

# Land Problem in Travancore-Cochin - II

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IN the first part of the article, some of the consequences of heavy population pressure in Travancore-Cochin have been examined. The consequences discussed so far are under the following heads: (i) Smallest size of holdings, (ii) disproportionate land distribution, and (iii) high proportion of non-agricultural population. Some further consequences of population pressure are discussed below,

(iv) Highest Proportion of Agricultural Labour Class. The All India Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee reported that the agricultural labour class in T.C. was 39.5 per cent of the total families, the highest in the Indian Union.

Livelihood Classes	% of families
Land owners	19.0
Tenants	8.1
Agricultural labour	
with land	20.8
without land	18.7
Non-agricultural families	33.4

Of this, 20.8 per cent of the families had 32.8 per cent of the holdings and held 10.8 per cent of the cultivated area having 0.8 acres as the average size of holding; the remaining 18.7 per cent families had no land. The Census of India 1951, in the tables relating to livelihood classes (mentioned in the previous section) records that 20.2 per cent of the general population and 22.1 per cent of the rural population derives the major share of its income from agricultural labour. Amongst the agricultural class, the proportion of the agricultural labour is 36.8 per cent. In the different districts, the proportions are—Quilon 32.3 per cent, Kottayam 34.9 per cent, Trivandrum 36.3 per cent, and Trichur 46.4 per cent.

Besides, recently there has been a considerable switch over among the working class from non-agricultural occupations to agriculture, as is in-

<sup>1</sup> The class "agricultural labour" in the two reports mentioned above is not identical. In the former it refers to the percentage of agricultural labour families to total families, and in the latter it refers to the percentage of population deriving the major part of its family income from agricultural labour.

dicated by the change in the ratios

Livelihood Classes	Proportion of Principal Earners	
	1931	1951
1. Owner cultivators	24	21
2. Tenant cultivators	5	6
3. Agricultural labour	18	24
4. Rent receivers	1	1
<b>Total agricultural class</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>52</b>
5. Producers other than agricultural	25	24
6. Commerce	9	6
7. Transport	2	3
8. Miscellaneous	16	15
<b>Total non-agricultural class</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>48</b>

of agricultural and non-agricultural 'principal earners' from 48:52 in 1931 to 52:48 in 1951, which is mainly due to the increase in the proportion of agricultural labour from 18 per cent in 1931 to 24 per cent in 1951<sup>3</sup>

Such a high proportion of agricultural labour is a sign of growing agrarian distress, and it shows the emergence of a substantial section of population without stable economic base.

(v) High Degree of Unemployment. There has been a considerable dec-

	1931	1941	1951
	%	%	%
Principal earners	30.9	27.1	28.5
Earning dependents	17.1	9.5	7.6
	<b>48.0</b>		<b>36.1</b>
Non-earning dependents	52.0	63.4	63.9

<sup>2</sup> Census of India, 1951, Vol. XIII, T.C., Part IA-Report.

	Average days per year			
	All	Men	Women	
		Casual	Attached	
1. Employment				
Agricultural Labour	185	185	298	133
Non-agr. Labour	30	31	—	14
2. Self employment	42	41	67	—
3. Unemployment	108	108	—	—

Agricultural Classes	Trivandrum	Quilon	Kottayam	Trichur	TC State
Owner cultivators	52.2	58.2	53.2	21.6	48.0
Tenant cultivators	9.3	7.5	10.3	28.2	13.0
Agricultural Labourers	36.3	32.3	34.9	46.4	36.8
Rent receivers	2.2	1.7	1.6	3.8	2.2

it is almost equally divided between rural and urban areas. But here, out of 4.19 millions. 3.07 millions (or 73.2 per cent) are in the countryside and only 1.12 millions (or 26.8 per cent) are in urban areas. And further, considering the urban population only, while in other states it is predominantly non-agricultural, in this state, 25 per cent of it is agricultural. Such a high percentage of non-agricultural population in rural areas and the dependence of so large a proportion of urban population on agricultural occupations must conceal a considerable degree of underemployment.<sup>1</sup>

(vi) Movement of Population Towards Hilly Tracts. The acute land scarcity has given rise to a movement of population to hilly tracts in search of land for cultivation for some decades.<sup>2</sup> During the last decade, this tendency has become more pronounced; and there is an agitation for allotment of reserve forest land in the highland. But these forests being a boon to the state, any large-scale allotment of forest land for cultivation will be a short-sighted policy, since large-scale deforestation will adversely affect cultivation and will accelerate soil erosion. The results may be disastrous in the long run,

(vii) Adaptation of Cropping Pattern to Population Pressure. Cropping pattern is basically influenced by soil and climate; but the pressure of population has exercised a decisive influence on it, within the range of crops determined by the basic factors. Trichur is essentially a low-lying area where 72.6 per cent of the total cultivated land is devoted to paddy, while Kottayam is mainly hilly, where most of the plantation crops are localized.

