

PUSH AND PULL THEORY- A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MIGRATION TO IDDUKKI FROM THE CENTRAL TRAVANCORE

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Introduction

“Migration for land and mobility and the consequent expansion of the agriculture to the previously untamed areas has been an important facet of modern Kerala History.”¹ The social, economic, demographic, cultural and religious ambience of the modern Kerala was very much conducive to the process of migration. The present state of Kerala was divided into three independent princely states under the paramountcy of the British Empire namely Travancore, Kochin and Malabar in those days. Both the British and the rulers of princely states were introducing administrative policies primarily for their benefits and the welfare of the people was only a secondary concern for them. The life of people was miserable in a way mainly because of the negligence of the welfare concerns by the rulers of the state. People were struggling hard to make their both ends meet even in the case of basic necessities. So their major concerns were feeding their stomach and thus eradication of the poverty, increase of the quality of life etc. This basic instinct for upliftment made them to think about economic development. In the context of an agricultural economy, economic development means the expansion of agriculture. For the expansion of the agriculture the cultivators need more cultivable land and the search for cultivable land lead to migration.

In the annals of the history of Kerala we can see two major lines of migration especially from the then state of Travancore in particular from the Central Travancore region. One line of migration was to the highlands of the state of Travancore that is the high ranges, of modern civil district of Iddukki. The second line of migration was to the Malabar region that is to the present districts of Kannur, Kasargod and Kozhikode. Here in this paper we are trying to analyse the process of migration to Iddukki from the central Travancore area in the light of Push and Pull theory of Migration. The paper primarily concentrates on the factors and situations that provoked the people to migrate from the central Travancore and the factors that attracted the people to choose Iddukki as the destination of their migration.

Migration – A General Outline

Migration is the movement of people from the place of their origin to any other with a view to settle down there. It is the permanent or semi permanent change of residence in simple terms and no restriction is imposed upon the distance of the move or the voluntary or involuntary nature of the move. This process should not be considered as something unique instead it has to be understood in the context of the process of evolution against stagnation. Migration is not something that happens naturally “Migration is a response of the human organisation to social, economic and demographic forces of the environment.”² There are various social, economic, political, demographic and other factors behind every migratory movement. “Migration may be defined as a form of relocation diffusion (the spread of people, ideas, innovations, behaviours from one place to another) involving permanent moves to new locations.”³ “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.”⁴ As stated in the introduction a desire for upliftment in social life or betterment of life.

Push and Pull Theory of Migration

Push and Pull theory of migration is an important one among the theories of migration. It is a neo classical theory which mainly deals with the social, economic, political, cultural, geographical, climatic conditions that exist in the place of the origin of migration and the place of destination. Naturally people move from a densely populated area to a less populated area, from a low income to a high income area or link migrations to fluctuations in the business cycle. Everett Spurgeon Lee Professor of Sociology at the University

¹V.J.Varghese, *Yielding to the Divine Will? Agricultural Migrations and its Religious Moralities in Modern Kerala*, proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol 77 (2016), p 1113.

²Suneesh K.K, *The Marginalized in Revolt: Capital and Migration: Tenurial Rights in Idukki in 1961-1972*, Un-Published PhD Thesis, submitted to the Department of History, S.S.U.S Kalady, 2016, p 68.

³Everette Lee, *A Theory of Migration*, in *Demography*, Vol 3 No.1, 1966, P 44.

⁴Ravinder Kumar Kaul, *Migration and Society- A Study of Displaced Kashmir Pandits*, Ruwat, 2005, p.2.

of Georgia is known for his contribution to the theoretical framework of Migration. His contribution is known as Push and Pull theory of Migration or Lee's theory. This theory provides a scheme of factors that can explain the migratory movement from the place of origin to the destination. Lee has conceptualized the factors associated with the migration process under four categories namely,

1. Factors associated with the area of origin.
2. Factors associated with the area of destination.
3. Intervening obstacles.
4. Personal Factors⁵

Lee explains all these four categories by pointing out that in each area there are various factors which drive the people away from the area or hold the people in the area or to attract the people to it. There are significant differences in the factors associated with the place of origin and destination. Intervening obstacles include distance, transportation, communication etc while the personal factors are particular to each person.⁶ Push factors are those associated with the area of origin of the migrants. Those factors necessitate the movement of people from their home land to another place. Pull factors are those associated with the area of destination. Pull factors are the features of a place which attract the people to that particular area. This theory deals with the diverse situations that exist in the home land and the land to be migrated. All the major migrations took place in the world can easily be analyzed in the light of this theory.

