

Panel 44: Kerala's Development in Context: Emerging Realities, Historical Vistas, Comparative Scope

Conveners:

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Abstracts:

1. Modeling a Productive Citizen: Land, Labour and Migrations in Kerala

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The proposed paper seeks to understand the historical process through which a new discourse of development has taken shape around the twin sites of land and hard work and through the agency of migrations for agriculture by taming the wilderness in Kerala, South India. The new discourse of development, fashioned through a process of dictation by the colonialism and appropriation by a resolute native agency through a process of translation, had brought in new attitudes to the native landscape and has constructed a new notion of citizenship in the figure of a productive subject (*purogamana karshakan*). My paper will specifically focus on the Syrian Christian migration to Malabar from Travancore, 1920-70, and will unravel how the migrants became the immediate benefactors of land reforms, one of the causative factors to the meta-narrative of Kerala Model. The paper will extensively make use of the migrant fiction to disentangle the facets of the productive citizen along side the communist literature that defines the figure of *purogamana karshakan* around the migrant subject in the developmentalist anxieties of 1950-70. The historical formation and the resultant 'social imaginary' that viewed migrations for agriculture as the route to development had taken the concerns of environment and that of the original inhabitants into oblivion.

2. Appropriating „science“ and „relatedness“: Environmental conflict and environmental knowledge in the fishery of Kerala

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In the fishery of Kerala the claim to knowledge being scientific has been influential in legitimizing state interventions and in the agitation of activists demanding regulative action against the over-exploitation of marine resources and social injustice. Widely deemed an important success, the activist intervention has received attention far beyond Kerala's state borders. However, it is impossible to make sense of the mutual perceptions of state representatives and the fisherfolk without considering the epistemic premises of the knowledges invoked. The notion of a social relation between knower and known, and in particular between the fisherfolk and the „sea (as) mother“, is significant here. Considered together, claims to „science“ and claims to „human-

environment relatedness“ illuminate shifts in how state representatives and members of the fisherfolk conceived of their relationship under colonial rule and after the transition to India’s independence in 1947.

I shall consider this development, focusing on two issues. Firstly, a ban on the fishery of the Indian oil sardine, as it was issued by the British colonial administration in the last years of its rule (1943-47), based on scientific investigations made locally by the Madras Fisheries Department. Secondly, the debate on installing a seasonal ban on trawling and purse-seining (both regarded as ecologically destructive fishing techniques) which has received much public attention since the early 1980s.

3. Situating Narayana Guru within the incommensurability between his epistemic and social locations

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Narayana Guru could be epistemically located within the fold of the conceptual apparatus of advaita vedanta, which has been the central discursive instrument held by the ‘dominant minority’ of the caste-Hindus. His conscious thinking was subsumed under his internalization of renunciation (sannyasa) and the entextualization of its traditional discourse. This paper argues that the epistemic location of Narayana Guru was incommensurable with his own social location. A person, whose social location is on the side of the oppressed, is not automatically qualified to speak from a subaltern epistemic location. But, this incommensurability is capable of producing some ‘exterior spaces’, not fully integrated into his epistemic location. It is proposed here that, this epistemic exteriority is to be located within the ‘disjunctures’ between Narayana Guru’s epistemic location and his socio-political interventions. Narayana Guru’s failure in de-linking himself epistemically from the conceptual foundation of vedanta was because of his unawareness of his own epistemic exteriority. The relatively free exterior spaces of one’s thought world has a potential for epistemic re-location. This paper is an attempt at epistemic re-location of Narayana Guru and to situate his radical political praxis within his epistemic exteriority.

4. Defying Irrepresentability, Othering and Social Exclusion: Re-visiting the Travancore Experience.

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The processes of self representation to assert one’s own identity and to capture their denied social space are viewed as the dynamic actions defining historical transformations.

In Travancore, the non-caste Hindus remained ghettoized for many centuries on account of caste system and so incapacitated to represent by themselves. The social set-up based on caste and its murderously oppressive institutions held sway over the micro aspects of

social life, thought to be unassailable and immutable. This paper attempts to unravel the complexities involved in the Civic Right Movement (1918-22), which interrogated this long prevailed context. The movement was a powerful surge of non-caste and non-Hindus against the state of Travancore. It considered maintenance of caste system as its primary duty (*Dharma*) and any deviation is viewed as fall (*Dharmabrahamsha*).

Anti-Muslim (Islam) and Christian campaign was unleashed to strengthen the Hindu national sentiments and they were carefully constructed as 'Others' to imagine the Nation. But here this 'Othering' was deconstructed by forging an alliance between non-caste and non-Hindus. The paper argues in this context that the realm of engagement of transformation of Travancore into a modern democratic society contest the legacy of modern Indian nation.

