

EMERGENCE OF A KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY Role of Migrant Farmers in the Educational Progress of Malabar in the Twentieth Century

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Abstract: This article explores the role of a migrant farming community in transforming a conservative and backward society into a modern society. By establishing educational institutions in Malabar region of Kerala, India in the twentieth century, farmers from Travancore educationally revolutionized the Malabar society. Though these farmers were not formally educated, their thirst for knowledge prompted them to formulate various methods and techniques of resource collection for bringing educational progress in the hilly terrains of Malabar. Not only in school education but in higher education also they marked imprints in this wild jungle region of south India. Native people, especially indigenous tribal groups, greatly benefited from the educational institutions of the migrants. Educational institutions of these marginal farmers had impacts upon the feudal social fabric of a conservative society by liberating oppressed people from the clutches of caste system and landlordism.

Keywords: Education, Migrants, Malabar, Resource Mobilization, School Committees, Syrian Christians, Tribal People.

1. Introduction

A knowledge society is a society that is nurtured by its diversity and its capacity. Education is a significant capacity building factor of modern society. Education plays a prominent role in the social

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progress of every society. In India, before the introduction of modern educational system by the Europeans, a native education system existed among the higher strata of the society. Later the spread of modern education and scientific knowledge among the common people by the second half of the twentieth century especially among the marginalized sections has brought far-reaching changes in the traditional society. Though colonial administrators and foreign missionaries tried to spread new knowledge among the native people, the same was not dispersed to all parts of India because of various reasons. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the educational situation of Kerala was very dismal mainly in the British Malabar region under Madras Presidency. The hilly terrains of Malabar region, where the indigenous tribal people mainly existed, was completely out of the purview of education and modern amenities.

Traditional Malabar society was not a knowledge society and it was inclined to serious inequality, exclusion and social conflict. In this orthodox society knowledge was an exclusive domain of high caste Hindu society and the lower caste sections of the society were completely excluded from the education on account of rigid caste system. In this exclusive knowledge society modern ideas of universality, liberty, and equality were absent in the medieval society of Malabar, where marginalised communities lived in educational and cultural darkness.

This situation in Malabar began to change with the advent migrant farmers from central Travancore to the hilly areas of Malabar for cultivation in the early decades of the twentieth century. These subsistence farmers originally came from an educationally developed knowledge society, where education was promoted by native rulers, Christian missionaries and enlightened social reformers since the beginning of eighteenth century. These marginal farmers who permanently settled in the hilly terrains of Malabar introduced education in this backward area and paved way for the making of a knowledge society. The diffusion of new knowledge was made possible through establishing educational institutions, appointing trained teachers

from neighbouring states, providing study materials and starting printing press in the educationally backward Malabar society.

In this paper we explore the process of the emergence of a knowledge society in the forest and tribal hilly regions of Malabar by the intervention of migrant farmers from the native state of Travancore. Also, we examine the various methods of unique resource mobilization techniques by poor farmers for building educational institutions to disperse knowledge not only for the children of migrants but also of the natives and tribal people. This paper starts with the educational situation of Malabar, which was very poor because of the existence of an oppressive and caste ridden society. A break in this conservative social system is visible in the Malabar society with the coming of the migrant farmers and their intervention in the economic and social arenas of Malabar. Their contribution in the field of spreading education and the role played by them to make Malabar a knowledge society is examined in the second part of the paper.

The agrarian migration of farmers from Travancore to Malabar slowly started by 1930s and it continued till 1970s. Majority of the migrant farmers from Travancore were Syrian Christians and others were Ezhavas, Nairs, and Christians of other denominations. The migrants were poor peasants who hailed chiefly from Meenachil, Thodupuzha, Muvattupuzha, Vaikkom, and Chengannassery taluks of the Kottayam division of the Central Travancore. More than three hundred thousand farmers settled in around 400 migration centres in Malabar over a period of fifty years. They were settled in the hilly regions of the present Malabar region that comprises six districts of north Kerala namely Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur, and Kasargode. They purchased cultivable land from the landlords and temple authorities for agriculture.¹ Due to the hard work and