Migration to Iddukki

Iddukki is one of the civil districts of Kerala formed in the year 1972 carving out Devikulam, Peerumedu, Udumbanchola Taluks from the district of Kottayam and the Taluk of Thodupuzha from the district of Ernakulam. "The high ranges vary in altitude from 2500 feet above mean sea level in Kulamavu to more than 5000 feet above mean sea level in Munnar"⁷ Till the time of British colonial rule in this particular area the region was a thick forest. The colonial masters came to the area and cleared the forest for plantations in large scale using mainly the labour force they brought from the neighbouring state of Tamil Nadu. The first group of people who have reached to the area were those who came to work in the colonial plantations. It is only after 1940's people begun to come to this area for settling down with a view of establishing agriculture there. This large scale movement of the people or the migration was mainly from the central Travancore area. There was a gradual transformation of a dense forest geographical area into human habitat. The Migration that begun and slowly accelerated made tremendous changes in the geography of the area and it created a new culture to the area.

1. Push Factors in the Migration to Iddukki

From 1940 onwards there were large scale movement of the people from the central Travancore to Iddukki. The people who decided to move had sufficient reasons for doing so. The first half of the 20th century was not a favourable time for the people in the Travancore because poverty was increasing, population was increasing, area of cultivable land for each family was decreasing, adverse effects of the first and Second World War, the adverse effects of British colonial rule etc. All these and many other reasons paved way for the historic migration of the people from the mid lands of Travancore to the High Ranges. Let us look into the major reasons

1.1. Economic Problems

One of the major causes of migration to Iddukki was economic. During the period of First World War (1914-1919) the economic crisis reached at its peak in the Travancore. The impact of economic crisis especially to the poor people was detrimental. The increasing price of essential commodities and the unavailability of it in the market aggravated the situation. During the Second World War Burma came under the control of Japan and that led to the stoppage of rice from Burma leading to the high prices for food grains. "In 1930's adding to the woes of the people, the world wide economic depression gripped the economy of Kerala. A fall in food prices combined with inflation broke the back bone of the peasants. The price of cash crops like pepper and other spices took a down turn. Fall in agricultural prices, increase of agricultural debt, severe unemployment, famine, malnutrition diseases etc became the order of the day."⁸ There was considerable decrease in the price of pepper, rubber and other cash crops which were produced by them. The trade was also going down day by day and the fall of the prices of the agricultural products lead to shrinkages in the value of both exports and imports. In short the economic crisis in Travancore was very severe and people were struggling hard to find their ways of livelihood and that compelled them to find new avenues of income generation. This situation led them to search for more cultivable land because the economy was completely depended on agriculture.

⁵Push and Pull Factors and Lee's Theory of Migration at <http://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in>, E.Pathsala, accessed on 17th February

⁶Lee E.S, *A Theory of Migration*, in *Demography*, 1966, p 48 in <https://doi.org/10.2307/2060063> accessed on 17th February.

⁷District Hand Books of Kerala, Idukki, Department of Public Relations: Government of Kerala, 1986, p.2.

⁸V.J.Varghese, *Land Labour and Migration: Understanding Kerala's Economic Modernity*, Working Paper Series 420, p 44.

