Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 The study of Migration

Migration is a topic of common interest to several social science disciplines. The demographer, for example, considers migration as one of the factors affecting the structure, distribution and growth of population in a given region, the other factors being fertility and mortality. The town planner is concerned with rural-urban migration as a factor generating several urban problems such as overcrowding, slum-dwelling etc. "Spatial processes and spatial interaction are of more concern" to the modern geographer "than a concern with spatial patterns"¹ and hence the importance of the territorial redistribution of population. To the economist, geographical mobility of people is a pre-condition for economic development since the logic of industrialization demands that manpower is available at places where industrial enterprises are located.

The sociologist who studies migration is basically interested in the following aspects:

(a) the causal factor in migration which may be based on the motivational and personality structure of the individual migrant or in the socio-economic structure of society which encourages migration;
(b) the process of migration including the decision to migrate, planning and preparation, mobilization of resources;

(c) the nature of interaction between the migrants and the local population; and

(d) the consequences of migration for (i) the migrant group; (ii) the social structure of the sending community; and (iii) the social structure of the receiving community.

In spite of the number of studies on migration by scholars from almost all branches of social science, theory building in this field has been static and inadequate. This is in spite of "the dynamic quality of migration itself and the extraordinary importance which movements of population assume both as a catalyst and an ingredient of social change". Most theories of migration tend to be "time-bound, culture-bound and situation-bound". The inadequate theoretical development in the field is partly due to the absence of inter-disciplinary research with the result that "there has been little attempt to order the confusion with theoretical propositions and models which would lend both elegance and understanding to this large and important subject."
There are also several myths and misconceptions regarding migration. It is often believed that man is universally sedentary, that "movement away from the natal place is a deviant activity associated with disorganization and a threat to the established harmony of Gemeinschaft relationships which are implied by a life lived within a fixed social framework". However, there are societies where migration is a way of life. For example, in societies where inheritance is governed by primogeniture the younger males are expected to migrate. Among nomads shifting of residence is the rule rather than the exception. Another misleading assumption regarding migration is its snapshot character, once and only once phenomenon. But a significant part of the world population today consists of what Richmond calls "transilents", that is, people who spend periods of their life outside their country of birth, return home and again migrate.

Most research in the field of migration has been done by demographers and economists with elegant looking mathematical models and with an almost exclusive emphasis on rural-urban migration. Even sociological studies have been restricted to studying the problems of urban integration of migrants, race relation in
1.2 Types of Migration

It would be useful here to classify the different types of migration. The geographical boundaries which the migrants cross may be one basis for identification of migration types. If migration takes place within the boundaries of a given nation state, it may be termed intranational (internal) migration; if the movement crosses national boundaries we have international migration. The persons involved in internal migration are called 'in-migrants' with reference to the receiving area and 'out-migrants' with reference to the sending area. Similarly, international migrants may be designated by the terms 'immigrants' and 'emigrants'.

The level of development of a society may have important consequences for the composition of migrants. For example, in the pre-industrial European nations and in the contemporary Third World, persons involved in urban-ward migration are largely unskilled labour. They are recruited from the poorest and over populated rural areas.
and consist of large number of unmarried males. The reverse is true for societies which have reached a high level of economic development. Brain-power, rather than muscle power is in demand in those societies. Considerations of nationality, race and welfare may also govern the selection and composition of migrants. For example, nationality laws, sons of the soil policy, ethnicity, planned relocation of population (particularly in socialist societies) etc. are relevant considerations in contemporary internal and international migrations.

Another typology of migration may be obtained from the scope for individual choice in the decision to migrate. Thus migration may be free or forced. Refugees who migrate due to political or ethnic causes, persons displaced by natural calamities, slaves bought and sold etc are examples of forced migrants.

