the commencement of the British administration. The *janmi* has by the action of the Civil Courts, been virtually converted into a dominus, and the result on the workers, the cultivators, has been, and is, very deplorable".

One of the major consequences of this new land policy of the colonial rulers was that it legalised the feudal land relations that existed in Malabar and made *janmies* a powerful

class, who no longer depended for power and influence on protective rulers. Logan provides an illustration about the *janmies*<sup>20</sup>.

The big *Janmies*' property is scattered widely over the face of the country and is rarely held in compact blocks capable of effective management. Most of them do not know where much of their property lies, having never even seen it. They do not know the persons who cultivate it and do not concern themselves as to whether their tenants sublet or not. Most of them care nothing for the welfare of the tenants. Moreover, the men employed by these big *janmis* to manage their scattered properties are all men of common education, who get very small pay, and their chief duty is to grant receipts for rent collected.

As a result of this new land tenure policy, the other co-sharers like *Kanakaran* and *Verumpattakaran* were pushed down to the status of mere tenant. In the feudal structure the *janmi* should be at the top while the agrestic serfs stood at the bottom of the hierarchy. Farming was undertaken either by the poor *Karan* or *Verumpattom* tenants or by a class of agrestic serf known as *Cherumar*. A large proportion of the agricultural workers were, in the southern part of the district, until mid 1800s, slaves, subject to purchase, sale and transfer with or separate from the land they tilled. Though slavery was abolished in 1843 by the colonial rulers, the agrestic slave system continued in Malabar because of the feudal land ownership structure that existed. In a stagnant, backward agricultural economy, the serfs, who do not find any other occupation outside farming, were forced to live as serfs. By 1857 Malabar had about 1.87 lakhs agrestic slaves, accounting for 12 percent of the total population, who lived mainly in grain producing taluks<sup>21</sup>.

Another result of the new land tenure policy was that it prevented emergence of a land market in Malabar, which is one of the preconditions of commercialisation or capitalist agriculture. When *janmies* were conferred absolute ownership of land, they became legal owners of vast areas of waste land, cultivable waste land and forest lands. As a class, which had no interest in the land, they found it advantageous to sublet the land, retaining their ownership right and earn an income, *pattom*, without making any effort from their side. Since the colonial administration favoured eviction of tenants, the *janmies* could evict the tenants without any difficulty. As a result of this, sales of land became fewer and almost the entire ownership of land in a village was vested in *janmies*, temples and native rulers. Village studies<sup>22</sup> conducted during the first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century in three villages of Malabar, found that owing to prestige and social importance of land ownership big *janmies* never sold their

land even at high prices. The ownership of cultivable waste land and forest land by *janmies* also discouraged cultivation of coffee, tea, rubber and teak.

The extent of land ownership concentration that prevailed in Malabar during the 1880s was evident from the tax return statement of Malabar. Of the total tax assessment, 78 percent was paid by landlords whose average amount of land tax varied from more than Rs.10 to more than Rs.1000. (Table 1.4).

**Table 1.4**  
**Pattern of land ownership**

	Pattas	Number of pattas		Total pattas		Land tax	
		Single	Joint	Total	%	(Rs)	%
1	Below Rs.10	1,41,272	4,090	1,45,365	80.96	3,86,400	21.61
2	Above Rs.10 & below Rs.30	21,054	927	21,981	12.24	3,70,188	20.69
3	Above Rs.30 & below Rs.50	5,336	260	5,596	3.12	2,10,672	11.78
4	Above Rs.50 & below Rs.100	3,894	151	4,045	2.25	2,73,671	15.30
5	Above Rs.100 & below Rs.250	1,956	73	2,029	1.13	2,99,651	16.75
6	Above Rs.250 & below Rs.500	393	8	401	0.01	1,35,395	7.57
7	Above Rs.500 & below Rs.1000	98	4	102	0.01	68,726	3.85
8	Above Rs.1000	28	1	29	-	43,662	2.45
<b>Total:</b>						100.00	100.00

*Source:* William Logan, Malabar, Vo.II.P.9

A third consequence of the new land tenure policy was that it did not provide any incentive to cultivating tenants to increase productivity, make permanent improvements or resort to extensive cultivation of waste lands and forest lands, leading to stagnation of the agricultural sector.

The wrong interpretation given by the colonial administration and courts about traditional tenures such as *Kanam*, *Kulikanam* and *Verumpattom* had virtually resulted in loss of security of tenure and reduced the share of produce enjoyed by tenants.

As a result of Court rulings the *Kanam* tenure became sometimes a lease or a mortgage or a mortgage lease. According to Logan, *Kanam* right in the traditional sense was the right to supervise or to protect all the inhabitants of a particular *Nad* or country and for this service a portion of net produce equal in amount to that enjoyed by the *janmi* was paid to *kanakaran* or supervisors<sup>23</sup>. At the time of the British take over of Malabar, the net produce was being divided equally between *kanakaran* and *janmi*. But due to wrong interpretation, the *kanam* amount was later considered an advance of rent given by a tenant to a *janmi* as a security deposit against failure of payment of *pattom* dues. Later as a result of court rulings the holder of *kanam* tenure was made liable to renew the *kanam* at the end of every twelve years<sup>24</sup>. The court ruling helped the *janmies* to evict a tenant after 12 years or demand a sum for renewing the *kanam* tenure. This measure had a very adverse impact on the *kanakaran* since it destroyed security of tenure, which in turn prevented tenants from making any improvements in land. The practice of renewal fees also created a situation in which tenants might lose their tenantry, if they made any improvements in land. When they make improvements in land, it became more productive and the *janmi* could offer the land to others at a higher rate of renewal fee and *kanam*. So the wise policy appeared to be not to make any improvements in land leading to increased productivity.

Later another development took place with regard to *kanam* tenure, which completely did away with the security of *kanam* tenure. This was the practice of putting a clause in *kanam* deeds which required that the *kanakaran* should return the land 'on demand' before the expiry of 12 years, introduced around the 1860s. Such clauses were recognised and enforced by the courts with grave injustice to the cultivator. And the power of eviction conferred upon the *janmi* had completely nullified the security which used to prevail. Logan observed<sup>25</sup>. The common *kanam* tenure has degenerated into an outrageous system of forehand renting, favourable only to the money lender.

In case of *Kulikanam* tenure also, the courts rulings were highly unfavourable to the interest of the tenants. The Courts viewed the payment of compensation to *kulikanam* tenants not as a compensation to the cultivator for his customary share, but as a compensation for the customary share due to the *janmi*<sup>26</sup>. The courts ruling of the power of ouster of a *kulikanam* tenant had completely neutralised the benefits the cultivator derived from his power to sell or subdivide the holding. The low rates of compensation recognised by the courts were highly inadequate when compared to the actual cost of improvements valued at current market rates.

For crops such as coconut, betel nut, jackfruit, etc. it takes more than 12 years to bring the trees into full bearing. And during these initial years, the annual expenses are very high. Hence, the tenant will be a loser if he is evicted at the expiry of 12 years.

The courts also viewed *Verumpattom* as a tenure extending for a period of one year, unless the lease specifically provided for otherwise, which was quite contrary to traditional practice. At beginning of colonial rule, *Verumpattom* cultivators used to plant up gardens and reclaim wastes and they were regarded as actual cultivators-cum-part-proprietors. They went also permitted to sell or subdivided their holdings. The colonial rulers had curtailed all these privileges and rights enjoyed by them and pushed them to the status of tenant-at-will.

As a result of the above developments, by 1860's a large number of eviction suits were filed in courts by *janmies* against the tenants. Within a period of 20 years, the number of eviction suits filed were more than doubled (Table 1.5). Logan observed<sup>27</sup>. About one in every twenty cultivators has now a decree for eviction passed annually against him, and the rate of increase has more than quadrupled itself in 20 years. In Palghat alone, the number of evictions annually decreed is now 12 times more numerous than it was twenty years ago.

**Table 1.5**  
**Number of evictions**

Qualificational periods	Average		Annual number of
	Suits of eviction	Persons against whom eviction decrees have passed	Rent decrees, excluding small cause suits against persons
1862-66	2039	1891	1473
1867-71	2547	3483	2549
1872-76	3974	6286	4314
1877-80	4983	8355	6498
Five years ending 1896	3178	2352	N.A
Five years ending 1901	2951	2175	N.A
Five years ending 1904	2604	1705	N.A

Source: 1. Willing Logan, Malabar, Vol.I P.583

2. Innes C.A. Malabar, Vol.I.(Madras Govt. of Madras, 1951) P.234.

Using the facility of eviction, *janmies* also had filed eviction suits against tenants who possessed land from very early times. As a result of the filing of suits the tenant was always

the loser, owing to courts costs and other expenses, though deprived the value of improvements due to him.

The recognition of waste land, cultivable waste lands and forest lands and forest lands as *janmom* land, had also discouraged expansion of cultivation of crops especially commercial crops, construction of public irrigation works, and stood as a major obstacles to agricultural development. In Malabar, almost the entire waste land was treated as private property of *janmies*. By the 1940s all the waste land in Waynad taluk was in the hands of a few *janmies*<sup>28</sup>. When coffee planting was started in Wayanad, one of the problems faced by the European planters was the difficulty in getting land for plantation, though large areas of land were available there<sup>29</sup>. The entire land belonged to the *janmies* and one had to purchase it or take it on lease from them. The first attempt to plant rubber on a large scale at Ingapuzha at the foot of Tamarasseri ghat was not successful due to the problems connected with the title deed<sup>30</sup>. For planting teak at Nilambur, the colonial government was also faced with the same problem of procuring land, and land was procured either by purchase or lease<sup>31</sup>. While examining the reasons for the lack of government sponsored irrigation projects, the Malabar Tenancy Committee (1940) had found that because waste land, including river beds, was private property, government had difficulty in acquiring those lands of irrigation projects. To quote the Committee<sup>32</sup>. One of the obstacles to state schemes of irrigation is that all land including the beds of rivers, streams and canals, is regarded as private property and the government cannot, therefore, interfere with the rights of private owners by constructing irrigation works.

Thus large areas of cultivable waste land and forest land remained uncultivated in a region where severe unemployment and shortages of food grains existed. Though about 60 percent of the area in Malabar was cultivable, only 44 per cent of the area was actually cultivated in 1881. During the period from 1890 to 1940, we find that of the total area of Malabar, cultivable waste land accounting about 20 to 25 per cent remained uncultivated (Table 1.6). We can attribute this to the wrong land policy of the colonial power which created a situation where Malabar heavily depended on a large volume of food grain imports to feed its population, when vast areas of cultivable land remained uncultivated. It was also paradoxical that despite the fact that vast areas of land remained uncultivated a large number of people migrated to places outside Malabar in search of employment.

**Table 1.6**  
**Classification of area**

Year	Cultivable Waste other than fallow		Net area sown during the year		Total cropped area (net area sown + land under misc. trees and crops)		Total geographical area
	(Acres)	(%)	(Acres)	(%)	(Acres)	(%)	(Acres)
1890-91	723,307	20.2	909,812	25.4	1,025,895	28.7	3,575,452
1900-01	1,197,677	33.3	940,225	26.1	1,173,065	32.6	3,597,110
1910-11	958,277	25.8	1,309,545	35.3	1,586,375	42.8	3,708,410
1920-21	970,077	26.5	1,308,966	35.5	1,672,916	45.8	3,655,279
1930-31	944,408	25.0	1,489,112	40.0	1,762,632	47.6	3,705,907
1930-31	864,167*	24.0	1,517,672	42.0	1,798,884	50.0	3,595,777
1950-51	N.A		1,674,158	45.0	1,962,435	52.9	3,713,105

\* Other uncultivated land excluding current fallows

Source: (1) Govt. of India, Agricultural Statistics of British India for the years 1890-91 to 1894-95, 1900-1901 to 1904-05 Vol.I and 1906-1907 to 1910-11 Vol.1. (2) Govt. of Madras (Board of Revenue), Season and Crop. Reports of Madras Presidency for the Agricultural years. 1920-21, 1930-31 and 1939-40. (3) Govt. of Madras, Season and Crop Report of Madras State for the Agricultural Year 1950-51.

### Colonial Extraction of a Large Share of Agricultural Surplus

We do not have a clear idea about the land tax system that existed prior to the colonial period<sup>33</sup>. Buchanan, who visited Malabar in 1800, gives some hints about the extent of land revenue paid by the cultivators<sup>34</sup>. According to him the *Pattom* or rent paid for a *Paray* sowing of land in Palghat region varied from 5 to 2 *Paray's* of grain depending on the number of crops cultivated. On an average, rent for one crop land may be about 2.25 *Paray's* for one *Paray* sowing. And leaving rent and other expenses of every kind, the cultivating tenant was entitled to get a net gain of about 40 per cent of the gross produce. If we calculate the value of the rent received in kind at the low prices prevailing at harvesting season, the landlord would be required to pay about 84 per cent of his rent as land tax. On the other hand,

if he sold the rice at other seasons, he was required to pay about 60 per cent of his rent as land tax. Buchanan considered this as one of the highest rates of land tax, prevailing in any part of India at that time, which acted as a great disincentive for cultivation. He noted that vast areas of rice land and coconut gardens remained deserted due to the high tax (26 per cent of the gross produce) that prevailed in northern Malabar.

