CHAPTER II
MIGRATION AND TENURIAL RIGHTS IN Idukki

The marginalised peasantry of the mainland had no other means but to migrate to prospective regions that offered land and facilities for survival. The modern district of Idukki that emerged as a plantation sector offered lot of labour. The post-World War situation that inaugurated the era of ‘Grow More Food’ also promoted migration to the High Ranges in Idukki.\(^1\) Provoked by the changed situation that functioned as a pull factor, the marginalised peasants of the main land migrated in large numbers to the emergent plantation sector. Land, money and material facilitated their survival. Unfortunately, the political undercurrents of the subsequent periods resulted in unscrupulous eviction of the poor emigrants form two major colonies of occupation.

There is little authentic knowledge about the ancient history of Idukki region. The urn burials in the high ranges that date back to the megalithic period are the sole indication of human presence over the region. The burial vaults called Pandukuzhis, the Menhir and dolmens found in the Anchunad valley in the present Deviculam taluk substantiate this argument. The rock art in the Anchunad Valley has the depictions of the material life and culture of the prehistoric and megalithic periods. These petro graphs, petro glyph and dolmens and other remains of Mesolithic and megalithic cultures of the Valley

help us to reconstruct the history of the prehistoric and megalithic people. They give us an insight into the mental world of the prehistoric and megalithic people’s imaginary relations, fantasies and social milieu of ideas and institutions.\(^2\) The discovery of the rock art sites in the valley secured a place to the region in the prehistory of Kerala. The excavations of the Archaeological department at Marayoor, Thangalkkal near Vandiperiyar, Baisonvalley and Thondimalai show distinct characteristics of the pre-historic civilization.\(^3\)

Archaeological excavation conducted during 1947-48 at Kallar Pattom colony in Udumbanchola taluk and at Vandiperiyar in Peermadu taluk brought to light remnants like Menhir and tombs of the Old Stone Age. It is interesting to note that Karikode near Thodupuzha was the headquarters of the Vadakkumkoor Rajas. There are remains of the fort at Karikode. Near the fort, there is a Devi temple, said to have constructed by the Vadakkumkoor Rajas.\(^4\)

Historians argue that Kuzhumur, the capital of the Tamil Sangam is the present Kumily in Peermadu taluk.\(^5\) During A.D 800-1102, the high ranges, consisting of the present Deviculam, Udumbanchola and Peermadu taluks


formed part of the Kingdom of Vempolinad. By about A.D.1100, Vempolinad was split into two Kingdoms, viz., Vadakkumkoor and Thekkumkoor.

Manavikrama Kulasekhara, who reached Vadakkumkoor as a refugee from the Pandyan Kingdom purchased a tract of land, next to the hills known as Poonjar from the Thekkumkoor Raj.\(^6\) For this, he got assistance from the Vadakkumkoor Raja. Later on, Manavikrama Kulasekhara ascended himself to the position of the Poonjar Raja.

**Poonjar Kingdom**

Manavikrama Kulesekhara Perumal of the Madurai region acquired the tract of Poonjar in the present Meenachil taluk by about A.D 1160. At the time of the purchase, the territory extended only over five hundred square miles. In the first stage, it comprised of those territories, including Kanjirapally extending to that of the northern boundary of Thekkumkoor and possessed Peermadu and Kolahalamedu in the east\(^7\). In the later periods, by the fifteenth century, he acquired extensive areas in the High Ranges, extending from Peermadu to Deviculam, from the Thekkumkoor Raja.

Later on, the *Keezhmalaka koviladhikarigal* handed over the lands of Anchunad and Kannan Devan Hills to the Poonjar Raja. In 1419, the Poonjar Raja purchased the lands of Vandiperiyar from *Venpalanadu koviladhikarikal*. They constructed a temple of Sastha at Vandiperiyar in honor of the boy, who

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saved him from the robbers. In the same year, the Poonjar royal family bought Manjumala and Periyar from Venpalamadu Koviladhikarikal. By 1420, the Kingdom of Poonjar extended from Anchunad in the north to Manjumala and Periyar in the south.

As part of territorial expansion, Poonjar Raja purchased large tracts of land adjoining to his Kingdom. Raja signed few alliances in this regard. The administration of Poonjar was enriched by the forest revenue, land revenue etc. In order to collect taxes Raja appointed officials called Kaaraimar which includes Muthuvans, Mannan, Muslim Khans and Ravuthers etc. Mannadiyar communities were also used as the intermediaries for tax collection. Thus Poonjar has had an independent position during the time.

In 1729, Marthanda Varma was enthroned as the ruler of Travancore. Immediately after his coronation, he gave form to a strong and powerful army, which defeated all his enemies who came to confront with him. He had acquired the territories of Vadakkumkoor, Thekkumkoor and Chembakasseri by the battle of Kayamkulam. The kingdom of Travancore maintained healthy and friendly relation with the Poonjar Raja, who provided military aid and moral support in the conquest of Vadakkumkoor and Thekkumkoor, in the year 1755. The fact is that, Poonjar had already an evil eye on the kingdoms of

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Vadakkumkoor and Thekkumkoor. In return for the aid provided by the Poonjar Raja, Marthanda Varma acknowledged Poonjar as an independent territory.\textsuperscript{11}

The beginnings of the penetration of colonial capital can be traced to the leasing out of the hilly Kannan Devan areas to the British planter John Daniel Munroe for a period of ninety-nine years.\textsuperscript{12} According to the agreement executed, they admitted to relieve the lands and quit the place at the end of the tenure of lease.

In 1898, the Poonjar Raja entered into a contract with the Travancore Government on the question of Anchunad hills.\textsuperscript{13} As such, Poonjar Raja completely relinquished his right over the agreement which designed to provide a sum of fourteen thousand rupees to Poonjar every year. Poonjar Raja deceived himself and his people by signing an agreement between him and Travancore that ultimately handed over the sovereignty of Poonjar to the hands of Travancore Rajas. Thereafter the history of Idukki region was associated with the history of the erstwhile native State of Travancore.

