CHAPTER 9

STANDARD OF LIVING AND THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH REGIONAL WAGE DIFFERENTIALS IN SAMPLE VILLAGES
Standard of living and their association with regional wage differentials in sample villages

In a class ridden society, labour power, like any other commodity, is bought and sold for a price, which is the long-run average cost of reproduction of labour. It has already been discussed in some detail in chapter two where it was argued that the stage of development as manifested in the production relations and forces of production are important factors influencing the magnitude of the value of labour power. Wage is the monetary expression of the value of labour. Smith, Ricardo and Marx, irrespective of their differences in the conceptualisation of labour power and its value, converged on the view that the magnitude of the value of labour power varied not only across nations but also within nations, across regions and within regions and between urban and rural areas. Regional variations in the value of labour power in the short-run could be explained by changes in the supply of and the demand for labourers. But if the differences are significant and persist for longer periods, the supply-demand framework is inadequate to address the issue. It would then call for an enquiry, placed against the backdrop of socio-economic and historical factors contributing to wage differentials. It is against this backdrop, the analyses of socio-economic characteristics of sample households in sample villages assumes significance. At the outset, it may be mentioned that we do not attempt here any wage determination modelling to relate wage rates with its determinants. On the contrary, the observations at the field level are verbally narrated to explain the difference in the living pattern of agricultural labour households between high-wage and low-wage zones. Modelling is avoided because the wage question arises from socio-cultural milieu and the different facets of the issue may not be meaningfully captured with econometric models.

The objectives of the present chapter are: i) To examine differences and similarities in the major indicators of social development as well as their living standards, across sample regions; ii) To examine the assets of farmers and labourers in the sample villages; iii) To assess the state of development of
agriculture in the sample villages; iv). To examine the relationship between wage rates and its major determinants in the light of the evidence from the sample villages. In this chapter, the following two hypotheses are tested:

Hypothesis 1: Demographic, social and economic characteristics of farmers and labourers are different between high wage and low wage zones;

Hypothesis 2: Living standards of labourers are different between high and low wage zones.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, the demographic profiles and other socio economic characteristics of the sample households are analysed. The second section deals with the asset possession of the sample households. In the third section, important indicators of agriculture development of the sample regions are analysed, followed by a conclusion.

Section 1

9.1. Demographic profile of sample villages

9.1.1. Travancore

Demographic variables are important indicators of social and economic development of the inhabitants of a region. Birth and death rates, infant mortality rate, life expectancy, sex ratio, average size of households and age structure of the population are the important demographic variables. In a primary survey administered for a study on wage formation of rural labourers, it is difficult to capture all these demographic characteristics of a region. However, for the sample populations, information was gathered to estimate the sex ratio, work participation rate, level of education, age structure and average family size of agricultural labour and farmer households. Table 9.1 compares the demographic characteristics of the sample population. In Venganoor village, the high wage zone in Travancore, the total population of sample households was 283. In the total population, 43 percent were labour households and 27.56 percent were farmer households. The average family
size of a labour household was 4.56 and that of a farmer household was 4.94 in Venganoor. It is worth mentioning in this context that a sex ratio favouring female population was conventionally considered as an indicator of advanced stage of social development. Significant difference in work participation could be observed between farmer and labour households and also between males and females. In Venganoor, work participation rate for the labour households was 63 percent for males and 17 percent for females. In the farmer households, work participation rate was 73 percent for males and 6 percent for females.

The low wage zone in Travancore region, Santhanppara village in Idukki district, had a total sample population of 368, of which 42.40 percent belonged to farmer households and 57.60 percent were labour households. Average family size of labour households in Santhanppara was 4.42 and farmer households were 5.03. It is important to note that the sex ratio in Santhanppara was as low as 838 females per 1000 male population and the sex ratio of the sample population matched well with the sex ratio recorded for the Grama Panchayat in 2001. Further, the sex ratio for labour households was on the lower side when compared to farmer households. In the literature on social development and demographic transition, a lower female work participation rate was considered as an indicator of higher state of development particularly in the context of Third World countries. In labour households, very low income level compels women to enter the labour market, which established a positive association between poverty and labour market participation of women and children. The crude work participation rate for males in labour households was 52 and the corresponding rate for females was 31. Like Venganoor, the work participation rate for farmer household was higher in Santhanppara as well. It was 72 percent for males and 8 percent for females in farmer households in Santhanppara.
Table 9.1 Demographic characteristics of sample households -2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic particulars</th>
<th>Travancore</th>
<th>Malabar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High wage zone</td>
<td>Low wage zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thirvananthapuram (Venganoor GP)</td>
<td>Idukki (Santhanpara GP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour HH</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer HH</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>1297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average family size</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>4.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work participation rate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sample Survey
9.1.2. Malabar

In Tavanoore Grama Panchayat, the high wage-zone area from Malabar, had 84 labour households and 27 farmer households as sample population. The total population of labour households was 396 and farmer households was 142. Average family size of labour household was 4.71 and 5.25 for farmer households. A higher family size of farmer households could be attributed to the differences in religious composition between farmer and labour households. Farmer households mostly belonged to Muslim community in which average family size was on a higher side when compared to general pattern in the village. The sex ratio in the sample households was 983 female per 1000 males, which was on the lower side when compared to the state average. Sex ratio, for the labour households was 1024 females per 1000 males and for farmer households 925 females for 1000 males (Table 9.1). Average work participation rate for the sample households was 47.20 percent, which compared well with the state average. However, considerable difference in work participation rate could be noted between farmer and labour households and also between males and females. For the labour households, 52 percent of the male population were working and the female work participation rate for labour households was 32 percent, which was much higher than the state average. Work participation rate of males in farmer households was 72 percent while only 8 per cent of the females were working or reported as available for work in Tavanoore from farmer households.

Mananthavadi Grama Panchayat of Wayanad district is the low wage zone in the Malabar region. Total sample size from Mananthavadi was 47, comprising 30 labour households and 17 farmer households. Total population from sample households was 240, of which 67 percent belonged to labour households and 33 households were farmer households. Average family size of labour households was 5.36 and farmer households was 4.64. Average sex ratio in the sample Panchayat was 912 females per 1000 males. Sex ratio in labour households was 950 females per 1000 males and the corresponding percentage for farmer households was 844 males per 1000 population. Work
participation rate for the sample household was 48.33 percent. For the labour households, 61 percent of males and 47 percent of females were reported as working. In the farmer households, 44 percent of males and 29 percent of females population were working (Figure 5.2). It may be mentioned in this context that the higher work participation rate for females may be viewed against the cultural milieu within which Advasi community live and work.

A brief analysis of the demographic profile of sample villages has brought into light the following characteristic difference between low wage and high wage zones and also between farmers and labourers.

1. Work participation rate for males was higher in high wage zones for farmer households than labour households;
2. Female work participation rate of farmer households in high wage zone was lower than labour households;
3. Sex ratio defined as number of females per 1000 male population is higher in high wage zones in farmer households (except Tavanoor) than in low wage zones;
4. Female work participation rate of labour households was higher than farmer households.

