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Urbanization in Kerala and Tamil Nadu:
Some contrasts
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Introduction

1. The urban pattern of Kerala differs from the patterns observed in the rest of India in several important respects. In particular it is noticed that (a) the towns are more evenly distributed within Kerala than in the other parts of the country; (b) unlike in other States, the differentiation in the urban hierarchy is much less pronounced in Kerala; (c) again in contrast to the all-India pattern, one does not see in Kerala a sharp break in economic structure when one moves from rural to urban areas; (d) the economic base of urban areas of Kerala are distinctly different; and (e) the historical evolution of Kerala's urban pattern seem to have followed a different path from other regions. This paper attempts to explore these differences, and the underlying reasons therefor, in some detail. Besides comparing the various aspects of urban growth in Kerala with all-India picture, we shall emphasise comparisons with the pattern prevailing in the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu where urbanization follows the pattern typical of the rest of India.

2. The paper is divided into four sections: Section one describes in detail the differences between Kerala on the one hand and Tamil Nadu and all-India on the other, in respect of various aspects of urban patterns. Section two attempts an explanation of the factors responsible for these differences. Section three covers the historical aspects of the pattern of urbanization in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In the concluding section, the implications of the present pattern of urban settlements for the industrial policy are discussed.

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SECTION I

3. According to the 1971 Census the urban population of Kerala is 3.5 million persons living in 88 towns spread all over the state. The share of urban areas in total population is 16.3 per cent in Kerala as against 19.1 per cent for all-India. In terms of the concepts of urbanization used by the Census, Kerala is one of the less urbanised states in the union. The contrast between Kerala and the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu, where about 30 per cent of the population live in urban areas, is particularly striking.

4. The average size of a town in Kerala (39,391 in 1971) is much larger than the corresponding Tamil Nadu figure of 28,137 and somewhat greater than the national average of 37,243. The population density in urban areas is also higher in Kerala (2584 per sq.km.) than Tamil Nadu (2115) and all India (858). There is not much difference between the two main regions within Kerala (viz. Travancore-Cochin and Malabar) in terms of the degree of urbanization (measured by the proportion of population in urban areas). But the average town in Malabar tends to be smaller and agricultural in character than in Travancore-Cochin (See Table-1).

Table 1 Indicators of urbanization - 1971

| | % of urban to total population | Average size of town | % of urban workers in primary sector |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Travancore-Cochin | 16.8 | 43,097 | 18.0 |
| Malabar | 15.3 | 34,039 | 21.5 |

Source: Census of India, 1971.

at the more disaggregated level of districts, we notice a much more even distribution of the number of towns in Kerala than in Tamil Nadu; but

The distribution of urban population is almost as uneven in both the states.^{1/} This and other aspects of urbanization within Kerala have been discussed in the following sections.

5. Table 2 shows the distribution of towns and urban population in 1971 by different size-classes. The various classes of towns have been grouped into three categories. Big cities include classes I and II; Classes III and IV come under the category of medium towns; and small towns consist of V and VI.^{2/} Kerala's urban hierarchy is dominated by the medium towns in terms of both the number of towns and to a lesser extent, population. Clearly small towns play a far less significant role in Kerala, their share in the number of towns and in the total urban population being very much smaller than in all-India. In Tamil Nadu, on the contrary, they seem to be more prominent than in the rest of the country. Big cities in Kerala, though relatively more numerous, account for a smaller proportion of population than in Tamil Nadu and in all India.

Table:2 Percentage Distribution of Towns and Urban population into six urban classes - 1971

| | Total | | Big Cities | | Medium Towns | | Small Towns | |
|------------|-------|-------|------------|------|--------------|------|-------------|-----|
| | A | B | A | B | A | B | A | B |
| Kerala | 100.0 | 100.0 | 13.7 | 55.7 | 73.9 | 42.0 | 12.4 | 2.3 |
| Tamil Nadu | 100.0 | 100.0 | 9.9 | 57.3 | 44.2 | 34.1 | 45.9 | 8.6 |
| India | 100.0 | 100.0 | 11.7 | 64.6 | 53.0 | 29.4 | 35.3 | 6.0 |

Source: Census of India, 1971

Note: A. Number of Towns
B. Population.

6. That ^{the} big cities do not play a dominant role in Kerala's urban system as in the rest of the country, is also brought out by a comparison of the average size of the Class I (big) city with that of other size-classes as

well as the extent of concentration of economic activity in the big cities in Kerala (see Table 3). Not only is the average class I city in Kerala smaller than in the rest of the country, but the range of variation in the average size of different classes of towns is also much less. This is largely explained by the fact that in general, the average population of the 'small towns' of Kerala is larger than the corresponding national average, while the average population of the large towns in Kerala tends to be smaller than their counterparts in the rest of India. The comparison between Kerala and Tamil Nadu also reveals a more or less similar pattern. The Tamil Nadu urban hierarchy is more dominated by the big city than the all-India pattern, and more so, than in Kerala.

Table 3: Average Size of Towns of various Size - Classes, 1971

| Size - Class | Average Size | | |
|-----------------|--------------|------------|----------|
| | Kerala | Tamil Nadu | India |
| I | 2,93,409 | 4,23,385 | 4,01,524 |
| II | 66,243 | 65,374 | 66,783 |
| III | 27,535 | 23,835 | 30,609 |
| IV | 14,025 | 10,534 | 14,068 |
| V | 8,280 | 3,456 | 7,537 |
| VI | 4,566 | 400 | 3,128 |
| Total | 39,391 | 28,137 | 37,243 |

Source: Census of India, 1971.