¹For a detailed discussion on agrarian migration to Malabar see P. K. Michael Tharakan, "Dimensions and Characteristics of Migration of Farmers from Travancore to Malabar 1930-1950," *Journal of Kerala Studies* 5, no.2 (June 1978), 287-299; V. J. Varghese "Memory as History: A Study of Peasant Migration in Kerala from Travancore to Malabar, 1920-1970," Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis submitted to the University of

unity of these farmers the wild jungles of Malabar turned to be the land of prosperous agriculture.² Though hundreds of migrants lost their lives in Malabar due to Malaria, attack of wild animals, severe cold, and many other diseases, they never retreated from their endeavour.³

2. Educational Situation in Malabar

When the migrants from the native state of Travancore settled in the forest regions of Malabar, education of their children was one of their main concern. The children who discontinued their education in Travancore for the purpose of migration had no facilities for studies in Malabar, especially in the villages. The native students and tribal people of Malabar were also deprived of educational opportunities because of caste system and lack of basic educational infrastructure facilities in the remote areas. In Malabar the indigenous tribal communities were mainly inhabited in Wayanad, Nilambur and Attappady regions. Paniyas, Adiyas, Kurumas, Kurichiyas, Kattunaikkas, Uralikurumas, Cholanaikkas, Mudugas and Irulas are the prominent tribal sections of Malabar, who had not achieved considerable social progress even in the second half of the twentieth century. Though colonial rulers established some schools in the urban centres, their intervention was not effective in the promotion of educational development of Malabar. There were only very few government institutions for education existing in Malabar and they were situated in faraway places, so the students of the hilly regions were unable to attend the schools and colleges. According to Census data of 1881, in the six main taluks

Hyderabad, Hyderabad, 2006; Thomas Pazhayaparambil, *Swapnabhoomiyil*, Moovattupuzha: Mar Mathews Press, 1978.

²For more information see, Joshy Mathew, *Tradition, Migration and Transformation: Agrarian Migration to Wayanad - A Socio-Historical Study*, Thalassery: IRISH Publications, 2011; P. T. Sebastian, "Christian Migration to Malabar," Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, University of Calicut, 2002.

³Kuruvilangad Joseph, *Konippadikal*, Kozhikode: Boby Books, 1991, 33-55.

of agrarian migration in Malabar, 90 percent of the native people were illiterates.

Migration Taluks	Under Instruction	Instructed	Illiterates	Total
Chirakkal	9,486	17,772	245,411	272,669
Kottayam	5,567	12,764	147,444	165,775
Kurumbranad	7,944	20,206	232,874	261,024
Wynad	1,370	3,853	82,868	88,091
Calicut	6,384	18,721	180,857	205,962
Eranad	5,114	14,823	276,206	296,143
Total	35,865	88,139	1,165,660	1,289,664

Table-1: Educational Situation in Malabar in the Taluks of Migration 1881⁴

At the time of agrarian migration to Malabar, the educational condition of Malabar was very backward. There were very limited educational institutions existed in 1930's, which was not sufficient to cater the educational needs of even 25 percent of the population. In the early decades of the twentieth century a few native schools for high caste Hindus existed in the various taluks of Malabar. As a caste ridden society low caste students including Thiyyas were not allowed to study in the native schools. Though the government schools and very few missionary schools allowed all children to enter the schools, the caste Hindus opposed the admission of low caste students in the schools.⁵ Basel Evangelical Mission from Switzerland was the first Christian mission in the field of education in Malabar. They established their first English School in Malabar at Kallayi in 1848, which later developed into famous Malabar Christian College in Calicut.⁶

⁴William Logan, *Malabar Manual Vol. I*, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1989, 106.

⁵A. Abdul Salam and P. R. Gopinathan Nair, *Educational Development in India: The Kerala Experience since 1800*, New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2002, 118.

⁶Jaiprakash Raghaviah, *Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and South Canara*, New Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1990, 61.

3. Agents of Education

Usually in most of the migration centres along with churches migrants started schools for the education of the children. Initially no separate building was constructed for schools, but a small room (*Pallicharth*) was attached with the main building of the church for the school. These institutions were known as *Pallikkoodams*.⁷ It was usually run by single teachers appointed by the migrants. Not only native students but also tribal children got opportunity to acquire modern education when migrants established schools in the remote areas of Malabar. Once they overcame the initial hurdles of migration, these farmers established various educational institutions in Malabar. In the beginning they have constructed primary schools and constant efforts were made for time bound upgrading of these institutions into High Schools and Higher Secondary Schools. Among the migrants, Syrian Christians established maximum number of educational institutions in Malabar. In the early years the migrants even used the makeshift church building (thatched sheds) as schools in the week days. Not only the Syrian Christian but also the Ezhava migrants made considerable efforts to begin educational institutions. Under Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) *Shakas* (basic local units) educational institutions were started and run by Ezhavas in many parts of Malabar.⁸ The urge for education and the need for social mobility

⁷The schools being auxiliary to the churches were known as *Pallikoodam* in Travancore. The term *Pallikoodam* became popular when St Kuriakose Chavara, the Vicar General of Syrian Catholic Church issued a directive in 1865 calling up on all parish churches under his jurisdiction to have a school attached to all churches. For additional information see Wilson Kokkat, *Contribution of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate Congregation to Education in Kerala 1831-2008*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2016, 96-99.