In 1804, Thomas Warden<sup>35</sup>, Collector, had described the method of sharing total produce between tenant, *janmi* and government that prevailed in Palghat region. The cultivator got two-thirds of the total produce, one fifth of one third of the produce went to *Janmkar*, and four fifths of one third went to the government as land tax. It was pointed out that due to the very low prices that prevailed for rice, the share of rice earmarked for payment of tax was not sufficient to pay the amount and the cultivator was forced to sell a part of his own share to pay land tax. Thomas Warden attributed this as a major reason for the widespread poverty and perpetual indebtedness among the Malabar peasantry.

With a view of remedy the extreme inequalities of assessment that prevailed, the colonial administration had introduced a new guideline for revenue assessment on 21 July 1805<sup>36</sup>. Accordingly, for wet lands and garden lands the following rates were fixed: (1) On land, after deducting from the gross produce, the seed and exactly the same quantity for expenses of cultivation, and allotting one-third of the balance as the cultivator's share, the residue or *pattom* was to be divided in the proportion of 60 per cent and 40 per cent between government and *Janmi* respectively and the government's share was to be commuted into money 'under a consideration to local value of the several articles in the different districts'; (2) on garden lands, one third of coconut, and jack tree produce was deemed sufficient for the *kudian*, the remainder or *pattom* was to be equally divided between the government and the *Janmi*; (3) on dry grain lands, the government's share was to be half of the *Janmi's varam* or what was actually cultivated during the year.

The result of this standardization of revenue assessment was that the colonial government and the *janmies* were entitled to a larger share of total produce as their share, when compared to their previous position. In the new definition of gross produce, the customary shares of produce given in harvesting operations to carpenter, blacksmith and other amounting in all to about 20 per cent of the gross produce were not deducted.

Secondly, according to the new method of assessment, the total cost of cultivation was defined as the amount of seed required and exactly the same quantity for expenses of

cultivation. This implies that for clearing land, ploughing, sowing, tansplanting, manuring, watering etc. the cultivator was entitled to get a measure of produce equivalent to the quantity of seed. Thus the share of produce earmarked as cultivation cost was highly insufficient for grain crops. The cultivators of garden crops such as coconut, betel nut and jack trees were also provided with a very low share of the total produce (one third). The crops, especially coconut and betel nut, required regular watering in dry seasons and the share earmarked to cultivators of these crops was very meagre.

Another serious problem created by the new assessment was the calculation of tax in money terms. Due to lack of development of roads, other a transportation network and marketing system, there were considerable variation in the prices of the same agricultural product in different taluks. But for tax purposes the money assessment fixed was uniform throughout Malabar. This affected the tax payers adversely in taluks where the prices were lower. Because of the extremely low prices for agricultural products that prevailed in Malabar till 1831, the cultivators, especially those belonging to north Malabar, were forced to pay a larger share of their produce as tax as compared with their counterparts in south Malabar.

Thus as a result of this new assessment, the colonial power was able to enhance land tax rates and extract about 35 per cent of the total produce as land tax. On the other hand the cultivators share had decreased from about 66 per cent or two-thirds of the total produce to 42 per cent (Table 1.7).

In 1866, an official attempt was made to find out the exact share of total produce received by actual cultivators and the share given as *pattom* in Chevayur Village, located near Calicut town (Table 1.8). Two plots of land were selected for the study, which were cultivated by *Verumpattom* tenants. It was found that in single crop paddy land, out of the total produce, the rent entitlement of the landlord accounted for 42 per cent and land tax for 8 per cent, implying that the net gain to tenant was just 20 per cent. In case of double crop land the net gain to the *Verumpattom* tenant was 27 per cent. But the estimate seems to be an overestimate as the author takes the full value of rice and straw and fails to include the cost of manure, credit, renewal fees paid and the customary share given to other persons like the village barber, etc. If we include the above items in the cost of cultivation we find that the net share received by the cultivating tenant will be hardly ten percent of the total produce. Logan's enquiry relating to certain plots of land in 1881 also revealed that the actual

cultivator, after paying rent, government assessment and amounts paid on entry or renewal, had left to him a share very much less than the early British administrators had intended<sup>37</sup>. Because of the low share of gross produce received by the cultivating tenants, they were always in poverty and debt. Logan who examined the indebtedness of cultivators found that 56 per cent were in debt, owing on average Rs.395 per head.

**Table 1.7**  
**Land revenue assessment**

For wet lands	New Assessment*	Assessment	
	dt. 21 <sup>st</sup> July 1805 Paras of Paddy	rates in 1801**	
		Percentage	Percentage
1. Gross Produce (5 Para x 15)	75	-	-
2. Deduct cultivation expenses (5 paras for other expenses)	10	-	-
Net produce	65	-	-
3. Cultivators share (one third of net produce)	21.66	-	-
4. Total share of cultivator (21.66+10)	31.66	42.2	66.6
5. Govt's share as land tax (60% of the pattom of 43.34 paras)	26	34.7	26.8
6. Janmi's share (40% of the pattom of 43.34 paras)	17.33	23.1	6.6
Total		100.00	100.00

\* William Logan, Malabar, Vol.I P. 665

\*\* Report of Mr. Thomas Warden, Collector dt. 19th March 1801 on the Conditions of Palghat, Congasid etc. of the District of Malabar, P.8.

The important reasons for the indebtedness were, house and land improvements, purchase of stock, excessive rents, renewal fees, fines, bad seasons, wedding expenses and maintenance of families (Table 1.9). It is evident from the table that 26 per cent of the persons incurred debt in order to maintain their families and another 15 per cent due to excessive renewal fees and rents<sup>38</sup>.

**Table 1.8**  
**Cost of cultivation and cultivator's share (in 1866)**

Description	Single crop land (Kamal)			Double crop land (Karnal and Magaram)		
	Rs.	Anna	%	Rs.	Anna	%
1. Area	(One Acre)			(92 cents)		
2. Land	4	- 14	8.1	3	- 2	3.0
3. Rent	25	- 0	41.7	32	- 0	32.0
4. Seed	6	- 0	-	12	- 0	-
5. Cultivation expenses	12	- 2	-	26	- 0	-
6. Total cost of cultivation	18	- 2	30.2	38	- 0	38.0
7. Net gain to tenant	12	- 0	20.2	26	- 14	27.0
8. Gross produce (inclusive of the value of straw)	60	- 0	100.00	100	- 0	100.00

Note: 16 Annas was one Rupee

Source: Cameron J. Report of the Village of Chevayur 1866 (Calicut Malabar) Govt. Press, 1868) P.8

### ***Neglect of Irrigation and infrastructure.***

Total neglect of irrigation and infrastructural works also contributed to the backwardness of agriculture. During colonial rule, the rulers had made no attempt to construct irrigation projects which would help to expand cultivation. By 1800, agricultural operations were carried out mainly with the help of rain and only in a few places of South Malabar, a second crop was cultivated with the help of small water reservoirs, constructed and maintained by farmers<sup>39</sup>. These reservoirs gave water only for a few weeks. In the geographical survey of Ward and Connner in the 1820s, it was revealed that Palghat and Bettudnad were the taluks where irrigation facilities existed<sup>40</sup>. In Bettudnad taluk with the help of natural streams, a few areas were irrigated. The report pointed out the destruction of vast areas of crops due to overflow of rivers and streams in rainy seasons. No attempts were made to construct bunds to save crops from floods. P. Clementson, Collector of Malabar, in his report in 1838 stressed the need for changing the agricultural policy by constructing irrigation projects to promote agriculture. Here, Clementson argued for providing irrigation because he feared that if it were not provided, it would affect agricultural production and thereby the revenues of government<sup>41</sup>.

**Table 1.9**  
**Indebtedness of cultivators (1881)**

Reasons	No. of persons	Percentage
1. House and land improvements	736	12.9
2. Purchase of stock	182	3.2
3. Excessive of stock	221	3.9
4. Excessive fines, renewal of leases etc.	644	11.3
5. Bad seasons	1,222	21.3
6. Loss of stock	214	3.7
7. Wedding and ceremonies	671	11.8
8. Sickness	114	2.0
9. Family maintenance	1,498	26.2
10. Others	207	3.6
Total	5,709	100.00

Source: Malabar Special Commission 1881-82, Malabar Land Tenures Report, Vol. I (Madras: Govt. of Madras, 1896) Chapter IV, Para - 89.

During first part of the nineteenth century till the 1860s public works mainly consisted of road, communications, military and civil building works<sup>42</sup>. Here the interest behind these expenditures was to strengthen road and communication systems to facilitate quick movement of troops. But since 1879, a small amount was earmarked for repairing tanks, channels and small anicuts<sup>43</sup>. The amount was so small that it varied between 6 and 14 per cent of total public works expenditure of imperial funds. During 1880s some attempts were made to construct a few small tanks, channels, anicuts and wells, bringing about 23,635 acres of land under irrigation by the end of the 1880s, mainly in four grain producing taluks viz. Ernad, Walluvanad, Palghat and Ponnani (Table 1.10).

Even during first half of the present century, there was no considerable change with regard to irrigation facilities. By 1951, besides a number of tanks, canals and wells, Malabar had about 49 anicuts inclusive of three minor dams<sup>44</sup>.

The neglect of development of road and inland water transportation was another factor which adversely affected agricultural development. In the pre-Mysorean period, the country was split up into small principalities and roads were not a necessity. During Mysorean rule, roads were constructed taking into consideration the requirements for military movements. A few roads were constructed connecting the interior places of Malabar till the middle of the nineteenth century. Because of the numerous rivers and backwaters, it was not possible for

bullock carts to carry goods from one place to another especially in the rainy seasons, without constructing bridges. This very much affected the marketing of the agricultural products and resulted in stagnation of prices for the products. It was pointed out that even by the 1880s, there was no considerable shift in traffic from water ways to road transport, due to the lack of a road net work connecting interior areas of Malabar. To quote Logan<sup>45</sup>. 'The chief traffic of the country was and in great measure still is, carried on as already alluded to in this sector of rivers etc. by water and not by land'.

**Table 1.10**  
**Source of irrigation belonged to Govt. (by the end of 1880's)**

<b>Taluks:</b>	<b>Tanks</b>		<b>Channels</b>		<b>Anicuts</b>		<b>Wells</b>	
	No.	Average extent of cultivation within the last 5 years (Acres)	No.	Average extent of cultivation within the last 5 years (Acres)	No.	Average extent of cultivation within the last 5 years (Acres)	No.	Average extent of cultivation within the last 5 years (Acres)
<b>Ernad</b>	8	82	97	3073	4	95	252	318
<b>Walluvana</b>	174	1467	61	4347	-	-	55	496
<b>d</b>								
<b>Palghat</b>	135	5001	82	2213	24	1690	-	-
	4							
<b>Ponnani</b>	158	485	12	575	5	3639	-	-
<b>Cochin</b>	-	-	-	3	172	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	169	7035	252	10208	36	5596	307	814
	4							

Source: William Logan, Malabar, Vo.II P.24

No attempts were made to improve the waterways till 1865, when measures were taken to construct a few canals having a distance of 46 miles. Instead of considering ferries as public utilities, colonial rulers viewed the ferries numbering about 250 as sources of revenue to government. Tolls were levied at these ferries, the collection of which was generally leased to renters. Though the colonial government earned a considerable amount as revenue from this account even from the beginning of the eighteenth century, the government had not spent any amount for its improvement till the 1960s.

## **Lower Price for Agricultural Products**

The general level of prices that prevailed for agricultural products were lower throughout the colonial period. By 1800 A.D. we have evidence to show that lower prices prevailed for paddy and landlords were forced to sell a larger share of *pattom* for paying land tax<sup>46</sup>. Logan pointed out that, during the early decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century, upto 1831, prices of agricultural products were 'abnormally low'<sup>47</sup>. Clementson also discusses the very low prices prevailed for grains in 1835 and the consequent decline in price of labour and land<sup>48</sup>. Though there had been a marginal increase in prices in 1831, 1833 and 1836, the general level of prices of agricultural products continued to remain lower till 1850s<sup>49</sup>.

But there had been a marked change in prices of agricultural products such as paddy, ginger, pepper and coffee since 1852<sup>50</sup>. This price hike had provided some relief to cultivating tenants due to increase in their incomes. But with the higher prices, the landlords now found it more profitable to lease his land to tenants who were prepared to pay a higher amount of rent. Consequently this had also led to filling of a large number of eviction suits, since 1860s. Thus in effect the greater part of the benefit of this price hike had gone in favour of the land-lords.