7. Much the same conclusion is suggested by a comparison of the share of the most populous city in total urban population and urban economic activity in different states. Table 4 presents the indices in respect of Kerala and three highly urbanised states in India, viz. West Bengal, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu respectively. The table shows that the degree

of concentration of urban activity in the largest city is lowest in Kerala and the highest in West Bengal.

Table 4: Concentration Ratios (Private City) 1971.

| Concentration Ratios | Calcutta | Bombay | Madras | Cochin |
|---|----------|--------|--------|--------|
| Population | 64.11 | 38.00 | 25.43 | 12.67 |
| Manufacturing other than household industry | 79.32 | 58.20 | 29.33 | 14.52 |
| Trade and Commerce | 72.52 | 49.95 | 24.97 | 13.83 |
| Transport, Storage and Communications | 29.51 | 49.49 | 41.32 | 21.12 |
| Other services | 68.41 | 40.37 | 27.93 | 15.31 |

Source: Census of India, 1971

Note: The percentages in the Table are the shares of the concerned city in the respective state totals of the indicators chosen.

Calcutta accounts for 64 per cent of the urban population of West Bengal; but the share of Cochin in Kerala's urban population is less than 13 per cent. The contrast becomes even sharper when we look at the concentration of manufacturing and trade activities in these cities.

8. A similar comparison of the second largest cities (see Table 5) in the above states confirms that the big city dominance is comparatively weak in Kerala. More interestingly, unlike in the highly urbanised states, the distance between the first and the second biggest cities is not very great in terms of any of the measures of concentration we have used. Thus Trivandrum's share of population is 11.82 as against 12.67 in Cochin. In the case of other States the difference between the first two cities is very vast and points to the disproportionate dominance of one big city in the urban system of these states.

Table 5 Concentration Ratios (Second biggest city), 1971

| Concentration Ratios | Asansol | Poona | Coimbatore | Trivandrum |
|---|---------|-------|------------|------------|
| Population | 2.21 | 7.22 | 5.91 | 11.82 |
| Manufacturing other than Household industry | 2.21 | 6.80 | 10.02 | 7.92 |
| Trade and Commerce | 1.64 | 5.27 | 5.51 | 10.61 |
| Transport, Storage and Communications | 1.26 | 6.14 | 4.38 | 9.58 |
| Other services | 1.36 | 10.72 | 2.19 | 19.88 |

Source: *ibid*

9. In terms of the functional character of the cities and towns, as well as the degree of differentiation among them, Kerala again presents a different pattern from the rest of India and Tamil Nadu. Overall, secondary activity plays a much less important role and primary activity is more prominent in Kerala's urban areas than in the rest of India (See Table Table 6: Industrial classification of the urban work force, 1971. (in percentages))

| Sector | Kerala | Tamil Nadu | India |
|-----------|--------|------------|-------|
| Primary | 19.3 | 16.7 | 13.8 |
| Secondary | 22.4 | 29.7 | 27.9 |
| Tertiary | 58.3 | 53.6 | 58.3 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: Census of India, 1971

Note: Primary sector includes the Census Industrial categories from I to IV while the secondary refers to V. Tertiary covers the rest.

Secondly, at the national level the proportion of workers employed in secondary and tertiary sectors is highest in Class I cities and these

proportions decline steadily as one moves from larger to smaller towns (See Table 7). But in the cities of Kerala secondary activity is considerably less important than their counterparts in India; tertiary sector seems to be much more crucial in their economic base. And unlike in the rest of India, the smaller towns have a larger proportion of their workers engaged in secondary activity than the larger towns. In fact the latter seem to be much more agro-commercial in character than their counterparts in the other parts of India. Furthermore, the differences in the structure of economic activity in different sizes of towns is much less pronounced in Kerala compared to the differences at the all India level. This gives a greater degree of functional homogeneity in Kerala's urban economy.

Table:7 Industrial Distribution of the work force, size-class-wise - 1961

| Size-class | INDIA | | | | KERALA | | | |
|------------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|
| | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary | Total | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary | Total |
| I | 3.85 | 32.53 | 63.62 | 100.00 | 5.91 | 21.42 | 72.67 | 100.00 |
| II | 10.87 | 29.93 | 59.20 | 100.00 | 9.21 | 19.89 | 70.90 | 100.00 |
| III | 15.70 | 27.04 | 57.26 | 100.00 | 20.16 | 25.98 | 53.86 | 100.00 |
| IV | 28.05 | 22.98 | 48.97 | 100.00 | 30.39 | 22.06 | 47.55 | 100.00 |
| V | 31.71 | 20.83 | 47.46 | 100.00 | 24.10 | 25.26 | 50.62 | 100.00 |
| VI | 31.82 | 16.57 | 51.61 | 100.00 | - | - | - | - |
| Total | 12.55 | 28.86 | 58.59 | 100.00 | 15.18 | 23.11 | 61.71 | 100.00 |

Source: Census of India, 1961.