1.2. Demographic Pressure

First half of the 20th century witnessed a considerable increase in the population in Travancore which led to poverty and unemployment. The increase in the population also increased the demand for food as well as demand for cultivable land. The existing cultivable land became insufficient for the increasing population. The below given table will make things more precise

Percentage of increase in the Population of Travancore from 1901-1941

Census Figures			Graduate Figures		
Year	Population	Percentage Increase	Population	Percentage Increase	Percentage of Error
1901	2952157	--	2943229	--	0.30
1911	3428975	16.2	3430003	16.5	0.03
1921	4006062	16.8	4080664	18.9	1.83
1931	5095973	27.2	4952734	21.4	2.89
1941	6070018	19.1	6130245	23.8	0.98

Source: Census of India, Vol. 25, Travancore P 13

This table gives us a picture about the increase in the population. The increase of population necessitated more cultivable land and that triggered the process of migration. The economy of Travancore was basically an agrarian economy so land was very much important for well being. The amount of cultivable land each one possesses determines the economic capacity. So when people heard of the availability of the uncultivated land in Iddukki without thinking about anything else they had begun to move to there.

1.3. Patrilineal Inheritance System

The Syrian Christian⁹ community were one of the major religious communities in central Travancore. The Syrian Christians in the Travancore followed the Patrilineal inheritance system according to it the paternal property was distributed among the male children in the family. During the time of marriage the girls were given certain amount of money and jewels as *sthreedhanam* and with that they lose their rights over the paternal property. Due to the inheritance law among the Christians the land was divided equally among the male children of the family. This division of the land created a situation of scarcity of cultivable land. A community completely depends on agriculture need land for cultivation and the absence of the sufficient cultivable land paved way for a crisis situation. This has made people to think about moving to different geographical location where land is available. "I have nine children and the land available for cultivation is only jus half acre. Then I came to know about the possibilities migration to Malabar and thus I moved to Malabar."¹⁰ Though this reference is about Malabar migration the fact of the scarcity of land was true behind the Iddukki Migration too. Along with this crisis situation there was a rise in the price of the land. "Due to the inflation of money there was a sharp rise in the price of land and the people sold their lands in Travancore at high prices and which enabled them to acquire more land in Idukki."¹¹

1.4. Land Tenures in Travancore

Agriculture was the main income generating activity of the people of Travancore. The fertile soil and the favourable climatic conditions prevailing there made agriculture much beneficial. "Till the beginning of the 19th century Travancorians concentrated their attention towards staple products only. They cultivated paddy, Rubber, Ginger, Pepper etc. When the population increased traditional agricultural pattern changed and people begun to cultivate food crops as well as cash crops."¹²

There was complete instability regarding the ownership of the land during those days in Travancore. The peasants who were working hard in the land had no rights over it, they were only mere tenets. The peasants were completely at the mercy of the land owners. According to William Logan "Tenants lived in perpetual fear of eviction, that most of the *ryots* were chronically in debt, and that the tenants were increasingly being reduced to the position of *Verumpattamdar* holding land on a year to year basis and on rack renting terms and were being driven to the limits of starvation."¹³

⁹Syrian Christian community is one of the Christian denominations in Kerala who had a very strong basis in the culture, economy, politics and society of Kerala. They claim to be the descendents of St. Thomas one of the 12 apostles of Jesus Christ who came to India in AD 52.

¹⁰K.K. Subair, "Mamalayodum Padavetti Mannil Kanakam Vilayichy, Ranipuram Kudiyettam@ 50' www.mathrubhumi.com, accessed on 9th Feb, 2022.

¹¹Kuravilangad Joseph, 'Kudiyettathinde Vzhyyile Chadikkuzhikal' Koodaranji Edavakayude Suvarna Jubilee Smaranika, 1949-1999, p 45.

¹²S. Mahadevan Nadar, 'Commercialization of Agricultural Products and the New Economic Order in Travancore 1860-1900', Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol. VII, Mar-June-Sep-Dec, Part 1-4, pp 215-216.

¹³K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State, Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921*, p.104.

Land had categorized under two different heads in Travancore namely *Pandaravaka* and *Puravaka*. "Pandaravaka means lands where *sircar* is in the position of a land lord and which are held by the riots on various kinds of tenures derived from the government."¹⁴ The *Puravaka* land belonged to the private owners while the other was owned by the ruler. The *Puravaka* lands were also known as *Janmam* lands which were owned by the Brahmin *Janmis*. The real tillers of the land were working hard and they were compelled to contribute a major share of their hard work as *Pattam* to the owner. They were struggling hard to make their both ends meet and so they had nothing to keep for the next year.