9.1.3. Caste composition of farmers and labourers in sample villages

Caste plays an important role in the wage formation process. Like in other parts of India, land was owned and operated in Kerala by farmers who belonged to higher castes and the labour force was drawn mostly from schedule castes and Tribes. Unlike other states in India, by the 1970s, effective implementation of land reforms in Kerala changed the land ownership structure to a very great extent. However, for the agricultural sector, labourers from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) community still constitute the major share of the labour force. Table 9.2 shows the caste-wise break up of agricultural labourers and farmers in sample villages.
Table 9.2. Percentage distribution of farmers and labourer households by castes

| Castes               | Travancore | Malabar |  |
|----------------------|------------|---------|  |
|                      | High wage zone | Low wage zone |  |
|                      | Thirvananthapuram (Venganoor GP) | Idukki (Santhanpara GP) |  |
| Labour HH | Farmer HH | Labour HH | Farmer HH | Labour HH | Farmer HH | Labour HH | Farmer HH |
| Ezava (OBC) | 6 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 12 | 26 | 9 | 15 |
| Paniyar (ST) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 0 |
| Fisherman (OBC) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Adiyar (ST) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 42 | 6 |
| Kurumar (ST) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 4 |
| Kurichi (ST) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Thevar (SC) | 0 | 0 | 34 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Chettiyar (OBC) | 0 | 0 | 15 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| Nadar | 24 | 42 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Devankar (OBC) | 0 | 0 | 4 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kanakkar (SC) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Parayas (SC) | 10 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pulayas (SC) | 20 | 5 | 0 | 47 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Thattan (General) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Nairs (General)* | 22 | 47 | 6 | 2 | 10 | 58 | 12 | 25 |
| Nambuddiri (General) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Other castes Christians / Muslims | 18 | 0 | 33 | 47 | 0 | 3 | 10 | 50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

* In Malappuram, 32 percent of farmers were resettled as Panikkars, which were included in the category Nairs as it is relatively inferior to Nairs, but for all practical purposes are treated alike. In Wayanad and Idukki, considerable size of the farmers are from Christian community who migrated to this place from 1930 through 1940s.
9.1.3.1. Caste composition in Travancore

Among labour households in the high wage zone in Travancore, 30 percent belonged to SCs. Among SCs, Parayas and Pulays, two castes in the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy, supplied 30 percent of the agricultural labour force in the sample village. The second largest community supplying labour force was Nadars. Nairs\(^1\) came only next in the order.

On the contrary, among farmer households, 47 percent were Nairs closely followed by Nadars (42%). It is rather strange to note that the households from SC category constituted only 5 percent of the farming community in this village. Of course, a miniscule proportion of the farming community came from the ranks of agricultural labour who did lease land cultivation in paddy lands. It was the erstwhile agricultural labourers who had no other avenues of employment, who leased in land and became cultivators.

It may be noted that the original inhabitants of the Santhanppara village were Thevar, Chettiyar (Tamil origin), Devankar and other lower castes of Tamil origin. A major share in the supply of labourers working in cash crops were engaged mostly by small and marginal farmers. Farmers in the village were mostly migrants to the place by the 1970s. The farming community is comprised of Nairs, Christians and Muslims, who were attracted to the place by cheap labour and land.

9.1.3.2. Caste Composition in Malabar

Like Venganoor, the SCs are the major source of labour supply to the agricultural sector in Tavanoor. Pulaya community alone accounted for 47 percent of the total labour households; another caste of the SC category, Kanakar, formed the second largest source of supply of labourers. Among farmer households, Nairs was the single largest category and Ezhava was the second largest group followed by Namboodiris.

The single largest social group supplying labour force to the agricultural sector in Manathavady was Adivasi communities who belonged to

\(^1\) \textit{Nairs} in South Kerala is the same as the case referred in the chapter 4 as Nayars
the ST category. Parayar was the second largest source of labour supply in the village. Adivasis and other ST and SC categories are aboriginals in the village and Christian, Nairs and Muslims are migrants from the mainland, who were attracted to the place by the availability of cheap labour and land. Among farmer households, the Christian and Muslim communities constituted 50 percent of the farmer households in the village and 25 percent of farmer households were of Nairs. Not a single household from Adivasi community was found among farmer households.

Section 2

9.2. Living standards and asset holdings

9.2.1. Consumption pattern in high wage zones

Daily household expenditure on food and non-food items is a direct indicator of the consumption levels of households. Consumption theories underline the demonstration effect of the consumption pattern as people in the lower strata are motivated by the consumption habits of the upper strata, implying that the consumption becomes part of customs and traditions. In the sample survey, we collected information on the expenditure on food and non-food items of both labour and farmer households in all the sample villages. In household expenditure, both food items and non-food items on a normal day were elicited. The expense ranged from Rs 20 to Rs 200 per day, which excluded electricity charges, house rent (commuted rent), expenditure on education, clothing, gifts and contributions, marriage expenses and expenditure incurred on other special occasions. Data collected included food expenditure and expenses incurred on smoking, drinking, vehicle maintenance and expenditure on other items which sample households perceived as indispensable for their daily living.

Common features could be found in the consumption pattern of labourers as well as of farmers in the high wage zones in Travancore and Malabar. Both farmer and labour households in this high wage zones began the day with bed coffee or red tea, followed by reasonably good breakfast with
items such as *Iddali, Dosai* or some other breakfast items made usually of rice or wheat. On certain occasions, labour households, take breakfast from nearby stalls if it is not cooked by that time. Between 1 and 2 pm, invariably, both farmer and labour households take lunch with not less than two side dishes, one inevitably a fish curry. The cost of fish purchased per day ranged between Rs 10 and Rs 20 for labour households and Rs 15 and Rs 50 for farmer households. This is for a six member family, comprising father, mother, two children and two relatives (grand parents). By evening, around 5 p.m. all members take tea with milk occasionally with the snacks. Male members may sometimes go out to the village centre for their evening tea and snacks or a glass of country liquor. In the night, labour and farmer households alike take square meals consisting of fish curry with one or two other side dishes. Labour households, by and large, purchase milk for morning tea and for children below 3 years of age. For adult members, the quantity of milk bought varied from one glass (Rs 3 for 200 ml) to half a litre. Farmers as well as labourers purchase vegetables rather regularly along with fish for preparation of side dishes. After the working hours or having completed the work, adult male members pay regular evening visits to the village centre wearing pressed or at least neatly washed clothes and spend there three to four hours on socialisation. For a six member family, a labour household spends between Rs 3000 and Rs 5000 on clothes annually and the amount goes up further in households with school or college-going students.

For marriage and other special occasions, friends, neighbours and relatives are invited and the invitation list, in normal course, would extend to 500 to 1000 persons. Labour households in high wage zones in Travancore and Malappuram offer gifts either in kind (household utensils, gold) or in cash to on marriage occasions. For the marriage of neighbouring households and friends, the amount given in gift would be not less than Rs 100 (Rs 50 in the case of labour households). In the case of close relatives, the amount of gift would vary from Rs 250 to any higher amount depending on the intimacy of relationships and financial strength of labour households. For the marriage of
female children, a labour household gives dowry worth 20 to 30 sovereign and
a farmer household would offer between 50 and 100 sovereigns in Venganoor.
This is in addition to the share in landed property in which women at relatively
larger shares (among Hindu communities) in southern Kerala. In Tavanoore,
the amount of gold offered as dowry is not as high as in Venganoor, but
property share would be higher for women. During marriage occasions,
scrumptious feast is served to all the invitees and a feast served per person
would cost not less than Rs 50. Poor households reduce celebrations and
festivities to suit their financial strength. In addition to the feast served to the
day of the ceremony. On an equally expensive reception is held on the
marriage eve in the bridegroom’s residence. The bride’s household also throw
a party to relatives at their residence on the day of the marriage. For Hindus,
the marriage is solemnised at public halls both in Travancore and Malabar;
but Christians conduct marriage in the church and feast is served in public
halls; for Muslims the marriage ceremonies are solemnised in the bridegroom’s
residence.

9.2.2. Consumption pattern in low wage zones

Living standards and consumption patterns in the low wage zones, viz.,
Santhanppara Grama Panchayat in Idukki and Mananthavady Grama
Panchayat in Wayanad districts bear many similarities. In Santhanppara, labour
households as well as farmer households are mostly of Tamil origin. It is
believed that Tamilians are the aboriginals of the village. Farmers from nearby
places migrated to the village during the 1970s and the early 1980s lured by
the cheap price at which land was available in abundance. A farmer in Kumali
or Thodupuzha, the district’s growth centres, was able to purchase about five
acres of land in Santhanpara by selling not more than 50 cents of lands in his
original home town in Kumali or Thodupuzha. Labourers live in hut-type,
Tamilnadu-model villages and the average estimated cost of a hut is below Rs
5000. On an average, a farmer’s house is not distinctly different from that of a
labourer. Labourers work in small estates, which are not covered under labour
laws or minimum wage legislation, of areas ranging between 25 acres and 50
acres to cultivate pepper, cardamom and coffee. It is only recently that electricity reached Santhanpara village and the road was made motorable. Santhanpara village is situated five K.M. away from the main road. Farmers and labourers walk up the distance on normal days because the public transport system is yet to reach the village.

