

## **Socio-Economic and Cultural Development in Plantations and its Impact on Idukki District of Kerala**

**Sony Alias<sup>a</sup>, James John<sup>b</sup>**

<sup>a</sup>Research Scholar in History, Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

<sup>b</sup>Research Guide in History, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore Tamil Nadu, India  
Assistant Professor and Principal, Department of History, St. Thomas College, Pala, Kerala, India

### **Abstract**

Socio-economic framework is the basic key for country's development. Idukki is a beautiful clean hilly and plantation area of Kerala state. It is an important tourist district of Kerala Government. This hilly station is most important for large tea garden. Number of layers and layers tea estates, water fall, mountain beauty and wildlife sanctuaries are main attraction of Idukki. Socioeconomic condition and its significant scenario are the main factors for country's progress. Social structure, political stability, government policy, economic growth, educational pattern, demographic graph, women empowerment and food security- these are most important features in this area. Here 'Kerala Model' is apt for this type of work. Hilly region basically shows an under developed and isolated from main traditional society in 3rd world and developing country but here Idukki socio-economic structure is different. Socio-economic structure is dynamic; it is changing over time to time. The general isolation of the plantations and its dependence on immigrant labour give rise to some specific characteristics to its labour force. The social relation among the workers which evolves out of such system is also bound to be different from that of labour in other industry. This paper examines the present socio-economic condition of Idukki by Primary survey and field experience. The socio-economic formation of the plantation industry, with its low level of technology and its heavy dependence on manual labour, is significantly different from that of other industries.

### **INTRODUCTION**

India one of the most developing countries in 21st century. Socio- economic status of any country plays an important role for development. Different states of India have different scenario also. The position of Kerala is significant in our country than any other states by physical and cultural landform inequalities from place to place. So, socio- economic status in plain land and mountain area are mostly different. Kerala is one of the most heterogeneous community states in India, like 35 tribal groups and its distribution is 1.20 % out of total population. This type of information provides different socio-economic imbalance and problem yet Kerala's socio-economic status is well. High social development, inter-cast stability and schedule tribes' population developments are indicate 'Follow Kerala. High socio economic level provides higher education level from surrounding regions and child education is also developing. Economic development is independent development and it is also different from other development; especially for women economic empowerment is a positive result for socio-economic development. Health development indicates the stander of living of any society and it is also important for socio-economic indicator. Women are important part of a society, they play important role to standardize of society. On the other hand education is another significant element for socio-economic condition. Education is important factor for socio-economic

development of a country. Health, education and employment these elements make standard of living. Socio-economic disparity of any region indicates historical, political, cultural, economic, demographic and governmental process. Socio-economic status is a national status and scenario of a particular place or region. Socio-economic status is the structure of any society. It is the framework for national development. It is dynamic and changeable over time to time, government policy to another government policy. The occupational characteristics influence the livelihood pattern of Idukki district and playing an important role in the socio-economic development. It also reflects in the system of social organization and the nature of economy prevailing in this region. The economic structure of the region is analyzed by calculating the percentage of population engaged in different kinds of work. Resource base in the region promote different kinds of work and people search for altering the land to fulfill the task. Work is defined as participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit.

### **Objectives**

- To identify the major factors for the socio economic and cultural development in plantations
- To trace importance of Plantation Labour Act 1951

### **Factors Influence the Socio-Economic and Cultural Development in Plantations**

Development is a process of qualitative changes and quantitative growth of social and economic reality which can call society or economy, culture refers to characteristic pattern of attitude, value, beliefs, and behaviors shared by member of a society of population. Major factors for the socio economic and cultural development in plantations are