⁸SNDP was caste based organisation of Ezhavas started in 1903 under the guidance of the famous social reformer Sree Narayana Guru for the social and cultural progress of the Ezhava community in Kerala. SNDP *Shakas* in Pulpally, Poothadi (Wayanad) and Manathana (Kannur) established schools in 1970's.

prompted the migrants to take initiatives for the promotion of education. Moreover, education was considered a key factor for people to get into good occupations that often guaranteed both economic reward and social status.⁹ By starting various educational institutions migrants have tremendously contributed to the social development of Malabar.

4. Internal Resource Mobilization

Lack of resources was a serious constraint for the establishment of educational institutions. The migrant farmers never waited for the financial help of external agencies including government for the local development of the migration centres. On the other hand they mobilized resources and designed many internal resource mobilization techniques for fund raising for developmental activities. Once they decided to start a school, the seed money was collected from among themselves. The self-motivated migrants used to donate land and building materials for the construction of the school. There were instances of farmers who donated bricks and timber for the construction and timely completion of the school, which was actually kept for the construction of their houses.¹⁰ Poor farmers accorded such great importance to the promotion of education in the hills of Malabar.

Some of the prominent methods of resource collection were *Pidiyari* (A handful of rice is kept separate for the purpose of school construction), *Azhchapirivu* (weekly collection), *Masappirivu* (monthly collection), *Uppannapirivu*, *Pothupani*, *Atmakuri* or *Bespurkkana Chitty*, and so on. In all these methods the migrants collected resources both in cash and kind from the common people for public purposes. All this was done under the supervision of parish priest with the support of the parish committee of each church. The *Ezhava* community also mobilized

⁹T. K. Sebastian, "Agrarian Migration to Malabar and the Educational Progress", in *Indian constitution, Education and Minorities in Kerala*, ed. K. S. Mathew and T. K. Sebastian, Tellicherry: IRISH Publications, 2009, p. 273.

¹⁰Joy Vattakkuzhy, ed., *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, Karikkottakari, Kannur: St. Thomas U P School, 2009, 21-23.

resources by using some of these methods to establish educational institutions in their areas of domination. In every migration centres the migrants employed some of these methods for mobilizing resources for the establishment of educational institutions. Besides, *Massakkuttam*, *Aikyananayasangam* and *Kuttukrishi* were the other methods of resource collection.

In *Pidiyari* system the women in the migrant houses set apart a handful of rice before preparing food every day. Once in a month one person from the church will visit all houses to collect the rice for the church. Migrants believed that food inside the pot will not diminish even if a handful of rice was separated. *Pothuppani* was a common voluntary manual labour by the members of a parish with a common aim. This method was chiefly used for the construction of public institutions and churches in a migration centre.¹¹ In the method of *Ulppannapirivu*, under the initiative of the church the migrants collected agricultural products from the farmers once or twice in a year during harvest season. These products were auctioned or sold in the market and the money raised by this way was used for public purposes. *Atmakuri* or *Bespurkkana Chitty* was designed for the collection of money in memory of the departed souls of their forefathers. *Vithapirivu* was also a method of collection of resources from the people for the developmental activities under the church. In this system usually on the basis of the ability to contribute, the families in each parish were divided into three or four groups and assign a particular amount to them to be contributed to the church. *Azhchapirivu* or weekly collection of money and *Masappirivu* or monthly collection of money for a common purpose were the two other usual practices of resource collection. *Kuttukrishi* or group farming was also an important method of fund raising among the migrants for the various development activities in the migration centres.