Labourers do not cook breakfast and lunch separately like in the high wage zones. They take black tea or coffee (low priced and locally available) in the morning and cook rice for the day. Along with rice, chutney made of locally available leaves is prepared. During working days, they cook rice in the morning and carry tiffin containing cooked rice and chutney to be eaten around 11 am. On returning home, supper is cooked. Supper too contains rice and one side dish. If they do not have work, rice will be cooked around 11 am and the cooked rice is eaten between 1 and 2 pm. However, they do not have the practice of taking lunch or breakfast at specific hours; their adults particularly women limit their intake of food in the day time to one meal. Only on special occasions, they buy fish or chicken. When they have work, on their way back home in the evening, labourers purchase vegetables mainly for preparing sambar curry, the cost of vegetables not exceeding Rs 5 for household. While shopping, labourers may take black tea and a snack, together cost Rs 5. from a nearby tea shop in the village centre, which functioned only in the mornings and the evenings. Labourers, to a certain extent, use neem-stick for brushing teeth. However, such food habits are not strictly confined to labour households only. In farmer households, unless the farmer are large estate owners, only occasionally breakfast is cooked. The difference in the food intake pattern between labourers and farmers in Santhanpara is small farmer households occasionally purchase fish for Rs 10 or Rs 15 and cook one or two side dishes while labour households very rarely cook non-vegetarian dishes. Many of the farmer households have telephone facility. Labourers from Tamil origin have their children studying in their native places and most of them are migrants from a particular place called Bodyjetty in Tamilnadu. Girl children of the Tamil labour households are sent for work to cloth mills in Coimbatore for a daily wage rate of Rs 15 to Rs 20 per day.

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Labour and farmer households, often wear low-cost cloths, which they purchase on instalment basis from village moneylenders. Village money lenders procure cloths at low prices from Coimbatore and sell to the people in Santhanppara on instalment basis. Unlike in high-wage zones, for the marriages in Santhanppara, the maximum number of persons invited would not exceed 100 and lunch costing between Rs 10-20 per person is served. For the farmer households, the number of invitees will be larger and quality of food will be relatively good. Gold offered as dowry (unless the farmer is an estate owner) does not exceed 10 sovereigns. For labour households, dowry is limited between 2 to 5 sovereigns. For marriages of friends and neighbours, gifts are offered only to the bridegroom and not to the bride. The gift costs for labour households less than Rs 50 and for farmer households it varies from Rs 50 to Rs 100. Farmers and labourers usually smoke only beedi or low price unfiltered cigarettes. At shops in village centres, navy cut brand cigarettes costing Rs 2.50 per piece is not at all sold and there is no demand for it, a brand which is available in every nook and corner of high-wage zones.

In the low wage zone in the Malabar region, Mananthavady Panchayat, labourers are drawn mainly from Adivasi communities. Adivasi community usually live together and their habitation is called Ooru. Like Santhanppara, employment in Mananthavady Grama Panchayat is seasonal as crops grown in the village are annuals: pepper and coffee. However, Mananthavady town is a relatively large urban centre with all facilities. The sample village is an extension of the urban centre. Unlike Santhanppara, public transport system is developed and buses ply to the sample village rather frequently.

Unlike Santhanppara, considerable difference could be observed in Mananthavady in the standards of living between farmers and labourers. Labourers cook rice in the morning and skip breakfast. The cooked rice is eaten around 11 am and the supper is served with one side dish. They do not take or cook breakfast; instead they drink black tea in the morning. On the day of wage employment, they take breakfast from tea shops. However, they do not purchase milk for morning tea or for children. The value of clothes purchased for a year for a six member labour household in the community does not exceed Rs 1500.
Farmers mostly belong to forward communities such as *Nairs*, Christians, Muslims and *Ezhavas*. The living standards of farmers in Mananthavady village, considered in relation to their average size of holdings are low. They are much lower than the standard of living of farmers below the standard of life of farmers of the same size class in the high wage zone. Nonetheless, farmer households cook breakfast, lunch with sufficient side dishes and take evening tea and supper. They eat fish almost every day, their daily purchases of fish varied between Rs 10 and 20. Even though living standards of farmers in the low wage zone can not be compared with those in the high wage zone, the material culture of farmer household in Mananthavady Panchayat is far better than that of Santhanappara.

9.2.3. Distribution of sample households by expenditure class

9.2.3.1. Travancore

To recapitulate the description on the pattern of living standards in different sample locations in quantitative terms, the daily expenditures of households were measured. Table 9.3. shows the percentage distribution of farmers and labourers by expenditure classes. As already mentioned, the expenditure class is based on the daily household expenditure for food and certain non-food items of daily consumption, the demand for which arise mostly from customs and habits. In the high wage zone in Travancore (Venganoor), 26.09 percent of labourers incurred a daily expenditure of Rs. 50 or below. In the highest expenditure class of Rs 151, no case was reported from labour households. Only 15.22 percent of labourers incurred a daily expenditure between Rs 101 to Rs 150. More than 50 percent (58.69%) of labour households incurred a daily expenditure of more than Rs 51 but less than Rs 100. In Venganoor, only 5.88 percent of farmer households reported in the lowest daily expenditure class of Rs 50 or below. The vast majority of farmer households (82.36%) were in the daily expenditure class of more than Rs 51 but less than Rs 101. About 6 percent of farmer households incurred a daily expenditure above Rs 151 in Venganoor Grama Panchayat.
Table 9.3. Percentage distribution of labour and farmer households by daily expenditure on food and non-food items

| Expenditure class | Travancore | | Malabar | | |
|-------------------|------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                   | High wage zone | Low wage zone | High wage zone | Low wage zone | High wage zone | Low wage zone | High wage zone | Low wage zone |
|                   | Thirvananthapuram | Idukki | Malapuram | Wayanad | Thirvananthapuram | Idukki | Malapuram | Wayanad |
|                   | (Venganoor GP) | (Santhanpara GP) | (Tavanoor GP) | (Mananthavadi GP) | (Venganoor GP) | (Santhanpara GP) | (Tavanoor GP) | (Mananthavadi GP) |
| Labour HH | 26.09 | 5.88 | 45.28 | 26.47 | 23.08 | 12.90 | 75 | 25.00 |
| Farmer HH | 51.08 | 41.18 | 30.19 | 35.29 | 23.08 | 9.68 | 13 | 12.50 |
| 76-100 | 13.04 | 41.18 | 24.53 | 20.59 | 32.05 | 45.16 | 12 | 25.00 |
| 101-125 | 8.70 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1.28 | 0 | 0 | 12.50 |
| 126-150 | 6.52 | 5.88 | 0 | 11.79 | 17.95 | 19.35 | 0 | 12.50 |
| > 151 | 0 | 5.88 | 0 | 5.88 | 2.56 | 12.90 | 0 | 12.50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Source: Sample Survey
Distribution of farmers and labourers in the low wage zone in the Travancore region that is Santhanppara Grama Panchayat in Idukki revealed that 45.28 percent of households incurred an expenditure below Rs 50 per day, the lowest expenditure class. No case was reported from labour households under the expenditure class of Rs 101 a day or more. In the case of farmer households, 61.76 percent of farmers fall under the expenditure class below Rs 75 per day. The notable difference between the low and the high wage zones is that only 5.88 percent of farmer in the lowest expenditure class in Venganoor, whereas 26.47 percent of farmer households fell under the lowest expenditure class in Santhanppara. Another marked difference is that the highest two expenditure class as covered 17.67 percent of farmers in the low wage zone whereas only 11.76 percent of farmers incurred a daily expenditure above Rs 126 in the high wage zones. It may be noted that the farmers are mostly estate owners and they serve food to their attached labourers in estates. It was difficult for them to separate the household expenditure incurred on labourers from that incurred on household members. It is an indication in the sense that the estate owners (small scale) are found to share the same type of food of their as that of their labourers. In terms of comforts in life, farmers with the same size of holdings, differ between high wage and low wage zones.