### **Literacy**

Education makes the individual to improve his horizon of knowledge and inculcate rational outlook towards life. The literary rates in Idukki district is 86.94 per cent. In plantation industry Primary education facility is provided in the estates either by the company or by the government in all plantations. From the sample survey it is clear that 13 percent of the workers 'are illiterate. Sixteen percent of the respondents 'are coming under the category having 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> standard education, 48 per cent, having 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> standard education, 23 per cent, and above standard education and 13 per cent, no education at all. Education is one of the crucial factors which can create a change in the attitude of the people. With the spread of education, progressive ideas conducive to development would be inculcated in the minds of the people and gradually the barriers to development would erode. Modern system of education had an earlier start in Kerala. It could, however, make rapid progress only towards the close of nineteenth century. The growth of print media which began to appear from the closing decades of nineteenth century reinforced education in inculcating new ideas. Supplanting old values and bringing people from different parts of the world into close contact.

In the plantations sector in Idukki district number of school up to pre-primary level are maintained on all estates, where formal education is provide to children of workers. Slate and books are also provided free by the management to students who are attending those schools. Some of these schools are aided by government and rests are maintained by the management. Tata Tea Limited has established 110 schools to educate children of state employees, and has instituted scholarship for these children in its estates. In every plantation where there are more than 25 children between the age of six and twelve,

education facilities have to be provided in such a manner and of such standard as may be specified by the government.

### **Family Income**

Income decides the economic status of an individual in a family and society. It helps to procure articles of life, which in terms makes one's life comfortable. Financial assets play an integral part in the improvement of livelihood of an individual. Possession of financial assets enables the individuals significantly in their quest for social inclusion as livelihood is highly dependent on the financial assets of an individual. Wages, access to credit facility and saving habit determines the nature of financial asset. In order to understand the financial assets of plantation workers variables such as possession of bank account, provision of insurance coverage, accessibility or difficulty in access to credit from formal sources like bank, average monthly income etc.

Income one of the important factor affecting the standard of living is the amount of earning at a given time. Standard of living and income level are closely interconnected. In fact, purchasing power limits the quality and quantity of the satisfaction obtained. Thus the individual's standard of living is limited by his income. If family income increase the standard of living condition of a family must be changed, progress of civilization in the community, increasing the purchasing power, social customs also changed. If the members of a family goes up, naturally the income fall and the level of consumption also falls.

### **Occupational Structure**

The occupational characteristics influence the livelihood pattern of Idukki district and playing an important role in the socio-economic development. It also reflects in the system of social organization and the nature of economy prevailing in this region. The economic structure of the region is analyzed by calculating the percentage of population engaged in different kinds of work. Resource base in the region promote different kinds of work and people search for altering the land to fulfill the task. Work is defined as participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit.

**Table 1 -Different category of workers in Idukki**

year	Cultivators (%)	Agriculture labours (%)	Other works
1981	2.59	18.51	78.90
1991	17.66	20.15	62.19
2001	21.14	27.07	51.79
2011	19.54	28.22	52.24

The percentage of total workers to the total population in the district is 46.56 % in 2011. Of the total workers 19.54 % are cultivators, 28.22 % are agricultural labourers and 52.24 % are other workers. The table 3.9 shows the distribution of workers between 1981 - 2011. An increase of population is seen in 89 the working category of agricultural labourers from 27.07% to 28.22%, whereas a decrease is noticed in cultivators from 21.14% to 19.54% during 2001-2011. Agricultural labourers constitute the single largest working group among the occupation categories during the period 1981-2011. This phenomenon may be due to promotion of agricultural activities and the expansion of plantation and estates in the study area. The percentage of other workers was highest in 1991 (62.19%) and an uneven variation noticed afterwards up to 2011.

## **Religion**

Kerala is religiously heterogeneous. The religious composition of Kerala is different from that of the all India model as 42 percent of the population in Kerala is in the Non-Hindu category. The population studied here includes the Hindus, Christian and Muslim. The traditional plantation society of Kerala underwent significant changes as a result of the activities of the Christian Missionaries. This transformation was a gradual process like many other social changes in history. The important changes are changes in caste system, struggle against untouchability, abolition of slavery, freedom of dress, freedom from compulsory labour, privileges for the depressed class, progress of women.