According to situations and needs the migrants employed some of these methods for collecting money for the beginning of the institutions. For instance, in 1957 under *Vithapirivu* system, the

¹¹Thomas Pampadiyil, ed., *Church Consecration Souvenir*, Odamthode: St. Sebastian's Church, 2006, 57.

families in the St. George church, Puravayal (Kannur) was divided into four groups i.e., A B C D. Each group had to contribute 30 *seers* of paddy and Rs. 30, 20 *seers* of paddy and Rs. 20, 10 *seers* of paddy and Rs. 10, and 5 *seers* of paddy and Rs. 5 respectively for the construction of the school.¹² Besides, church also collected paddy and tapioca regularly from the migrants for other development activities of this area. Usually 5 to 10 percent of the total production of paddy and tapioca of a migrant family was given to the church as *Vithapirivu*.¹³

When a High School was sanctioned in Palavayal (Kasargode) in 1967, the migrants had to deposit a security amount in the government according to the specification of Kerala Education Rules and to build a new school building for which they had no money. The migrants began dry land paddy cultivation in the forests of Karnataka on leased land to obtain money for the school building. Church Committee cultivated eight acres of land and 200 to 300 parish members worked every day freely. Since it was virgin soil the migrants got heavy output from this cultivation. Besides, when the revenue officers came for collecting levy from whole production the cultivators as per rule jointly claimed their share of paddy, so the officers returned without collecting levy.¹⁴ The output from this cultivation was sufficient for the expenses of starting a school. The Kodencherry (Calicut) *Masakkuttam* started a *Bespurkkana Chitty* and the migrants collected eight *annas* per month to raise money for the construction of School and church.¹⁵ An active *Massakkuttam* also functioned in Kiliyamthara (Kannur)

¹²One *seer* is equal to 0.933105 kilogram. Augustine Vengakunnel, *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, Puravayal: St. George Church, 2007, 45.

¹³Information given by early migrant farmers in various migration centres of Malabar during my research in 2005-2008.

¹⁴Fr. Mathew M. Chalil was the parish priest of Palavayal in this period. Mathew M. Chalil, *Migration Golden Jubilee Souvenir 1949-1999*, Palavayal: St. John's Church, 1999, 23.

¹⁵*Anna* is currency unit formerly used in India, equal to 1/16 of a rupee. Thomas Augustine, *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, Kodencherry: St. Joseph's Higher Secondary School, 2003, 47.

since 1949 to provide financial help for the construction of a school building and renovation of the church.¹⁶

5. School Committees

The first step of starting a school in a migration centre was the formation of School Committee by the migrants. More than 85 such School Committees were functioned in differ migration centres in various parts of Malabar.¹⁷ This School Committee was normally under the chairmanship of the parish priest of that area for the better coordination among the people. Farmers themselves donated land for schools and they also raised money for the construction of these institutions as well. The poor farmers had generously donated money for the education of the children. It is estimated that till the year 2000, migrants had established 228 Upper Primary Schools, 156 High Schools and 70 Higher Secondary Schools in Malabar aided by the government purely under the leadership of migrants.¹⁸ Apart from these schools many private English and Malayalam medium schools were established by missionary congregations and individuals who also came as a part of Malabar migration. According to the estimate of the government 224 such schools were established till 2000.¹⁹ Among the migrants, Ezhava and Nair communities also adopted these same measures for the establishment of educational institutions in their centres of migration. All these institutions not only benefited migrants but also greatly helped the tribal and native people in their education, and it ushered a new social change among the people of Malabar. Many tribal students who got education in the schools of the migrants secured government jobs and attained social mobility in Malabar.

¹⁶K. F. Aphonse, *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, Kiliyanthara: St. Mary's Church, 2003, 43.

¹⁷Information collected from various migration centres in Malabar during field work.

¹⁸Aided institutions means government grant-in-aid schools run by private managements. *Report of Educational Institutions in Kerala*, Trivandrum: Department of Statistics, 2001, 12-16.

¹⁹*Report of Educational Institutions in Kerala*, 12.

One of the early schools established under a School Committee of migrants in Malabar was a Lower Elementary School in 1949 at Kallanode in Kozhikode recognized by Madras Government. Parish priests of migration centres supported the educational activities of the migrants. In Kodencherry, under the initiative of Fr. Fabius, the school building construction was undertaken by the migrants. It was a regular feature that after Sunday mass the migrants brought stone and wood from faraway places to the construction site for next week's construction.