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Section II

10. In this section we attempt some tentative explanations for the many distinctive features of Kerala's urban pattern outlined in the previous section. The relatively high population density in urban Kerala is in part a reflection of the high overall population density in the State. It will be seen from Table 8 that Kerala as a whole is nearly thrice as densely populated as all-India, and about 70 per cent more than Tamil Nadu. The high population density in Kerala is possibly a reflection of the fact that the climatic and soil conditions of the state enable it to support a larger population per unit area than in other parts of the country. Even during earlier decades, Kerala had more people per ^{sq.} km. than the rest of India and it continues to be one of the most densely populated regions in the country. ³ The differences

Table 8: The Density of Population - 1971

| <u>State</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Urban</u> |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Kerala | 549 | 2584 |
| Tamil Nadu | 317 | 2115 |
| <u>India</u> | <u>182</u> | <u>858</u> |

Source: Census of India, 1971

have been accentuated over time because population in Kerala was growing faster than in the rest of India throughout the first half of the century. (See Table 9). But the gap has been narrowed down in the last two decades and has virtually been eliminated in the sixties. While the population density of urban Kerala is higher in absolute terms than in Tamil Nadu and all-India, it is significant that the ratio of urban to total density in Kerala is less than in Tamil Nadu. For Kerala the figure is 4.7 as against 6.7 ^{of} Tamil Nadu. This may be due in part to the dominance of big cities in Tamil Nadu - as big cities typically have

far higher density than rural areas and small towns.⁴ But it could also be a reflection of the relatively spread out pattern of urban settlement in Kerala.



Table 9: Rate of Growth of Population

| Year | Kerala | Tamil Nadu | India |
|---------|--------|------------|-------|
| 1901-11 | 11.8 | 8.6 | 5.85 |
| 1911-21 | 9.2 | 3.5 | -0.3 |
| 1921-31 | 21.9 | 8.5 | 11.0 |
| 1931-41 | 16.0 | 11.9 | 14.2 |
| 1941-51 | 22.8 | 14.7 | 13.3 |
| 1951-61 | 24.8 | 11.9 | 21.5 |
| 1961-71 | 25.9 | 22.0 | 24.5 |

Source: Ashish Bose "Studies in India's Urbanization, 1901-1971".

11. The predominance of medium towns in the urban hierarchy of Kerala may be the result of the peculiar pattern of human settlement prevalent in the State. Nearly nine out of ten villages in Kerala have a population of 5,000 and above (see Table 10). These big villages claim about 97 percent of the total rural population of the State. In Tamil Nadu, on the contrary, only 5.67 per cent of the villages are "big" and account for barely a quarter of the rural population. The nucleated cluster-type settlements which are the typical pattern in Tamil Nadu, (as in other parts of the country), is conspicuous by its absence in Kerala. The predominance of coconuts and other garden crops in Kerala combined with high population density give rise to a dispersed and more or less continuous pattern of settlement. The pattern is such that, 'It is impossible for the Malayalee visitor to know when he has come to the edge of one village or entered another ... The whole region along the coast is from one end to the other like a garden city where one can hardly walk a furlong

without seeing some houses."⁵ These differences in settlement patterns reflected in the vastly different distributions of villages and towns sizes. Under the Tamil Nadu pattern, the transition from small to large villages and on to towns is much more gradual than in Kerala. In Kerala

Table 10: Villages classified by size of Population, 1971

| Size-Class | Kerala | | Tamil Nadu | |
|-----------------|--------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Number | Population | Number | Population |
| Less than 1,000 | 0.48 | 0.04 | 40.63 | 11.70 |
| 1,000 - 1,999 | 1.26 | 0.15 | 28.90 | 22.71 |
| 2,000 - 4,999 | 9.62 | 2.60 | 24.80 | 40.99 |
| 5,000 and above | 88.64 | 97.21 | 5.67 | 24.60 |
| Total | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

Source: Census of India, 1971.

since the village size is large, they graduate into urban status and directly fall into classes IV or III which have been designated as medium towns. Moreover, unlike Tamil Nadu, Kerala has relatively few settlements with less 5,000 population having characteristics which qualify for urban status. It is interesting in this context to note that out of the 23 new towns in Kerala reported in the 1971 Census, 15 towns belong to medium-size class and only 6 towns come under the category of small towns. In Tamil Nadu, where the villages are mainly of small size, out of the 155 new towns that emerged, only 20 towns have been classified as medium towns.

Not only is the average size of the Kerala village large, but it has also a relatively more diversified pattern of economic activity—a pattern which makes for considerably smaller difference between the structure of economic activity in rural and urban areas of Kerala than in the rest of the country.



Table 11. Industrial Distribution of the Work Force, 1971

| Sector | Kerala | | Tamil Nadu | | India | |
|-----------|--------|-------|------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban | Rural | Urban |
| Primary | 62.5 | 19.3 | 81.3 | 16.7 | 85.2 | 13.8 |
| Secondary | 14.5 | 22.4 | 7.8 | 29.7 | 5.5 | 27.9 |
| Tertiary | 23.0 | 58.3 | 10.9 | 53.6 | 9.3 | 58.3 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Source: Census of India, 1971.

It will be seen from Table 11 that the share of the primary sector in rural Kerala (62.5 per cent) is lesser compared to Tamil Nadu (81.3 per cent) and all-India (85.2 per cent). On the other hand, the secondary and tertiary activities seem to be more prominent in Kerala's rural areas. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that in Kerala 14.5 per cent of the total work force is engaged in secondary activity as against 7.8 per cent in Tamil Nadu and only 5.5 per cent in India. But, "Urban" Kerala employs a considerably larger size of its workers in agriculture and correspondingly smaller proportion in secondary activities than in Tamil Nadu and all-India. The "distance" between sectoral distribution of rural and urban work force—a rough measure of which is given by the ratio of the proportion of rural work force in any sector to the corresponding proportion in urban/parts of India. This shows that the functional differentiation between rural and urban areas of Kerala is not as pronounced as in the rest of India. The fact that changes in the pattern of economic activity associated with a transition from rural to urban areas is more gradual in Kerala is due to the special characteristics of the economy. The ecological conditions and the pattern of settlements are such that the cultivation of crops (especially garden

crops like coconut) is widely diffused, not only as between parts of the State but also as between rural and urban areas.