**Emergence of Modern Idukki**

Derived from the word ‘Idukk’, the word ‘Idukki’, means a gorge. The term derived from the perennial river Periyar that was flowing along a narrow gorge between two granite hills, the legendary Kuravan and Kurathy, the site of

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{12} Neettu, Vol.1, 73, 1.5.1042.
the Idukki Arch Dam. The region of Idukki constituted a part of the Peermadu Taluk, when the modern State of Kerala came into being. However, Idukki emerged a separate District on 26 January 1972, carving out positions from Ernakulam and Kottayam districts.\textsuperscript{14} Idukki district came into existence by amalgamating Deviculam, Peermadu and Udumbanchola taluks from Kottayam district and Thodupuzha taluk from Ernakulam district.

The district extends by 115 kms, from south to north and 67 kms from east to west. The aggregate area of the district is 5061 sq. kms\textsuperscript{15} For the sake of revenue administration, the district is sub divided into four taluks viz. Deviculam, Peermadu, Udumbanchola and Thodupuzha. For the purpose of developmental activities, the taluks divided into eight blocks, Arudai, Deviculam, Elamdesam, Idukki, Kattappana, Adimali, Nedumkandom and Thodupuzha. Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts bound the district on the south, Thrichur and Coimbatore districts on the north, Madurai, Ramanad and Thirunelveli districts on the east and Ernakulam and Kottayam districts on the west.\textsuperscript{16} At the time of formation, the district headquarters started functioning at Kottayam, from where was shifted to Painav in Thodupuzha taluk in June 1976.

Idukki is the second largest district in the State, with several unique features. It generates more than 80 per cent of the Hydro Electric power produced in the State. It is highly heterogeneous in many ways—demographically, culturally, ecologically, agriculturally and physiographically.

\textsuperscript{14} P. K. Mohanty, \textit{District Hand Book of Kerala}, Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1986, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{16} Idem.
There are rain-shadows and rain-sodden areas in the district, whereas low land areas are very absent. It is interesting to project the fact that approximately, 96 per cent of the total area of the district comes under the highland region covered by rugged mountain ranges, hills and deep valleys, excluding the small strip of midland area towards the western part of Thodupuzha taluk. As per the official figures, forests form more than fifty per cent of the area. However, the actual area under forest may be around 30 per cent, the reasons for which are numerous and debatable. Predominantly perennial crops like cardamom, tea, rubber, coconut, pepper, etc. cover the agriculture sector. Area under paddy is very limited here. Though Idukki has a high per-capita income, it is the most backward of all the districts in Kerala in terms of communication, medical and education facilities, developmental activities, power distribution, housing, industrial development etc.\footnote{M. A. Nasar, \textit{Op. Cit.}, p.6.}

The modern history of the region, as stated above in this chapter starts with the penetration of capital in the Poonjar region. Before going in to the details of the plantation system, it is necessary to go through the general features the high ranges.

**Landscape of Idukki**

Sprawling over an area of 5,061 sq. kms, the district mounts by undulating hills and valleys. The high ranges vary in altitude from 2500 ft. above mean sea level in Kulamav to more than 5,000 ft.\footnote{www. Wickipedia. Com, Accessed on 02.02.2013.} minimum sea level in
Munnar. The highest peak in Kerala, Anamudi, 8,841 ft. high, is in the district.\textsuperscript{19} The different levels of elevation promote the region in the western portions of Thodupuzha taluk and all the remaining areas consisting of Deviculam, Peermadu and Udumbanchola taluks and the eastern portion of the Thodupuzha taluk is highland region. There are eleven peaks in Idukki, which exceed a height of 600 ft. above the sea level. The high land region is having a comparatively cold climate. The annual rainfall in the district varies from 250 to 425 cms.

The three important rivers of the district are Periyar, Thodupuzhayar and Thalayar, in addition to eight small rivers. Though the Pampa River originates from the district, it mostly runs through the Pathanamthitta district. Deviculam, Eravikulam and Elaveezhapoonchira are the three fresh water lakes in Idukki.\textsuperscript{20}

The district has, at present, about 1500 sq. kms-reserved forests and this is approximately 30 per cent of the total area of the forest. However, the sylvan wealth of the district and the animal life are fast disintegrating due to deforestation, indiscriminate felling of trees, encroachment and poaching. All kinds of wild animals, with the exception of lions abound in the forests of Idukki. Critiques opine that the precious trees growing in the dense forests of the region, like teak, rosewood, deodars, Sandal etc, were instrumental to the colonial capital for identifying the colonisation of the region.


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 2.
Demography

As per the 2011 census records, the population of Idukki was 1,107,453, of which male and female were 551,944 and 555,509 respectively. As per the 2001 census, the population was 1,129,221, of which males were 566,682 and remaining, 562,539 were females. The initial provisional data released by census India 2011, shows that density of Idukki district for 2011 is 254 people per sq. km., against a density of 259 people per sq. km. in 2001. Idukki district administer 4,358 square kilometres of area.

Average literacy rate of Idukki in 2011 was 92.20 per cent, against 88.69 of 2001. Gender wise rate of male and female literacy were 94.84 and 89.59 respectively. For 2001 census, same figures stood at 92.33 and 85.02 in Idukki District. Total literates in Idukki District were 9, 28,774, of which male and female were 4,74,988 and 4,53,786 respectively. In 2001, Idukki District had a population of 8, 82,458. Out of the total population of 2011, 4.70 per cent lives in urban regions. In total, 52,025 people lives in urban areas, of which males are 25,524 and females are 26,501.

As per 2011 census, 95.30 per cent of the population of Idukki district lives in rural areas or villages. The total Idukki district population living in rural areas is 1,055,428 of which males and females are 526,420 and 529,008 respectively.

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23 Ibid, p. 22.
The British Colonial Planters

In 1877 Kerala Varma, the Raja of Poonjar, sold 227 sq. miles of Kannan Devan Hills to John Daniel Munroe, a British planter. The tract was largely dense forest. In 1878, the Maharaja of Travancore confirmed the sale.\(^{24}\) J.D. Munroe, who formed the North Travancore Land Planting and Agricultural Society, facilitated the members of the society develop their own estates in various parts of the high ranges.\(^{25}\) To the colonial masters, conversion of the dense forests into tracks for plantation was just a business. They fixed Tramway and the earliest mono block railway connecting the entire area, to facilitate extraction of the nature to the optimum. The most vital deforestation programs took place ever in Kerala, leading to unprecedented adverse effects on the ecology and environment of the region. Then they tried many crops such as Coffee, Cinchona, Sisal and Cardamom, before adopting tea as the crop best suited for this area, for the further exploitation of the resources of the State. It is worth mentioning that the current thought about environmentalism was totally absent in those times.