From the urban-rural character of sending and receiving areas we get the following types of migration: (i) rural to rural; (ii) rural to urban; (iii) urban to rural; and (iv) urban to urban. Rural-urban migration catches attention of most students of migration in developing countries due obviously to the visibility of rural migrants in urban areas and due to their impact
on urban amenities, job opportunities, patterns of living, delinquency, crime etc. As a result, the other migration streams are given scant attention. At least one demographer has expressed dissatisfaction at this state of affairs.

... a whole edifice of demographic investigations awaits to be built up around three phenomena of rural to rural, urban to rural and urban to urban migration, because, in the context of economic and social development in developing countries, material and cultural progress depends largely on activating the rural base through the raising of agricultural production and expansion of agro-based industries.

There is evidence to show that in recent decades, the volume of rural to urban migration in India has decreased and the other streams have gained importance. Zachariah's study also suggested a change in the character of migration after 1951 in the sense that urban to urban and rural to rural migration might have become more important.

Urban to rural migration is comprised of two elements. The first is rural migrants returning to their original villages after retirement or demobilization. This is also called turn-over migration.
The second is the flow of skilled manpower, whether administrative, scientific or technical, to rural areas under government incentives such as hardship bonuses, higher salaries etc. The urban to rural migrants "act as a critical mass for bringing about accelerated social change among seemingly stagnant societies".

From the angle of sheer volume and number of people involved, rural to rural migration occupies pride of place in developing countries. The most common form of rural-to-rural migration is marriage migration, resulting from village exogamy and virilocal residence. In India about three fourth of the rural to rural migrants is comprised of females. In South India, on the other hand, where village exogamy is less rigid, the proportion of rural-to-rural migrants to total migrants is considerably less. However it would also not be correct to assume that all female migration is marriage migration, since working class rural women migrate either singly or with families to urban or rural areas.

Another type of rural-rural migration is the seasonal migration of agricultural labour from agriculturally backward and employment scarce areas to relatively developed and labour scarce areas. The movement of labourers from Easterly U.P and Bihar to
to Punjab is a good example of this type. This movement is seasonal, related to the agricultural cycle, and temporary since the labourers return to their native places at the end of the season. However, during the next season the labourers may again go in search of employment. Hence it is also called circular migration. This migration has important consequences both for the sending and receiving areas. For the sending community remittance of migrants and the release from underemployment may act as effective cushions for economic backwardness. The remittances may also help acquire new assets or finance the education of a relative thereby raising the economic and social status of the migrant's family. The returning migrants may also bring along with them new values and behaviour patterns. In the receiving community the availability of cheap migrant labour may depress wages of local labour and reduce their bargaining power, thereby increasing the power of landowners and perpetuating the poverty of the labourers.

A third subtype of rural to rural migration is the migration of labourers to plantations, mines and other extractive and processing industries located in rural areas. In most Third World countries the development of plantations and mining was the direct result of colonial rule. Interestingly, the planters, who were mostly
foreigners, preferred to recruit outside labour partly because the latter was cheaper and partly because the local population was reluctant to give up their traditional occupations. Indentured labour and recruitment through ingenious systems such as the 'leader' system (also known as the sardari or the kankani system) were characteristic features of the early development of plantations and mines. Several people from India, including urbanites, migrated to Ceylon, Malaysia, Burma, and to some African countries as plantation labourers or miners. In India also several plantation centres developed chief among which were the foot hill zones of Brahmaputra and Surma valleys in Assam, the Darjeeling-Jalpaiguri tract of West Bengal, the Western Ghats of Kerala (High Ranges of Travancore and Wynad of Malabar), Karnataka (Coorg) and Tamil Nadu (the Nilgiris).

Colonization of agricultural waste, either through government sponsored schemes, or through spontaneous peasant action, is another type of rural-rural migration. Examples of Government colonization schemes are the Rajasthan Canal Colonies, the Dandakaranya scheme and the Wynad exservicemen colonization scheme. However spontaneous agricultural colonization has played a much more important role in developing backward
areas and increasing agricultural production. The plantations, by improving communications and controlling epidemics, accelerated the pace of peasant colonization of agricultural waste land. B.H. Farmer has shown that while in the nineteenth century the extension of area under cultivation in India was associated with tea, plantation crop, in the twentieth century it was associated with spontaneous movement of peasants from the plains to jungle areas. In both Assam and the Western Ghats peasant colonization gained momentum after the successful establishment of plantations and land hungry peasants from the plains took up forest land for cultivation.