13. The plantation crops (consisting of Tea, Coffee, Rubber and Cardamom) account for nearly one-tenth of the total cultivated area in the state while the non-food crops as a whole claim around 50 per cent of the area under cultivation. The processing and trading activities that this type of commercial agriculture generates, are carried on mostly in small scale, decentralised factories characterised by high level labour-intensive techniques. The relatively high proportion of workers in secondary activity in rural areas as well as in small towns is largely to be explained by this phenomenon. Consequently commercial agriculture is very crucial in the economy of Kerala and the major urban stimulant comes from, what can be broadly termed as the agro-commercial activity.⁶ In Tamil Nadu, on the contrary, the conventional relationship between urbanization and industrialization holds good. The growth of large scale, relatively capital intensive industries have led to an urban pattern dominated by big urban agglomerations. In what follows, we have focused certain aspects of industrial and tertiary sectors of Kerala.

14. Industrial activity in Kerala is dominated by agricultural processing to a much greater extent than in Tamil Nadu or all India. Also the proportion of industrial employment in the unorganized sector (i.e. units falling outside the purview of the Factories Act) in Kerala is much higher than the national average. These features are brought out clearly in Table 13. The size of the factory



sector in terms of workers employed, is much lower in Kerala. On the other hand non-factory sector accounts for a disproportionately higher share of industrial employment. Though the data for all-India and Kerala are for different years we can assume that the situation in Kerala has not changed much since 1960-61.

Table 13: The Composition of the Industrial Sector

| | Workers (percentages) | |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| | India (1973) | Kerala (1960-61) |
| 1. Factory sector | 30 | 15 |
| 2. Non-Factory Sector (a+b) | 70 | 85 |
| (a) Household | 36 | 43 |
| (b) Non-factory, non-household | 34 | 42 |
| 3. Total number of workers in manufacturing sector (1+2) | 100 | 100 |

Sources: 1. Indian data are from Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy 'Basic Statistics Relating to the Indian Economy, Vol. I'
2. Kerala data are from PCAER 'Industrial Programmes for the Fourth Plan - Kerala'.

15. Apart from the fact that the size of the factory sector in Kerala is small, it also consists largely of agro-based industries of the relatively labour intensive type.

This can be seen from Table 14 which shows that cashew industry alone accounts for more than half of the workers employed in the factory sector.

Altogether the predominance of small scale units and of agricultural processing industries, using relatively simple techniques, calling for limited capital investment, is an important explanation for the greater diffusion of the manufacturing activity in Kerala and

Table 14: The Distribution of Employment According to Industries - Kerala, 1965 (Annual Survey of Industries)

| Sl.No. | Name of Industry | Persons employed |
|--------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1. | Mixed fertilizers | 1.99 |
| 2. | Inorganic heavy chemicals | 1003 |
| 3. | Cotton Textiles | 7.53 |
| 4. | Tea Manufacturing | 3.01 |
| 5. | Cashewnut processing | 53.95 |
| 6. | Tiles | |
| 7. | Coir Manufacture | 6.39 |
| 8. | Plywood | 2.48 |
| 9. | Saw milling | 1.71 |
| 10. | Soaps & Glycerenes | 1.82 |
| 11. | Insecticides & Fungicides | 0.84 |
| 12. | Other Industries | 19.79 |
| | Total | 100.00 |

Source: Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Kerala, 'Industries and Infrastructure.'

the relatively narrow rural-urban differences in the proportion of workers engaged in manufacturing. Table 15 summarizes the essentials of our argument. The productive capital per worker in Kerala is far below compared to Tamil Nadu and all-India. Similarly the contribution of Kerala to the all-India total in terms of the industrial characteristics shown in the Table are far lower than Tamil Nadu. Thus Industrialisation in Kerala has not progressed much beyond the processing of agricultural and other primary products based on traditional, labour intensive techniques.⁷

16. The high level of tertiary employment overall, and in rural and urban areas of Kerala is also due, largely, to the importance of commercial crops in State's agriculture.⁸ Commercial crops (as distinguished from food



crops) account for nearly half the total cropped area in the State and a considerably higher proportion of gross output. By both indices, Kerala's agriculture is among the most commercialized in India. The cultivation of these crops is also quite diffused within the state. While crops like

Table 15: Some Aspects of the Industrial Sector - 1965

| State | Percentage shares | | No. of persons employed | Total value of output | Ratios | |
|------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Registered factories | Productive capital | | | Produ-ctive capi-tal per wor-ker | Value added per wor-ker |
| | | | | | Rs. | Rs. |
| Kerala | 4.67 | 1.44 | 3.96 | 2.06 | 6587 | 2503 |
| Tamil Nadu | 8.82 | 8.11 | 8.72 | 8.49 | 17597 | 5079 |
| India | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 19263 | 5083 |

- Notes: 1. For percentage shares, Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Kerala, 'Rates and Ratios'.
 2. Ratios have been calculated from ASI data.

rubber, tea and coffee show a certain degree of regional concentration, coconut which is by far the most important commercial crop and which supports two of the principal industries of the State (viz. coconut oil and coir), and to a lesser extent cashew and pepper, are cultivated all over the state. Kerala has also a well developed ^{transport} system to facilitate the movement of these agricultural commodities. The development of road transport system has been particularly impressive in Kerala, being much more advanced than Tamil Nadu. (See Table 16)

17. The combined effect of the relatively greater role of plantations and commercial crops in Kerala's agriculture, the dominance of small scale, labour-intensive agricultural processing activity in its industrial