Between 1860 and 1880, though there had been a marginal increase in the price of paddy (3%), prices of ginger, coconut and arecanut registered a fall<sup>51</sup>. A significant aspect of the prices were the wide variation in the prices prevailed in different taluks of Malabar for same commodity. The price of paddy varied between Rs.82 and Rs.72 per 1000 Maclead seers in 1880. In the case of ginger we can notice a variation between Rs.125 and Rs.239 per 1000 Maclead seers. There were also considerable variations in the price of coconuts and arecanuts prevailed in different taluks of Malabar. This wide variation in prices of agricultural products can be attributed to lack of development of road and other communication network, marketing facilities and the widespread unemployment prevailed leading to less demand for products. The low prices, made agricultural activities and unprofitable occupation and acted as a great disincentive to agricultural development.

## **Impact of Colonial Policies in Non-Agricultural Sector**

During the colonial rule, the policies followed by the colonial power on imports, exports and taxation had very unfavourable effect on the generation of economic activities and employment outside agricultural sector. The policy of importing large quantities of mill

made cotton cloth had destroyed the cottage weaving industry that thrived in some parts of Malabar. As early as 1800 A.D. cottage weaving handloom units producing coarse varieties of cloth existed in a few places of South Malabar. The observation made by Clemenston, Collector of Malabar in 1838, gives an idea about the extent of damage done to the industry by the import policy of colonial government. To quote Clemenston<sup>52</sup>.

“Malabar has never been famous for manufactures - coarse cotton cloth is manufactured in the Palghat and Temalpooram Taluks and here and there on the coast; the vast quantity of Europe piece goods imported - and which are procurable at very cheap prices - have discouraged this branch of industry, so much so that the poorer class find it more profitable to turn their lands to agriculture”.

Besides cloth, a large number of consumer goods were also imported to Malabar, discouraging the growth of cottage industries. By the 1880s its industries consisted of weaving, coffee and ginger processing, oil extraction, coir making and manufacture of toddy and liquor.

But by first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, there had been a slight change in the position and a few large scale industries were started. The important large scale industries include, cotton spinning, weaving, saw mills, match factories, brick and tile works, handloom weaving, coir factories and printing works, employing about 2883 persons in 1951. The cottage and small scale industries also witnessed some change. The important industries coming under this sector were cotton spinning, weaving, rope making, mat making, manufacture of dairy products, fish preservation, manufacture of beedies, copper and bellmetal works, pottery and basket making. The total employment in this sector was found as 62,221 by 1951 Census<sup>53</sup>.

The colonial taxation policy as stood as a barrier to expansion of economic activities and employment generation outside agricultural sector. Colonial administration imposed taxes on skilled workers such as carpenters, ironsmiths, etc. and also on implements such as handlooms, oil presses, fishnets, etc. We have evidence to show that a very high rate of tax was levied on this category of people during the early decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The toddy tappers were required to take licenses and had to pay tax at the rate of one silver *Fanam* per month or Rs.2 and two-fifth per year in 1813<sup>54</sup>. A direct tax was also levied on the fishing net, and the hut of fishermen, thereby discouraging fishing activities. The policy of declaring salt as a state monopoly and importing the entire quantity of salt from outside Malabar has

resulted in loss of employment to many fisher-people whose side occupation was salt making<sup>55</sup>. The ferry tax was levied in such a way that it favoured the rich people with tax concessions while full rates of tax was collected from poor people. To quote Sullivan<sup>56</sup>, in 1841.

The ferry tax in Malabar is one respect more obnoxious than that of the tobacco tax. All the classes are subject to the latter but while the carriage and the palanquin of the wealthy area allowed to pass toll free, the poor woman whose livelihood depends upon the bundle of sticks which she is carrying cannot pass until she had paid so hardly does this tax press upon the lower orders that lives have been lost in attempts to swim the rivers for the purpose of avoiding it.

Taxes were also levied on carpenters, ironsmiths, boatmen, gold and silversmiths and on implements such as looms, oil presses, fishermen net and carts. Houses, shops and bazars were also not spared from the tax (Table 1.11). Instead of encouraging this skilled category of people to engage in productive occupations, the colonial power had discouraged them and even prevented them to engage in productive occupations through the wrong extractive policies of taxation. The ultimate result of this policy was that people were either prevented or discouraged from moving from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations.

### **The Institution of Caste System**

The institution of caste system and its associated evils of caste pollution and system of inheritance stood as a major social obstacle to agricultural development in Malabar. The Nambudiri Brahmins, descendants of Aryan settlers of Malabar, were able to introduce a caste system in which they installed themselves as undisputed masters in the society. Castes were arranged in a hierarchical order from the highest and most sacred to the lowest and least worthy. Caste system also recognised caste pollution. Every man considered himself polluted by the touch of one of a lower caste, and there were castes low in social scale which mutually convey pollution to each other. Again, there was a recognised scale of distance at which members of each of the polluting castes must stand from a man of higher caste or his house.

In the caste hierarchy Nambudiri Brahmin stood at top followed by foreign Brahmins, Nayars and their sub groups, Tiyas, artisan groups such as Kammalans and at the lowest bottom Parayas and Pulayas, constituting agrestic serfs. The Nambudiri Brahmins, a priestly caste and dominant land owners of the district were, the least commercially oriented and most tradition-bound people of Malabar. For generations subsequent to colonial rule, they firmly

rejected exposure to western education and took no active part in commerce, industry or civil service. Their consumption habits were meagre and rigidly subscribed by tradition. They deliberately avoided social contacts with other lower castes except ruling Nayars, on the ground of caste pollution. By custom they were prevented from other occupations except religious exercises and had no interest in cultivation, which they considered as an inferior occupation meant for lower castes. A Nambudiri Brahmin's typical life style is depicted by Innes as follows<sup>57</sup>.

**Table 1.11**  
**Particulars of Moturfa Tax levied**

Items taxed	1833 A.D		1863 A.D	
	No.	Amount of tax (Rs)	No.	Amount of tax (Rs)
1. Houses	1,68,075	89,391	98,304*	82,568
2. Shops and bazars	6,073	8,719	11,497	12,040
3. Looms	3,150	3,106	5,018	3,339
4. Oil Presses	2,840	3,377	5,555	4,790
5. Gold and Silversmith	730	411	1,287	647
6. Carpenters	1,895	1,107	3,534	1,769
7. Iron Smith	799	452	1,333	625
8. Boatman	888	1,138	2,126	1,964
9. Fishermen's net	409	3,278	8583,014	-
10. Pack Bullocks	1,483	847	4,131	1,446
11. Carts	-	-	3,214	3,197
12. Other Sundries	-	928	-	2,838
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>1,12,754</b>	-	<b>1,18,237</b>

A Nambudiri should rise very early at about 3 A.M and immediately bath in a tank; he should then proceed to his religious exercise in temple. After that and till eleven O' Clock he should read or recite the Vedas; then comes the principal meal followed by a period of rest, including the keeping of solemn silence. At sun set he should bath in oil and then again resort to temple till 9 P.M.

In the caste hierarchy, Nayars and their sub-castes like Kurup, Nambiar, Adiyodi, Pillai, Kartha, etc. enjoyed a dominant position because of their relation with Nambudiris through '*sambandham*'. In the pre-colonial days, they played the roles of statesmen, soldiers,

administrators and almost exclusively engaged in activities directly or indirectly connected with warfare. As a caste whose tradition was warfare, the Nayars imitating the Nambudiris also considered cultivation as an inferior occupation.

Next comes Tiyyas, a lower cast in the caste hierarchy, with traditional occupation of toddy tapping. During the course of colonial period they have emerged as a commercially oriented caste engaging in all economic activities such as cultivation, industrial activities, commerce, trade etc. Below them comes the section of polluting castes such as Mukhuvas or fishermen, Kammalans, goldsmith, carpenters and blacksmiths. And at the bottom of the caste hierarchy was the agricultural serf known as Cherumar consisted of Pulayas and Parays, who have no recognised place in society. The agricultural serfs consisted the section of population, who supplied almost the entire labour for cultivation to the landlords and higher caste tenants.

Thus the caste system of Malabar did not recognise agricultural occupation as a respectable. And farming work became a degraded work of the lowest castes, who neither had ownership of land, nor had a fair share of agricultural produce as the reward for their labour. The practice of caste pollution and consequent untouchability, unapproachability and restricted inter-course between various castes living in a society, prevented occupational mobility and stood as an obstacle to the economic development of Malabar. It retarded expansion of activities in agriculture, commerce and industry by preventing movement of working population from custom-bound occupations to new occupations outside agriculture. The tradition-bound life styles of various castes prevented introduction of new goods, new consumption habits and limited their wants and material requirements.

The inheritance laws followed by various land owning castes also acted as a major barrier to agricultural development in Malabar. The Nambudiri Brahmans and Nayars were the two castes of dominant land owners possessing the larger part of the land consisted of cultivable lands, waste and forest lands. Among them let us examine the inheritance systems of Nambudiri Brahmans. The Brahmans followed a type of patrilineal system of inheritance in which the eldest son alone was recognised as legal heir of property. Till the enactment of Nambudiri Act of 1933<sup>58</sup>, the eldest son alone was recognised as the legal heir to inherit properties of a Nambudiri family. It is interesting to note that only eldest son alone was allowed to marry a Nambudiri girl, while younger brothers were given freedom to have relations with Nayar girls through '*Sambandham*'. The clever Brahmans made such a

tradition primarily with objective to preserve landed properties of the family from sub division or transfer of its ownership to outsiders. This had resulted in concentration of land ownership in a few hands and totally prevented transfer of ownership.

And vast areas of cultivable, cultivable waste and forest land in villages began to remain under the ownership of a few Brahman *janmies* who neither cultivate land nor prepared to sell land, due to prestige and social importance of land ownership. Even if waste lands were given for improvements, because of extreme uncertainty prevailed with respect of security of tenure, tenants would not be prepared to make any significant improvements in land.

Village studies in Kothachira (Ponnani Taluk) and Vatanamkurussi (Walluvanad Taluk) in 1918 revealed that owing to prestige of land ownership, owners never sell their lands even for good prices unless driven to it by extreme necessity. To quote A. Krishna Warriyer<sup>59</sup>.

“An acre of land costs from Rs.200 to Rs.300. But purchases on *janmi* tenure are worth above Rs.500. But it is impossible to acquire *janmom* property except for *janmies*; for the *janmies* are jealous guardians of their lands and never sell lands once acquired. Direct threatening and indirect intimidation are used by them to obtain the *janmom* right of lands if held by any lesser land owner.”

Thus the system of inheritance which prevented transfer of ownership from a class of feudal *janmies* who had no interest in cultivation, to actual cultivators, stood as a barrier to the emergence of a land market, which is considered as a prerequisite for capitalist development in agriculture.

The next dominant land owners were Nayars, who followed matrilineal system of inheritance known as ‘*Marumakkathayam*’. The *Marumakkathayam* joint family or *tarward* consisted of all the descendants of a common ancestress in female line only. The *tarward* property is joint property of all members and each member is entitled to get maintenance right, but not entitled to claim partition. But partition may be effected by a mutual agreement between all the members. In a *tarward*, every member is entitled to dispose the property acquired by him as he wishes, but at death any property which may not have been disposed of by gift or otherwise will lapse to the *tarward*. It is usually managed by the eldest male

member termed *Karnavan*, who can only be removed for mismanagement only by a decree of a civil court.

Though the Malabar Marriage Act of 1869 provided for the optimal registration of *sambandham*, it had not become popular due to the provisions containing legal obligation to maintain wife and children and restrictions imposed on a formal divorce. But the enactment of the Madras *Marumakkathayam* (Matrilineal Inheritance) Act of 1933<sup>60</sup>, contributed towards the disintegration of the *tarawad* system.

The system of inheritance had a very unfavourable effect on agricultural development. Firstly it prevented transfer of property from the *tarward* to the members of family thereby giving opportunities for them to utilize the land in a better manner; secondly it resulted in mismanagement of properties because vast areas of landed property were owned by *tarwards*. Thirdly, it created a lot of discontent and frustration among its younger members, because they were not given a chance for better management or better utilization of land. Thus the system of inheritance discouraged more intensive as well as extensive cultivation. It also stood as an obstacle to create favourable conditions for the emergence of a land market. Even after the enactment of the Act in 1933, free sale of the *tarward's* properties became not so common because of frequent disputes between numerous members and the difficulty in obtaining a clear title of land from the legal owners. It is common that the number of legal owners in most of the cases were more than 200 per family.

To sum up, the foregoing analysis has shown that, despite the fact that the areas under cultivation of various crops had shown an increase during the colonial period, the agricultural sector remained as backward. The colonial policies such as reinstatement of feudal land tenure system, neglect of irrigation and infrastructural works, extractive taxation on skilled category of workers, native productive equipments, etc. and the unfavourable policies on trade and industry had prevented the process of agricultural development. The social institution of caste system and its associated evils and the inheritance system followed by the dominant land owning castes also stood as major barriers for any change favourable to agricultural development.