A primary school in Mullankolly (Wayanad) was started under the initiative of Mullankolly *Masakkuttam* in 1952. Mullankolly *Massakkuttam* organized a School Committee under Thomas Thekkanattu to start a school for the children of the migrants. They appointed an *Ashan* (traditional teacher) in the house of Mathai Kannamthanath in Mullankolly for the education of the children. *Massakuttam* paid Rs 20 and 15 *seers* of rice per month as salary to the teacher. The parents of the students also collected *Pidiyari* for the purpose of the salary of the teacher in this school. Later School Committee set up a small shed and shifted the school to that makeshift shed near the church. A migrant farmer Paily Vellilamthadathil donated land for the school building.²⁰ When the school construction work started migrants engaged in *Veethapani* (one or two days of manual work assigned to each family in a parish) for the construction of building. The School Committee also donated paddy and lemongrass oil as their share for the construction of building.²¹ In most of the migration centres the School Committees arranged the salary, food, and accommodation of the teachers.

One can observe continuous efforts from the side of the migrant farmers for upgrading educational institutions. A single teacher school started in Kodencherry in 1946 became a Lower Elementary School in 1950 under the initiative of migrants. Due to

²⁰Jose Thomas Thekkanat, *Church Consecration Souvenir*, Mullankolly: St. Mary's Forane Church, 1988, p.19

²¹The price of the products of the migrants during that time was very low. 100 *Para* paddy costs Rs. 200, one box of lemongrass oil costs Rs. 100 and One *Bharam* (420kg.) costs Rs. 10.

the constant effort of the people, the school was elevated to a Higher Elementary School. Then the migrants started efforts to secure permission for the beginning of High School because the existing High School was in Kunnamangalam which was 45 kms. away. Some visionary parish priests also constantly worked for the educational progress of migration centres. Finally in Kodencherry under the leadership of Fr. Dosethivous, migrants constructed a building for High School and raised Rs. 10,000 from the people to deposit in government treasury for the beginning of High School. Finally the first High School in this region was sanctioned in Kodencherry in 1954.²²

The migrants also took into account and planned for the needs of the region and maintained coordination with neighbouring migration centres. For example, when the people of Kunnoth started a Lower Elementary School, the migrants of nearby Kiliyamthara began a Higher Elementary School in 1953, and the people of nearby Edoor established a High School in 1957. Thus in a newly developed region the children were able to access all grades of school education, where there was no educational facility in the pre-migration period.

Many missionary congregations and supporting agencies established educational institutions like Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), Society of Jesus (SJ), Apostolic Carmelites (AC), and many other Catholic religious congregations established institutions for education for the social development of Malabar.²³ To overcome the issue of the scarcity of teachers in Malabar, the CMI authorities brought teachers from Pavaratty in Trissur and appointed them in various newly opened schools in the hilly terrains of Malabar.²⁴ In the early years of migration the priests of CMI congregation helped the migrants to establish 20

²²The Director of Public Instruction of the Madras Government as per Government Order 3367/54 dated 22/06/1954 sanctioned. Augustine, *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, 44.

²³For a detailed study see Mathew, *Tradition, Migration and Transformation*, 244-247.

²⁴Kokkat, *Contribution of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate*, 124.

primary and secondary schools in various migration centres in Malabar.²⁵

6. Higher Education Institutions

Not only schools but also many higher educational institutions like arts and science colleges, training institutes, and technical institutions were also established by the migrants. The migrants took initiatives for the beginning of government aided colleges in all districts of Malabar including Calicut, Kannur, Kasargode and Wayanad for their youth to have higher education. Earlier, native students used to discontinue their education after the completion of school education in Malabar due to the lack of higher educational institutions. Otherwise students of Malabar had to go to distant places like Mysore, Mangalore, Bangalore, Bombay and Madras for their higher education, which was not possible for common people. Considering this situation, migrant farmers took up the issue of scarcity of higher education institutions in Malabar. Not only government aided institutions, numerous parallel colleges were also started in Malabar by the migrant community to accommodate more students to higher education. In the period between 1960 and 1990 many colleges were started in various parts of Malabar by the migrants. The prominent institutions were Nirmalagiri College, Kuttuparamba; St. Mary's College, Sultan Bathery; Pazhassiraja College, Pulpally; St. Pius X College, Rajapuram, and Mary Matha College, Mananthavady.