Rice is the staple food of the people. Paddy is by far the most important crop in the low-lying areas; and the whole of the wet land is devoted to it (which can support the maximum number of persons in comparison to other food

Unemployment and underemployment are not peculiar to agriculture alone, but are common to industrial occupations also. It is mostly in the case of unskilled workers; and the period is irregular. Besides, there is educated unemployment also.

<sup>2</sup>percentage of increase in total population 1891--1951:—  
 Lowland 44  
 Midland 84  
 Highland 355

crops) though the soil and climatic conditions are suitable for growing other crops. These are clear signs of agricultural adaptation to population pressure. Further, the fact that mixed cropping is the characteristic feature of garden land, is again an index of land-use, and cropping system evolving in response to the same influence.

The difference in density of population in the different districts reflects itself remarkably, in the proportion of areas devoted to food and plantation crops. Kottayam with a density of 604, has only 31.5 per cent of its total cultivated area under paddy and tapioca, and 41.3 per cent under plantation crops. On the other hand, the other three districts where the density is more than 1,100, the percentage of area under paddy and tapioca is 58—80 and that under plantation only 3—8. Quilon which has a higher density than Kottayam, but lower than that of Trichur and Trivandrum has 58 per cent under paddy and tapioca (i.e. a lower percentage than in Trichur and Trivandrum which have 80 per cent and 66 per cent); and it has also a larger proportion of its area under plantations than the other two. This shows the relative pressure of population, reflected in the varying proportion of the cultivated areas devoted to food and plantation crops.

Analysing the distribution of the total area under each crop it is found that food crops on the whole are fairly well distributed over all the districts, while commercial crops are concentrated. Again, plantation crops are mainly concentrated in Kottayam which has the lowest density and is also the richest district; paddy and tapioca are grown

only in small quantities. Quilon which has the next higher density has a lower proportion of plantation crops. On the other hand, Trivandrum and Trichur, which have still greater densities, have the smallest proportion of plantation crops, and a considerably larger proportion of food crops.

(viii) Deterioration in the standard of cultivation and of living. During the past few decades, in spite of fresh land being brought under cultivation,<sup>1</sup> cultivated area per capita has gone down from ½ acre in 1921 to about 0.29 acre in 1955. There is likewise a reduction in the irrigated area per capita. On the other hand, the agricultural class has increased during the last decade,

Agricultural class	% of growth	
	1931-40	1941-50
Owner cultivators	—9	18.0
Tenant cultivators	25.8	37.8
Agri. Labourers	—10.1	98.6
Rent receivers	9.0	29.0
All	—1.6	48.4

by 48.4 per cent while the general population has risen by 23.7 per cent. The average annual income per family of 5-6 persons is estimated to be Rs. 600 only and food deficit is estimated to the extent of 50 per cent. The table below taken from the Report of the All India Agricultural Labour Enquiry, 1954 gives an idea of the standard of living of the people in general.

The returns from land are very low. An average family invariably

<sup>1</sup> Population has been growing continuously, but during the last 4 decades the unirrigated area per capita has remained almost the same. This shows an addition of the new land under the plough in each decade.

	up to Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Above
1 Annual consumption expenditure per consumption unit	100	100-150	150-200	200-250	250
2 Percentage of families	24.4				

Districts	Density	% of cultivated area under			
		Paddy & Tapioca	Plantations	Coco-nut	Sugar cane
1. Kottayam	604	31.5	41.3	22.9	4.3
2. Quilon	1,109	50.1	7.8	32.8	1.3
3. Trichur	1,176	80.2	3.4	15.8	0.7
4. Trivandrum	1,444	66.0	7.6	26.4	—