## Notes and References

1. T.W. Shea, 'Barriers to Economic. Development in Traditional Societies: Malabar, A case study, *The journal of Economic History*, Vol.19, No.4, December 1959.
2. Ward and Corner, *A Descriptive Member of Malabar*, 1821, Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1901. P.1
3. The rich variety of forests of Malabar may be classified into six classes viz. (1) Zone of deciduous forests, (2) Tropical evergreen forest, (3) Evergreen shola forest, (4) Scrub shola forests, (5) Mixed deciduous and evergreen forest and (6) Heavy deciduous forests. For detailed discussion of the forests of Malabar see William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.I, Govt. of Madras, 1951, reprint, Chap.1
4. The total number of shops, looms, oil presses, gold and silver smiths, carpenters, iron smiths, boatmen and fishermen nets on whom the Moturfa tax levied was 16,784 in 1833. Assuming that shops, looms and oil presses employ more than one person and taking the possibility of underreporting, we may place three times of the above figure as the total employed in non-agricultural activities. It works out to be 4.3 per cent of the total population of Malabar in 1837.  
  
Source: *Statistics of Malabar 1873-74* P.23
5. Clementson P, *A Report on Revenue and other Matters connected with Malabar*, dt. 31 December 1938, Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1914, p.p.19-23.
6. Ibid, p.p 19-23
7. Buchanan, Francis A, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Vol.II Madras Higgin Botham and Co. 1870, p.p. 74-76.
8. William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.II, p.36.
9. *Statistics of Malabar 1873-74*, p.17
10. In 1876-77, of the total imports of Malabar, grains inclusive of rice and paddy accounted 62 per cent of the total value of imports.  
  
Source: William Logan, *Malabar* Vol.II, p.35.
11. William Logan, *Malabar* Vol.II p.p.6-7
12. Innes C.A, *Malabar* Vol.I, Madras, Govt. of Madras Press, 1951-reprint, p.281.

13. William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.I, p.215.
14. Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee, Vol.I Madras, Govt. Press, 1940, p.14
15. Ibid, p.14
16. Govt. of Madras 1951 Census Hand Book - Malabar District, (Madras: Govt. of Madras, 1953) p.9.
17. Ibid, p.9
18. William Logan, *Malabar Special Commission 1881-82*, op. cit. Chapter IV, para.3
19. William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.I, op.cit, p.604.
20. Ibid, p. 584.
21. William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.II p.175.
22. Salter, Gilbert (ed.), *Economic Studies*, Vol.I Some South Indian Villages, Madras, Oxford University Press, p.173 and 195.
23. William Logan, *Malabar Special Commission 1881-82*, op cit, Chapter IV, para 106.
24. On 5 August 1856, the Sadr Court Defined the various tenures and fixed the tenure of *Kanam*, *Kilikanam* tenures as redeemable tenures after 12 years. For details see Kurup, K.K.N, William Logan - *A study in the Agrarian Relation of Malabar*, Calicut, Sandhya Publications, 1981, Chapter 3.
25. William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.I, op. cit, p.583
26. William Logan, *Malabar Special Commission 1881-82*, op cit. Chapter 4, para 119.
27. Ibid, Para 151.
28. Sullivan, *Report on the Province of Malabar and Canara* dt. 29<sup>th</sup> January 1841, Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1916. p.9
29. Robinson W, *Report on the History, Condition and Prospects of the Taluk of Waynad* dt.22<sup>nd</sup> August 1857, op.cit, p.9
30. Innes C.A. *Malabar* op. 227
31. Bourne R, Nilambur Valley Working Plan, Vol. I Op.cit, p.40.
32. Malabar Tenancy Committee (1940), Vol.I, op.cit, p.50

33. It is often cited that during the Mysorean rule, Arshed Beg Khan, the Mysorean Governor had introduced a systematic land tax system, which was later copied by the early colonial rulers of Malabar. But Logan points out that prior to colonial rule, the country was not settled enough for the introduction of any systematic land tax system. Logan further says that the Joint Commissioner in 1792-93 obtained from a Brahman named Jinnea, a statement purporting to give details of Arshed Beg Khan's settlement of southern portion of the district for the year 1784-85, and on this basis they framed guidelines for the introduction of tax system in the southern districts. But later in 1822, it was proved beyond doubt that the information supplied by Jinnea was false. See William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol. I op. cit, p.p 621-627.
34. Buchanan, Francis, op. cit, p.66
35. Thomas Warden, op. cit, p.p. 7-10
36. For the text of the proclamation see: William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol. II Appendix V, P.250.
37. William Logan, *Malabar Special Commission 1881-82*, op. cit. Chapter IV, paras 160-162.
38. Logan says that the reasons attributed to excessive renewal fee, and rent are probably under reported because the tenants give the information in the presence of landlords or their agents.
39. Burchanan, op.cit, p.69.
40. Ward and Conner op. cit, p.86 and 138.
41. Clementson P. op.cit, p.3.
42. Statistics of Malabar 1873-74, p.19.
43. William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.II op. cit, p.22.
44. 1951 Census Hand Book - Malabar District, op. cit, p.4.
45. William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.I, op.cit, p.62.
46. Buchanan says that Landlords had to pay a larger share of rent ranging from 60 per cent to 84 per cent as land tax to the government because of the low price prevailed. The land tax was required to pay in money See: Buchanan, op.cit, p.67.

47. William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.I, p.614.
48. Clemenston P. op.cit, p.4.
49. William Logan, *Malabar* Vol.I, p.614.
50. Ibid, p.718.
51. Willaim Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.II, op. cit, p.p.252 & 254-56.
52. Clemenston P. op, cit, p.2.
53. 1951 Census Handbook - Malabar District, p.13.
54. Thomas Warden, *Report on the Revenue System in Malabar*, dt. the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1813. Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1916, p.4.
55. Ibid, p.4.
56. Sullivan, *Report on the Provinces of Malabar and Canara* dt. 29<sup>th</sup> January ` 1841, Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1916, p.6.
57. Innes C.A, Malabar, op.cit, p.106, See also Wlliam Logan, *Malabar*, Vol. I p. 156 and 157 for a detailed list of customs of Malabar Brahmins.
58. The main provisions in this Act were that the younger Nambudiris may marry Nambudiri girls and that the *Illom* property can be inherited by these younger sons. Because of the new law, there was a gradual change, and many *Illoms* were dividing mainly due to quarrels between the members. For details see: Adrian Mayar C, *Land and Society in Malabar*, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1952, Chapter 5.
59. Krishna Warriyer A, in Salter Gilbert (ed.) op. cit, p.177.
60. This Act made *tarward* partiable and legalised inheritance from father to son. The effect of the Act had led to split up both the partilineally and matrilineatly inherited estates. Before this Act, a Nayar *Tarward* could divide only with the consent of the *Karnavan*. A *tarward* under this Act can divide if it has previously been voted as a potentially divisible *tarward* by a majority of its members.

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## Chapter 2

# INDUSTRIAL CHANGE

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In this chapter an attempt is made to examine industrial change of Malabar during 19<sup>th</sup> century and first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our information about the native industries that existed in Malabar during the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century is meagre<sup>1</sup>. From the reports of Buchanan and colonial administrators we will get a rough idea about the nature of industries that existed during the early decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The available evidence suggests that Malabar was basically an agricultural economy during the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century and engaged in production and export of agricultural raw materials. The only processed product exported from Malabar was coir rope. Buchanan cited the existence of handloom weaving in South Malabar especially at the Palghat region during 1800 A.D<sup>2</sup>. He pointed out that majority of weavers were migrants from the neighbouring places of Palghat taluk and the total number of looms existed were estimated as around 552. Besides cotton weaving and coir manufacture, craftman like goldsmith, silversmith, carpenters, ironsmiths, potters, masons etc. also existed. The Noturfa tax statement gives an idea about the number of persons engaged in the above occupations for the year 1833 A.D. On the basis of this we have estimated that the population that engaged in non-agricultural activities hardly exceed five percent of the total population in 1837.

During the early decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century, industrial and trade policies pursued by the colonial government were highly unfavourable to the growth of domestic cottage industries. After the imposition of colonial rule in Malabar, the colonial rulers began to import large quantities of mill made cheap cloth to Malabar. The colonial government also started a big weaving mill at Calicut during the first decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>3</sup>. The investment for the mill was made by the government of Bombay and the mill was run by the commercial resident of the Province. These steps had resulted in the total destruction of the cottage handloom weaving and spinning industry that thrived in different parts of Malabar. The remarks of the principal Collector of Malabar in 1838 give an idea about the resultant destruction of cotton handloom industry due to the import policy. To quote him;<sup>4</sup> “Malabar has never been famous for manufactures – coarse cotton cloth is manufactured in the Palghat and Tenalpooram taluks and here and there on the coast, the vast quality of Europe piece goods imported – and

which are procurable at very cheap price – have discouraged this branch of industry, so much so that the poorer class find it more profitable to turn their hands to agriculture.”

During the first four decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Malabar remained as an exporter of agricultural raw materials. By 1840’s we find that Malabar began to export semi processed agricultural produce like coconut oil, coir and coir rope, coffee and cotton goods. This denotes that coir industries, oil extracting industries, coffee processing industries etc. had started in Malabar by around 1840’s. The export statistics during 1860’s and 1870’s also shows an increase in the exports of these products in the subsequent decades. Thus it was evident that a few processing industries were began to grow in Malabar since 1840’s. During the decades 1840’s to 1860’s among the goods imported, the most important items of export to Malabar was cotton goods.

The 1871 census, the first census of Malabar gave us some information about the number of people engaged in industrial occupations. The census classified Hindu castes on the basis of hereditary occupation or caste guides. The people who were classified under the head “Mechanics and handicraftman” came to about 12.7 percent of the total population (Table 2.1). The craftman were classified under the above head were weavers, cobblers, potters, carpenters, masons, goldsmiths and blacksmiths. As the census classified the category of workers on the basis of caste, it does not give a correct position of the people employed in Industrial occupations.

**Table 2.1**  
**Industrial Population in Malabar (1871 Census)**

No.	Persons classified as Mechanics and Handicraft men	Number
1	Devangulu (Telugus)	10
2	Kaikalar (Weavers)	20,465
3	Kamsalar or Kammalar (Carpenters, Braziers, stone – masons, goldsmiths, Blacksmiths)	51,553
4.	Kummara or Kushavan (Potters)	11,770
5	Madiga (Workers in leather)	181,614
6	Sale (Weavers)	21,586
7	Seniyan (Tamil – Weavers)	486
	Sub Total	287,487
	Total Population	2261,250
	Industrial population as percentage of total population	12.71

Source: Within Logan, Malabar Vol I,P.81, 114 and 115.

The second census conducted in 1881 gives some what a clear picture about industrial workers engaged in different occupations. The census classified industrial workers into 20 groups. It was found that the industrial workers accounted for 27 percent of the total working population. But this estimate is likely to be an over estimate as the definition of the industrial worker included non-industrial workers. If we exclude the category of non-industrial workers from the category we can see that industrial workers account not more than 10 percent of the total working population.

The Malabar manual gives a brief account of the industries that existed in different taluks of Malabar during 1880's<sup>5</sup> According to this account, inferior variety of cloth were manufactured by using rude appliances in several places of Chirakkal, Kottayam, Calicut and Palghat taluks. Manufacture of coir and coir goods were a major industrial activity of the people belonged to Ernad and Cochin taluks. It is pointed out that a large coir factory providing employment to more than 100 persons were started in Calicut town by a Bombay merchant during 1880's. Among the other industrial activities, the important ones were oil extraction, arrack and toddy manufacture, metal works, coffee and tea processing. A few unsuccessful efforts were also made by some companies to mine gold from Wynad. A big spinning and weaving company was started in 1883 with a capital investment of Rs. 6,00,000 (Rupees Six Lakhs).

The Basel Mission, a Christian missionary society had started a few industrial units in Malabar. The mission established bigger weaving units at Cannanore, Tellicherry and Calicut. Tile industry owes its origin to the efforts made by the mission. The first tile factory was opened by the Mission at Padiyarakallu, near Calicut in 1874. Subsequently two more tile factories were started by the Mission in 1891 at Kottakkal and Olavakkod. Henke and co's factory at Ferok started in 1894 was the largest factory in Madras presidency. The tiles of Malabar were famous all over India. Following the Basel Mission a few small scale tile units were started by local industrialists at Calicut, Shoranur and Palghat. The domination of the Basel mission on the tile industry of Malabar came to an end during the first world war when the Mills of the Mission at Cannanore and Calicut were sold to the Common-Wealth Trust.

### **Industrial change during 20<sup>th</sup> century**

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the industrial activities which provided the largest employment in the industrial sector were coconut oil extraction, coir manufacture and coir goods manufacture<sup>6</sup>. Coconut oil extraction was the traditional occupation of certain castes, like Chakkans, Vattakadans and low Nayar sub – Castes. Though traditional types of oil mills were largely used for oil extraction, a few new oil mills worked by steam were also started in Cochin and Calicut. The other important industries that existed were timber, tile, handloom and powerloom. According to the 1901 census it was found that about 25 percent of the populations were supported by industries<sup>7</sup>.