The remote and tribal taluk of Wayanad got the first higher education institution by the vision and hard work of the migrants. Fr. Mathai Nooranal, a migrant priest formed a local committee of migrants in Sultan Bathery for the establishment of the first college in Wayanad. By mobilizing the locally available resources the committee of migrants established St. Mary's College, Sultan Bathery in 1965. One of the best examples of establishing a college purely by subsistence farmers was Pazhassiraja College in Pulpally in Wayanad. This institution was established under the auspices of Pazhassiraja Education Society formed by a group

²⁵Kokkat, *Contribution of Carmelites of Mary Immaculate*, 126-127.

migrants in 1982 under the leadership of T. U. Jacob, a migrant farmer from Kottayam, and the migrants mobilized the entire resource for the institution.²⁶ Thousands of students, including the tribal and native students from this hilly and backward region could acquire their higher education due to the beginning of these higher educational institutions.

Providence Women's College in Calicut was the first women's college in Malabar established in 1952 by Apostolic Carmelite, a missionary congregation. Malabar was very backward in case of female education. According to the Census of 1881, out of the total 2,129,045 illiterates in Malabar 1,160,471 (55 percent) were females.²⁷ The girl students of the hilly terrains of the Malabar utilized this opportunity for their educational advancement.²⁸

When the number of migrant farmers increased in Malabar, the CMI Congregation extended their educational services to the north of Bharathapuzha by establishing Devagiri College in Calicut, affiliated to the University of Madras, in 1956, mainly to educationally support the migrant community.

The age old educational backwardness of North Malabar was addressed by the migrant farmers by the establishment of Nirmalagiri College, Kuttuparamba in Kannur, under the aegis of the Catholic Diocese of Thalassery in 1967.²⁹ A college committee was formed under Fr. John George Vadakkumthala to raise financial resources from the people to construct a huge college building in 1970. On account this permanent building in the first year itself 397 students were admitted in the college for Pre-

²⁶This society was given this name because Kerala Varma Pazhassiraja, the prince of Kottayam dynasty, died in Mavilamthode near Pulpally in 1805. The headquarters of the Kottayam dynasty was at a place Pazhassi near Mattannur in North Malabar. The people of Wayanad accepted the suzerainty of Kottayam dynasty at least since 12th century AD.

²⁷Logan, *Malabar Manual Vol. I*, 106.

²⁸K. S. Mathew and Joshy Mathew, *Education in Colonial and Post Colonial Malabar 1920-2006*, New Delhi: Gyan Publications, 2016, p.99.

²⁹The Diocese of Thalassery was established in 1953 exclusively for the ecclesiastical needs of the migrants in Malabar.

Degree course. The migrant farmers and the people of Kasargode district of North Malabar, including the prominent tribal groups like Mavilas and Koragas had only limited opportunity for higher education.³⁰ The migrant farmers of Rajapuram started St. Pius X College with the support of the Knanaya Catholics Diocese of Kottayam in 1990. This initiative of migrant farmers in Kasargode was giant leap in solving issue of lack of higher education institution in North Malabar.³¹

In all migration centres farmers whole heartedly supported the government initiatives of starting educational institutions. In the Construction of the Government College in Kodencherry, the migrants took the leadership. Under the leadership of parish priests Fr. Alex Manakkattumattam and Fr. Francis Arupara, a College Committee was formed to mobilize resources for the construction of the college. This Committee raised funds from the people and purchased 18 acres of land for the college. Spending Rs. 500,000, the college was constructed by the committee. They also donated necessary furniture for the college to secure government recognition. When a Government College was sanctioned in Mananthavady, the Catholic parish of Thonichal freely allowed their building to function as the college till the completion of a permanent college building.

Type of Educational Institutions	Kozhikode	Wayanad	Malappuram	Kannur	Kasargode	Palakkad
L P School	32	35	9	56	7	14
UP School	22	37	9	37	8	15
HS School	30	38	5	38	8	16
HSS School	15	10	3	20	7	12
EM School	15	2	2	3	2	2
CBSE School	15	2	2	2	-	2
A&S Colleges	4	5	1	6	4	3
Nursing Colleges	1	-	-	-	-	1

³⁰Kasargode was erstwhile Kannada speaking South Canara district of Madras Presidency.

³¹Mathew and Mathew, *Education in Colonial*, 101-102.