Table 16: Road Length in Relation to Area and Population 1967
(Length in kms)

| State | Per 100 sq. kms of area (All Roads) | per lakh of population |
|------------|---|---------------------------|
| Kerala | 144 | 822 |
| Tamil Nadu | 46 | 162 |
| India | 27 | 173 |

Source: "Rates and Ratio's, ibid.

sector and the relatively higher proportion of employment in the tertiary sector, again comprising largely of labour-intensive small scale units activity, is reflected in the inter-sectoral differences in product per worker. Table 17 shows that the product per worker in agriculture is considerably more than that of the other two sectors in Kerala. This is in sharp contrast to the pattern of Tamil Nadu and all-India where the product per worker in agriculture is substantially below the other two sectors. The Kerala phenomenon is to be explained by the fact that its agriculture has high value yielding crops, and hence the product per worker in agriculture is high. "Though nearly one-fifth of the total working force is engaged in manufacturing, about one-half of them is in household enterprises where the value added per worker has been estimated to be only a small fraction of the net output per worker in the economy. Even in factory enterprises, .. the value added per worker is only about 1/2 times as high as in the primary sector; "(9) While we have no estimates of sectoral product per worker in rural and urban areas separately, the fact that rural-urban differences in terms of economic structure is much less pronounced in Kerala than in other parts of the country would suggest that the differences in terms of product per worker

Table 17: Relative Sectoral Product per worker 1960-61

| State | Primary | Secondary | Tertiary |
|------------|---------|-----------|----------|
| Kerala | 1.17 | 0.80 | 0.87 |
| Tamil Nadu | 0.72 | 1.13 | 1.74 |
| India | 0.71 | 1.41 | 2.03 |

Source: "Poverty, Unemployment and Development Policy"
Centre for Development Studies.

between rural and urban areas will also be smaller. There is some corroboration of this in NSS data which shows that though as in the rest of India urban per capita consumption is higher than in rural areas, the ratio of the former to the latter in Kerala is significantly below Tamil Nadu.¹⁰

Section III

18. In terms of the rate and pattern of urban growth also Kerala presents a marked contrast to the trends experienced in Tamil Nadu (See Tables 18 A and B). Between 1901 and 1951 the number of "towns" in Kerala rose by nearly four and a half times while in Tamil Nadu it was only slightly more than doubled; urban population in Kerala grew by 300 per cent as against 170 per cent in Tamil Nadu. The principal criterion for distinguishing rural and urban settlements upto the 1951 Census was population. Given the fact that there is a predominance of large villages in Kerala and that the overall growth of population in the State during the first half of the century (111 per cent) was considerably more than in Tamil Nadu (57 per cent), it is not surprising that the urban population in the former also grew much faster. However, at the beginning of the

20th century Kerala was much less urbanised than Tamil Nadu, and with the growth of urban population relative to total population in Kerala being well below that in Tamil Nadu, the difference in the degree of urbanization-persisted even in 1951.

Table 18-A: Indices of Urbanisation

| Year | TamilNadu | | Kerala | | Travancore-Cochin | | Malabar | |
|------|-----------|------|--------|------|-------------------|------|---------|------|
| | A | B | A | B | A | B | A | B |
| 1901 | 133 | 14.2 | 20 | 7.1 | 13 | 6.9 | 7 | 7.4 |
| 1951 | 297 | 24.4 | 94 | 13.5 | 73 | 14.7 | 21 | 11.3 |
| 1961 | 339 | 26.7 | 92 | 15.1 | 50 | 15.3 | 42 | 14.8 |
| 1971 | 443 | 30.0 | 88 | 16.3 | 52 | 16.8 | 36 | 15.3 |

Source: Census of India

Note: A. - Number of Towns

B. - Percentage of urban to total population

Table 18-B: Growth Rates

| Year | Tamil Nadu | | Kerala | | Travancore-Cochin | | Malabar | |
|---------|------------|-------|--------|-------|-------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| | A | B | A | B | A | B | A | B |
| 1901-51 | 56.4 | 169.1 | 111.8 | 301.7 | 145.0 | 423.0 | 71.7 | 164.3 |
| 1951-61 | 11.9 | 22.6 | 24.8 | 39.9 | 25.6 | 30.6 | 23.4 | 60.6 |
| 1961-71 | 22.3 | 38.6 | 26.3 | 35.7 | 23.7 | 35.9 | 30.8 | 35.5 |
| 1951-71 | 36.8 | 70.0 | 57.6 | 89.9 | 55.3 | 77.5 | 61.4 | 117.6 |

Source: Census of India

Note: A - Total population

B - Urban population

19. Since 1951, while the number of towns continued to increase in Tamil Nadu, it fell in Kerala; the differences in the rate of urban population increase have apparently narrowed, reflecting in part a narrowing in the differences of overall population growth, and perhaps more importantly the effects of changes in the definition of "Urban area" introduced in the 1961 Census whereby besides size of population and its administrative



status, the proportion of the male working population in the non-primary sector was added as another criterion in deciding whether or not a particular place could be classified as "urban". Since, for reasons explained in Section II, agricultural activities figure more prominently in "urban" centres of Kerala as a whole and in the smaller towns in particular, the introduction of the additional criterion in the 1961 Census, resulted in the "declassification" of a number of small and medium towns. The exclusion of the population of these "declassified terms" must have depressed the apparent growth of urban population. Since these effects of definitional changes could not be properly quantified, it would be inappropriate to read much significance into the trends in urban population growth in the period 1951-1971.