Both handloom and powerloom weaving units existed side by side in Malabar. Handloom weaving units faced severe competition from import as well as the domestic production of mill made cloth. There was a steady increase in large factory type of weaving mills run by power. By 1931, the number of such mills had increased to 13 having a total strength of 1500 looms. Of this, nine mills were located at Calicut and four at Cannanore. The Common Wealth Trust, M.N. Nayar and Co., and the standard Cotton and Silk Weaving Company owned majority of them. The mills produced a variety of cloth such as sheets, towels, shirtings, silk clothes etc. By this time a few knitting factories were also started producing banianys at Feroke and Calicut. The yarn for all the factories were obtained either from Madurai, Tirunelvely or imported from Britain.

In the handloom sector, the total number of looms came to about 12,000 in 1931. Of the total looms about one third were fitted with fly shuttles. The handloom weavers were chiefly Chaliyans, who lived in pockets scattered all over Malabar except Wynad taluk. Weaving was the hereditary occupation of Kaikolar, Tamil Devanga Chettis and a section of Rowthers in Palghat and Walluvanad taluks. Each village had its own group of weavers, while large colonies of them were existed in the suburbs of Calicut, Palapuram in Walluvanad, Taliparampa, Chirakkal and Tellicherry. Though the handloom units faced severe competition from powerlooms, the handloom units survived partly because of the native varieties of cloth produced and partly because of the very low price of the cloth. Due to the competition from the power looms, the weavers were forced to sell the handloom cloth at very low price. The low price was made possible by sacrificing the major share of the

weaver's wages. Due to lack of other remunerative employment opportunities, the weavers were forced to continue in the handloom weaving industry<sup>8</sup>.

During the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, coir and coir based industries registered a steady growth. The best variety of coir yarn in Malabar was produced in Vadanapalli and Venkidangara village in Ponnani taluk. The major share of the coir and coir goods in Malabar was exported from Cochin and other ports. Timber industry was another growing activity of Malabar which provided employment to many connected with timber trade, transportation, saw mills and furniture units. The Beypore river, which tapped the forest of Nilambur valley and the adjacent hills were connected by canal with Kallayi, the largest timber mart of Malabar. Steam saw mills were also started in Kallai and Cochin for timber cutting. By 1919's Calicut town had emerged as the second largest furniture making centre in the Madras presidency. The soap manufacture was introduced to Malabar with the starting of a soap factory by the government. Later a number of small soap making units were started in the private sector. Among the other industries existed, mention may be made about fish oil, jaggery, manufacture of palm leaf umbrellas and baskets, metal and belmetal works, beedi making, match making, manufacture of household utensils, coffee and tea processing and umbrella making. Manufacture of country spirits and toddy also constituted an important activity of the people as evident from the number of retail shops existed (Table 2. 2).

**Table 2.2**  
**Number of Liquor Shops in the Malabar in 1992 – 13**

Sl. No.	Item	Country Spirit	Toddy	Ganga Bhang	Opium	Total
1	Number of retail shops licensed.	647	1263	45	27	1982
2	Number of persons per retail shop	4644	2307	66767	111,278	184,996
3	Gross receipt from duty (Rs.)	298,248	300,556*	56,303	211,160	866,267
4	Gross receipts from rentals (Rs.)	114,142	334,310	16,729	14,930	480,111

\* Gross receipts from tree tax.

Source: Innes C.A. Madras District Gazetteers – Malabar and Anjengo Vol. II Malabar (Madras : Govet.press, 1915) P.46.

We may also examine the growth of industries of Malabar during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Though there had been an increase in the growth of industries, the rate of

growth was not an impressive one. The 1951 census shows that out of the total population of Malabar 16.2 percent of the population came under the classification of industries, which is termed in the census as ‘ Production other than cultivation’<sup>9</sup>. Among the populations coming under industries, only 32 percent were actually employed and the rest 68 percent were non-earning dependents. According to the census the total number of large scale units were 488 providing employment to about 33,000 people. (Table 2 .3) Among the large scale industries handloom weaving units provide the largest employment followed by bricks and tile works, cotton spinning and weaving mills, coir units, beedi unit, saw mills match factories and general engineering works.

Table 2.3  
Large scale industrial in Malabar (1951 census)

Sl. No.	Industry	Number of Units	Persons Employed	
			Number	Percentage
1	Coffee Curing Works	3	553	1.69
2	Cashew nut/processing	3	1464	4.48
3	Cotton spinning and weaving	27	4489	13.75
4	Knitting Mills	8	797	2.44
5	Weaving mills (Handloom)	206	8468	25.93
6	Saw Mills	31	1508	4.62
7	Plywood	2	304	0.93
8	Printing Press	18	500	1.53
9	Match Factories	31	1456	4.46
10	Bricks and tile works	17	4538	13.90
11	Beedi	51	2015	6.45
12	Tobacco - cigar	29	427	1.31
13	Tea factories	19	624	1.91
14	Animal oil and fats	1	45	1.91
15	Soap	3	238	0.73
16	Coir	12	3193	9.78
17	Umbrella	2	204	0.62
18	Furniture	5	349	1.07
19	General engineering	8	702	2.15
20	Motor works	7	205	0.63
21	Metal products	4	355	1.09
22	Glass	1	217	0.66
	Total	488	32,651	100.00

Source: 1951 census Hand book - Malabar District, op.cit.p.7.

A significant aspect of the industrial growth of Malabar was the localization of large scale units in two taluks viz. Chirakkal and Calicut. These two taluks accounted for about 90 percent of the large scale industrial units and 85 percent of the total persons employed (table 2.4). On the other hand in four taluks viz. Kottayam, Ernad, Ponnani and Fort Cochin, not a single large scale industrial unit was started till 1951. In Chirakkal taluk, handloom weaving was the most important large scale industry. The other large scale industrial units existed in the taluk were cotton spinning and weaving mills, beedi units, cashew nut processing units, knitting units, plywood units, bricks and tile works, match factories and printing units.

**Table 2.4**  
**Large scale industries in Malabar (1951 census)**

Sl. No.	Taluk	Industrial Units		Persons employed	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1	Chirakkal	328	67.21	15810	48.42
2	Wynad	19	3.89	624	1.91
3	Kurumbranad	3	0.61	233	0.71
4	Calicut	112	22.95	12036	36.86
5	Walluvanad	13	2.67	1065	3.26
6	Palaghat	13	2.67	2883	8.84
7	Kottayam	Nil	--	Nil	--
8	Ernad q	Nil	--	Nil	--
9	Ponnani	Nil	--	Nil	--
10	Fort Cochin	Nil	--	Nil	--
	Total	488	100.00	32,651	100.00

Source : 1951 Census hand book – Malabar District op. Cit, p.7.

In Calicut taluk, bricks and tiles provided the largest employment followed by a spinning and weaving mills, saw mills, cashew nut units, coir units, match factories, general engineering works and furniture works. Tea factories and handlooms units were the large scale industrial units existed in wynad and kurumbranad taluks respectively. Match, metal products, bricks and tiles were the important large scale units existed in Walluvanad taluk. The important large scale units in Palghat taluk were coir, match and glass units.

In 1951 there were 17,000 cottage and small scale industrial units providing employment to about 62,000 people (Table 2.5). In cottage and small industries sector, the cotton spinning and weaving constituted the major industrial activity providing the largest

employment. Gur manufacture, mainly confined in Palghat taluk, provided the second largest employment. Coir, rope making, mats and mattings were the third largest employment providing activity under cottage and small scale industry. The other cottage and small scale industries which provided sizeable employment were pottery, oil extraction, beedi making, basket making and umbrella making. In terms of number of units and persons employed, Palghat taluk stood first followed by Chirakkal and Kurumbranad.

**Table 2.5**  
**Cottage and small scale industries in Malabar (1951 census)**

Sl. No	Industry	Number of Units	Persons Employed	
			Number	Percentage
1	Cotton spinning and weaving	6958	26,782	43.04
2	Rope making	1264	5,050	8.12
3	Mat weaving	595	1,308	2.10
4	Diary Products	73	232	0.37
5	Fish Preservation	155	682	1.10
6	Oil extraction	1366	3639	5.85
7	Beedi	1168	3,535	5.68
8	Copper, brass and bell metal works	352	1,199	1.93
9	Pottery	1337	4,229	6.80
10	Basket making	880	3,240	5.21
11	Gur manufacture units	2254	10,017	16.10
12	Umbrella units	245	1,284	2.06
13	Others	304	1,024	1.65
	Total	16,951	62,221	100.00

Source : 1951 Census Hand Book – Malabar District, op.cit, P.13.

We may conclude the chapter with the following Observations. The trade and industrial policies pursued by the colonial government since the take-over of Malabar had resulted in the decline of the domestic cottage and handloom weaving and spinning industry that flourished in different parts of Malabar. The import of a number of consumer goods had discouraged the production of indigenous goods produced by various category of craftsmen. The handloom weaving and spinning industry which provided the largest employment in industrial sector was forced to sell the products below cost in order to face the competition from the mill made cloth. The weavers were forced to sell the handloom product below cost by sacrificing their own wage, in order to sell atleast a part of the products produced by them.

During the colonial rule the government took no initiative to start industrial units except a few weaving and spinning mills. They started these mills anticipating huge profits by selling the cloth in the domestic market. In the promotion of industries, the Basel mission took an active part by starting a few big tile factories. The mission also started other industrial units. If we look the industrial and trade policies pursued by the colonial government throughout colonial period, we can conclude that the policies were highly unfavourable to the promotion of indigenous industries. The colonial rulers were mainly guided by two motives – maximization of trade profits and safeguarding the colonial interest.

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### Notes

- (1) Though a number of reports were prepared by the colonial administration for administrative purposes during the early decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century all of them dealt with the aspects like revenue administration, revenue assessment, land tenures etc. William Logan's Malabar (Vol. II) published in 1887 is perhaps the first source which give some details about the type of industries that existed in various taluks of Malabar.
- (2) Buchanan Fransis, A journey from Madrass through the countries of mysore, Cannara and Malabar, Vol II, op cit. P. 50
- (3) Thomas Warden, Collector dt. 19<sup>th</sup> March 1801 on the condition of Palghat, Congaad etc. of the District of Malabar, P. 11.
- (4) Clemenston P, A report on revenue and other matters connected with Malabar dt. 31<sup>st</sup> December 1838, op. cit. P.2.
- (5) William Logan, Malabar Vol. II, Appendix. 21 op. cit .PP. 270-419.
- (6) Innes C.A, Malabar Vol. I op. cit. PP. 249-251.
- (7) According to 1901 census, the population supported by industries were found as 689,380. Of this 44 percent of the people were termed as actual workers and 56 percent as dependents.

Source: census of India 1901 – Madrass Part I Report (Madrass Govt. Press, 1902)- P.216.

- (8) Innes pointed out the receipt of the very low wage by the entire family associated with the work. For the ordinary weaver, his wife and children used to get an income of about six anas (36 paise) for the entire days work in 1906 AD.
- (9) The population which were classified under large scale, cottage and small scale and other industries were 7.71 lakhs accounting 16.2 percent of the total population of Malabar. Of this 7.71 lakhs, 32 percent were actually employed and the rest 68 percent were dependents.

Source: 1951 Census Hand Book – Malabar, op. cit.

## Chapter 3

### INFRASTRUCTURAL SECTOR

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In this chapter we examine the infrastructural change of Malabar. The transport system in Malabar consisted of inland water transport, ports, roads and railways. In this section we trace the development of the above four modes of transport.

#### (1) Inland Water Transport.

Rivers and backwaters were the major means of communication net work that existed Malabar till the Mysorean invasion. The foreigners who came to Malabar prior to Mysoreans settled closely to the rivers and selected sites. Which had close access to water transportation net work. Much of the early trade and traffic of Malabar were carried by means of water communication because wheeled traffic and pack bullock traffic were unknown to Malabar till the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. In these days, sailing of vessels were not possible during monsoon seasons resulting in abnormal increase in price of food grains. Even prior to British rule attempts were made to construct canals in Malabar. In 1766, the Ali Raja of Cannanore constructed a canal known as Sultan's canal, having a distance of 2.4 miles, connecting the Mount Delli river with the backwater formed at the mouth of Taliparamba and Valarpattanam rivers, providing un interrupted water communication at all seasons<sup>2</sup>. Country crafts of various types were the principal means of transport used for transporting goods. Country crafts were kept by private owners for ferrying passengers and goods over rivers and small contribution towards ferry charge were collected from the passengers. In some places crafts were maintained by individuals.

But with the inception of colonial rule, the rulers viewed ferry as a source of revenue and imposed ferry tax. As early as 1801 A D. there were about 250 places where ferry existed in Malabar<sup>3</sup>. Instead of considering ferry as a public utility, the administration viewed it as a source of revenue and imposed a regressive tax which had serious adverse impact on the local poor people. Sullivan's observation about the ferry tax in 1841 gives an idea about its impact on the local population<sup>4</sup>.