The Royal Proclamation of 1865 by the Rajah of Travancore gave the holders full proprietary rights. The land was made private, saleable, heritable, and transferable and a commodity to be bought and sold. This has opened a situation of land transfers and immediately the Nair Jenmis sold out their lands and the Syrian Christians purchased it enormously. Even though, the demographic pressure created a situation of scarcity of cultivable land. The Royal proclamation of 1865 gave proprietary rights of the land to the cultivators. This has made land a commodity to be bought and sold. So the Syrian Christians the then land owning community in the Central Travancore begun to sell the land to buy more cultivable land in places where land is available at a cheaper rate. The search for land triggered the process of migration. The *Kuttahakapatta Vilambaram*¹⁵ and the later government orders¹⁶ made the waste lands and meadows in Peerumedu and Devikulam available for cultivation food crops which also attracted many people to migrate to this area. The changes in the land policies in Travancore initiated by the government were acted as a catalyst for the process of migration.

1.5. Hydro Electric Projects

Iddukki District because of its geographical peculiarities has become a hub of hydro electric projects. These hydro electric projects contribute almost 80% of the power production of the state. The construction and maintenance of these dams required a large amount of labour force. That turned to be one of the reasons for migration ie, labour requirement. There are 16 dams in total in the district and 13 are in the high ranges. Majority of these were constructed in the second half of the 20th century. The technology and the scientific machinery expertness were not in a very advanced during those days. Manual Labour force was used very much for the construction and necessitated more people and that ended up in the migration of large number of people especially from the central Travancore to the High Ranges. Due to the lack of communication and transportation facilities the labours that came for the work brought their families too and that lead to the establishment of human settlements initially in the vicinity of the dam sights. Later on few have returned to their home land once the construction of the dam is over but majority of them remained back and moved from the initial settlements to the more fertile and cultivable lands.

2. Pull Factors in the Migration to Iddukki

Pull factors are opposite to the push factors which attract the people to a new location. Some of the general examples may be easy availability of land for cultivation and settling down, better living conditions, better welfare measures etc. There were certain factors that definitely turned the situation favourable for migration in Iddukki.

2.1 Grow More Food Programme

Second World War (1939-1945) had a tremendous impact on the lives of the people all over the world especially in India since India being a colony of Britain. The country was gradually falling down to abject poverty. Lakhs of people have lost their lives because of the extreme poverty which they were undergoing. Along with the impact of the second war various other problems also emerged during this time and that made the situation worst. "The outbreak of the second world war, failure of the monsoon, famines, natural calamities, agricultural policy and the administration of the then British Government in Madras Presidency were the causes of the genesis of Grow More Food Campaign."¹⁷ In order to solve the scarcity of the food grains the then food minister of the Travancore Mr. Ikkandavarier came out with a new project in collaboration with the people which is known as Grow More Food Project.¹⁸ Government was releasing certain amount of land from the forest department and brought it under the supervision of the revenue department. The land brought under the revenue department was given to the people for cultivation. "Mr. N.S. Krishnapillai was appointed as the commissioner for land distribution in the Taluks of Deviculum and Peerumedu."¹⁹ The farmers who were given the land were asked to cultivate food crops and were instructed to return certain amount of paddy to the government to be distributed through the public distribution system. "According to the project 600 allotments of land including 5

¹⁴Velupillai, T.K., Sadasyatilaka, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol IV, P.180.

¹⁵Dis-1910/40/Dev dtd.04/04/1940.

¹⁶G.O.Roc-11774/42/Dev, Dtd-24/11/1942.

¹⁷N.Subrahmanyam, 'Grow More Food Campaign in the Madras Presidency', in K.K.Kusman (ed.), South Indian History Congress 12th Session, Karnataka, 1993, p.123.