20. Within Kerala there are significant regional differences in the pattern of urban growth between Travancore-Cochin and Malabar. At the turn of the century, the two regions had more or less the same proportion of population in urban areas; in fact the ratio in Malabar was slightly more than in Travancore-Cochin. But during the period 1901-1951, the rate of urban growth in Malabar both in terms of the number of towns and of urban population was much slower than in Travancore-Cochin. The urban population in Malabar rose by only 164 per cent in the first half of the century compared to a nearly-five-fold rise in Travancore-Cochin. In Travancore-Cochin the ratio of urban to total population was more than doubled during the same period (from around 7 per cent in 1901 to close to 15 per cent in 1951); the comparable ratios for Malabar are 7.4 and 11.3 per cent respectively. The difference in the trends of urbanization between the two regions seems to reflect, in part, the difference in the rate of overall population increase. For various historical reasons¹¹ the decline in mortality rates occurred much earlier in Travancore-Cochin than in Malabar and resulted in a significantly higher

rate of natural increase in population in the former region (145 per cent between 1901 and 1951 - almost double the rate in Malabar). The effect of differential growth in overall population may have been compounded by the fact that the average size of a village in Malabar is much smaller than in Travancore-Cochin (See Table 19). Besides the above two factors it is probable that the higher urbanisation rate in Travancore-Cochin during the first half of the century was also due in part, to the more dynamic and development-oriented policies pursued by the administration of the region compared to Malabar under British rule. An accurate assessment of the effect of policy factors is difficult, in the absence of data on trends in industrialisation and other urbanising influences in the two regions during the first half of the century. However the fact that in 1961 Malabar had a smaller proportion of area under non-food crops, a smaller share of factories and average daily employment as well as a less developed road network (See Table 20) strongly suggests that economic factors which stimulate urbanization were much weaker in this region.

Table 19. Villages classified by size of population - 1961

| | Travancore-Cochin | | Malabar | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------|---------|-------|
| | A | B | A | B |
| Less than 1,000 | 1.1 | 0.0 | 1.6 | 0.2 |
| 1000- 1,999 | 3.0 | 0.4 | 4.2 | 1.0 |
| 2,000- 4,999 | 15.2 | 10.5 | 33.7 | 9.9 |
| Above 5,000 | 80.7 | 89.1 | 60.5 | 88.9 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Average size of settlement | 12438 | | 6251 | |

Source: Census of India, 1961
 Table A. Villages, I. Population.



Table 20: Indicators of Development

| Region | No. of factories 1961 | Average daily Employment 1961 | Area under Non-foodcrops 1960-61 | Road mileage per 100 sq. km. 1961 |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| Travancore-Cochin | 64.5 | 77.8 | 36.8 | 31 |
| Malabar | 35.5 | 22.2 | 28.3 | 24 |
| Kerala | 100.0 | 100.0 | 33.4 | 28 |

Sources: Various Kerala Government publications.

21. During 1951-71 the number of towns in Malabar was nearly doubled whereas in Travancore-Cochin it shows a significant decline. Similarly the increase in the share of urban population in the former is more sharp than in the latter region. Though this sudden change in Malabar is hard to explain, we can provide two hunches. One is that the overall population in Malabar has grown faster in this period (61 per cent as against 55 per cent in Travancore-Cochin). Unlike the period 1901-51, Malabar has not only caught up with Travancore-Cochin, but has even surpassed it in this regard. Secondly after Malabar became part of Kerala, it is likely that the development impulses have started diffusing into it from the southern parts of the State.

22. The relative rates of growth of different classes of towns also reveals certain similar tendencies in the urban growth of the two regions which we observed in the preceding paragraphs. During 1901-1951 the rate of growth of population in big cities of Travancore-Cochin was far higher than Malabar (See Table 21). Expansion of big cities could be more due to real and developmental factors and less due to the overall rate of population growth. The latter is likely to be more important in explaining the growth of small towns. The very rapid increase in small town

population in Travancore-Cochin, probably reflects the combined effect of much faster growth of total population, the greater dominance of villages and perhaps the more rapid commercialisation of agriculture in the region. Demographic factors could also explain, in part, the faster growth of population of big cities in Travancore-Cochin, but the fact that the rate of growth in big city population relative to overall population growth was much higher in Travancore-Cochin than in Malabar suggests that differential rates of development may have been an important factor. It is interesting to note that in Malabar the rate of growth of big city population relative to that of total population during the first half of the century was not only lower than in Travancore-Cochin, but also in comparison with Tamil Nadu. This suggests that such development impulses as were generated within old Madras Presidency under British rule was not as strong in Malabar as in other parts of the province.

25. The growth of population in medium sized towns relative to overall population has apparently come down sharply in the last two decades in Tamil Nadu, Kerala as well as in Travancore-Cochin and Malabar. However, the extent of this reduction was much greater in Tamil Nadu. The reasons for this are not clear. The pace of expansion of big cities relative to population growth has continued to be as high as in the previous fifty years in Tamil Nadu, but has fallen sharply in Kerala and more particularly in Travancore-Cochin. In Malabar, on the other hand, the expansion of big cities relative to population growth is roughly in line with previous trends.