“The ferry tax in Malabar is one respect more obnoxious than that of the tobacco-tax. All classes are subject to the latter but while the carriage and the palanquin of the

wealthy are allowed to pass toll free, the poor women whose livelihood depends upon the bundle of sticks which she is carrying cannot pass until she has paid - so hardly does this tax press upon the lower orders that lives have been lost in attempts to swim the rivers for the purpose of avoiding it.” From the above observation it is evident that the ferry tax was regressive in the sense that it levied tax from the poor people while rich were exempted from tax. Though a fairly good amount was collected as ferry tax, very little was spent either for the improvement of ferry service or for construction of roads till the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>. In 1855-56, the administration changed the policy by recognizing the need for diverting ferry tax for the construction of bridges and roads<sup>6</sup>. By 1931 there were 304 ferries managed by the district boards, of which 22 were in Cochin State, the income from which was shared equally between the Cochin government and District Board<sup>7</sup>.

The colonial administration took no steps to construct canals till the decade 1840’s. During 1840’s taking into account the colonial trade interests steps were taken to construct a few canals having a distance of about 46 miles. (Table 3.1)

**Table 3.1**  
**Expenditure on canals in Malabar.**

Sl. No	Name of Canal	Distance (mile)	Original cost of construction before 1855-56(Rs.)	Expenditure up to 1986-66 chufy from local funds (Rs.)
1	Sultan’s canal	3.0	-	885
2	Badagherry canal	3.0	795	-
3	Payoli canal	1.5	1,195	8,882
4	Conoley canal	6.0	19,360	525
5	Cootay and Tanoor canal	15.5	19,017	7,235
6	Ponnani and Chawghat canal	15.0	12,410	3,849
7	Edaturty	1.0	-	-
8	Calicut Bazar	1.0	2,350	11,424
		46.0	55,123	32,800

Source : Statistics of Malabar 1873 – 74, P.13

The Payyoli, Conolly, Ponnani and Badagara canals were completed between 1840 and 1860<sup>8</sup>. By 1880’s with the completion of canals at Ponnani and Chowghat, the inland water communication network connected Tirur Railway Station to Cochin. The total length of this system of inland navigation was 93 miles, of which 77 miles were in the Ponnani taluk. The common country boats were the important vessels used for transport of

passengers and goods except a few boats having cabins. The usual type of country boat was run by two persons and had a passenger capacity of about twenty persons. Calvetty canal, having a distance of 6 miles, connecting Calvetty to the river at Kallancheri was also constructed during 1880's. There was also new addition of canals and by the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the inland water transport communication network connected Kavvayi in the extreme north of Malabar to Trivandrum, except with slight interruption.

## (2) Ports.

During 19<sup>th</sup> century among the 26 ports in Malabar Coast, only five of them were major ports<sup>9</sup>. The rest of the ports were either minor or small ports where small coasting crafts used to visit occasionally. The major ports were Cannanore, Tellicherry, Calicut, Beggapore and Cochin.

(a) Cannanore :- Cannanore was one of the earliest ports of Malabar coast, and the first batch of Europeans who saw it remarked as<sup>10</sup> “ a large town of the thatched houses inside a bag “. By 19<sup>th</sup> century the port became the headquarters of Malabar and Canara brigade, the centre of colonial navy. As the port was mainly engaged in the shipment of troops, very little trade was carried there. By declaring salt as a government monopoly, the little trade that existed in the port also came to a half. By the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the average tonnage of the port was about 4.59 lakhs per annum.

(b) Tellicherry : Tellicherry was the port where the first regular settlement of the East India Company was established in Malabar coast<sup>11</sup>. The company selected Tellicherry because they found that it was ideal place for them to engage in pepper trade in the region. A fort was built by the company on a rocky cliff projecting in to the sea at Tellicherry in 1708 and this place continued as one of the principal trading places of the company till 1792. After the takeover of Malabar by the company there had been considerable increase in the trade in the port. By the last decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century, port handled shipment of a number of articles like coffee, pepper, rice, salt etc. and the average tonnage was about 6 lakhs per year<sup>12</sup>.

(c) Calicut : Calicut was established itself as a major port, even during the very ancient times. It probably rose into importance during the eleventh or twelfth century A D. In the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when Shaik Ibn Batula visited Calicut, was established itself as a place of great trade and continued its position till the arrival of Portuguese at the end of

15<sup>th</sup> century. Since then its decline was rapid owing to the interference of the Portuguese with the Muhammadan trade, and Cochin its rival, having greater natural facilities became the major port in Malabar coast in the subsequent period.

Calicut possessed an iron screw pile pier extending out to twelve feet of water and it had a light house exposing a good dioptric light. By the last decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century this port was one of the largest ports in Madras presidency having an annual tonnage of about 9 lakhs. Its imports were mainly grain, salt and piece goods and export consisted of coffee, pepper, timber, ginger etc<sup>13</sup>.

(d) Beypore : - Beypore port lies on north banks of the Beypore river. The anchorage for small vessels was inside the river, close to the north bank and immediately below a reef of laterite rock which project for into the stream. By the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the port's average tonnage was about 2.76 lakhs per year.

(e) Cochin : - Cochin emerged as one of the largest trading ports in the Madras Presidency by 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cochin possessed great natural facilities for trade as it is the centre of an immense area of rich country, tapped in all directions by navigable inland backwaters. For centuries Cochin was only a road stead and the boats and lighters took cargo from the ocean going steamers waiting outside. Though sailing vessels could enter the natural harbor at cochin, the sand bar at the mouth prevented deeper draft steamers from using it. As early as 1879, proposal had been made to develop the port by cutting a deep channel, but nothing happened till 1920. It was the Cochin chamber of commerce mainly composed of European businessman who first sponsored a proposal in 1879 for construction of a deep water port by cutting a deep channel through the bar to permit steamers to come inside. The colonial businessmen taking into consideration their trade and commercial interest in the region, put pressure on colonial government for constructing a modern port. The colonial government was also fully aware of the need for modernizing the port for expanding colonial trade. Finally the colonial government decided to construct a modern harbour at Cochin in 1920<sup>14</sup>.

Mr. Robert Bristow, a harbour expert was entrusted with the responsibility of conducting investigation works and prepare a scheme for execution. No harbour project had around so much technical interest and controversy as the feasibility of opening a deep navigation channel through the Cochin bar, capable of being maintained at a reasonable

expense through out the year. After many daring experiments and surveys, the cutting of an approach channel from the deep sea across the bar to the harbour was completed in 1929. The work was done by a dredger by name Lord Willingdon, with a pipe line. The performance of this dredger had created a world record for speed, cheapness and continuity of work. In 1930 the port was thrown open for vessels upto 30 feet draft. The project work had progressed very fast because of the keen interest taken by the governor of Madras.

The harbour development scheme was implemented in four stage. The first stage consisted of all preliminary works of an investigatory nature done prior to the commencement of the experiment in cutting the bar in 1920. The second stage consisted mainly of fore share protection and experimental dredging. The third stage consisted of the major dredging operation inside and outside, the moorings, a few residences, a large area of reclamation, and a dry dock. And the last stage included all works connected with making the harbour a terminal port with rail and steamers meeting at common wharf on the reclamation, thus linking up the whole port directly with the road and rail net work. In 1936 Cochin was declared as a major port.

With the opening of the harbour the trade of Cochin began to expand. The total volume of cargo handled increased from 3.17 lakh tones in 1920 to 21.4 lakhs tones in 1936, when the port was declared as a major port.

**(3) Roads.**

Prior to Mysorean invasion, Malabar was split into a large number of small principalities which were in constant rivalry, and roads were not a necessity. The traffic were carried through inland water ways and wheeled traffic and pack bullocks were unknown to Malabar till the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was only during the Mysorean invasion that construction of broad roads was necessitated for speedy movement of troops and establishing Mysorean authority in the region. The Mysorean rulers and constructed an extensive net work of roads connecting importance places in Malabar. According to the account given by Sham ninth, following were the gun roads constructed by Tippu Sulthan :-

(1) Feroke, Tipu's Capital in Malabar was connected with Coimbatore by a road led via. Tirurangadi to Venkatakotta and then bifurcated, one going to Coimbatore by Angadipuram, Mannarghat and the Attappady valley, (2) Coast road from Begpore to Cranganore via.

Tanur, Ponnani, Velliyangode and Chettuvayi, (3) A road from Tanur to Palghat through Pudiyangadi, Trittala and Lakkidi, (4) a road from Palghat to Dindigal and (5) A road Originating from Palghat and ending at Kollengode.

The conquest of Malabar by the British had temporarily arrested the growth in construction of roads. During the early years of colonial rule, a number of roads had been destroyed by the local landowners by gradual encroachment. A number of roads were also lost its shape due to the poor and hasty construction of roads by the Mysoreans. The colonial administration also took no interest in maintaining the existing roads, resulting in deterioration of almost the entire roads of Malabar. In 1848, Mr. Conolly, Collector of Malabar, reported that there were only two carriage roads in Malabar, one from the border of Coimbatore to sea and the other from the Mysore frontier to Cannanore and Tellicherry. The colonial administration was aware of the need for constructing new roads, but no serious attempts were made to construct new roads except constructing roads to suppress the rebellion of Pazhassi Raja in Tellicherry, Wynad region. Though the colonial government received a fairly good amount as ferry tax, the amount was not spent for constructing roads or improving ferry service till the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The frequent occurrence of the Mappila out breaks during 1830's and 1840's prompted the government to construct new roads in Malabar to suppress the revolts. During period from 1836 to 1853 twenty two out breaks took place in Malabar besides numerous abortive risings and conspiracies. And steps were made to construct new roads and improving district roads by devoting a share of ferry tax in 1855<sup>15</sup>. Till then, roads were constructed from the finance of imperial funds. A number of roads were constructed and by 1880's Malabar had about 97 roads having a distance of 1568 miles (Table 3.2) of this 97 roads, except seven, the rest were either branch lines or railway feeders. There were seven main roads having a distance of 482 miles connecting Calicut to different important places, within Malabar and neighbouring districts. During the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there had been an increase in the length of roads and by 1901, Malabar had about 1747 miles of road consisted of 1695 miles metalled and 52 miles unmetalled roads (Table 3.3)

**Table 3.2**  
**Roads in Malabar ( 1880's)**

Sl. No	Category of Roads	Number of Roads	Distance
			Miles- Furlongs
1	Main Roads	7	481 - 7
2	Branch lines and Railway feeders	90	1086 – 6
		97	1568 - 5

Source : William Logan, Malabar, Vol. II Ap. Cit.PP 84 and 85

**Table 3.3**  
**Roads in Malabar**

Year	Roads maintained (Miles )		
	Metalled	Unmetalled	Total
1891 - 92	1588	46	1634
1901-02	1695	52	1747
1906-07	1714	63	1777
1911-12	1737	65	1802

Source : Innes C.A. Madras District Gasetters - Malabar Aand Angengo – Vol II Malabar (Madrass. Sort Paras, 1915) P.2

The introduction of Railways in Malabar during 1860's and 1880's and its further extension to Mangalore in 1907 had resulted in a substantial shift of traffic from road to railways. And by the end of the first decade of the present century, roads were became mere feeders to Railway lines except in case of a few main roads in the Wynad region, connecting Wynad with the coastal towns.

In 1920 three major roads were designated as trunk roads and government undertook the responsibility to provide grants for their maintenance. The roads were (1) the Madras – Calicut road (94 miles) (2) Gudalur – Calicut road (40Miles) and Gudalur – Vayittin road (19 miles). Government paid at the rate of Rs.500/- per mile to the District Boards for its maintenance. For maintaining the rest of the roads, government contributed half of the cost of maintenance subject to a ceiling of Rs. 1.57 lakhs.

The Mappila rebellion in 1921 prompted the colonial government to construct more roads in order to send troops to crush any future rebellions. During the decade 1920's a number of new roads were constructed and by 1931; Malabar had about two thousand miles of roads, maintained by local boards, Muncipal councils and public works department.

Most of new roads were constructed in southern region of Malabar. A few new roads were also constructed during the subsequent decades. And by the end of the colonial rule the total length of roads in Malabar came to about 2224 miles consisting of national highways, provincial high ways, major district roads, village roads and municipal roads. (Table 3.4.)

**(4) Railways**

Promotion of colonial trading interests and establishing their firm military control over the entire territory were the chief motives behind introduction of Railways in Malabar. The first railway line in Malabar connecting Beypore to Tirur, a distance of 19 miles was commissioned in 12<sup>th</sup> March 1861. In the same year the Railway line from Tirur was extended to Pattambi. Work relating Pattambi to Padanur Railway line was completed and opened up for service in the next year. At first the government decided to fix the terminus at Beypore instead of Calicut. But later, by taking into account colonial trading interests the government had decided to extent the line upto Calicut in 1888 A D. The construction of railway line required the construction of a number of major bridges having a distance ranging from 100 feet to 840 feet.