Engineering Colleges	-	-	1	2	1	2
ITI	-	1	-	-	-	2
ITC	-	-	-	5	1	5
TTI and B.Ed.	2	5	-	1	-	1
HM	2	-	-	-	-	-

Table2: Educational Institutions Established by Migrants in Malabar 1937-1990³²

7. Beneficiaries of Education

Local people were one of the chief beneficiaries of education in the institutions developed under the initiative of migrants. In the colonial period very little was done for the educational progress of backward castes in Malabar. Cherumans, Parayans, Pulayans, Kuravans, Nayadies, Paniyas, Kurumas and Kurichiyas were the prominent aboriginals and hill tribes who had not received any help from government authorities for their education in the colonial period.³³ The issue of pollution and the reluctance of higher castes to allow them to elevate themselves out of their position of serfs hindered the educational development of backward castes.³⁴ The educational status of tribal people was so poor in the most backward Eranad and Wayanad taluks of

³²Thomas Nagaparambil, "Malabar Migration and Education," in *Studies on Travancorian Migration to Malabar*, ed. Varghese Thottakkad, Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala State Language Institute, 2015, 168. LP - Lower Primary, UP - Upper Primary, HS - High School, HSS - Higher Secondary, EM English Medium, CBSE - Central Board of Secondary Education, A&S - Arts & Science, ITI - Industrial Training Institute, ITC - Industrial Training Centres, TTI - Teacher Training Institutes, B. Ed. Bachelor of Education, HM - Hotel Management.

³³C. A. Innes and F. B. Evans, *Madras District Gazetteers-Malabar*, Madras: Government Press, 1951, 299-300.

³⁴Agricultural slavery known as Valliyurkavu System existed in Wayanad among the Adiyas and Paniyas. The landlords used to buy, sell, and mortgage tribal workers during the annual Valliyurkavu festival near Mananthavady. Moreover, they were attached to the land and exchanged them along with land. For more details see Joshy Mathew, *Tradition, Migration and Transformation*, 55

Malabar in the colonial period.³⁵ But the migrant educational institutions in Malabar never discriminated the backward sections in their institutions. In the tribal dominated Wayanad taluk, indigenous people greatly benefited from the migrant institutions.

Migrants of Wayanad encouraged tribal students to attend their classes in the schools attached to the churches. The schools, thus, acted as agents of social and intellectual revolution by admitting the children of tribal communities like Adiyas, Paniyas, Uralies and Kattunaikkas,³⁶ who were originally agricultural slaves of the high caste Hindu landlords. In the early schools started in Payyampilly (1942), Thavinjal (1944), Kallody (1948), Nadavayal (1950), Kommayad (1950), Kaniyaram (1951), Bathery (1951), Thariode (1952), Mullankolly (1953), Poroor (1957), Kottathara (1957), and so on, considerable number of tribal students were admitted. Food was supplied to the tribal children in the schools to attract native and tribal students to education. They frequently visited the tribal settlements to encourage the parents to send the children to school. Landlords and high caste Hindus opposed the education of tribal children as they considered them as a source of labour for agricultural work.³⁷

In one of the instances of the tribal social mobility through education can be observed in St. Catherine's Lower Elementary School in Payyampilly near Mananthavady in 1942.³⁸ The Admission Register of this school in 1942 shows that in the first

³⁵Eranad with 15 per cent literates among males and 3.3 percent among women and the Wayanad with 15 percent and 2.2 percent literates in 1950's. See Malabar. C. A. Innes and F. B. Evans, *Madras District Gazetteers-Malabar*, 296.

³⁶Joy Varkey, "Syrian Christian Peasant Migration and the Educational Development of Wayanad," in *Region, Religion and Culture in the Making of Higher Education in Kerala*, N. J. Francis ed., Trichur: St. Thomas College, 2010, 72.

³⁷A. Aiyappan, *The Paniyas: An Ex-slave Tribe of South India*, Calcutta: Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology, 1992, 43-45.

³⁸This school was initially started and functioned under the Church in Payyampilly. Later the pioneer migrant farmer K. P. Mathew Kudakkachira donated 10 acres of land for the construction of the school.

batch of the thirty three students, eight students were from the most backward Adiya and Kattunaikka tribal communities and six of them were non-tribal Hindu students.³⁹ Though drop out among tribal students were very high, two tribal students completed their courses and secured government jobs under central and state governments by 1958.⁴⁰ With the establishment of higher education institutions in Wayanad, many tribal students also got the opportunity of receiving Under Graduate and Post Graduate degrees in Wayanad, which was quite impossible for them earlier. The following table shows the tribal participation of higher education in the tribal district of Wayanad.