24. The growth in the number of small towns and their population is primarily influenced by demographic factors and by the concept of an urban area. The role of these factors as distinct from developmental influences is likely to be less as we move from small urban centres through medium on to big cities. Since, there are no indications of any deliberate policy in any of the regions considered to regulate the location of economic activity as between different classes of towns, the relative rates of population growth in medium and large-sized towns might also give an indication of the relative strength of the developmental impulses in different regions and different time periods. In general, the big cities have expanded much faster than medium towns in all the

Table 21: Rate of growth of Urban Population according to Size-class

| Region | 1901 - 1951 | | | 1951 - 1971 | | |
|-------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Big cities | Medium towns | Small towns | Big cities | Medium towns | Small Towns |
| Tamil Nadu | 211.1 | 136.2 | 123.2 | 128.9 | 17.8 | -50.0 |
| Kerala | 495.6 | 159.4 | 1065.0 | 140.4 | 87.7 | -66.4 |
| Travancore-Cochin | 893.5 | 182.4 | 974.8 | 130.1 | 92.3 | -84.0 |
| Malabar | 197.3 | 132.0 | - | 166.2 | 80.9 | 143.3 |

Source: Various Census Reports.

the regions. However, the expansion of big cities has been consistently smaller in Kerala than in Tamil Nadu and within Kerala, in Malabar than in Travancore-Cochin. Moreover during 1901-1951 the population of big cities relative to that of medium towns in Travancore-Cochin rose considerably faster than in Tamil Nadu and even more so in comparison with Malabar. But in the subsequent two decades the gap between

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Travancore-Cochin and Malabar has significantly narrowed in this respect, thereby strengthening our hunch that while the developmental impulses in Malabar compared to Travancore-Cochin were relatively weak during the first half of the century, they have considerably increased in the post-independent period.

25. The relative roles of commercial and industrial expansion in urban growth could be better judged if we had comparable data on the sectoral distribution of urban work force at different periods of time. While time-series data on the industrial classification of the total urban work force are not available, the Census reports give the distribution of urban population among towns classified by various functional categories on the basis of the predominant economic activity. The data presented in Table 22 shows that in Kerala and in Tamil Nadu the population in towns whose principal economic base is manufacturing rose more than in towns which are primarily dependent upon services (including trade and commerce) during the first half of the century. However, the

Table: 22 Rate of growth of population in the functional categories of towns

| Functional Category | Kerala | | Tamil Nadu | |
|---------------------|---------|---------|------------|---------|
| | 1901-51 | 1951-61 | 1901-51 | 1951-61 |
| Manufacturing | 275.9 | 117.3 | 193.5 | 34.1 |
| Service | 241.8 | 40.5 | 157.5 | 23.3 |

Source: Various Census Reports.

growth of manufacturing towns relative to that of services was greater in Tamil Nadu than in Kerala. Even so the relative importance of the two categories of towns (judged by their share in the total urban popula

in Kerala is markedly different from that in Tamil Nadu. During 1951-1961 the rate of expansion of population in manufacturing towns in Kerala was thrice as fast as in Tamil Nadu. This seems again to point to a quickening of industrial growth in Kerala.

26. The impact of the industrial ~~spurt~~ that we observed in the preceding paragraph, however, has not had any appreciable effect on the industrial structure of Kerala. This can be gauged from Table 23 which presents data on the composition of manufacturing sector in Kerala and changes in it over time. The data relates to the entire state as we are not able to get similar information for the urban areas separately. In Kerala the share of agro-based industries in the total manufacturing sector has declined marginally from 75.8 per cent in 1911 to 73.9 per cent in 1951. This can be contrasted with West Bengal (as the relevant information for Tamil Nadu is not available), where the decline is

Table 23: The Distribution of the Working Force in Manufacturing in Kerala, 1911-61 by Four Broad Groups of Activities
(Male)

| Activity | 1911 | 1921 | 1931 | 1951 | 1961 |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| A | 75.8 | 72.6 | 75.1 | 73.9 | 73.4 |
| B | 5.5 | 9.3 | 6.1 | 7.5 | 10.0 |
| C | 9.3 | 9.3 | 9.5 | 8.6 | 6.6 |
| D | 9.4 | 8.8 | 9.3 | 10.0 | 10.0 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Sources: J. Krishnamoorthy "The Industrial Distribution of the Working Force in India, 1901 - 1961."

Note. 1. Activity A - food stuffs, beverages, tobacco textiles, wood and wood products and leather and leather products.
2. B - Rubber, Petroleum, coal, chemicals and non-metallic mineral products.
3. C - Basic metals and products
4. D - Machinery and equipment, miscellaneous manufacturing, paper and paper products and printing and publishing.

sharper (72.9 per cent to 61.3 per cent) in the same period. Activities C and D put together (viz. the non-agro-based sector), on the contrary, have risen from 18.7 to 28.6 per cent in Bengal. Kerala's share in these groups has fallen from 18.7 in 1911 to 16.6 per cent in 1961. So in Kerala there has not been any marked change in the industrial structure from agro-processing to modern industries.

Conclusion

27. To sum up, Kerala is less urbanised compared to Tamil Nadu and its urban pattern is markedly different from the rest of India. The distinguishing features of Kerala's urban pattern are that (a) the city-dominance is conspicuously absent; (b) the urban influence is more widely diffused; and (c) rural-urban distinction is blurred. These differences are due not so much to deliberate policy of planned urban growth, as demographic and ecological factors peculiar to Kerala. The importance of commercial agriculture of the State and the processing and trading of commodities has been largely responsible for the emergence of this type of urban pattern in Kerala. Whatever the nature of forces which have shaped Kerala's urban growth, the fact that it has a relatively large number of medium sized towns, dispersed over the State, provides the basis for planning future industrial development in a way which ensures greater dispersal and avoids congestion and allied problems of a city-oriented urban system with its attendant economic and social costs. In other words, with proper spatial developmental planning, they can serve as growth poles to promote balanced regional development in the State. Thus Kerala is in a very advantageous position compared to ^{the} industrially advanced States where the degree of concentration has already reached uneconomic

The adverse implications of such a concentration lies in the fact that the process of undoing it is very expansive and painful. The fact that the infrastructural facilities are widely dispersed in the state gives an added advantage to Kerala in this regard. With careful selection of industries and their location, and with greater government control it is possible to achieve a more balanced pattern of spatial development in Kerala.