9.2.3.2. Malabar

In the high wage zones in Malabar, 46.16 percent of labourers incurred an expenditure below Rs 76 per day and 23.08 percent of labourers reported a daily expenditure below Rs 50 per day. It is important to note that more than 20 percent of labourers reported a daily expenditure of above Rs 100 per day and 2.56 percent of labourers were included in the highest expenditure class.

A notable difference in labour households between Tavanoore and Venganoor is that 21.79 percent of labourers fell in the highest three expenditure strata in Tavanoore against only 6.52 percent of labour households in Venganoor. Farmer households in Tavanoore belonged mostly to the daily expenditure class of Rs 101 to Rs 125. A little more than 20 percent of farmers
reported a daily expenditure in the last two strata. The proportion of farmers covered in the highest expenditure class was the highest in Tavanoore.

In the low wage zones in Malabar region, Mananthavady, 75 percent of labour households reported a daily expenditure below Rs 50 per day. Labourers from non-Adivasi community reported daily expenditure, which was more or less comparable with the living standards of farmer households in the region. An important point worth noting is that in the high expenditure classes, no case was reported from labour households from the low wage zone in Malabar, which is in contrast to the distribution pattern of labour households in the high wage zone of Malabar. Important points emerging from the analysis of expenditure pattern are summarised below..

Significant difference in the living standard of farmers and labourers was observed between high wage and low wage zones:

1. There exists a striking similarity in the consumption patterns and living standards of labour households of low-wage zones between Travancore and Malabar.
2. Daily expenditure per family on necessary food articles by labour households are abysmally low in low-wage zones;
3. Difference in the living standard between farmers and labourers within zone is found higher in low wage zones than in high wage zones.

Table 9.4. Standard error of the proportions of expenditure of classes between high and low wage zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure class</th>
<th>Travancore</th>
<th>Malabar</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difference between farmers in low and high wage regions</td>
<td>Difference between labourers in low and high wage regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 50</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>1.724**</td>
</tr>
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<td>51-75</td>
<td>1.720</td>
<td>3.042**</td>
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<tr>
<td>76-100</td>
<td>1.590</td>
<td>0.814</td>
</tr>
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<td>101-125</td>
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<td>0.492</td>
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<td>126-150</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 151</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>0.138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** significance at 1 % level
* significance at 5 % level

Source: Sample survey.
The hypothesis put forwarded in the chapter can now be verified. Two hypotheses to be tested are: i) There exists a significant difference in living standards of labour households between high and low wage zones. In Table 9.4, Standard Errors, worked out for different expenditure classes are given. It could be observed from the Table that the proportion of labourers in the lower expenditure strata in Santhanppara and Manathavady regions are found to be significantly different from the corresponding proportion in the expenditure class of the labourers in the high wage zone. The difference in the proportion of farmers in different expenditure classes between low and high wage zone in Travancore region is not statistically significant.

9.2.4. Possession of consumer durables

Table 9.5 supports the observations made in the Table 9.4. Possession of six items of consumer durables is considered for comparison of labourers and farmers in high and low wage zones. Labour households in Venganoor did not own vehicles and only 34 percent of labour households were reported to have possessed colour television and only 2 percent of the labour households possessed refrigerator. Among farmer households, 6 percent possessed two wheelers, 64 percent had colour television sets and 6 percent had refrigerator. In the low wage zone in Travancore, Santhanppara village, neither farmer nor labour households, report to have possession of any of these consumer durable items.

The level of possession of consumer durables in Tavanoore is higher than Venganoor. It may be noted that 16 percent of farmer households possessed four wheelers for personal use, 26 percent were reported to have two wheelers and another 3 percent of them had other vehicles (jeep). In the case of colour television sets 60 percent of farmer households possessed than and 13 percent of the households had washing machines in Tavanoore.

In the case of labour households in Tavanoore, 2.5 percent of households possessed two wheelers and 2 percent of them had other vehicles. Among labour households 16 percent had colour televisions and they also reported to have owned refrigerators.
Table 9.5. Percentage distribution of labour and farmer households by the possession of consumer durables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure class</th>
<th>Travancore</th>
<th>Malabar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High wage zone</td>
<td>Low wage zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thirvananthapuram</td>
<td>Idukki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Venganoor )</td>
<td>(Santhanpara )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour HH</td>
<td>Farmer HH</td>
<td>Labour HH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car or jeep</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two wheeler</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other I vehicles</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fridge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing machine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sample Survey
In the low wage zone in Malabar (Mananthavady), 19 percent of the farmer households possessed vehicles, 67 percent of them owned colour television sets and 25 percent of farmers had refrigerators and washing machines. Labour households belonged mostly to the Adivasi community and they did not have any of such comforts in life. Among labour households, few of those who belonged to upper castes (Nairs and Ezhavas) owned televisions sets.

9.2.5. Basic amenities of life

Table 9.6 shows the basic amenities of life available in the sample, such as availability of drinking water, electricity and toilet facility. Drinking water can either be from own well within house premises or public water connection. In Santhanppara, many farmer households did not have well or public water taps in their houses, but they collect water from common ponds or brooks originating from the nearby reserve forest area (Mathikettan mala). Among labour households, only 22 percent of labour households had accessibility to drinking water facility in the vicinity of their residential area. None of the labour households owned wells. Among farmer households, 67 percent had drinking water facility, but a few households possessed well and they were large farmers owning estates of cardamom and pepper. Other farmer households depend on common drinking water facilities. On the contrary, in the high wage zone in Travancore, all labour and farmer households had access to drinking water facilities notwithstanding the fact that in the summer season, in certain places in Venganoor, severe shortage for water is felt. It may be noted that the sample Panchayat ward is closer to the Kovalam Beach and the proximity to the tourist spot provides the market for drinking water from the wells in house premises. This commercialisation of drinking water creates severe water shortage in the area particularly during summer season. All farmers' houses are electrified and have toilets. It was reported that 9 percent of labour households do not have electricity and 7 percent of labour households use public places as toilets in Venganoor. On the contrary, in the
low wage zone in Travancore, Santhanppara, 33 per cent of farmer households and 78 percent of labour households are yet to have access to drinking water. Only 9 percent of labour houses are electrified and 68 percent of labour households do not have toilet facility. In the case of farmer households in Santhanppara, only 29 percent have electrified their houses and 42 per cent of them are yet to have toilets. The broad picture emerging from the comparison of labour and farmer households between high and low wage zones indicates that the living standard of labour households in the high wage zones is far ahead of the living standard of the farmer households in low wage zone.

In Tavanoore, all farmer households have basic amenities in life. Compared to the labour households in Venganoor Grama Panchayat, their counterparts in Tavanoore enjoy relatively less facilities. About 58 percent of labour households are yet to be supplied with drinking water and 33 percent of them do not have electricity and 9 percent do not have toilets (Table 9.6). In the low wage zone, almost every farmer household and labour household from non-Adivasi and Non-SC communities had wells in their house premises but labour households from Adivasi and SC communities carried water either from a public well or from public taps from a distances not less than 100 metres, on an average. It is worth mentioning in this context that the Adivasi colonies are electrified by the government schemes and common toilet facilities have also been constructed under government schemes. Labour households in Travancore high wage zone are better placed in terms of basic amenities of life.
Table 9.6. Percentage distribution of farmers and labourers having basic amenities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Travancore</th>
<th>Malabar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High wage zone</td>
<td>Low wage zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thirvananthapuram</td>
<td>Idukki (Santhanpara GP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour HH</td>
<td>Farmer HH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking water</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sample Survey