Transforming the forests into plantations, the earliest Tea Estate was that of A.H. Sharp at a place called Parvathy, the current Ezhimala Estate, developed by deforesting about 50 acres of dense forest. In 1895, Finlay Muir and company (the current James Finlay and Company Limited), purchased that

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\(^{24}\) Neettu, Vol.1, 73, 1.5.1042.

area. It is worth mentioning that, over a short period the Kannan Devan Hills Produce Company Ltd. and the Anglo American Direct Tea Trading company Ltd. owned 28 estates in these areas. Other British and Indian companies, not belonging to this group, owned the remaining estates.\textsuperscript{26}

In Peermadu and Vandiperiyar, was opened plantation in 1862 when J.D. Munro started the Hope Estate. In Peermadu, it was coffee, which was the first crop to introduce, but after the coffee leaf disease in 1875, they turned to tea. Thus, by 1906, there were 8,000 acres of tea, but only 500 acres of coffee. Cinchona was also cultivated.\textsuperscript{27}

It was only after 1895 that the tract of land developed due to the interest taken by Finlay Muir and Co. Until 1952, the Finlay Muir Group retained great interest in the Kannan Devan Hill Produce Company. In 1908, the Kannan Devan Hill produce Company Ltd. had the following area under each crop.\textsuperscript{28}

Table 2.1 Kannan Devan Company - Area under each Crop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>11,645 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 23.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plantation</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinchona</td>
<td>830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camphor</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisal</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea (clew Extension)</td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo –American direct Tea Trading Co. Ltd</td>
<td>1,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private interests</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>19,308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Kerala District Gazetteers, Kottayam District, 1970.

Plantation sector in Travancore developed fast. Travancore emerged as the most important plantation corridor of South India.\(^{29}\) Starting with coffee and subsequently with tea plantations, the pioneering British entrepreneurs seem to have invested nearly Rs. 90 lakhs on land.\(^{30}\) The Travancore government

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seems to have encouraged the clearing of the forests in the High Ranges by selling land through public auction in quick succession to the introduction of European capital and enterprise.

The High Range region was still isolated. Gradually good transportation roots were established between the centers of European owned cultivation and the plains to the east and west. The plantation era provided key elements that promoted extensive migration to the High Ranges in the later period. These elements included (1) continuing depletion of forests in remote locations (2) the development of an initial road network (3) the major hydroelectric project (4) encroachments on forest lands by both land less settlers and wealthy individuals.

**Roots of Migration**

The phenomenon of migration in society is universal and is applicable to all stages of human life. Any movement of people from the place of origin to another for settling down is generally termed as migration. This is part of a continuous process of evolution against stagnation. It is not only natural but also steered by socio economic changes in society. Migration emerges in external and internal spheres. External migration stands for crossing the internationally recognised boundaries of the country and settling down in foreign land. The internal migration occurs within the country from one region to another or one place to another and has psychological, socio economic and other reasons and background. Internal migration has four streams: rural to
rural, rural to urban, urban to urban and urban to rural. The last one is significant for the present study.

Migration whatever from rural areas to metropolitan centres or from one urban complex to another, is an event of economic, socio-psychological and cultural significance. It does not merely involve a movement in physical space but also from one social organisation to another. Migration is a response of human organisation to social, economic and demographic forces of the environment. A person tends to remain in the same area in which he develops a sense of belongingness so long as his needs are satisfied and well adjusted without any threat perception. Migration research begins with the premise that every departure of a new community is a response to some impelling need that for some reasons has rendered the community undesirable and unpleasant.\(^{31}\)

Theoretical formulations in general principles of migration are found in the pioneering work of E.G. Ravenstein. His seven generalisations, which he claims as ‘seven laws of migration’ are related to the patterns and distance of migration, migratory streams, motives and characteristics of migrants. Many of his observations are still quite relevant. His seventh law gave rise to the concepts of ‘push and pull’ as used in migration researches, especially the present study.

Erich Kahler has stated in *The Tower and the Abyss* that the history of man is very well be written as a history of the alienation of man.\(^{32}\) It might also be a tenable assertion that the history of man could very well be written as a history of the marginal man, especially, if that concept is applied in its broadest sense, in its many and diverse usages. The conditions for marginality are ubiquitous. Situational marginality is almost concomitant with difference and change, and nearly everyone experiences marginality to some degree.\(^{33}\) However, it is not the scope and purpose of this study to present the history of the peasants in marginal terms. In this situation, the term 'Marginal Man' is applicable to the peasants, who migrated to this region. Hence, it is necessary to investigate in to the details of the factors, which pushed and pulled the peasants further and further to the High Ranges that made them Marginal.

The following are the corroborative factors behind the migration and marginalisation in the region under study:

- Introduction of private property on land
- Various land revenue policies in Travancore
- Leasing out of land to private individuals
- Capitalist motives like abolition of slavery, in a society in which social exclusion was vibrant
- Scarcity of agricultural fields in the main land in Travancore

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- Increase in population of labours that led to poverty and unemployment
- Increase in population that led to pressure on land compelling the people to search for arable land
- The depression of 1930s that dripped the economy of Kerala
- Increase in the prize of spices
- Effects of the World Wars
- Commercialization of Agriculture
- 1865 Pattom Proclamation Act
- 1883- Revenue Settlement Act
- Abolition of Kayal land
- Plantation industries
- Grow More Food Campaign and,
- High Range Reclamation Scheme, 1954

The peasant migration from Travancore was a historical development that originated from the constellation of a number of social, economic, political and institutional factors. Peasant migration calls for the existence of a class of peasants who are ready to migrate. Such a class could emerge in Travancore by the close of nineteenth century because of various reforms as stated above. Abolition of slavery and liberation of the socially excluded sections of the native State, industrialized Britain’s primary concern to protect its industrial and commercial interests, the setting up of different industries in Kerala in favour of promotion of the British economic interests, emergence of agriculture as an
industry, the rise of plantation etc. were the prominent among them.\textsuperscript{34} The greatest change was that a European plantation sector emerged, its owners and managers setting up the political agenda to ensure growth and profitability. They demanded the acquisition of fertile soil and the recruitment of sufficient number of workers. The available forest in the high ranges acquired as agricultural land.