**Table 3.4.**  
**Roads in Malabar (1951 census) (In miles)**

Sl. No.	Taluk	National Highways	Provincial Highways	Major district roads	Other district roads	Village Roads	P.W.D Roads	Municipal roads	Total
1	Chirakkal	-	38	68	49	31	-	24	210
2	Kottayam	-	42	46	40	11	-	19	158
3	Wynad	-	26	140	25	23	-	-	214
4	Kurumdranad	-	30	56	39	11	-	-	136
5	Kozhikode	-	50	28	40	50	-	70	238
6	Ernad	-	67	142	30	67	-	-	306
7	Wallunad	-	64	142	32	17	-	-	256
8	Ponnani	-	-	90	44	83	-	-	217
9	Palghat	42	13	98	90	155	8	67	473
10	For Cochin	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	16
	Total	42	330	811	389	448	8	196	2224

Source : 1951 census hand book – Malabar District op.cit, P.4

By 1888 A D, a distance of 118 miles of Railway line had been completed in Malabar as shown below<sup>16</sup>.

<b>Sl.No</b>	<b>Sections</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Date of opening</b>
1	BeyPore to Tirur	19	12 <sup>th</sup> March, 1861
2	Tirur to Kuttipuram	9	1 <sup>st</sup> May 1861
3	Kuttipuram to Pattambi	12	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 1861
4	Pattambi to Podanur	65	14 <sup>th</sup> April 1862
5	Kadalundi to Calicut	10	02 <sup>nd</sup> January 1888
6	Olavakkot to Palghat	3	02 <sup>nd</sup> January 1888

In the early years of opening of railway service in the above routes, there was little increase in goods traffic, mainly due to locational disadvantage of terminal station. In case of third class passengers, the higher fares discouraged train travel. But following some concessions offered to third class passengers, there had been an increase in passenger traffic.

The government also took measure to expand the railway services in northern parts of Malabar. In 1907 AD the work relating Calicut Mangalore railway line, a distance of 118 miles had been completed. The dates on which the various sections of railway line between Calicut to Mangalore was opened are given below<sup>17</sup>.

<b>section</b>	<b>Date of Opening</b>
<b>Calicut to Badagara</b>	01 <sup>st</sup> October, 1901
<b>Badagara to Tellicherry</b>	01 <sup>st</sup> May 1901
<b>Tellicherry to Cannanore</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> May 1903
<b>Cannanore to Azhikkal</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> March, 1904
<b>Azhikkal to Kanhangad</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> August 1906
<b>Kanhangad to Kasargod</b>	01 <sup>st</sup> October 1906
<b>Kasargod to Kumbla</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> November 1906
<b>Kumbla to Mangalore</b>	03 <sup>rd</sup> July 1907

In June 1902, the Shornur-Ernakulam, metre gauge line was opened for traffic. This metre gauge line was subsequently converted into a broad gauge line in 1935 and further extended to Cochin harbor on July 1940. The railway network of Malabar was further extended with the construction of a Branch line connecting Sharanur to Nilambur, a distance of 41.5 miles in 1927 at a cost of Rs.70 lakhs by the South Indian Railway. The line envisaged the development of the area, which remained as a very backward area due to lack

of proper transportation facilities. Pollachi – Palghat metre gauge line was another major construction work completed in 1932. Of the total length of 33 miles, about 20 miles of the line were run through Palghat taluk. This feeder line connected broad and metre gauges and gave direct communication between Dindigul on the main southern line and Palghat.

We may sum up the above discussion with the following observations. During the early periods of colonial rule, the policies pursued by colonial rulers were not helpful for the development of transport sector. The rulers considered ferry as a source of revenue and regressive taxes were imposed on it. Road development was neglected except the roads used for the movement of troops. But since the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century some steps were taken to construct canals and roads mainly safeguarding colonial trade and political interests. The frequent occurrence of Mappila out breaks were the important factor which prompted the rulers to construct roads in Malabar. Colonial trading and political interests were the factors which prompted them to start railways in Malabar and constructing a modern port at Cochin.

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## Notes

- (1) William Logan, Malabar Vol. I op.cit P.8
- (2) Ibid. P 10 and 11
- (3) Statistics of Malabar. 1873-74, op. cit. P 14.
- (4) Sullivan, Report on the provinces of Malabar and Canara dt. 29<sup>th</sup> January, 1841, op. cit. P.6
- (5) During the period from 1801 to 1855 a sum of Rs. 16 Lakhs were collected as ferry tax.  
Source: Statistics of Malabar 1873-74 op. cit.
- (6) Ibid. p.11

- (7) Innes. C. A. Malabar District Gazetteers – Malabar (Madras Govt. Press, 1951) P. 273
- (8) Ibid. P. 267
- (9) William Logan, Malabar Vol. I op. cit P.P. 69 -80, Vol. II Appendix VIII and IX.
- (10) William Logan, Malabar Vol I op. cit. P 70
- (11) William Logan, Malabar, Vol. I op. cit. P.62.
- (12) Kareem C. K. Kerala District Gazateers – Palghat (Ernakulam, Govt. Press. 1976 P. 372
- (13) William Logan, Malabar Vol. P.63
- (14) Innes C. A op. cit. P.271
- (15) Statistics of Malabar 1873-74, op. cit. P.11.
- (16) William Logan. Malabar Vol. I. op. cit P.66.
- (17) (a) A. Sreedhara Menon, Kerala District gazeteers Kozhikode (Trivandrum govt. press. 1962) P. 417
- (b) A. Sreedhara Menon, Kerala District gazetteers-Cannanore (Trivandrum, govt. press. 1972) P. 410

## Chapter 4

### EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

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In this chapter we present the educational change of Malabar during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and first half of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Prior to the introduction of the western type of education in Malabar, *Ezhuthupallies* provided facilities to the students to learn reading and writing. The *Ezhuthupallies* under the *Ezhuthachan* or Village school master afforded ample facilities to students to acquire elementary education<sup>1</sup>. Students were first taught, to write in sand and the letters of the alphabet. They were then trained to write on *ola* (Palm leaf) and commit to memory short verses of a devotional character. Simple lessons in arithmetic were also taught. Some of the pupils from the rich families were taught science subjects such as astronomy and astrology. After under-going their primary education in the *Ezhuthupallies* the children were sent to the *kalaries* for being trained in gymnastics and the use of arms or were sent to study Sanskrit in vedic school under well trained teachers.

Educational institutions of western type started in Malabar by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1848 the Basel Evangelical Mission started a Primary School at Kallayi. The educational dispatch of the court of directors of the East India Company (1854) gave high priority and asked the Basel Mission to expand their activities through education. With the introduction of the system of grant-in-aid, the Basel Mission started an English School at Telicherry with 74 students in 1856. The Municipal high school, Cannanore was also started in 1861. The Brennen school, Telicherry, the present Government Brennen college was started in 1862 with the donation made by Mr. Brennen, master attendant at Telicherry. The school was run by the Basel Mission till 1872 when it was taken over by the Government and was affiliated to the Madras University in 1891. A school started in 1877 for imparting education to young Rajas was later affiliated to the University of Madras in 1879. Later students belonging to upper cast Hindus were also given admission to the school.

During 1850's the number of students who studied in these schools were below thousand and the total number of them almost remained at that level till 1863. (Table 4.1)

**Table 4.1**  
**Number of Students in Malabar**

Years	University	High School	Middle School	Elementary	Normal School	Total
1857-58	-	205	580	116	-	901
1862-63	-	381	577	-	32	990
1867-68	10	753	2012	1013	26	3814
1872-73	32	562	3696	11671	22	15983
1877-78	55	295	1180	27527	90	29,147

Source: William Logan, Malabar. Vol. I. op. Cit. P. 106

But after mid 1860's the schools got much publicity and more and more students were sent to these elementary schools. By the middle of 1870's these schools became so popular that there was in fact, of very heavy rush to join the schools. The increase was so evident that the number of students, had increased from 1013 in 1868 to 27,527 in 1878. The trend in the growth of elementary schools were continued in the subsequent decades also. But a major defect of the colonial education policy was that they encouraged only primary education and not secondary education. As a result of this, a large section of students completing primary education were denied secondary education simply because of the lack of secondary schools. And even after 30 years of educational progress Malabar had only 7 High schools and 35 middle schools (Table 4.2).

**Table 4.2**  
**Growth of Educational Institutions in Malabar**

Sl. No	Category	1878-79			1882-83		
		Number of Institutions	Students		Number of Institutions	Students	
			Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
1	College	1	28	0.12	2	149	0.44
2	High schools	4	213	0.89	7	431	1.27
3	Middle schools	27	803	3.36	35	1375	4.04
4	Primary schools	644	22813	95.30	892	31949	93.90
5	Normal schools	3	80	0.33	N.A.	120	0.35
	Total	679	23937	100.00	936	34024	100.00

Note: N.A. : Not Available

Source: William Logan, Malabar. Vol. II. op. Cit. pp. 26 and 27.

Colonial policy of education in Malabar was mainly to encourage private agencies and individuals to start new schools by giving grants. The educational institutions that started in Malabar can be grouped in to three categories on the basis of the funds received for its maintenance viz. (1) maintained from imperial, provincial or municipal funds; (2) aided and (3) un aided. In 1882-83, among the educational institutions, one college, four High schools, six middle schools, four primary schools and two normal schools were maintained from imperial or provincial funds. But majority of the primary schools were aided either by result grants or aided or by combined salary and result grants. The rest of the institutions were classified as un aided, but they were given grants on the basis of inspection and there by satisfying good results.

In spite of the efforts taken to expand educational facilities in Malabar by colonial government, Christian Missions and private agencies since 1850's, the educational facilities provided to by them were meagre compared to the requirements. Even after thirty years of educational advancement, Malabar could hardly achieve seven percent literacy. The 1881 census, which defined illiterates as 'instructed' accounted only seven percent of the total population (Table 4.3). The Taluks which had the lowest rates of literacy were Wayanad, Ernad and Walluvanad, while Cochin had the highest rate of literacy. Here the literate populations included the people got instruction in the schools imparting western type of education and also the numerous *Ezhuthupallies* that existed in Malabar. Besides them, *Mappila* children were taught in local schools attached to Mosque to read and write in Malayalam and Arabic.

The trend in the expansion of educational facilities continued during the last two decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century and the literacy rate rose to ten percent in 1901 A.D.<sup>2</sup> The benefits of the educational facilities were largely gone in favour of males probably due to the social inhibitions preventing girls to attend schools, and the literacy rate of women stood at 3 percent in 1901<sup>3</sup>. By 1911 A.D. the literacy rate had rose to 11.2 percent. Wayanad and Ernad continued to remain the most backward taluks of Malabar with respect to attainment of literacy for males as well as females (Table 4.4). It was found that Christians were the most literate among local population and Christian women had high rate of literacy even compared to Hindu males<sup>4</sup>. In 1911 A.D. a sizable local population (about 20,000) were also attained literacy in English.

**Table 4.3**  
**Literacy Rates in Malabar in 1881**

Sl. No.	Taluks	Percentage of literates
1	Chirakkal	6.5
2	Kottayam	7.7
3	Kurumbranad	7.7
4	Waynad	4.4
5	Calicut	9.0
6	Ernad	5.0
7	Walluvanad	6.2
8	Palghat	7.5
9	Ponnani	7.0
10	Cochin	18.9
	Total District	7.0

Source: William Logan, Malabar. Vol. 1 P. 106

**Table 4.4**  
**Literacy Rate in Malabar in 1911**

Sl. No.	Taluks	Literates per thousand of population	
		Males	Females
1	Chirakkal	222	39
2	Kottayam	278	56
3	Kurumbranad	239	38
4	Ernad	111	17
5	Walluvanad	172	36
6	Palghat	189	27
7	Ponnani	157	31
8	Waynad	109	11
9	Cochin	344	139
10	Calicut	236	49
11	Locadive Islands	59	1
	Total District	190	35

Source: Innes C. A. Malabar District Gazetteers – Vol. II op.cit .p.63

During the 30 years (1883-1913) there was considerable growth with respect to educational institutions and number of students. While the educational institutions increased by 223 percent, the number of students had increased by 436 percent during the period (Table 4.2 and 4.5). Among the category of educational institutions the largest increase was with respect to primary schools (212 percent). Another 612 unaided private schools were also started during this period. The change in the attitude of higher cast of people towards

education and the policy of the government to give grants for elementary schools had led to increase of both schools and scholars.

**Table 4.5**  
**Number of Educational Institutions in Malabar in 1913**

Sl. No	Category of Institutions	Educational Institutions					Total	Number of Students
		Govt.	Municipal	Local Fund	Aided	Unaided		
1	Arts colleges	-	2	-	2	-	4	548
2	High schools	1	4	8	33	1	47	10999
3	Higher elementary schools	11	2	1	18	-	32	4666
4	Lower Elementary schools	10	60	269	911	133	1383	107405
5	Training schools	4	-	3	1	-	8	376
6	Other Special Schools	1	-	-	1	-	2	317
7	Advanced schools (Private)	-	-	-	-	105	105	5983
8	Elementary schools (Private)	-	-	-	-	507	507	18011
	Total	27	68	281	966	746	2088	148,305

*Source:*Innes C. A. Malabar District gazettiers – Vol. II Madras Govt. Press. 1915 p. 64.