Table 9.7. Percentage distribution of farmers and labourers by type of houses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure class</th>
<th>Travancore</th>
<th>Malabar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High wage zone</td>
<td>Low wage zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thirvananthapuram</td>
<td>Idukki (Santhanpara GP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour HH</td>
<td>Farmer HH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiles</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thatched</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hut</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheet</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat house</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sample Survey
9.2.6. Housing pattern: High wage zones

The type of houses in which people live in a particular locality reflect the resource base. For the purpose of comparison, houses were classed under five types, viz., 1. Terrace including double storied building, 2. Tiled houses, 3. Thatched houses, 4. Houses with asbestos sheet for roof 5. Huts. It is found that there is a clear distinction in the type of houses between farmers and labourers within sample villages as well as across sample locations. In Venganoor, 59 percent of farmer households have terrace buildings, 23 percent of them live in tiled houses and 18 percent of the households have thatched roofs. (Table 9.7). On the contrary, 39 percent of the labour households in Venganoor live either in huts, or sheet-roofed houses or houses constructed for them by the Panchayat: all these three categories are non-existent in the farmer category. Though 19 percent of houses of labour households may also be included under the terrace building category, these terraced buildings are not strictly comparable with those of farmer households because these houses have slopped terrace, which are of low cost and have cement flooring. In the low wage zone at Santhanpara Panchayat, 73 percent of farmers live in houses with tiled roof with two rooms, with floor of cement concrete. The total cost of such construction would be around Rs 1 lakh. In the case of labour households, 96 percent live in tiled houses but which are of the hut type and do not fall under the category of *pucca* houses.

In Tavanoore, the high wage zone in the Malabar region, most of the farmers’ houses are terrace building with marble or granite for floor. The cost of construction of a house would be between Rs 10 and Rs 15 lakh. To a lesser extent, farmer households in Venganoor would cost not less than Rs 5 lakh. On an average, a labour household in Venganoor village would cost around Rs 2 lakh. On the contrary, an estimated cost of farmer households was Rs 1 lakh in Wayanad and further not even a single case was noted with granite or marble flooring; but cement concrete or cow-dung plastering were used for flooring. As part of the Peoples plan in Kerala in 1996, a major drive was initiated to construct houses for the poor by the respective Grama Panchayats.
Financial assistance to house construction was extended only to those who were in the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category. It may be noted from Table 9.7 that 31 per cent of labour households in Wayanad and 9 per cent of households in Thiruvananthapuram were homeless and that they lived in houses constructed for the BPL families. In Santhanappara, even though many of the labour households were under BPL category, the Grama Panchayat was unable to construct houses for them as they did not have title deeds for the lands they possessed.

In Tavanoore, 76 percent of farmers owned pucca terraced buildings costing on an average, Rs 10, lakh with granite or marble flooring, strong ground walls and attached bath rooms. Only 24 percent of farmer households lived in tiled houses. However, the tiled houses need to be distinguished from the ones in other places because these are all the old buildings constructed by rich farmers during an earlier period. These tiled houses carry an antique value and the present generation has modified these houses. The walls of such houses were constructed with teak wood and were considered to be the symbol of pride and richness till the early 1980s (until the Gulf boom driven housing revolution in Kerala). In Tavannore, labour households too live in a comfortable conditions with 79 percent owning houses either with terraced or tiled roof, and there was no sheet roofed or Panchayat constructed house for the BPL families in the village. In the low wage zone in Malabar region, Mananthavady, 56 percent of farmers have terraced building and the type of terrace is comparable to the ones found in Venganoor, but not in Tavanoore. But farmers in the low wage zone have huts as well as sheet roofed buildings while labourers mostly stay in houses constructed for them by the Panchayat (31 percent) or huts and sheet-roofed houses. The following observations could be made on the basis of the analysis of social conditions of living reflected in terms of basic amenities of life:

1. Farmers and labour households in the high wage zone in Travancore and Malabar shared comparable social conditions in life and therefore had more similarities than differences. Similarly, the living standards of farmers in the
low wage zones were, to a certain extent, comparable between Travancore and Malabar.

2. Eventhough the size of holdings of farmers are, on an average, larger in low wage zones, their living standards and social conditions of life was much inferior to the farmers in the high wage zones. In certain cases, labour households in the high wage region enjoy more facilities than farmer households in the low wage zone.

9.2.7. Secondary occupation of households

Availability of alternative sources of employment is related to the educational level of the people concerned, which in turn is an indicator of general development too. An analysis of the proportion of people in schools, colleges and professional education in the age group of 6-20 may reveal the differences in the general level of development of sample villages. It was found that the farmer households in general and labour households in the high wage zones in particular had clear upper hand over the labour households in low wage zones. Table 9. 8. shows the secondary occupation of farmers and labourers in the sample regions. Secondary occupation assumes crucial importance as employment and income from the farm sector have recently become highly volatile. Importance of being engaged in secondary occupations is that it depends on the availability alternative source. A crop failure or any other natural mishap, would block the income flow from the primary occupation: households could then switch over to the alternative source for livelihood, if ones were available. The spate of farmers’ suicide reported from Kerala since the second half of the 1990s underlined the importance of alternative sources income because the suicide cases were concentrated in Wayanad and Idukki districts where farmers and labourers had very little
Table 9.8. Percentage distribution of farmer and labour households with secondary occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Travancore - High wage zone</th>
<th>Travancore - low wage zone</th>
<th>Malabar - High wage zone</th>
<th>Malabar - low wage zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>farmer</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No occupation</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural labour</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head load workers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other work</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Other works: For Wayanad a particular community in the farmer category are engaged in pappad making.
*-cattle rearing
Source: Sample Survey
option to switch over when the agriculture sector was caught in crisis. In the sample households in high-wage and low-wage zone, it is reported that the household heads have very few options but agriculture. In the high wage zone in Travancore, 68 percent of farmers reported that they had no source of employment other than farming and 26 percent farmers reported to have alternative income sources in cattle rearing or running petty shops in the village centres. In the case of secondary occupation, significant differences could not be observed across sample regions.

9.2.8. Distribution of land in sample villages

Area of land owned is an important indicator of political as well as economic power particularly in village economies of the Third World. In the wage determination process, power relations play an important role. A skewed distribution of land has implications with respect to rural wage formation because concentration in the ownership of land empowers the owners with oligopsony power, which weakens the bargaining power of labourers. Table 9.9. shows the average holding size of land in Travancore and Malabar regions. The association between land concentration and wage rates gets clearer by the percentage distribution of holdings across categories. The low wage zones reported considerable difference in the size of holdings among farmers while high wage zone displayed a more or less equitable distribution of land. It indicates that possession of area owned by farmers in low wage zones is higher than in high wage zones. An acre of dryland in Venganoor Panchayat would cost between Rs 20 and Rs 35 lakh whereas one acre of dryland in the low wage zone in Santhanppara would cost not more than Rs 3 lakh. Moreover, as the price of cash crops grown started declining by the 2nd half of the 1990s and land was available at a throwaway prices, there was no buyer of land in the village. Similarly, one acre of dry land could fetch between Rs 20 to 40 lakh in Tavanore Panchayat in Malappuram while the

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Table 9.9. Percentage distribution of labour and farmer households by size class of owned land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size class of owned land (cents)</th>
<th>Travancore</th>
<th>Malabar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High wage zone</td>
<td>Low wage zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thirvananthapuram (Venganoo GP)</td>
<td>Idukki (Santhanpara GP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour HH</td>
<td>Farmer HH</td>
<td>Labour HH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land less</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-25</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-200</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-300</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;301</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sample Survey
same area would not fetch more than Rs 10 lakh in Wayanad (dry land in the interior area where the samples are located). A notable difference observed in the use of land in the high wage zone in Travancore and Malabar was that in Venganoor wetland is either leased out or intensively cultivated by the owner farmers or their tenants, whereas most of the farmers had left their land fallow as there was no demand for wet land for cultivation in Tavanoore Panchayat.