There was a boom in the demand for labour force. Naturally, that resulted in the relocation of labour from within and from Tamil Nadu. It resulted in the migration of the economically marginalised labourers. Economic depression and the scarcity of food materials boosted migration for cultivation of food grains. Government promoted migration to some extent.\textsuperscript{35}

In order to assess the resources of the high ranges, the British organized geographical surveys. They found that the forest tracts of Idukki were very rich in forest wealth. There was high demand for sandal, teak, rosewood etc. in the international market. The high demand of Tea and Coffee also resulted in migration. Consequently, the development of transport and communication and the setting up of railway and tramway happened. Further, it led to the clearing of ancient trade routes and the development of infrastructure facilities in the district.

\textsuperscript{34} Oommen, T. K., \textit{From Mobilization to Institutionalization - The Dynamics of Agrarian Movement in Twentieth Century Kerala}, Popular Prakasan, 1985, p. 68.

Plantation and Migration

While the tenancy reforms were creating a new class of peasant farmers in Travancore, another development in the form of massive capital investment was also taking place in Travancore, namely the opening of European plantations in the High Ranges of Travancore from the middle of the 19th century. Starting with coffee and subsequently with tea plantations, the pioneering British entrepreneurs seem to have invested nearly Rs. 90 lakhs on land.\footnote{36 Samuel Mateer, Op. Cit., p. 74.} It is alarming to focus the fact that the Travancore Government seems to have encouraged the clearing of forests in the High Ranges, by selling land through public auction, in quick succession, to the induction of European capital and enterprise.\footnote{37 Report on the Administration of Travancore for the Year 1038 ME (1862 -1863). Also see the Administration of Travancore for the Year 1040 ME (1864 – 1865).}

The opening of Plantations promoted migration in several ways. The estates required the service of large number of workers that secured only by the import of labourers from outside the locality, as the high range region was in those days uninhabited. Naturally, such conditions necessitated the immigration of large number of coolies and labourers from adjacent districts.

Actually when the plantations were established, many persons had apprehended on exodus of workers from other districts of Travancore to the High Ranges. However, the volume of migration from within Travancore fell short of the labour requirements of the Plantations. The labour requirements of
the plantations met with workers from other areas. It was the Tamil districts of the then Madras Presidency that supplied the work force needed. It is significant to note that a number of factors contributed to the non-availability of adequate number of labourers from within the Travancore State for work in the plantation. One such factor was the obstacle to mobility created by the rigid caste system, which then prevailed. The population belonging to the slave castes that had emancipated was yet wanting in self-reliance to migrate to the distance of even a few days of journey in search of other means of livelihood and was dependent on landowners for employment and subsistence. Another main reason was the virtual absence of a large labour class in Travancore. The Agricultural labourers formed only 12 per cent of the total population in 1911. Abolition of slavery in British India and in Travancore made cheap labour available for the plantation industry. This was yet another reason for the migration.

With the opening of plantations apart from manual workers, other categories of workers were also in demand. The estates required the services of large number of educated persons to serve in various capacities such as managers, supervisors, clerks, accountants and skilled workers. Such opportunities were availed by the migrants themselves. The newly educated

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moved radically to the plantations to fill in these vacancies and to enrich themselves.\textsuperscript{42}

The opening of the plantations also became a source of inspiration and provided the necessary incentive for the migration of the more aspiring among the native capitalist farmers who commanded adequate capital. Further, the opening of a road connecting Kottayam with Peermadu region, towards the last quarter of the century facilitated the movement of men and materials to the Ghats section.\textsuperscript{43}

**Hydro – Electric Projects**

At present, eighty per cent of the hydroelectric power production of Kerala is from Idukki district, generated from the different hydroelectric projects, scattered in the high ranges of the district as follows:

1. Pallivasal (1940)
2. Mattupetty Hydro Electric Project (1953)
3. Sengulam Hydro Electric Project (1957)
5. Panniyar (1963)
7. Lower Periyar (1997)
8. Kuthunkal (2000) and

Out of the nine projects, the first seven are under Kerala State Electricity Board and the rest of them are private firms.

**Pallivasal - Stage I**

The earliest hydroelectric power station in the State utilising the waters of the Mudirapuzha River, commissioned in 1939 at Pallivasal, has an installed capacity of 13,500 k.w. The acute power shortage due to increased industrial activities during the wartime necessitated the second stage development of the Pallivasal Project.  

**Pallivasal – Stage II**

Under this stage was constructed a Dam at Mattupetty across Mudirapuzha for regulation of water supply to the power station and two sets of 7500 KW each installed. During the first Five Year Plan one unit of 7500 KW and three more units of 5000 KW each installed, subsequently. The storage capacities of Kundil and Mattupetty reservoirs are 270 Mc. feet and 1950 Mc. feet respectively.  

A barrage built across the river at Munnar diverts the water through a tunnel 10,235 feet long and through four pipe lines to a power station on the right bank of the river at Pallivasal. This water used to generate 32.5-mw power.

**Sengulam Hydroelectric Project**

Under this scheme, which was completed during the First Five Year Plan, the tail water from the Pallivasal Power Station is led along 2000 feet long

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open channel to a pump house fore bay. Water pumped from this fore bay leads to the inlet of a 5700 feet long tunnel. The power generation at this station is 48 M.W.\textsuperscript{46}

**Neriyamangalam Hydroelectric Project**

The project utilises the tail waters of Sengulam and Panniar Power Stations and the excess catchment of the Mudirapuzha River below Munnar. The diversion dam constructed across Mudirapuzha at Kallarkutty has a live storage capacity of 230 Mc. Fee. The power station is at Panamkutty, a little downstream of the confluence of Mudirapuzha with Periyar River. The power generation capacity of this station is 45 M.W.

**Panniyar Hydroelectric Project**

Panniyar, a tributary of the Mudirapuzha River, was developed into two reservoirs, an upper reservoir at Anayirankal and a lower reservoir at Ponmudi, with storage capacity of 1730 Mc. Feet long tunnel and two 2495 feet long pipe lines to a power station situated on the left bank of Mudirapuzha, opposite to Sengulam Power Station. The power generation is below 30 M.W.\textsuperscript{47}

**Lower Periyar Hydroelectric Project**

This scheme envisages utilisation of the tail waters from the existing Neriyamangalam Power Station and the spill from Kallarkutty head works, the available yield from the Perinjankutty catchment area below the dam at Kallarkutty, Perinjankutty and Idukki. The project has a capacity of 180 M.W.