Districts	Paddy Tapioca Rubber			Tea	Pepper	Coffee	Ginger	Coco-nut	Sugar cane
	Paddy	Tapioca	Rubber						
1 Kottayam	14.6	14.4	55.8	91.0	80.1	47.0	82.6	24.3	66.4
2 Quilon	26.5	42.4	30.3	5.9	1.2	22.0	3.1	41.9	24.4
3 Trichur	45.2	7.74	8.3	2.7	1.3	26.2	2.0	20.0	1
4 Trivandrum	13.7	35.5	5.6	1.1	17.4	4.8	12.2	13.8	9.1

runs into debt. The standard of cultivation has gone down. Cultivators do not have enough to buy good seed and manure and maintenance of livestock is proving beyond their resources. The result is that many cultivators are compelled to neglect cultivation, as is clear from the previous analysis of the livelihood pattern. In a heavily populated state, this is really a very serious situation.

Again, a decline in the proportion of workers (principal earners and earning dependents) and an increase in that of non-earning dependents, as shown previously, indicate the growing burden on earners. The capacity of the earners to shoulder the burden of dependents not increasing proportionately, there must be a corresponding fall in the standard of living. Further evidence of a fall in living standards in the agricultural section can be found in a strange situation which has developed in this state. The proportion

Agricultural Classes	Effective earners	Dependents
Owner cultivators	28	72
Tenant cultivator	31	69
Rent receivers	36	64
Agr. Labourers	40	60

of effective workers is lower in the principal agricultural classes (and the proportion of dependents correspondingly greater) than in the class of agricultural labour. This indicates the extent of burden an earner carries in different classes. The greater the burden, the greater are the chances of a lower standard.

**IV Signs of Growing Distress**

More than 92 per cent of the cultivable land has already been brought under cultivation. The limits of agricultural extension having been almost reached, there is little chance of bringing fresh land under the plough. The return from land is already very low, and a decline in the price level will bring distress. Population is increasing very fast. Though the volume of immigration is steadily falling and that of emigration rising, it is strange to find that in such a heavily populated state there has been for long considerable net immigration and it still continues to some extent.<sup>1</sup> Poverty and unemployment face a large number of educated<sup>2</sup> youths. Naturally the future is gloomy; it may become dangerous. Unless they are directed to new channels of economic activity the educated unemployed youths may become

vocal, and the voice will not be ineffective.

**V Some Suggestions**

The scarcity of land is acute, and the pressure of population tremendous. The remedial measures should broadly aim at increasing production on the one hand and population planning on the other. The percentage of literacy being very high, the measures of population control should prove more effective and quick than in other parts of the country. Besides, the T.C. government should explore the possibilities of planned emigration to the thinly populated central states. This would relieve the pressure in the problem areas of T.C., and would be helpful in stepping up the rate of progress in the latter.

In respect of production planning, it should be recognised that this state cannot be self-sufficient in food supply. Hence that should not be the aim. Secondly, it is equally important to realise that for the major problems of agriculture the real solutions lie outside the field of agriculture, i.e., in general industrialization and the creation of non-agricultural occupations, to provide a source of wealth and to absorb the surplus working populations. Coir, fishing, poultry and dairying have to be organized as subsidiary occupations for farmers, and the development of other cottage industries should be given an important place in the state's Second Five Year Plan.

Of late, public lands have been protected against encroachment, and the reserve forests have been free for occupation. There should not, however, be any large-scale clearing of these forests, since rivers and streams flowing from them are the important means of communications and sources of hydro-electric power; besides, forests are, and can further be developed into a valuable source of wealth. The state may reconsider its policy regarding public lands.

Subsidiary sources of food, particularly fishing, should be organized more extensively. Besides, in respect of the cultivated area, irrigation and manure are the two major requirements. Of the net area sown one-fourth is wet and three-fourths is dry; and if the irrigation targets in the First Five Year Plan are fully achieved, there will be an increase of 4.9 per cent over 1949-50, and the extent of irrigation by 1955-56 will be 34.3 per cent of the total area sown. Though the annual rainfall is quite heavy, and is also fairly

regular and uniform, the need for irrigation is nevertheless very great, for increasing the double-cropped area, and for enhancing crop yields. The form of irrigation will, however, depend on the local conditions. Regarding the choice of crops, the state can profitably extend cultivation of spices.