In Mananthavady, wet lands are intensively cultivated on a rental basis. In the Santhanppara area there was no wet land. Dryland in both Mananthavady and Santhanppara area intensively cultivated in spite of the fact that there has been a slow down in the intensity of input application particularly since the late 1990s as the prices of cash crops experienced a sharp fall. Significant differences were observed in the distribution of area owned by farmers and labourers and among farmers across wage zones. In Venganoor, 71 percent of farmers owned land below one acre whereas in the low wage zone in Travancore only 12 per cent of farmers owned land between one and two acres. Similarly, 44 percent of farmers in Santhanppara owned land above 3 acres and the proportion in Venganoor was only 6 percent. In the case of labourers in Venganoor, 79 percent of labourers had land below 25 cents and only 4 percent of the labourers were landless. On the contrary, 25 percent of labourers are landless in Santhanppara. In the high wage zone in Malabar, 39 percent of farmers owned land area of above 3 acre and only 3 percent of farmers possessed land below 25 cents. More than 80 percent of farmers possessed more than one acre of land in Tavanoore while the corresponding proportion in Venganoor is only 29 percent.

Table 9.10 reports the dispersion in the distribution of land and consumer expenditure among farmers and labourers within a sample region as well as across regions. It is found that the mean size of holdings in Venganoor is 40.90 cents of land, the lowest among the sample villages. The second lowest is Tavanoore village with a mean size of 115.50 cents of land—these two villages represent the high wage zones in Travancore and Malabar region respectively. The mean size of holdings is the highest in Santhanppara. It is important to note that the differences in the mean size of holdings between
farmers and labourers in low wage zones appear to be much higher than in the high wage zones. It is indicative of the long established inverse association between holding size and wage rate. In other wards, monopsony power of farmers in the labour market weakens the bargaining strength of labourers resulting in a lower wage rate. Measures of dispersion in Table 9.11 confirmed the inequality in the distribution of land holdings. A more comprehensive measure of dispersion is Gini co-efficient. Land concentration is measured for all samples in every sample villages for farmers and labourers. In Travancore the high wages zone and the low wages zone showed the same degree of dispersion. However, some notable difference between Venganoor and Santhanpara does exist. In Venganoor, dispersion in land holdings measured through Gini coefficient between farmers and labourers is on the lower side than Santhanpara where it was found to be highly skewed indicating the theoretical association between monopsony power in the labour market and wage rate. In the Malabar region, Tanavoor showed a higher unequal distribution of land holdings than Manathavadi village. In Tanavoor, distribution of land holdings showed a higher concentration ratio among labourers than among farmer. A ranking of sample districts in terms of Gini co-efficient showed that Tanavoor (Malappuram) ranked first followed by Manathavadi (Wayanad), Santhanpara (Idukki) and Venganoor (Thiruvananthapuram) in that order.

3 Gini coefficient ranges between zero representing perfect equality in the distribution to 1 for absolute inequality. Gini coefficient can be worked out with the formula given below:

\[
\frac{1}{2n^2w} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j=1}^{n} |W_i - W_j|
\]

where \( n \) is the number of households and \( W \) is the average landholdings for the series. However, the theoretical expression of the formula can be simplified in the following way, which would represent the direct estimation of Gini coefficient from Lorenze curve.

\[
\frac{n}{n(n-1)w} \sum_{i=1}^{n} (n+1-i)x_i
\]

where \( n \) is the number of households and \( i \) is the rank order of the household and \( x_i \) is the area possessed by the respective household.

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Table 9.10. Inequality in the distribution of landholdings in sample regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample regions</th>
<th>No of cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St.Error of mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Std.Deviation</th>
<th>Gini coefficient (land holding)</th>
<th>Gini coefficient (Household expenditure)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venganoor (total)</td>
<td>63.00</td>
<td>40.90</td>
<td>8.86</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>400.00</td>
<td>70.35</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>46.00</td>
<td>16.33</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>6.25.00</td>
<td>125.00</td>
<td>25.68</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>107.41</td>
<td>25.31</td>
<td>68.00</td>
<td>380.00</td>
<td>104.34</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idukki (total)</td>
<td>86.00</td>
<td>153.35</td>
<td>22.59</td>
<td>88.00</td>
<td>1200.00</td>
<td>209.52</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>52.00</td>
<td>33.66</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>200.00</td>
<td>54.02</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>34.00</td>
<td>336.42</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>300.00</td>
<td>1194.75</td>
<td>226.83</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavanoor (total)</td>
<td>102.00</td>
<td>115.50</td>
<td>22.92</td>
<td>11.50</td>
<td>1500.00</td>
<td>239.00</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>71.00</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>93.00</td>
<td>15.66</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>31.00</td>
<td>375.42</td>
<td>59.04</td>
<td>285.00</td>
<td>1478.00</td>
<td>328.74</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mananthavady (total)</td>
<td>49.00</td>
<td>169.47</td>
<td>49.40</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>1600.00</td>
<td>345.00</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td>39.03</td>
<td>9.16</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>210.00</td>
<td>51.85</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>122.60</td>
<td>245.00</td>
<td>1600.00</td>
<td>505.49</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in the parenthesis show std Deviation of the respective measure

Source: Sample Survey
The following observations can be made from the analysis in the section.

1. In the low wage zone in Travancore, a migrated social grouping from the boarder area of Tamilnadu supplied major share of the labour demand in agriculture. The living standard and social habitude of the off-the-main stream population was different from the general pattern of the living standard and habitude of the mainstream population in Kerala.

2. In the low wage zone in Malabar, Adivasi community supplied a major share of the demand for labour in the farm sector. The material and cultural requirements of the community was distinctly different from the mainstream community.

In the development literature, reproduction and perpetuation of such underdeveloped area or peripheries are characterised as an inevitable outcome of capitalistic development. In other words, such peripheries are reproduced within peripheral countries for the small core sector to continue its process of development. In the next section, the state of development of agriculture in sample villages are analysed to seek explanations for the wage differentials.

Section 3

9.3. Development of agriculture and employment in sample villages

In the previous two sections, regional difference in the standard of living of farmer and labour households in the sample villages were analysed. In this section, the current agriculture scenario of the sample villages and available days of employment of agricultural labour households (ALHHs) are discussed. Agriculture passes through different stages of transformation and every stage manifests itself on the peasantry in the form of class differentiations. Class

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differentiation entails concentration of farm land in a few hands, whom Lenin called the agricultural bourgeoisie\(^6\). In the process of penetration of capitalistic traits in agriculture, a vast majority of small peasants are forced to leave their small patches of land and work as agricultural labourers or in other words the process of de-peasantisation take place. It refers to the dissolution of old and patriarchal peasantry and its replacement with new types of rural inhabitants\(^7\). The primary manifestation of capitalistic development is thus the emergence of a class of wage labourers. The de-peasantised wage labourers migrate from less developed and thickly populated areas to more developed and thinly populated areas in search of employment. Development of capitalism, therefore, entails the emergence of a full-fledged labour market too, where in labourers are free from all feudal tie-ups and they are free to sell their labour power wherever a higher wage rate prevails. A primary condition to facilitate the migration of labour is the assured and uninterrupted employment at least for a season of agricultural operations, which is unlikely in the context of agricultural scenario in the state.

In other words, it implies that the development of agriculture has varied manifestations and impacts on different social classes of population. Land concentration in a fewer hands changes production relations in agriculture and the change is manifested in the employment of wage labour. Capitalistic development substitutes family labour on the one hand and modernisation of agriculture on the other, which in turn, rises the outlay on agricultural equipments and machinery employed per unit of land. In the Kerala context, instead of modernising agriculture, land owners stopped the cultivation, particularly of food crops and sought to appropriate wage labour in the form of ground rent by leasing out patches of farm land, especially wet land. It in turn implies that the development of capitalism in its true sense of the term has been skipped in the Kerala context, which resulted in a vulgarised form of peasantisation rather than depeasantisation. An immediate consequence of such

\(^{6}\) Ibid PP.175-176  
\(^{7}\) Ibid P.176
developments in Kerala was the prevention of labourers from moving out of the village in search of employment and the low asset base and hunger leasing trapping them in deep indebtedness.