\textsuperscript{46} http://globalenergyobservatory.org/ accessed on 16/ 05/ 2014.

\textsuperscript{47} http://www.kseb.in// accessed on 15/11/2014.
Idukki Hydro Electric Power Project

Idukki Hydro Electric Project, the biggest in the State consists of three major dams. In a narrow gorge between two granite hills, is constructed the Idukki Arch Dam, across Periyar River. It is 550 ft. high and at the base, its thickness is 65 ft. This is a double curvature Arch Dam that ranges second in the country. No far off from the Idukki Arch Dam, across river Cheruthony has a concrete gravity Dam and known as Cheruthony Dam and its height is 454 ft. The spillway of the Idukki reservoir is the Cheruthony dam. To prevent the water escape through a rivulet, called Kalivally 30 km west to Idukki Arch Dam, was constructed a free masonry dam across Killivally at Kulamavu. It is 328 ft. high.48

The water impounded by these three dams has formed a single reservoir spread over 36 miles on a height of 2300 ft. m.s.l. Along a power tunnel from the Kulamavu basin water flows to the pressure shafts in the underground power house beneath Nadukani hills at Moolamattom. After the generation of electricity water flows through a 4000 ft. long tunnel to a tributary of Thodupuzha River. It is worth mentioning that the Idukki Project, executed in accordance with the Colombo Plan of Commonwealth Countries, with the economic and technological assistance of Canada meets the power requirements of the State in a magnificent manner.49

48 Official website of KSEB accessed on 02/02/2013.
49 Home Department, SL. No. 9, Bundle No. 42, F. No. 320, Dated 22/11/1964.
For setting up of the above-mentioned Hydro Electric Projects, there was massive relocation of the labour force from the main land. The manual labour force migrated to the district in large numbers. Along with the labourers, their families also migrated to the high ranges. The various projects in the District, connected by a network of dams in Idukki affirm regular supply of water to the Projects. The following is the comprehensive list of dams in the district:

**Table 2.2 Distribution of Dams in the District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Dam</th>
<th>Year of Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Kundala Dam</td>
<td>1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sengulam Dam</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Madupetty Dam</td>
<td>1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Kallar Dam</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Kallarkutty Dam</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Ponmudi Dam</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Anathode Flanking Dam</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Anayirangal Dam</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Idukki /Idukki Arch Dam</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Cheruthoni Dam</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Kulamavu Dam</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Idamalayar Dam</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Erattayar Dam</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Malankara (Id)/Muttam/Thodupuzha Dam</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The net result is that the process of ‘damming’ for ‘power generation’ transformed a region with more than 80 percentage of dense forest in to an ecologically sensitive, seismically vibrant and habitually encroached area, challenging the very existence of the nature. Thus, the government-sponsored migration transformed Idukki into a damming district that ultimately generated a multitude of explosive issues in the society, discussed in detail in chapter IV of this study.

**Impact of the Second World War**

The outbreak of the Second World War added new dimensions to peasant migration. By the dawn of the 20th century, Travancore had become a net importer of rice, the staple food of the people. The rate of import increased geometrically. The actual import went up from an annual average of 1.7 lakh during the decade 1911-20 to 546 lakh during 1931-40. The import was mainly from Burma, part of the colonial British Empire, and Thailand. The British efforts to establish the colonial State of British Burma, resulted, in 1936, in the bifurcation of the region from India. However, the territorial reorganisation did not last long. In 1938, Burma fell into the hands of Japan; and the import of rice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Dam Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lower Periyar (Pambla) Dam</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Vazhikkadavu Dam</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://india-wris.nrsc.gov.in](http://india-wris.nrsc.gov.in)
completely cut off. Thus, a virtual shortage of food experienced, with no alternative source of supply in sight.

The condition of Travancore was not suitable for large-scale extension of paddy cultivation. 50 Tapioca, that served as a substitute for rice however, could be extensively cultivated. On the outbreak of the war, cultivation of tapioca too was in decline. On the other hand, significant increase registered in area under cash crops such as rubber, cashew nut, pepper and coconut. Apparently, much of the land suitable for cultivation of tapioca diverted for the cultivation of these cash crops. No wonder, to the people of Travancore, especially in the taluks of Meenachil, Thodupuzha and Kanjirapilly, where paddy lands are relatively scarce, rice abruptly cut off. 51

Many of them did not even have land suitable for extending tapioca cultivation to tide over the shortage of food caused by the war countries. During this difficult period, the information received from the pioneering migrants on the availability of plenty of land suitable for cultivation of crops including tapioca provoked a large number of starving sections of marginalized peasants readily sell their small bits of land at high prices and proceed to the High Ranges. Thus began once again an exodus of peasant farmers from Travancore to the jungles of Idukki.

50 Ibid., p. 97.
51 Home Department, SL. No. 9, Bundle No. 42, F. No. 320, Dated 22/11/1964.
Grow More Food Campaign

Grow more food campaign was introduced as the immediate effect of post–Second World War situation. The outbreak of the Second World War, failure of monsoon, famines and other natural calamities and the agricultural policy and administration of the then British Government in Madras Presidency were the causes for the genesis of this campaign.  

The Madras Presidency was not self-sufficient even in normal times concerning rice and had to supplement its own production by importing rice from Burma, Siam and Indo–China. Hence, the government decided to increase production in two directions, extensive cultivation by bringing new areas under food crops, and diverting areas under non–food crops to food crops, increasing double–crops cultivation and cultivation during the off–season and intensive cultivation by the use of improved seeds and better manoeuvring. 

Although authorisations were issued by the Collectors to permit cultivation of vegetables and other food crops on vacant lands, many difficulties were experienced in bringing under cultivation many of the lands in estates governed by the Madras Estates Land Act, 1908, which were not in the possession of riots or tenants. As the landholders were generally reluctant to permit cultivation of wastelands in estates without payment of rent for the

53 G. O. LR-48727/49 RD, Dated 03/03/1951.
reason that, the persons so permitted would demand occupancy rights, the program did not work out. The Madras Estates Land Act 1944, that removed this difficulty, provided for the temporary assignment of lands situated in an estate and not already in the possession of a riot or tenant for long periods, conferring occupancy rights on the assignee for raising food crops. Grow more scheme resulted in further integration with the concern of the government. Migrants seem to have taken advantage of the encouragement given by the Government for the cultivation of food crops in the wastelands under the Grow More Food Campaign. Consequently, the total population of the region which was 1,72,474 in 1951 increased rapidly to 4,12,374 in 1961 and 5,46,104 in 1971, recording an increase of more than 215 percent within a period of two decades.