5. The Latin Catholics and their diet: a note on one of Kerala's peculiarities

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In their article on food among Muslims and Hindus in Kerala, Caroline and Filippo Osella (2008) point in the very first sentence to the exceptionality of the state and underline as one of its unique features the high percentage of non-Hindus. Though the Latin Catholics as one of these non-Hindu groups share basic values with the surrounding Hindus, there are certain concepts connected with their religious affiliation which certainly set them apart. In continuation of the mentioned article, these differences are explored in the realm of 'food'. Among the Latin Catholics, there are next to no restrictions concerning diet, and non-vegetarianism is not only emphasised in everyday life, but also at ritual occasions. Catholic food habits thus often run contrary to Hindu concepts of purity, pollution and caste, and thus provide a field in which Christian notions differ considerably. Rather than dealing with the 'Kerala development model' as such, the paper concentrates on one of the state's exceptionality, the Christian community, which seems, given the number of educational and health institutions run by Christians organisations, to have not insignificantly contributed to its reputation as a 'model state'.

6. Religion, Education and Democracy: The Emergent Transformative Players

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The present paper addresses the likely impact of the emergent custodians on higher education – the dominant religious and caste groups - in terms of the secular and ethical education, which formed the bedrock of the Kerala model of social development? The demand for greater autonomy for the emergent governance structures has led to a crisis situation wherein religious and caste groups have declared their intention to launch a second 'liberation struggle', the first one having been staged in the immediate post-independence phase and having succeeded in pulling down the communist government in 1959. What has been the content of conflicts over the transformation of education in the state, the history of which dates back to the missionaries and renaissance movements? How have the dominant religious/caste forces come to represent and articulate the question of higher education in Kerala? What would be the implications of such interventions in terms of knowledge production and academic freedom when commerce is linked with education through institutions run directly by religious/caste

groups particularly considering the Supreme Court verdict that it is ‘unholy’ to bring commerce into educational institutions?

7. Unveiling the Janus: Understanding Modernity in Kerala
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In recent times the concept of modernity has increasingly come under scrutiny. The desirability or even the impossibility of imitating Western models of development has become obvious to critics. Hence there has emerged the debate on ‘alternative modernities’ and ‘multiple modernities’ which has put serious question marks on the universalist aspirations of European Enlightenment. At the same time, while the modernity project has been dissected and debunked in the academic sphere it is still celebrated at the popular level in many parts of the South, especially in the economically buoyant areas. That is why it is necessary to understand such contradictions so as to gauge the problems and prospects of human liberation in the South. Kerala proves to be an excellent case study for understanding the trajectory of modernity in non-Western countries for it is one of the most celebrated cases of development in the world with its achievement of remarkable levels of human development and democratic governance despite low levels of per capita GDP. While Kerala has achieved significant successes in reducing poverty and material deprivation, it has generated new problems not all of which are material. In a preliminary theoretical exploration, this paper will seek to situate the contradictions which allow many liberatory tendencies to coexist with some of the most conservative ones within the emerging debates on modernity.

8. Indigenism and class in a Paniya colony: Pathways of belonging after the Muthanga struggle
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What Anna Tsing calls “travelling models of indigenous voice” have also from the 1990s onwards found their way into Kerala, where we see the rise of modern political organizing focused around the notion of “indigenous” culture and history, culminating in the 2003 land occupation of the Muthanga wildlife sanctuary as an “adivasi homeland”. This paper focuses on the experiences of a group of Paniya workers, all from a particular nearby colony, who took part in the Muthanga struggle, to explore the ways in which people identified with the discourse of indigenism. It argues that rather than substantive historical differences, it is an expanded, relational notion of class that explains why in the aftermath of the colony’s failed attempt to attain land at Muthanga, some of its inhabitants started to interpret their history and position vis-à-vis others through the lens of indigenism, whereas others explicitly rejected the idea of “adivasi” culture. In exploring these pathways of belonging, I also hope to shed some light on the way global discourses of indigenism become locally mediated in Kerala today.

9. Revisiting the 'Turnaround' Debate:

An Appraisal of the Contemporary Growth Dynamics of the Kerala Economy

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An important criticism against the “Kerala model” of development was the sluggish pace of expansion in economic production in the state, reflected in the growth impasse of the 1970s and the 1980s. Many scholars evinced the apprehension that this would impinge upon the finances of the state, thus jeopardizing the sustainability of the heavily welfare-oriented Kerala model and threatening the very foundations of the achievements on the human development front.

The recent realisation that the economic growth of the state had picked up since the late 1980s has led to the emergence of a new literature which focusses on the “turnaround” in the growth performance of the economy. The most widely held view in this literature has been that the revival in growth was due to increased remittance inflows that induced a rise in consumption demand, which drove up growth rates.