In the context of the present study, it needs to be examined whether the observed wage differentials across districts in Kerala and the sample villages were the result of the differences in the level of capitalistic traits in agriculture. The classical assumption is that the advanced stage of development gives birth to a liberalised labour market with a relatively higher wage rate. Indicators often deployed to measure the level of development of agriculture are: i) Ratio of wage labour in total employment; ii) Value of agricultural inputs and machinery used per unit of land cultivated; iii) Value of agricultural production per unit of land, iv) Net value of output per unit of land, and v) Size of landholdings. As the scope of the present study does not warrant a detailed analysis of the development of agriculture, employing all such indicators of agriculture development, the analysis in this context is confined to testing the hypothesis of the association between wage differentials and development of agriculture. However, the primary manifestation of all such developments is on employment and wage levels and, therefore, the distribution of economically active population in different occupations in the rural sector and the available days of employment and wage rates for agricultural labourers in sample villages would provide a reliable indicator of development of agriculture.

9.3.1. Employment Structure in Travancore

A characteristic feature of development of agriculture is the emergence and proper functioning of a full-fledged labour market. In a developed labour market, the demand for labour is not confined to agricultural sector alone, but in allied sectors as well. An indicator that may be employed to assess the level of social development of the labour force is the employment structure and its proportions in the different sectors. Table 9.11 shows the structure of employment in the sample households. In the agricultural labour households (ALHs) in the low wage zone, 91.24 percent work as agricultural labourers. A comparison of the structure of employment of labour households between low wage and high wage zone indicated that 11.76 percent of the working males
are engaged in construction activities whereas not even single member from ALHs in the low wage zone reported to have worked even as mason’s helper. The importance of working in the construction sector is the availability of more days of employment with a relatively higher wage rate. Between low wage and high wage zones, differences in wage rates for masons and carpenters are insignificant. In Santhanppara, semi-skilled workers for the construction sector hailed mostly from nearby villages or within the villages, masons and carpenters belonged to mainstream communities such as Nair or Ezhava.

9.3.2. Employment structure in Malabar

The proportion of the population of FHHs which worked as government employees was 7.14 percent. The proportion of workers employed in West Asian countries as migrant labourers to Gulf countries came to 12.24 percent. Another 6.12 percent were returnees from Gulf countries. In the construction sector, 6.12 percent of the population were engaged as carpenters and 2 percent worked as masons. Not even a single member from farmer households was reported to have worked as agricultural labourer in the high wage zone in Malabar. It signifies the class division within the rural peasantry in the high wage zone of Malabar and Travancore.

ALHs in the high wage zone showed a higher WPR in relation to FHHs, which is natural. Two points worth mentioning in this context are 1. a relatively higher percentage (17.35) of members from ALHHs from the high wage zone worked as masons; 2. Emigrants to West Asian countries from ALHHs are lower than of FHHs within the high-wage zone.

The following similarities could be observed between the low wage zones in Travancore and Malabar. The proportion of the population engaged as agricultural labourers in the ALHs in the low wage zones was much higher than the proportion in the high-wage zone. This is a characteristic feature of low wage zones both in Travancore and Malabar. Another notable feature of the structure of employment in the low wage zone is the relatively low percentage of workers engaged in construction activities in the rural area either as masons or as carpenter.
Table 9.11. Structure of employment and percentage distribution of farmer and labour households in low and high wage zones in Travancore and Malabar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Venganoor (High wage zone)</th>
<th>Santhanpara (Low wage zone)</th>
<th>Tavanoor (High wage zone)</th>
<th>Mananthavady (Low wage zone)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation (in %)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>12.90</td>
<td>17.65</td>
<td>43.43</td>
<td>2.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>19.35</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>91.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government employees</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Gulf</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf returnees</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>15.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other workers</td>
<td>54.83</td>
<td>16.47</td>
<td>62.63</td>
<td>6.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary survey
9.3.3. Days of employment

From ALHs, information on the number of days worked per week, per month and during the year preceding the data of survey was elicited. Table 9.12 presents the number of days of employment for ALHHS in sample villages in Travancore and Malabar. The following observations may be made from Table 9.12. On an average, a male agricultural labourer worked for nine days in a month at Venganoor which could fetch him a monthly wage income of Rs 1485. It is important to note that the reported work included work performed in non-agricultural activities too and only able bodied and young labourers could work for nine days. Aged workers could avail not more than five days in a month at Venganoor. The widespread leasing in of paddy land by agricultural labourers in Venganoor may be viewed against this back drop of abysmally low number of days of employment available in the village. A male agricultural labourer spends, on an average, 10 days in a month on his leased in land (own farm employment) and the average size of wetland leased in at Venganoor was 43 cents or 43/100th of an acre. In fact, family members of ALHs work on the wetland and the total number of hours of work, if meticulously estimated would exceed 15 hours a day. The nature of cultural operations for banana or vegetables grown by ALHs in leased in land, demand personal care and supervision from the very day of the germination of the seedling to its harvesting, on all days and involve labour days for watering the plant if it does not rain consecutively for more than two days. Land leasing assumes importance in Venganoor because of the significant fall in the number of days of employment. It enables the labourer to get himself employed in own field and thereby avoid underselling his labour.

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8 In Venganoor village, for female agricultural labourers, there exists no work in the agricultural sector. They were mostly engaged in agricultural operations in paddy field related works. Rice cultivation has completely been stopped and the fields have already been converted into banana or vegetable cultivation. The wage rate for female agricultural labourers is therefore not reported in Table 9.12.

9 If the money rent paid to the land owner is included along with the imputed wage for the labourer and of his family members on the leased land, the hourly wage rate for agricultural labourers in Venganoor would not be significantly higher than the wage rate prevailing in the low wage zones.
Table 9.12. Number of days of work by a labourer in ALHs in Travancore and Malabar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Travancore</th>
<th>Average days of employment in a month</th>
<th>Venganoor (High wage zone)</th>
<th>Santhanppara (Low wage zone)</th>
<th>Malabar11</th>
<th>Tavanore (High wage zone)</th>
<th>Mananthavady (Low wage zone)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female 10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days Hired out</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal working hours</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time wage (Rs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>165</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hourly wage rate (Rs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.60</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.90</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly wage income (Rs)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1485</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1131</td>
<td>1064</td>
<td>3114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Days worked on own field</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sample Survey

In Santhanppara, an agricultural labourer received a monthly wage income of Rs 1131. A male agricultural labourer in the village worked for 13 days in month for an hourly wage rate of Rs 10.90 which was less than half the hourly wage rate prevailing in the high wage zones of Travancore. A female agricultural labourer in Santhanppara could work for 14 days in a

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10 In Venganoor, there is no work for female labourers. Therefore, there is no wage rate reported for them.

11 Wage rates exists with food and without food. The wage rate reported here for male agricultural labourers were the rates without food for manual work including plucking of pepper. Female labourers are mostly employed in coffee plucking in Wayanad. Mostly women labourers from Adivasi community supply the labourers. The farmer provides them breakfast, lunch and evening tea.
month at an hourly wage rate of Rs 9.50. The monthly wage income of a female agricultural labour in the low wage comes to Rs 1064 which was on the lower side when compared to that of a male worker notwithstanding the fact that the female labourer worked for more days in a month\textsuperscript{12}. Since the wage differentials between male and female agricultural labourers in Santhanapara are not significant from a higher number of days of employment (plucking of cardamom is the predominant occupation in the area where females are preferred to males) they get a monthly income not much lower than that of males.

1. A male agricultural labourer in the high wage zone of Malabar region could receive a monthly wage income of Rs 3114 and a female labourer received a monthly income to the tune of Rs 1500. The hourly wage rate of a male labourer in Tavanoore was Rs 19, and the hourly wage rate for a female labourer was Rs 15. Gender-based wage differentials in high-wage zones are wider than in low-wage zones and the same is the case with the number of days of employment available. On an average a male agricultural labourer worked for 18 days in a month and a female labour did work for 10 days in a month. Even though the hourly wage in Tavanoore is lower than in Venganoor, a higher number of days of employment gives the labourer in Tavanoore a significantly higher monthly wage income.