**Role of Land Reforms**

One of the factors which had both positive and negative impacts on migration was the land tenure system of Travancore. Migration was rendered possible because of the availability of cultivable wastelands under the *Kuthakapattom* system of land tenure in Idukki. Under this system anybody could lease a land without many formalities. Needless to say, the poor peasant farmers from Travancore availed of this opportunity fully. Had the lands been

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55 Ibid., p.124.
57 Dis. 1910/ 40/Dev., Dated 4-4-1940.
directly under Government, as was the case in Travancore or in the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu, migration would not have been on such smooth lines, especially in the context of the then prevailing authoritarian system of Government in the Presidencies.\textsuperscript{58}

On the other hand, in Malabar, under the \textit{jenmom} system, reclamation of any land was possible only by leasing out land from landlords on conditions of tenancy not very favorable to the tenants. The possibility of outright sale or purchase rights of \textit{jenmom} lands was absent in this system.\textsuperscript{59} Insecurity of tenure and rack renting are the two glassing evils of tenancy under the \textit{jenmom} system. The tenants could be evicted by the landlords under various pretexts without even paying adequate compensation, notwithstanding the protective shield provided by the provisions contained in the Compensation for the Tenants’ Improvement Act, and the Malabar Tenancy Act.\textsuperscript{60}

The land reforms have a very positive effect on migration. On the introduction of the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill in the State Assembly in 1957, the rich peasants started selling briskly not only the dry lands but also forest lands under their control and started migration in the form of forest encroachments. Some of the political leaders supported the migration to a great


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 227.
extent. It is also noticeable that, before the left wing came to power, it propagated the slogan ‘land to the tiller’. To some extent it was a stimulus factor that pushed the peasants to Idukki. This trend continued even during the Liberation Struggle. The Church also played an important role in this regard. Thus, to the Idukki region, where plenty of forest land and surplus land under the control of the planters available, took place an exodus, mainly through encroachment of forest lands, during the 1950s.

**High Range Colonisation Scheme**

It might be relevant in this context to review the High Range Colonisation Scheme started in 1954 to encourage settlement of families in the High Ranges. The object of the scheme was to solve the twin problem of over-population and poverty in the erstwhile Travancore-Cochin State by providing adequate land with facilities for cultivation to the landless agriculturists living in other parts of the State. The original proposal was to settle about 8,000 families of landless agricultural labourers in an area of 40,000 acres of land. The occupants were given an area of about 5 acres each, and financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 2,000, by way of interest free loans for house construction, cultivation, purchase of cow and agricultural implements, with an

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62 Personal Interview with Narayanan, Chelakkavunkal on 06/06/2012.
63 Personnal Interview with Sunny, Ilanjimattom on 08/06/2012.
64 T. Rajesh, Idukki Charithra Rekhakal (M), E-lion, 2008, p.75.
65 G.O.L.R. 5-5569/54/RD Dated the 22/06/1954.
estimated expenditure of Rs. 233.5 lakhs. The Government of India had agreed to give a loan of Rs.214 lakhs, interest free, repayable in 25 annual instalments. Accordingly, under the scheme separate blocks were granted to about 1,777 families. In 1964 there were only 1,513 families residing in the colonies, the others having abandoned the blocks or absconded. Hence, the original plan for settling 8,000 families dropped out afterwards due to non-availability of arable lands without affecting Forest Conservation. To the land, given to the colonists on lease, without limitation of time, pattom equivalent to basic tax was levied. The right of the lessee is heritable but not alienable. The lease is subject to cancellation in the event of alienation or desertion. The inheritance of the whole of a colonist's holding shall be to a single heir of his choice. The heir shall be a member of his family. Government placed the entire scheme under the administration and disciplinary control of the District Collector, Kottayam.

There were four colonies under the Scheme, viz., Kallar (Pattom), Kanthalloor, Marayoor and Deviyar. The Pattom settlement, Kallar, comprised of six camps, the first opened on January 20, 1955 and the last September 3, 1959. There were 1,397 blocks in the colony, the total area were 6,913.10 acres. On February 24, 1955, the Marayoor colony was established. In the beginning, it comprised of 149 blocks and an area of 799 acres of land. Out of

the 149 blocks allotted, just 126 persons really occupied the block. Kanthalloor colony in the Kanthallor range consisted of the villages of Kanthalloor, Kottabampur and Vattavada in Devikolam Taluk. Of the 262 blocks, covering an area of 1,304.30 acres of land surveyed and assigned to the inhabitants only 247 blocks allotted and 220 persons occupied. On finding most of the blocks not arable for cultivation, the Government ordered shifting of 97 settlers from Kanthalloor to Kallar. Nevertheless, the blocks allotted to the settlers at Marayoor found unsuitable for cultivation and habitation. The extent of land allotted to each family was about three acres as the soil in this colony found quite fertile. The degree of area distributed to every family was around 3 acres of land. In each colony, some area of land was set apart for common amenities.

The extent of area in each of the three colonies given below:

**Table 2.2 - The Extent of Area in each of the Three Colonies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Colony</th>
<th>Area(Acre)</th>
<th>Area(Cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pattom Colony</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marayoor Colony</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deviyar Colony</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


69 Idem.

Unauthorised alienation or encroachment led to the cancellation of many allotments. 71 The government supported to settle the poor marginalised peasants in different parts of the district. Though the colonisation scheme had a dual intention, one was to improve the life condition of the poor peasants in the Travancore-Cochin State and the other was to claim occupancy of Malayalam speaking populace during the time of State reorientation on linguistic basis. Thus, the poor peasants in the mainland migrated and settled in different parts of the district.

