

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

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Internal Migration and the Process of Assimilation in Kerala: Christian Migration to Mannarkkad

The coming of the migrants in Malabar was a great event in the history of modern Kerala. The present study on migration to Mannarkkad is done on the pattern of investigative approach. The available reference materials, settlement registers, periodicals and souvenirs, books related to the topic etc. are used for this study. Apart from this, interviews with a number of early migrants and their family members, priests who have worked among the settlers community in the migration centres of Mannarkkad and to get first hand information on migration to Mannarkkad.

The study is a detailed historical survey and an in depth analysis, which would give a clear picture about causes, course and impact of migration. A number of reasons behind the migration to Malabar, land system in Travancore, commercialization of agriculture, progress of education in Travancore, famine, the Christian way of inheritance which led to the fragmentation of property in Travancore, the despotic rule of Sir C. P Ramaswami Iyer and the political developments in Travancore are some of the factors which contributed to the migration of Syrian Christians to Malabar. Land prices were very low as compared with the land prices in Travancore. The price of an acre of land in Travancore was enough to buy almost 100 acres of land in Malabar.

The migrant centres which selected to study are Pottasseri, kanhirapuha, Irumbakachola and Poonchola regions, once belonged to mannarkkad Moopil nair, a feudatory of valluvakkonathiri. Once a thick forest, the remains of some articles which might have been used by the early inhabitants of these regions could be collected during this study. Before the arrival of the migrants there were hectic activities by the British in this thickly forest land.

Sir John hunt who bought 3000 acres and 96 cents of land on the lease for 99 years, in 1916, from Mannarkkad Moopil Nair, for planting rubber was the chief among them. This region was rich with the *churuli* trees used for making railway sleepers. The migrants reached Mannarkkad as early as 1926. It was a continuous process of the Malabar migration. The pioneers were Karippaparambil Chackochan (Jacob Thomas) and Maliyekkal Thomas Joseph. They bought 3000 acres and 96 cents of land from mannarkkad Moopil Nair on lease for 99 years. Till 1945, only few migrants reached to Palakkayam, Irumbakachola and

Poonchola. After 1945, there was a heavy flow of migrants to these regions. By 1975, the migrants owned almost the whole of these regions.

Life in Mannarkkad was not a pleasant experience for the early migrants. Attacks from the wild animals and diseases took the lives of many. Poverty and natural calamities intensified their problems the migration transformed the agricultural pattern of Mannarkkad. The new farmers had introduced a culture of hard work to the native farmers. Before the coming of the migrants the native farmer's pre dominantly engaged in paddy cultivation and neglected the farming of lucrative perennial cash crops. The large scale intensive cultivation of crops did not gain momentum until the coming of migrants from Travancore. Poverty and food shortage of the people, including tribal people, disappeared due to the intensive cultivation pattern of the migrants.

Lemon grass, tapioca, pepper, rubber, coconut, areca nut and ginger had become the common crops of Mannarkkad replacing paddy cultivation. The intensive cultivation and the cultivation of new crops of Mannarkkad led to the all round development of the taluk. The high yielding crop varieties, migrants had introduced in Malabar, which had been successful in Travancore, were pepper, rubber, coconut and cardamom varieties. Later the native farmers also started the cultivation of cash crops imitating the cultivation style of farmers from Travancore. Because of the economic advancement of the taluk due to cash crop cultivation new roads, markets and towns developed in Mannarkkad

The results of migration in the social, economic and infrastructural spheres of Malabar particularly in Mannarkkad are very advantage to the region. The migration of farmers from Travancore was not to exploit the wealth of Mannarkkad, but to cultivate and stay permanently and tried for all round development of the region. The people who settled in the new land ceased all their economic activities in their native land and dedicated everything to Malabar and stayed there even withstanding severe in clemencies of nature and men. The changes in Mannarkkad were tremendous.

Another notable change in Manarkkad due to migration was the educational and general infrastructural development in the region. Large numbers of educational institutions were set u by the migrants. These new institutions provided education not only to the students of migrants but also the children of native people, including tribal community. Education was an instrument in the social and cultural development of this area.

In spite of large number of beneficial impacts, migration has also produced certain economic, social and environmental problems. The settlers have also encroached on the government lands, which forced the government to take steps to evict them. But on the other hand certain arguments are in favour of migrants also. The migrants planted a number of trees including various plantation crops and mango trees, jack trees etc. The migration adversely affected the life of the tribal's in Malabar. The tribal's often have an inferior social status and they are ruthlessly exploited be the migrant farmers and by money lenders and local merchants. The tribal's, in many places, have been reduced to the position of agricultural labourers.