2 In the low wage zone in Malabar, Mananthavady, a male agricultural labourer could worked, on an average, 9.5 days and a female 7 days in a month. The hourly wage rate is the lowest in Mananthavady among sample villages. The monthly wage income of a male agricultural labourer in Mananthavady was Rs 950 and of a female agricultural labourer, Rs 402.50. It is important to note that, on an average, an agricultural labourer in Mananthavady spent 2.5 days in the field, which is again an indication of the prevalence of leased wet land cultivation on leased in land in the area.

\textsuperscript{12} Female agricultural labourers in Santhanapara get more days of employment. Harvesting of cardamom, clearing bushes in the cardamom field and carrying cowdung and fertilisers to the field, drying of cardamom etc are the important works in Santhanapara, for which females labourers are preferred to males, partly on account of the gender differences in wages.
However, leasing in by labour households is prominent among forward communities and not among Adivasis, who constitute the major suppliers of labour.

9.3.4. Development of agriculture

In the light of the observed differences in WPR, occupational distribution of the economically active population, the number of days worked and the level of development of agriculture in the sample villages are may now be examined. Comparison of the relative development in agriculture may be made on the basis of the value of output from agriculture from a unit of land, gross value of the agricultural implements per unit of land and also the number of hired labour hours employed per unit of cultivated land. However, in the present context, a word of caution is called for in the comparison of the net value of output could be a misnomer because farmers had stopped even the inevitable cultural practices and fertiliser application to those crops where price had been falling consecutively since 1997. Besides the falling price, the productivity too has declined during those periods. Modern instruments of production used in agriculture in all the four sample villages were confined to pick-axes, baskets, pesticides sprinkling pump and certain other small implements, but no modern machinery. The only modern contrivance used was electric pump sets for irrigation installed mainly for domestic needs but also used for irrigation. They are included in the implements for agricultural production because the pump sets have been in use for irrigating plants and annual crops in garden lands during summer months. In Table 9.13, total cost of machinery used in agriculture in the sample villages is given. It is found that FHHs in Venganoor possessed agricultural implements of the total value of 2653 per acre of cultivated land. In the total cost, the value of electric pump sets accounted for more than 75 percent. The value of agricultural implements owned by labourers in Venganoor were higher because households were involved in lease land cultivation. The average value of
Table 9.13. Value of agricultural implements possessed by farmers and labourers per acre of cultivated land (Rs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample region</th>
<th>Farmer</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venganoor</td>
<td>2653</td>
<td>1434</td>
<td>2266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santhanpara</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavanoor</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waynad</td>
<td>8131</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>6067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sample survey

Table 9.14. Gross value of output per acre of dry land by sample villages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Crops cultivated</th>
<th>Area under crops (in acres)</th>
<th>Value of out Per acre (Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travancore (Venganoore)</td>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>39.40</td>
<td>9800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High wage zone</td>
<td>Other mixed trees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travancore (Santhanppara)</td>
<td>Cardamom</td>
<td>104.86</td>
<td>25807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low wage zone</td>
<td>Pepper and coffee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malabar (Tavanoore)</td>
<td>Coconut, Areca</td>
<td>40.55</td>
<td>11968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(high wage zone)</td>
<td>nut and other mixed trees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malabar (Mananthavady)</td>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>69.86</td>
<td>17000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Low wage zone)</td>
<td>Pepper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area nut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cashew</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The high value of out per acre of land in Santhanppara was contributed by cardamom crop.
Source: Primary survey.

agricultural implements of the total value of Rs 2653 per acre of cultivated land. It is important to note that the average value of agricultural implements owned by the FHHs in Tavanoore was as low as Rs 678/- much lower than of ALHs in the area. This finding substantiates the observation made earlier that agriculture per se does not exist in this village in the true sense of the term. The value of agricultural implements is the lowest in Santhanppara because the value reflects only the cost of implements used in agriculture and not of water pumps mainly on account of the fact that electricity is yet to reach the village in many places. On the contrary, the value of agricultural implements per unit of land in Mananthavady is much higher than in the rest of the sample villages. In short, the value of agricultural implements used does not support the
hypothesis about the positive association between agricultural development and wage rates.

Another indicator of regional differences in the development of agriculture is the extent of labour use per acre of land. For the analysis, statistics need be presented separately for dry and wetland. There is a striking similarity between low wage and high wage zones in this respect. Dryland cultivation in Venganoor has almost come to a standstill and employment for male agricultural labourers are confined to coconut plucking once in 45-60 days. In dry lands where coconut is not cultivated the land is left fallow or grown with wild or fruit trees. On the contrary, in Tavanoore, the high wage-zone in Malabar, both dry and wet lands have left either fallow or cultivated with minimum labour intensity. In dry land, coconut is grown and the cultivation practices compare well with the labour use pattern observed in Venganoor.

Similarity could also be observed in the intensity of labour used per hectare of land in the low-wage zone, which may be attributed to similarities in the uniformity in cropping patterns. In Santhanppara, the major crops cultivated in dry land are cardamom and pepper. Number of labourers employed per acre of land in Santhanppara compared well with that in Mananthavady, but was higher than in high wage zones. i) The number of labourers employed per hectare of land in low wage zones was significantly higher than in high wage zones; ii) In high wage zones, labour use per hectare of land particularly in dry lands is extremely low; iii) Broadly, the picture which emerges from labour use pattern, intensity of land use and modernisation of agriculture does not support the pattern of wage differentials primarily between low and high wage zones, as envisaged in discussion on relationships in conventional theories.

9.4. Conclusion

It is found that there exist significant differences among villages in the demographic, economic and social indicators of development and wage levels. The demographic indicators such as sex ratio and work participation rate are different for high-wage and low-wage zones and the differences are not only
confined to labourers but also exist in farmer households. In the case of daily expenditure, in low wage zone a significant proportion of labourers are found to be in the lower strata while in the high-wage zone, across strata, labour households are more or less uniformly distributed except in the highest stratum. Differences were observed in housing pattern and availability of basic amenities of life between labour and farmer households in the high and low wage zones. It can therefore be concluded that the differences in wage rates and living standards of labourers explained in terms of the overall development of the region concerned are highly correlated. In other words, it is not the development of the particular sector defined in terms of capitalistic development in agriculture, but the all round socio-economic development theoretically posited as stage of development of the region concerned, would to a very great extent, explain regional wage differentials.

Significant difference could be observed in the distribution of land holdings across sample villages. The landholdings were found to be skewed in one of the high-wage zones than in the low-wage zones. The strength of Trade unions and collective bargaining power are important factors influencing wage rates. In the sample villages, trade union activities among agricultural labourers are more prominent in low wage zones than high wage areas. A typical feature of the trade union activity of agricultural labourers in the state is that agricultural labourers are either sympathisers or member of political parties. However, as agricultural labourers they are not involved in trade union activities. Analysis of the degree of penetration of capitalistic development in agriculture across sample regions indicated that the agriculture development in high wage zones has already come to a standstill, particularly in the dry lands. Agricultural labourers lease in wetland to compensate for the shortfall in the available days of employment while their counterparts in Tavanoore, were found to have shown the least interest in lease land cultivation because they get about 20 days of employment in a month. Dry land agriculture exists only in low wage zones and the cultivation is rather intensive as well. The number of labourers employed per hectare of land was higher in the low-wage zone and
the value of output per hectare of land was higher too. The explanation for the regional differences cannot be therefore sought in the degree of penetration of capitalistic development in agriculture. It was found that lion's share of the labour force in agriculture in the low wage zones supplied by the social groupings, which remain a lower level of development. Social grouping which are on a lower level of development naturally have relatively less cultural needs than compared to the cultural needs of the mainstream community. The Adivasi community in Mananthavady and the communities of Tamil origin who keep proximity to border areas of Tamilnadu, are such social groupings. Significant wage differentials across districts in Kerala could persist against such a backdrop.