**Demographic Pressure**

As stated elsewhere in the study, the region Idukki was a part of Kottayam district until 26\textsuperscript{th} January 1972 and hence, it should be good enough to go through the demography of Kottayam district. As in other districts of the State, there has been a steady growth of population in Kottayam district since the turn of the twentieth century. 72 The population of the district recorded an increase of 264.79 % during the period 1901 to 1961. In the decade 1961 -71 alone there was an increase of 20.78 % in the population of Kottayam. 73 Details of the demographic trends in the Kottayam district during 1901-1971 are as follows:

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
Table 2.3 - Percentage Variation of Population 1901 - 71

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901 -61</td>
<td>264.49</td>
<td>253.33</td>
<td>420.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-11</td>
<td>17.79</td>
<td>18.93</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-21</td>
<td>16.03</td>
<td>12.38</td>
<td>75.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-31</td>
<td>36.92</td>
<td>36.85</td>
<td>37.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-41</td>
<td>21.77</td>
<td>21.91</td>
<td>20.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-51</td>
<td>22.55</td>
<td>18.16</td>
<td>68.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-61</td>
<td>30.52</td>
<td>34.10</td>
<td>40.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-71</td>
<td>20.78</td>
<td>19.93</td>
<td>28.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Considering taluk wise, Udumbanchola and Peermadu taluks show the highest increase in population since 1921.\(^4\) The growth of population in Kottayam, attributed to the high fertility of the soil, particularly the hilly Taluks that attracted immigrants from other parts of the state and outside. In fact, the possibility of establishing plantations attracted many people. People from other parts of the state settled in large numbers into areas like Udumbanchola and

Governments were also following a systematic policy of encouraging colonization of select areas of the High Ranges.\textsuperscript{76}

**Impact of the Formation of the Modern State of Kerala**

Another event which has had far reaching effects on migration from the main land to the High range of Idukki was the formation of the Kerala State, on linguistic basis.\textsuperscript{77} To the migrants, the unification of Kerala meant the unification of their place of origin and the place of their destination into one political unit. Further, the migrants could also hope to participate in the administration of the State through their representatives. Migrants have been able to send representatives to the legislature from among their own ranks. As a result peasants moved to the High Ranges in larger numbers than during earlier periods with a sense of security and confidence which they did not have in the past. Some debates are still going on about the policies of the Government regarding the inclusion of the High range in the State of Kerala. The militant vested interest groups in and around the region that generates controversial ‘Tamil Sub Regionalism’ is a serious law and order problem of contemporary Idukki.\textsuperscript{78}


\textsuperscript{76} See Appendix (Idukki Colonization Scheme).


\textsuperscript{78} It may be noted that the groups like Periyar Samrakshana Samaithi, Abbas Kambam etc. spreading rumors that this region should have been merged with Tamil Nadu. The argument was very vibrant during the days of Mullaperiyar issue which unsettled till date.
Towards Eviction: The Problem of Idukki

The problem of the ‘illegal occupants’ of Government lands in the District of Idukki in Kerala is crucial. The magnitude and complexity of this issue are debatable. Successive Governments in Kerala tried to deal with this problem but failed to touch even on its fringe of it. Recently, Government has been contemplating evictions from certain areas in the high ranges of Idukki District.\textsuperscript{79} For a proper understanding of the problem it is necessary to investigate the history of the land assignments and subsequent occupations. In fact, there is a long history behind the process of ‘occupation’. Its history can be traced back to the Imperial times. The land assignment rules of the erstwhile native State of Travancore provided for occupancy rights in favor of the occupants of revenue land, on payment of tharavila (land value), maravila (value of trees) and other dues. In fact, it was the outcome of the definite policy of the then rulers of Travancore in order to settle the issues in relation to scarcity of cultivable land and increasing poverty and famine. In fact, it was a means by which individuals could get registry of land in their names.

During the 1940s there was an acute food shortage in the erstwhile native States of Travancore and Cochin and the Governments announced that lands in reserve forests areas would be given for cultivation of food crops.\textsuperscript{80} By a Government order, sanctioning \textit{Kuthakapattom} grant in reserve forests,

\textsuperscript{79}Munnar Eviction (2008), Perinchankooty Eviction (February 10, 2012) and other similar evictions in the district.

\textsuperscript{80}Dis. 1910/ 40/Dev., Dated 04/04/1940.
sanction was given for the lease of survey numbers 783/29 and 783/15 and 16 of Edamangalam Village within Kodumon South Block reserve on Kuthakapattom to the occupants. Government of Travancore announced the policy of leasing out forest lands to individuals, Cooperative Societies, Syndicates and Associations.\textsuperscript{81} All swampy areas including those in inaccessible interior parts of reserve forest were thrown open for cultivation. Government issued orders making available swamps in Deviculam, Peermadu and other taluks, grassy areas in minor Reserves and grassy areas over 2,000 ft. in elevation in the taluks as of Deviculam, Peermadu and Thodupuzha, an aggregate of 24,000 acres for cultivation of food crops.\textsuperscript{82} Further clarifications in this regard, released road margins and river valleys without any survey. During 1947- 48 District Committees were formed for distribution of forests land for cultivation. In most cases land were allotted in the names of leaders of groups in order to expedite the work of allotment.

In the name of urgency of food situation sanction was given for land available for cultivation in the taints of Peermadu and Deviculam being given under Kuthakapattom rules.\textsuperscript{83} A Commissioner was specially appointed in Deviculam in charge of allotment of land on Kuthakapattom in the two taluks.\textsuperscript{84} In the meanwhile, about 2,500 acres near Ayyappancoil and about 4,000 acres on either side of the Kumily - Devikulam road had been given under the High

\textsuperscript{81} Press Communication issued on 20-10-1942.
\textsuperscript{82} G.P.R.O.C. 11774/ 42/Dev., Dated 24/11/1942.
\textsuperscript{83} G. O. No. LRA-8727/49/RD., Dated 28/12/1949.
\textsuperscript{84} G. O. L R. 4-8727/49 RD. Dated 11/02/1950 and LR-48727/49 RD. Dated 03/03/1951.
Range Reclamation Scheme by the Chairman of the Food Induction Board in 1950.\textsuperscript{85} As expected this offhand, disposal of land attracted many land grabbers. No records are available in many Divisions even to find out official figures of lands thus leased out so that it can be assumed that such encroachments could be unauthorized.