It is interesting to note that in both the regions peasant colonization has been spearheaded by people from geographical regions and social groups from outside the region. For example, the colonizers of the Assam valley were Muslim peasants from Bengal whereas those in the highlands of Malabar were Syrian Christian peasants from Travancore. The difference was that while the Assam colonizers were linguistically and culturally different group, the Syrian Christian migrants in Malabar were from the same linguistic and cultural region, though in the initial stages Travancore and Malabar were separate political units.
1.3 The present study

Migration in general, and peasant migration in particular, constitutes a crucial agent of social change in seemingly stagnant societies. Peasant migration into tribal areas usually result in exploitation of tribals and the alienation of their land which leads to conflicts between migrants and tribals. This sometimes erupts into militant tribal movements. In certain areas peasant migrants bring along with them agricultural innovations such as new cropping patterns and technology. They may also introduce changes in the social and agrarian structure of the 'host' society and also be affected by the latter. The migration itself may be the result of factors inherent in the social and economic arrangements of the 'sending' area and also the ones relating to the 'receiving' area.

The purpose of the present exercise is to highlight some of these sociological dimensions of peasant migration and specifically, the migration of peasants from Travancore to Malabar.

This study is addressed specifically to the following questions:
(a) Why the people from distant Travancore and not from the nearby planes of Malabar were more successful in extending the agricultural 'frontier' of Malabar?
(b) What were the socio-economic characteristics of the migrants?

(c) What were the structural factors which operated to bring about a large scale voluntary transfer of population from Travancore to Malabar?

(d) Given the same structural factors why were members of certain religious groups and not others more prone to migrate?

(e) How did the 'migration chain' operate in the process of migration?

(f) What were the consequences of this large scale migration for the agrarian and social structure of Malabar?

(g) What were the patterns of adaptation and assimilation of the migrant community to their altered social and physical environment?

The present study attempts to provide reasonably satisfactory explanations to these questions. These explanations are based on a direct field work based study conducted by the researcher in the in-migration area. In other words the study provides empirical evidences to support the arguments used as explanations for the phenomenon of a specific type of migration, namely, the spontaneous migration of peasants to other rural areas for agricultural purposes.
1.4 Plan of the study

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical backdrop for the succeeding parts of the study. We divide the process of migration into three analytically distinct stages and discuss briefly various approaches to the study of each stage, and attempt to specify our own approach.

Chapter 3 turns to the historical process of the development of society in Kerala, our universe of study. This discussion provides a background to the accelerated rate of mobility of Kerala's population in recent times.

Chapter 4 focuses on the historical development of population mobility in Kerala, to provide a context to our intra-rural migration in Kerala.

Chapter 5 presents the results of our empirical study of peasant migration to Malabar. It explains the social structural factors which caused the migration of peasants from Travancore to Malabar and describes the actual migratory process.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the problems of adjustment and adaptation of the peasant migrants, and the emerging inter-group relations in Malabar.

Chapter 7 reviews the whole exercise to understand how the theoretical framework we adopted to study peasant migration fit the facts, to identify limitations and to point out areas of further research.
Notes and References


5. ibid., p.3

6. In industrial societies migration has become part of a persons' career cycle. The word 'transients' is used by A.H. Richmond, Pre-War Immigrants in Canada, Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1967, p.28.

See also C.J. Jansen, "Sociological Aspects of Migration", in J.A. Jackson, op.cit., p.69.


See also Maneefa A. Singh, "Women in the Market-Place: hawkers and Street Peddlers", paper presented to the subpanel on migration at the XVth All-India Sociological Conference, Meerut, 1980.