My paper argues that the “remittance-led growth” argument is inadequate as an explanation for the growth turnaround. Using evidence from surveys and micro-level studies as well as well-known insights from economic theory, the paper shows that the impact of the consumption expenditure of emigrants’ households on the commodity-producing sectors of the state economy was lower than that of households without emigrants. A sizable part of the consumption of emigrants’ households was of a conspicuous nature and highly import-intensive. Moreover, at the margin, the likelihood of increments in income being parked in banks or spent on land purchases, etc. is higher in the case of emigrants’ households. Thus the multiplier effects on *domestic* output of the increased consumption expenditure due to increased remittance inflows was lower than was suggested by the remittance-led growth argument, with the implication that the stimulus for the growth turnaround might have come from elsewhere. Putting forward an alternative explanation for the revival in growth, the paper demonstrates that the immediate trigger for the revival in growth in 1987-88 was the improved production of crops owing to better weather conditions coupled with high crop prices in general. The continuation of the higher growth rates in the commodity producing sectors of the economy and the consequent transformation of the spike in growth rates into a sustained turnaround was brought about by the increase in income from rubber production which manifested itself *inter alia* as a rise in the share of rubber in total value added in agriculture from 1989-90 onwards. The most important stimulus for the growth of output in manufacturing subsequently was provided by the demand generated by expanding incomes originating in agricultural sector, led by rubber. A big quantum of demand for services also came from the beneficiaries of the expansion in the commodity producing sectors of the economy, since a high proportion of the work force is employed in the primary and secondary sectors of the economy. The crash in the prices of the major commercial crops of Kerala during the second half of the 1990s (a result of the trade liberalisation measures put in place in the country) had detrimental consequences for Kerala's economic growth.

10. Socio- economic Groups and Economic Opportunities: Kerala, 1984- 2004

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Information on Kerala's growth experience shows a turn around since the mid eighties. This turn around has been characterized by an increase in the growth rates and hence in greater social opportunities. Nevertheless, little is known about the distribution of these widening spheres of social opportunities among the social classes. This paper is an attempt to examine the changes in economic opportunities available to each of the socio-religious groups in the state and to explore the changes in group inequalities in terms of these opportunities over the period 1984-2004. The paper uses the NSS unit level data, mobilized in the 1984 and 2004 Rounds.

11. Old age vulnerability and changing old age are in the state of Kerala.

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Population ageing is one of the most discussed global phenomena in the present century. It is generally referred to in terms of the growing share of older individuals in the total population. India has the second highest count of elderly population, which is to the tune of 77 million. The vulnerability and deprivation of the elderly in matters of health, economic dependence and familial support is of much concern under the evolving conditions of socio-economic transformation. Vulnerability arises primarily due to lack of preparedness to accommodate the expected risks, which become inevitable with various forms of dependence, be it physical, economic, familial or emotional. The present study looks up on specific case study of Kerala, the most demographically transformed state, to reflect on the aspects of vulnerability among the elderly that may evolve with time in other states of India. Another significant feature of this case study is that it attempts to highlight the response to changing societal conditioning in relation to care for the elderly. This paper also looks at the detailed picture of the well-being of the elderly in the state and how it is molded across different social and demographic characteristics. It looks up on how the perception of the old age care evolved and changed over time. Try to understand the linkage between old age care, perceptions and social transformation in the state.

12. Kerala's Development in Context: Emerging Realities, Historical Vistas, Comparative Scope

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Environmental conservation has gained importance in national and transnational development circles and networks over the last years. Kerala's successive governments, whose development policies have been acclaimed as India's foremost progressive and model ones, have officially been eager to implement the new guidelines set by the Indian Forest Policy of 1988 and more recently by the National Environmental Policy (NEP) of 2006 to achieve a balance between conservation and development. Since the 1990s a new forest policy, Joint Forest Management (JFM), has been adopted by the Kerala Forest Department as an innovative method to realize "sustainable" development and to improve the involvement of the local communities in conservation efforts. Presently, according to the Kerala State of Forest Report (FSI, 2005) more than 172,240 ha of Kerala's forests are covered under the JFM scheme.

At the same time that the Kerala Forest Department is promoting the protection of its forest land, the Supreme Court has recently (December 2006) passed a key piece of forest legislation, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, popularly known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA). The law concerns the rights of forest dwelling communities to land and other resources, denied to them over decades as a result of the continuance of colonial forest laws in India. In many of Kerala's districts the implementation of the Forest Rights Act by the Kerala Department of Scheduled Tribe Development is only now starting and Forest Rights Committees (FRCs) are being formed in the local forest communities.

The aim of this paper is to explore the Kerala Forest Department's conservationist efforts in the light of recent trends in Kerala's Tribal Development policies. The paper will provide an ethnographic case study from the Wyanad-District of Northern Kerala, focussing on the "bureaucratic confusion" which the implementation of the Forest Rights Act is causing between the Department of Scheduled Tribe Development and the Forest Department. Conflicts are arising at the intersection of divergent political, economic, ecological and cultural interests.