At a conference held in the Secretariat at Trivandrum on 26-12-1949 it was decided that the availability of forest lands for permanent assignment should be investigated.\textsuperscript{86} Reports were accordingly obtained from the Forest Department and the Anti-Erosion Committee. Government passed orders sanctioning permanent exclusion from reserve forest of 30,714 acres.\textsuperscript{87} Government did not stop with the above order but continued the policy of granting leases. Leases including those to various organizations like the N. S. S. and S.N.D.P. continued until it was ordered that lands should not be given to organizations.\textsuperscript{88} This brought about a difficult and uncontrollable situation and so the Government ordered that such lands should be given in small bits to actual cultivators. It was further ordered that areas under bonafide leases should be vacated by the Forest Department as and when feasible.\textsuperscript{89} The Revenue Department was afterwards to sanction fresh leases for 20 years

\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Report of the Sub-Committee appointed by the Consultative Committee on Kerala Legislation to Study the Question of Eviction of Encroachers from the Forest lands in the State of Kerala}, Chapter I, 1964, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{87} G.O.D. Dis. 5122/1951-DD., Dated 16/06/1951.
\textsuperscript{88} G.O.R. Dis. 4692/51 FD., Dated 15/09/1952.
\textsuperscript{89} G.O.F. 1-5295/1 FD-D Dated 05/02/1953.
periods, subject to the condition that the maximum extent per family should be 5 acres.\(^90\) It was in 1954 that the need for stopping this dangerous drift and taking positive restrictive measures were felt. In 1954, it was ordered that in case of unauthorized occupants whether by encroachment or by transfer or assignment, the question of lease of land to the occupant would be considered only after payment of rent for the whole period of occupation at the rate of Rs. 7 per acre.\(^91\) Such occupants will be eligible for assignment of lands occupied by them only if they are resident cultivators. In no case, will the extent of assignment exceed an economic holding. A special Officer in the grade of District Collector was sanctioned for survey and settlement.

It will be useful here to describe the state of forest areas known as Cardamom Hill Reserve comprising an area of 334 sq. miles and situated in Deviculam, Udumbanchola and Peermadu taluks. This area was under the dual control of the Forest and Revenue Departments. But the control over the entire land was transferred to the Revenue Department, Forest Department relating control over only the tree growth.\(^92\) It was ordered that the entire area of Cardamom hills Reserve should be surveyed and demarcated and all the encroachments therein should be dealt with according to the principles laid down as per the Government policy.\(^93\) These stipulations were, however, confined to land under cardamom cultivation and no instructions were given

\(^{90}\) Personal Interview with Kunjappan Thadathil, on 07/11/2011.
\(^{93}\) Idem.
regarding land occupied otherwise regarding which the system of dual control left both the Revenue and forest Departments hesitant and indifferent. Meanwhile large areas in Cardamom Hills Reserve were also given away either on lease or for colonization purposes. Later, Government ordered to survey of all areas under occupation. The survey party did some work in Ayyappancoil and Vadanmadu areas but the survey records were never completed. Thus except for some evergreen patches covering cardamom cultivation, almost the entire C. H. R. came under miscellaneous occupation.

It had also been ordered that in the case of Forest lands the question whether they should be classified as revertible or non-revertible to Forest Department should be decided. After this further discussions were held in a Conference at Kottayam and it was decided that the revertible and non-revertible areas in the Forest Reserve under unobjectionable occupation should be handed over to the Revenue Department for being leased out under Kuthakapatton rules. About 34,100 acres of occupied areas (allotments as well as encroachments) in C.H.R. in Kottayam Division were declared non-revertible and handed over to the Revenue Department in 1956.

Subsequently, on a report of the Board of Revenue that further areas if 12,000 acres would be available in the taluks of Deviculam and Peermadu for transfer to the Revenue Department. The Government decided to continue all

94 Roy P. Thomas, Op. Cit., p (Also see appendix)
96 G.O.L.R. 5-5569/54/RD., Dated the 22/06/1954, p. 2.
leases provisionally till the end of March, 1956 on condition that for all land to be de-reserved, rent of Rs. 3.8 per acre for dry land and Rs. 7 per acre for wet land should be collected. Subsequently, Government took stock of the entire position and concluded that about 60,000 acres (100 sq. miles) of reserve forests had come under occupation out of which 54,000 acres were more or less on the periphery of the forest and 6,000 acres were pockets inside reserve forest. Government ordered that from this 6,000 acres occupants should be evicted.98

On 3 - 6 -1957 Government issued a Press Release to the effect that all available forest land had already been given out for habitation and that encroachments of forest lands after 1- 4 -1957 would be viewed seriously. In July, 1957 Government constituted the popular committees on a range basis in order to demarcate on a permanent basis, without disturbing the poor landless cultivators who had developed the land by being in possession before 26 - 4 -1957. The department was left free to take steps against encroachers after 1- 4 -1957. The Department took action and with Police help they evicted a few families.99

Government approved a scheme for survey and demarcation of forest areas and sanctioned three regional development officers for this work.100 In

98 G.O. DIS 2759/56/RD., Dated 12/05/1956.
99 Report of the Sub-Committee appointed by the Consultative Committee on Kerala Legislation to Study the Question of Eviction of Encroachers from the Forest lands in the State of Kerala, Chapter I, 1964, p. 4.
100 G.O.M.S. 134/61-AD., Dated 18/02/1961.
1961 the area immediately required for forest conservation was defined and instructions for eviction operations were issued and evictions took place and the evicted persons were rehabilitated in Amaravathy and some other places like Ottakathalamedu, Vannapuram, Mundakkayam etc.  

The foregoing account tries to present the historical importance of the district, the factors led to the peopling of the district and the policies of the government that acted as the catalyst in migration to the district. The Migrants, the poor tillers of the soil were not the actual owners of the land. Under peculiar circumstances as stated elsewhere in the study, they migrated to Idukki, and started cultivation by clearing forest. However, it was contrary to the law of the land and the government policy, although the government had promoted migration at times due to a variety of reasons. The government decided to evict families forcibly from Ayyappankovil and Churuli-Keerithodu in the name of developmental projects and for maintenance of forest area as stated before, violating all norms of eviction. Alarmed at this, there arose demands for legislation in favour of tenurial rights, but of no use. It led to dissent, protest and resistance of the peasants at Amaravathy. Further, eviction took place at Churuli-Keerithodu. These agrarian discontents overflowed in the form of dissent, protest and resistances and got full political support from the left wing political parties, owing to the political undercurrents of the period under study.

\textsuperscript{101} G. O. M. S. 385/61 Agri., Dated 27/04/1961.
Naturally, resettlement of the evicted and the displaced population of the two major locations at Ayyappancoil and Churuli-Keerithodu that emerged a burning issue is analysed in detail in the next chapter.