## **Migration of cultivates**

The cultivation in this region started during the early decades of the present century with the introduction of the liberal policy on land by the state government. As a result, expansion of area under cultivation occurred since the government policy was liberal on the extent of a single holding. Immigration of cultivators contributed phenomenal change on land since the beginning of the 20th century. During this period the percentage of population was highest with the invasion of planters, small and medium farmers from Tamil Nadu and Travancore in highland region. The improvement of productivity has resulted in the development of a variety of crops from the status of wild forest products to crops cultivated under private tenure. Most of the early migrants have come to this highland region as coolies and majority of them acquired forest land for cultivation.

## **Plantations Labour Act, 1951**

But how far the provisions of the Act are realised by these plantation workers depicts their poor position in the socio-economic ladder and hence suggestions for remedial measures are relevant and important.

## **Health and Welfare**

- (a). **Medical** - Every plantation is required to provide and maintain, readily available, medical facilities for the workers and their families as may be prescribed by the State Governments.
- (b). **Housing** - The Act makes it obligatory for the employers to provide and maintain necessary housing accommodation for every worker and his family residing in the plantation. The Act also requires every employer to provide and maintain necessary housing accommodation for those desiring workers, who have put in six months of continuous service, but are residing outside the plantation. The State Governments are, however, empowered to frame rules to decide the standard and specification of the accommodation.
- (c). **Recreation** - The Act lays down that the State Governments may frame rules for providing such recreational facilities for the workers and children employed in the plantations as are prescribed.
- (d). **Education** - The State Governments are also empowered to make rules requiring every employer to provide educational facilities of such standard as may be prescribed, in his/her plantation, where the number of workers' children in the age group of six and twelve years exceeds twenty five
- (e). **Canteens** - In plantations employing 150 or more workers, the employers are required to provide and maintain one or more canteens of the standard prescribed by the State Governments for use of the workers.

- (f). **Creches** - In every plantation wherein 50 or more women workers are employed or were employed on any day of the preceding twelve months or where the number of children (below the age of six years) is 20 or more, creche facility for the use of children of such women workers is required to be provided and maintained by the employer.
- (g). **Other basic amenities** - Adequate supply of drinking water; maintenance of sufficient number of latrines and urinals in clean and sanitary conditions separately for men and women; supply of prescribed number and type of umbrellas, blankets, raincoats or similar amenities for the protection of workers from rain or cold; and appointment of welfare officers in the plantations, wherein 300 or more workers are ordinarily employed, are some of the other facilities required to be made available under the Act, for plantation workers by the employer. (ii) Hours of Work, Rest Intervals, etc. The Act provides that no adult worker is required or allowed to work in any plantation in excess of 48 hours a week and no adolescent or child for more than 27 hours a week. Nonetheless, when an adult worker works on any day in excess of the number of hours constituting a normal working day or for more than 48 hours in any week, he shall, in respect of such overtime work, be entitled to twice the rates of ordinary wages, provided that no such worker shall be allowed to work for more than nine hours on any day and more than 54 hours in any week.

### CONCLUSION

The European established plantation in Kerala and its development impact on the socio economic and cultural life of Kerala also. People who came in contact with the Missionaries were able to understand some aspects of Western culture. The study of English language enabled the people of Kerala to come in contact with western culture. It also created an intelligentsia with more knowledge about, European civilization. The role of plantation in Kerala in terms of its contribution to the regional economy. The social participation of the plantation workers the majority of them are participate in the workers association, panchyath, self group and there is less participation in clubs, religions organizations and government bodies that is why the socio-economic and cultural development equal to the development of urban area. The socio- economic background of the plantation works also differ from their counter parts in other crops. They are from different, racial and cultural group each following their own entity. The introduction of Plantation Labour Act in 1951 causes for lot of changes in the field of socio- economic and cultural development in the plantation workers in Idukki district.

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