Name of College	Status	Student Strength				
		Total	Male	Female	S.C	S.T
Govt. College, Kalpetta	Govt.	418	272	146	28	29
Govt. College, Mananthavady	Govt.	386	205	181	28	42
St. Mary's College, Sulthan Bathery	Private	1692	698	994	89	208
Pazhassi Raja College, Pulpally	Private	804	372	432	61	32
Mary Matha College, Mananthavady	Private	258	108	150	33	52
W.M.O. College, Muttill	Private	217	107	110	7	2

Table-3: Student Details of Colleges in Wayanad 2000⁴¹

³⁹P. Chathan, P. Mallan, Jogi, K. Machi, K. Kali, B. Chathu, V. Nenchi (All belonged to Adiya tribal community) and Domman (Kattunaikan) were the tribal students of this school in the year 1942. For more information see Register of Admission and Withdrawals 1942-1965, Vol. I, Payyampilly: St. Catherine's School, 3-13.

⁴⁰Varkey, *Syrian Christian Peasant Migration*, 73.

⁴¹Janakiyasuthrana *Prasthanam*, Wayanad Jilla, Kalpetta: District Planning Department, 2000, 167.

One of the problems faced by the newly opened schools in Malabar was the scarcity of trained school teachers. The teacher training candidates of Malabar had to go to either Palakkad or Trissur for teacher training.⁴² To solve this crisis Fr. George Kazhikkachalil started a training institute in Mananthavady in 1963.⁴³ This was the first govt. recognised private Teacher Institute started in Malabar. This revolutionary step of the migrant community solved the dearth of trained teachers in Malabar region. Another novel institution started during the era of migration was a printing press in Wayanad. When bishop of Thalassery expressed his intention to set up a printing press in Malabar, the migrants of Mananthavady and Fr. George Kazhikkachalil came forward readily. With the help of the people, a building for the press was constructed at Kaniyaram near Mananthavady. He brought a printing machine from Mannanam in Kottayam for Rs. 8000, donated by migrants and inaugurated St. Joseph's Printing Press in 1960. It was the only press in Wayanad and from this press the official journal of the eparchy of Thalassery namely *Girideepam* was published for a long time.

8. Conclusion

The diffusion of knowledge by peasant migrants created many new opportunities for the development of Malabar society and upward social mobility of indigenous tribal communities. In a new knowledge society the migrants could integrate all sections of this society and to promote new forms of solidarity among its members without much distinction. New educational institutions started by the migrants were for public good and thereby knowledge was made available to all groups of people in the society. Besides, the new society has revolutionised economic and human development in this traditional society. The spread of modern knowledge helped the tribal people in Malabar to escape from the slave system of labour that existed for centuries. The

⁴²Information given by P.A. Parameshwaran, former A. E. O. He served in the educational field of Wayanad for a long period from 1958 to 1982.

⁴³George Kazhikkachalil, *Girideepam, Special Issue*, 11 no.3 (1966), 89.

interaction of the natives of Malabar with new group of people from Travancore also helped them to escape from the exploitation of moneylenders and the oppression of high caste people.

In the process of the modernisation of Malabar society education acted as a capacity building force among the people. The small marginal community of agrarian migrants with very limited resources also involved in decision making process and facilitated the marginalised people to engage in collective bargaining in the existing social order. Without waiting for the support of external agencies and overpowering many constraints that impeded the work of migrant farmers, they spread information and knowledge in an educationally backward society by starting hundreds educational institutions.

Through providing education the migrants encouraged knowledge sharing in the society which was imperative towards the creation of a knowledge society. Though they had encountered many economic and social hurdles in the new area of settlement, their thirst for knowledge and hard work socially and economically improved Malabar society. Their promotion of modern knowledge through the new educational institutions disturbed the conservative social fabric of Malabar society. An attitudinal change has also occurred among indigenous communities with the spread of education among them.

Inequalities of access to information sources, contents and infrastructure in the society were resolved by the agrarian migrants in Malabar. The marginalised people could reassert their identity in the society by acquiring modern education from the institutions established by the migrant community. It is not easy to see this kind of an educational intervention in the history in other parts of India as in the case of the migrants in Malabar. In the humanity's march towards knowledge societies the contributions of these marginal farmers are unique. But their legacy did not receive due recognition in the mainstream historical narratives of India. Through this paper we bring out this silent revolutionary movement organised by migrant farmers for educational development of Malabar and consequent march towards knowledge societies.