The Impact of Education-Led Growth on Human Development

*A Case-Study of Malappuram District, Kerala*

**Thesis Abstract**

The primary objective of this thesis is to understand the effects of mass-education, international migration and virtuous growth on various processes which affect the formation of capabilities in different local economies in Malappuram district, Kerala. The Kerala model of development and virtuous growth – two related but distinct phases of development in Kerala\(^1\) – set the background for the study. Education continues to play a critical role in the process of migration and remittance-driven development that still takes place in Kerala. Despite having the largest number of international migrants in Kerala, the development experience of Malappuram district shows a lower-end case of Kerala’s development. Using a multi-stage stratified sequential random sample the thesis finds that within the district too there are varied effects as different regions are endowed with diverse geography, cultural composition and history of development.

The thesis begins by introducing the capabilities approach as a useful frame to understand Kerala’s development experience in the two growth phases. It then uses historical accounts to trace the pattern of transition that took place in the Coastal, Midland and Highland regions of Malabar region and Malappuram district in particular. The third chapter shows the emerging patterns in education and finds how migration, regional diversity, religion and caste\(^2\) compositions affect the dynamics of education in the new growth phase. While looking into the options of borrowings and savings available to the households, the fourth chapter highlights the importance of regional diversity (often

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\(^1\) The active engagement of the governments and the existing social and political conditions resulted in high social and human development in the state. Later, these achievements helped Kerala to enter a high growth phase and emerge as a good example to show relationship between economic growth and human development.

\(^2\) The Muslim majority limits the scope of caste-based analysis in Malappuram. Within the district, regional difference in the caste composition shows certain patterns of caste-dynamics which can be connected to the pattern elsewhere in the state.
reinforced by religion). The changing nature of Kurikkalyanam\(^3\) practice confirms this further and suggests that migration has a very limited impact on such traditional modes of local finance. In the fifth chapter, the results show that the options of education and occupation available to women are affected by marriage and choices made by their families. The nature of women’s engagement with various public spaces shows the significance of marriage, family, migration, religion and other traditions in shaping their social opportunity. Compared to other married women, Gulf-wives follow a different pattern: except in political meetings and activities organised under MGNREGS or SHGs, they actively participate in all public spaces related to their everyday life. Based on insights drawn from the panchayat election held in October 2010, the sixth chapter tries to understand the implications of the revised reservation policy (35 per cent reservation for women was revised to 50 per cent) on the political freedom of women in Kerala. The findings suggest that the reservation has been the primary factor in enabling many educated young female candidates to enter local politics and self-governing bodies. The last chapter outlines the conclusions of the study based on the findings of the previous chapters in an effort to capture the constitutive and instrumental aspects of freedom that the Kerala model has generated in Malappuram.

Instead of developing regional human development indices, the focus of the thesis has been on various processes which locally form the functionings and hence capabilities in the three regions of Malappuram. While focusing on specific capabilities which are relevant in the three regions, the study distinguishes between instrumental freedom, that is the means to enhance other freedoms, and constitutive freedom, that is freedom as an end in itself. The findings show that geographic diversity, culture, migration, gender and education affect the instrumental and constitutive freedom derived from specific capabilities. Among others, the study finds education and availability of contingency funds (options of savings and borrowings) are the two primary factors that had a greater

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\(^3\) Kurikkalyanam’ can be identified as an indigenous form of local finance which has been practiced in various parts of Malabar. When a community member requires financial support, he or she organises the Kurikkalyanam event and other members of a locality join and pool the money for the person. The deposit generated in this system does not incur any interest. Rather, the trustworthiness among the community members ensure the repayment of due amount (normally with some addition) through similar events conducted by the depositors.
instrumental effect. At the same time, women’s social opportunity and political freedom (through reservation) are two interesting cases of constitutive elements of freedom. The thesis also helps us see the role of various institutional practices that locally affect the options available to women. Thus, the thesis finds the experience of different regions in Malappuram provides snapshots of the lower end case of education-led development in Kerala.

**Key Words:** *Education, Migration, Financial Capability, Social Opportunity, Political Freedom, Malappuram-Kerala, Human Development*