There is a popular cry for putting a ceiling on land holdings. Sometimes doubts are expressed that larger estates being plantation estates, it may not be advisable from the view-point of their operational efficiency to break them up. In the case of others, the number of rent receivers is rather small, and even the redistribution of bigger holdings may not very much improve the lot of the surplus population. The concentration of land holding, however, is there; and in such a heavily burdened area ceiling has to be fixed from the view-point of public

Years	Immigration (mils.)	Emigration (mils.)	Balance (mils.)
1901	2.18	.43	1.75
1911	1.91	.60	1.31
1921	1.78	.58	1.20
1931	2.61	.77	1.84
1951	2.23	2.22	.01

The bulk of the immigrants comes to work in plantations in highlands\* Nearly 91% immigration is from Madras and 83% of emigration is also to Madras.

<sup>2</sup>The extent of literacy is 45.8 per cent (Males 54.8 per cent and females 37.0 per cent for general population, and 53.8 (males 64.5 and females 43.2) for population over 5 years of age.

<sup>3</sup>There are no heavy industries in T.C. and scarcity of capital is quite obvious. Factory industries relate to cashewnut, coir, cement, aluminium, glass, fertilizers, rayon, cotton textile, plywood, tiles, ceramics, paper, oil and soap, etc. But except in the cashewnut factories in Quilon and coir factories in and around Alleppey, very small number of labourers is employed. By far the major part of the non-agricultural labour is employed in cottage industries, the most important of which are handloom weaving, coir and fishing; others are jaggery making, bell metal work, making of screwpine mats, baskets, articles of furniture from cane, pottery, etc. In highlands, plantations absorb practically the whole population.

peace and social justice. Under a democratic frame-work, the popular cries are usually effective. The limits for ceiling suggested by the Land Policy Committee, Travancore-Cochin (1949-50), were—double crop (wet-lands) 50 acres; single crop 75 acres; dry lands other than coconut gardens 75 acres; coconut gardens 50 acres. The limits suggested by the Socialist Party in 1954 were double crop lands and coconut gardens 15 acres; single crop lands 22½ acres; and dry lands 30 acres. For such a heavily populated area these limits are too high. In order to make the idea of ceiling effective in reducing social distress, the limit should closely conform to the optimum size of family holding, so long as individual farming remains the common pattern of agriculture. The limit should not exceed 10 acres. The case of plantations, however, has to be treated separately, both in regard to ceiling and to other ameliorative measures. Proper land-use and operational efficiency should not be sacrificed. And for improving the conditions of labour one may think of the measures which are generally adopted in industries, i.e., enhanced wages, bonus and profit sharing, etc.

## Hind Cycles has a New Unit

THE balance sheet and other accounts of the Hind Cycles Ltd. for the year ending December 31, 1954, indicate improvement in performance over the previous year. During the year under report, the company's Establishment No. 2 at Kandivlee started production of cycle chains. Sales and manufacturing expenses on the one hand and establishment expenses on the other, both went up from 13.09 lakhs and Rs. 1.38 lakhs in 1953 to Rs. 16.10 lakhs and Rs. 1.62 lakhs respectively in 1954. Nevertheless net profits were also higher by Rs. 1.07 lakh, and amounted to Rs. 4.40 lakhs in 1954. This improvement was due to the noticeable increase both in production and in the value of sales; thus the number of cycles manufactured increased from 120,232 to 130,232, while the net value of sales rose from Rs. 1.42 crores to Rs. 1.55 crores. The company's contribution to provident fund and Employees State Insurance increased to Rs. 2.60 lakhs during the year from Rs. 2.34 lakhs in 1953. The allocation to depreciation was slightly higher by Rs. 0.19 lakh, at Rs. 6.28 lakhs, bringing up the Depreciation Reserve

Fund at the end of 1954 to Rs. 53.6 lakhs against a gross block value Rs. 73.31 lakhs.

The company has always regarded its well "looked after" and satisfied labour force as an invaluable asset. Hind Cycles pays its workers handsomely: thus, during the year 1954, wages per head per annum averaged about Rs. 2,625. This would be found to compare very favourably with the standard of wages in the engineering and other comparable industries. The wage level in Hind Cycles has been going up steadily since 1950, and the company is very proud of the fact that it has on its rolls highly paid 'daily' workers, some of whom pay income tax.

The company has plans to install additional plant and machinery. Orders have been placed for machinery worth Rs. 15 lakhs and expansion of factory building has been taken up. For financing the expansion programme, the directors are considering expansion of capital of the company.

The directors have recommended that the dividend should be raised from Rs. 8 to Rs 10 per share of Rs 100 each.



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