Notes

Table N 1 : The Inter-District Variation in the Distribution of Urban Population

(1)

| State | 1901 | 1951 | 1961 | 1971 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|
| Kerala | 7.6 | 17.0 | 32.7 | 52.7 |
| Tamil Nadu | -- | 28.1 | 35.0 | 51.1 |

Source: Various Census Reports.

The distribution of urban population among the districts in Kerala was more even till 1951 compared to Tamil Nadu as shown by variance data in presented/the above table. But this picture changed considerably during 1961 as a result of the definitional changes. Consequently the gap between Tamil Nadu and Kerala in variance has been virtually eliminated. These aspects are dealt with in greater detail in Section III. Appendix A shows the changes in the number of towns at the district-level during 1951-1961.

(2) The population range of these groups of towns are as follows:

1. Small towns - Below 10,000
2. Medium Towns - 10,000 - 50,000
3. Big Cities - Above 50,000

(3) Table A2: Density of population per sq. km.

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Kerala</u> | <u>India</u> |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1901 | 165 | - |
| 1951 | 349 | 117 |
| 1961 | 435 | 142 |
| 1971 | 549 | 177 |

Source: Kerala - 'Rates and Ratios' Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Government of Kerala.
India - 'India - A Reference Annual', Government of India.

The above table indicates the fact that the density of population has been consistently higher in Kerala than all India since the turn

of the century. No doubt, Kerala has been 'one of the most densely populated parts of the world.' (See Centre for Development Studies, 'Poverty, Unemployment and Development Policy' Chapter VII).

(4) Table N3 Density of Population of various urban classes,
Tamil Nadu-1971

| Size-Class | Density of Population Per sq. km. |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| I | 4338 |
| II | 2017 |
| III | 1627 |
| IV | 832 |
| V | 714 |
| VI | 173 |
| All Classes | 2115 |

Source Census of India, 1971.

The data presented in the above Table confirms the validity of the statement that the big cities have far higher density than the small towns. This is because of the heavy concentration of economic activity in big cities.

(5) See Joan P. Bencher, 'Kerala and Madras. A Comparative Study of Ecology and Social Structure', Ethnology, 1966.

(6) The relatively higher proportion of rural labour force employed in non-agricultural activity in Kerala can be explained in terms of the high degree of commercialization of agriculture. In the table below major States in India have been arranged according to the percentage of area under non-food crops along with the data on the percentage of workers engaged in non-agriculture sector. The value of rank correlation between these two variables is + 0.65 (significant at 1 per cent level). It confirms our view that the cultivation of cash crops generates

considerable volume of non-primary activity such as trading and processing of agricultural products.

Table N4: Ranking of States on the basis of area under non-food Crops and workers in non-primary sector, 1971

| States | Percentage of area under non-food crops | Rank | Percentage of workers in non-primary sector (rural) | Rank |
|----------------|---|------|---|------|
| Gujarat | 43.6 | 1 | 18.4 | 7 |
| Kerala | 35.6 | 2 | 46.1 | 1 |
| Mysore | 31.1 | 3 | 21.2 | 6 |
| Tamil Nadu | 30.9 | 4 | 23.4 | 4 |
| Andhra Pradesh | 28.0 | 5 | 24.8 | 2 |
| Maharashtra | 26.2 | 6 | 18.3 | 8 |
| Madhya Pradesh | 16.8 | 7 | 13.2 | 12 |
| Assam | 14.9 | 8 | 23.8 | 3 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 13.4 | 9 | 13.8 | 11 |
| Rajasthan | 10.7 | 10 | 16.8 | 9 |
| Orissa | 10.7 | 11 | 16.7 | 10 |
| West Bengal | 9.2 | 12 | 21.6 | 5 |
| Bihar | 4.2 | 13 | 12.8 | 13 |

Sources: 1. Data on non-agricultural employment are from Census of India, 1971

2. Data on area under non-food crops are from A.D. Neelakantan, 'Rural Wealth in India - A Study of Inter-regional variations', unpublished M.Phil Dissertation.

7. Centre for Development Studies, *ibid.*

8. In this connection it is appropriate to take note of the observation made by ICAER in its 'Techno-Economic Survey of Kerala'. 'A high degree of commercialization of Kerala economy is one of the factors responsible for the absorption of a large section of the population in the tertiary sector'.

9. See Centre for Development Studies, *ibid.*, Chapter VII

10. For instance according to NSS data for the year 1968-69 the ratio of urban to rural per capita consumption in Tamil Nadu is 1.6 as against 1.1 in Kerala.
11. See Centre for Development Studies, *ibid.*, Chapter VII.

A P P E N D I X

TOWNS: ADDITIONS AND DECLASSIFICATIONS, 1951-61

| District | Medium Towns | | Small Towns | | Total | |
|------------|--------------|---|-------------|----|-------|----|
| | A | B | A | B | A | B |
| Cannanore | 8 | - | 6 | - | 14 | - |
| Kozhikode | 3 | - | 7 | - | 10 | - |
| Palghat | - | - | 1 | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| Trichur | 1 | 2 | - | 2 | 1 | 4 |
| Ernakulam | 2 | - | - | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Tottayam | - | - | - | 6 | - | 6 |
| Malappuram | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| Coimbatore | 2 | 3 | - | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| Trivandrum | 4 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 9 |
| State | 20 | 7 | 15 | 29 | 35 | 36 |

Source: Census of India, 1961.

Notes: A - Addition

B - Deletion

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