A serious problem that emerged in the educational front during the period was the acute scarcity of secondary schools to accommodate the large army of students who completed primary education. This can be attributed to the peculiar educational policy of colonial government to encourage only the primary education. Another distressing aspect of the secondary education was the levy of tuition fees for all pupils, and denying opportunities to those who belonged to poor families.

Among the various sections of people of Malabar, the only section who did not get much benefit from expansion of educational facilities were *Mappila* population. Due to religious taboos, *Mappila* children were generally sent to Arabic schools attached to Mosques, instead of schools which imparts western type of education. The colonial government was fully aware of the mass illiteracy of *Mappila* population and recognized spreading education as the best safeguard against recurrence of *Mappila* outbreaks<sup>5</sup>. Though efforts were made on this direction by giving training to *Mappila* religious instructors and also starting schools in *Mappila* areas since the beginning of present century, not much progress was achieved, due to the indifference of *Mappila* to secular education.

During the period between 1910 to 1951, Malabar witnessed considerable increase in the number of educational institutions. The literacy rate had also increased to 31 percent in

1951<sup>6</sup>. But the major drawbacks of this expansion in educational institutions were inadequate number of secondary Schools and the failure to start higher learning institutions to impart instructions in medicine, engineering, agriculture, industries and science subjects. A close examination of the type of educational institutions existed in Malabar during 1951 reveals the following points. (Table 4.6). (1) the educational scene was mostly dominated by elementary Schools and of the total students 89 percent students were primary students. It is because of the policy of colonial government to encourage only elementary education. (2). Compared to the requirement of secondary schools, Malabar had only a few Secondary Schools. Of the total, students belonging to middle and high schools accounted only nine percent. The evidence presented earlier and in this table gives the impression that the colonial education policy did not favoured or encouraged the expansion of secondary educational institutions. (3). Except having a few arts and science colleges, no encouragement was given to promote higher learning institution in medicine, engineering, agriculture or allied subjects.

**Table 4.6**  
**Educational Institutions in Malabar (1951 census)**

Sl. No.	Type of educational institutions	Number of Institutions	Number of students		
			Boys	Girls	Total
1	College of Arts and Science	5	2339	327	2666
2	Training College for Men	1	59	22	81
3	Oriental College	4	96	39	135
4	Rural College	1	64	-	64
5	High School for Boys	78	34694	7324	42018
6	High School for Girls	16	349	7470	7819
7	Anglo Indian School	6	787	900	1687
8	Training School for Boys	6	1308	90	1398
9	Training School for Girls	4	-	365	365
10	Training School for girls (Anglo Indian)	1	-	23	23
11	Basic Training School	3	276	-	279
12	Basic Training School for Girls	1	-	79	79
13	Oriental School	4	126	18	144
14	School for Handicapped Children	1	28	-	28
15	Middle School for Boys	6	1470	264	1734
16	Middle School for Girls	2	23	299	322
17	Elementary School	3680	300782	213154	513936
18	Basic School	31	2002	1557	3559
19	Adult School	121	2601	133	2734
	Total	3971	347004	232064	579068

*Source: 1951 Census Hand Book. Malabar District. P. 12*

From the above discussion we can conclude as follows Western type of education started in Malabar around 1850's mainly by Christian mission like Basel Mission with the Patronage of colonial government. The colonial government followed a policy of giving grants to private educational institutions instead of starting them at their own initiative. The educational policy pursued since 1850's was confined to the attainment of two narrow objectives of (1) to make people literate and (2) to provide general education and train them to work for colonial establishment. Behind the objective of increasing literacy, the colonial government saw the need for making the *Mappila* population literate and there by prevent the occurrence of *Mappila* outbreaks. Though the policy had helped to increase literacy rates and popularize village schools in the place of *Ezhuthupallis*, the policy did not help to increase educational facilities at the secondary or higher levels or provide professional type of education.

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### Notes

1) Sreedhara Menon. A, Kerala District Gazetteers, Kozhikode, Government Press, Trivandrum, 1962, p.654.

2) According to 1901 census, the number of literates per 1000 males were 172 and number of literate per 1000 females were 30.

See: Census of India 1901 – Madras Part I Report (Madras: Govt. Press, 1902) p.87.

3) The number of literates per 1000 males increased from 125 to 175 between 1881 A.D. and 1901 A.D. During this period the number of literates per 1000 females had increased from 17 to 30.

See: Census of India 1901, op. Cit. P.87

4) The literates per thousand population in 1911 A. D were as follows:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
Christian	417	229
Hindus	222	44
Muslims	110	5
Others	528	161

*Source: Innes C.A. Malabar District Gazetteers, Vol. II, op. cit, P.63.*

5) Innes C. A. Malabar District Gazetteers Vol. I. op. Cit. P.300

6) 1951 Census Hand Book, Malabar, op. Cit P.227

## Chapter 5

# CONCLUSION

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### 1. Agriculture

The erstwhile Malabar district of Madras Presidency, forming the northern region of present day Kerala State had remained as an economically backward region in many respects during the colonial period. The region was under colonial rule since the English East India Company conquered Malabar from the Mysoreans in 1792 till attainment of independence in 1947. Though Malabar had been a major exporter of a wide variety of agricultural products to Europe for more than two thousand years and consequently exposed to influences from abroad, it remained an underdeveloped region till 1947. In the study, it is argued that the region remained as backward due to two sets of factors viz. (1) the unfavourable and extractive policies pursued by the colonial power in the spheres of agriculture, industry, infrastructure, trade and commerce; and (2) the caste system, and the social practices arising out of the system, that prevailed in Malabar.

The British conquest of Malabar in 1792 and the subsequent policy of recognising the *Janmi* as absolute owner of land and the wrong interpretation given by the courts and administration of the three types of tenures such as *Kanam*, *Kulikanam* and *Verumpattom* had severe adverse effects on the agricultural development of Malabar. These steps had resulted in the creation of a feudal class of *janmies* who had no interest in cultivation, prevented emergence of a land market in Malabar and retarded agricultural productivity and expansion in cultivation. Famines and situations close to famine were frequent in Malabar. Large areas of cultivable waste land and forest land remained uncultivated in a region where severe unemployment and shortage of food grains existed. We attribute this to the wrong land policy of the colonial power. It was also paradoxical that despite the fact that vast areas of land remained uncultivated, a large number of people migrated to places outside Malabar in search of employment.

Colonial extraction of a large share of agricultural surplus had resulted in perpetual misery and poverty to the tenants. The colonial government's standardisation of revenue assessment in 1805 had resulted in the entitlement of a larger share of total produce to the landlord compared to the previous position. The calculation of tax in money terms is a non-cash economy created acute problem to the tenants and most of them forced to sell at very low prices to get cash for tax payment. These changes had reduced the share of the produce entitled to the actual producer and tenants and forced them to live in perpetual poverty and debt. Total neglect of irrigation and infrastructure of the colonial government also contributed to the backwardness of agriculture. The lack of development of road and inland water transport also affected agricultural marketing and resulted in stagnation of prices of agricultural products.

The institution of caste system and its associated evils of caste pollution and system of inheritance stood as a major social obstacle to agricultural development. The system of inheritance which prevented transfer of ownership from a class of feudal landlords who had no interest in cultivation, to actual cultivators, stood as a barrier to the emergence of a land market, which is considered as a prerequisite for capitalist development in agriculture. The system of inheritance had a very unfavourable effect on agricultural development. Firstly, it prevented transfer of property from the *tarward* to the members of family thereby giving opportunities for them to utilize the land in a better manner. Secondly, it resulted in mismanagement of properties because vast areas of landed property were owned by *tarwards*. Thirdly, it created a lot of discontent and frustration among its younger members, because they were not given a chance for better management or better utilization of land.

## **2. Industrial Change**

The industrial change that witnessed in Malabar during the colonial rule may be summarised as follows: The trade and industrial policies pursued by the colonial government since the take-over of Malabar in 1792 had resulted in the decline of the domestic cottage and handloom weaving and spinning industry that flourished in different parts of Malabar. The imports of a number of consumer goods had discouraged the production of indigenous goods produced by various category of craftsmen. The handloom weaving and spinning industry which provided the largest employment in industrial sector was forced to sell the products below cost in order to face the competition from the mill made cloth. The weavers were

forced to sell the handloom products below cost by sacrificing their own wage, in order to sell atleast a part of the products produced by them. During the colonial rule, the government took no initiative to start industrial units except a few weaving and spinning mills. They started these mills anticipating huge profits by selling the cloth in the domestic market. In promotion of industries, the Basel Evangelical mission took an active part by starting a few big tile factories. The mission also started other industrial units. If we look the industrial and trade policies pursued by the colonial government throughout the colonial period, we can conclude that the policies were highly unfavourable to the promotion of indigenous industries. The colonial rulers were mainly guided by two motives – maximization of trade profits and safeguarding the colonial interest.

### **3. Infrastructure Sector**

Much of the early trade and traffic of Malabar were carried by means of water communication because wheeled traffic and pack bullock traffic were unknown to Malabar till the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Country crafts of various types were the principal means of transport used for transporting goods. But with the inception of colonial rule, the rulers viewed ferry as a source of revenue and imposed ferry tax, which had serious adverse impact on the local poor people. In 1855-56, the administration changed the policy by recognizing the need for diverting ferry tax for the construction of bridges and roads. During 1840's taking into account the colonial trade interests steps were taken to construct a few canals having a distance of about 46 miles. During 19<sup>th</sup> century among the 26 ports in Malabar Coast, only five of them were major ports. The rest of the ports were either minor or small ports where small coasting crafts used to visit occasionally. The colonial government was fully aware of the need for modernizing the port of Cochin for expanding colonial trade and constructed a harbour in 1929.

Prior to Mysorean invasion, Malabar was split into a large number of small principalities which were in constant rivalry, and roads were not a necessity. It was only during the Mysorean invasion that construction of broad roads was necessitated for speedy movement of troops and establishing Mysorean authority in the region. The Mysorean rulers constructed extensive network of roads connecting important places in Malabar. The conquest of Malabar by the British had temporarily arrested the growth in construction of roads. The colonial administration took no interest in maintaining the existing roads, resulting

in deterioration of almost the entire roads of Malabar. The frequent occurrence of the Mappila outbreaks during 1830's and 1840's prompted the government to construct new roads in Malabar to suppress the revolts. During the period from 1836 to 1853 twenty two outbreaks took place in Malabar besides numerous abortive risings and conspiracies. Promotion of colonial trading interests and establishing their firm military control over the entire territory were the chief motives behind introduction of railways in Malabar. The first railway line in Malabar connecting Beypore to Tirur, a distance of 19 miles was commissioned in 12<sup>th</sup> March 1861. The government also took measure to expand the railway services in northern parts of Malabar. In June 1902, the Shornur-Ernakulam, metre gauge line was opened for traffic. This metre gauge line was subsequently converted into a broad gauge line in 1935 and further extended to Cochin harbour on July 1940.

#### **4. Educational Change**

Prior to the introduction of the western type of education in Malabar, *Ezhuthupallies* provided facilities to the students to learn reading and writing. Educational institutions of western type started in Malabar by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1848 the Basel Evangelical Mission started a Primary School at Kallayi. The educational dispatch of the court of directors of the East India Company (1854) gave high priority and asked the Basel Mission to expand their activities through education. With the introduction of the system of grant-in-aid, the Basel Mission started an English School at Telicherry with 74 students in 1856. The colonial policy of education in Malabar was mainly to encourage private agencies and individuals to start new schools by giving grants.

The educational institutions that started in Malabar can be grouped in to three categories on the basis of the funds received for its maintenance viz. (1) maintained from imperial, provincial or municipal funds; (2) aided and (3) un aided. During the 3 decades (1883-1913) there was considerable growth with respect to educational institutions and number of students. While the educational institutions increased by 223 percent, the number of students had increased by 436 percent during the period. Among the category of educational institutions, the largest increase was with respect to primary schools. A serious problem that emerged in the educational front during the period was the acute scarcity of secondary schools to accommodate the large army of students who completed primary education. This can be attributed to the policy of colonial government to encourage only the

primary education. Another distressing aspect of the secondary education was the levy of tuition fees for all pupils, and denying opportunities to those who belonged to poor families. Among the various sections of people of Malabar, the only section who did not get much benefit from expansion of educational facilities were *Mappila* population. Due to religious taboos, *Mappila* children were generally sent to Arabic schools attached to Mosques, instead of schools which imparted western type of education. A major drawback of the educational development during the period of the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century had been the starting of a small number of secondary schools resulting in denying education to large number of students who completed primary education and failure to start post-school, higher educational institutions.

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