¹⁸GO LR4 8727/49/2RD Dtd 28/12/1943

¹⁹K.S.Francis, *Ayyappancovilile Erumadathilninnu Jaithrayathra*, (Mal), Deepika, 2000 January 18, p 4.

acre each were distributed in Vandammedu, Kunthalampara and Kalthotty.”²⁰ This campaign had attracted the attention of many people and there was large scale migration to the area. The availability of the land under the auspicious of the government itself was a great push factor for migration. “Consequently the Total Population of the region which was 172424 in 1951 increased rapidly to 412374 in 1961 and 546104 in 1971 rewarding an increase of more than 215 percent within a period of two decades.”²¹

2.2. High Range Colonization Scheme

High Range colonization scheme was introduced by the Travancore Government in 1954 to encourage settlement of families in the selected areas of the High Range. The Tamil speaking people had great influence in the boundary areas especially during 1948-1955. The Tamils lived there were looting the forest resources from this area and they have been trying to bring the area under their control. “In the context of the linguistic reorganization of states after the independence of India there were lots of protests in various parts of Kerala and Tamilnadu. The Tamil people wanted to make the high ranges especially the boundary areas part of their state because of the richness of that area. The government of Kerala wanted to avoid this and for that they have given up few taluks in the southernmost part of Kerala and Peerumedu and Deviculum Taluks were held.

The then chief minister of Tiru-Kochi state Sri Pattam Thanupillai had foreseen the possibility of these areas being adjoined to the state of Tamilnadu in the context of the linguistic reorganization of the states. In order to avoid this situation he had decided to establish the colonies of Malayalam speaking people in the areas where the influence of the Tamil Speaking people is at high. The high Range colonization Scheme²² was the project introduced for the same. They decided to establish colonies in Kallar, Kanthallor, Marayoor, Kottakkamboor, Vattavada etc and settle Malayaless there. The government officially announced the news of dispensing the land via news papers and it was responded immediately by large number of people. The offer was 5 acres of land and 2000 rupees each. “The original proposal was to settle about 8000 families of landless agricultural labourers in the area of 40000 acres of land.”²³ “The occupants were given an area about 5 acres to each and financial assistance to the tune of 2000 by way of interest free of loans for house construction, cultivation, purchase of cow and agricultural implements with an estimated expenditure of Rs 233.5 lakhs.”²⁴

As a result of this scheme there was a flow of people to the particular area. Four colonies were established initially in Kallar, Kanthallor, Marayoor, Deviyar. The first colony was inaugurated at Kallar in 1955 January 20 and later on other colonies were also established. The initial inhabitants of this area had to fight with the wild animals and the adverse extreme climatic conditions. Many of them could not resist to it and they left everything there itself and gone back to their native areas. In order to reduce the drop outs from the colonies the EMS Government had announced financial incentives in the form of interest free loans as well as loans with a provision of non repayment etc and this has become a great attraction for many people. “When the people in the colonies were settled well there and others who came to know about it begun to come to the place in search of land but they were not allotted land by the government. This paved way for the unauthorized encroachment in and outside of the land specified for the same.”²⁵ This particular project triggered the process of migration from Travancore to the High Ranges.

2.3. Availability of Fertile and Cultivable Land

The most attractive factor for the aspiring migrants to choose Iddukki as their destination was the availability of the fertile cultivable land. “The people in the central Travancore came to know in the end of the first half of the 20th century about the virgin lands available in the high ranges. They were actually facing the problem of the scarcity of cultivable land in the Travancore.”²⁶ Prior to the large scale migration to Iddukki vast majority of the area was covered with dense forest. Since there had no cultivation at all the land was virgin and very much fertile. The repeated cultivation of same crops may reduce the fertility of the soil but it had not happened. So that was also a pull factor that attracted the people to move to there.

Conclusion

Migration is a normal but vital process in the course of History. From the very beginning of the history the primitive nomadic people prior to the development of the settled life were kept on migrating always from place to place in search of better living conditions. In the light of the Migration Theory of Everett Lee this movement of the primitive men was also caused by certain factors and the new place they have chosen had certain peculiarities which attracted them. Here in the case of Migration to Iddukki from the central Travancore also the theory is well suitable. The people had lot of difficulties in Travancore especially in the mid of 20th

²⁰Kurias J, *Highranginte Kudiyetta Charithram*, AKCC Iddukki, 2012 December, p 108.

²¹Census 1961 *Kerala State: District Census Hand Book-Kottayam Vol 1*, SGP Govt Press 1965.

²²G.O.A- 7171/54/FD Dated 01/10/1954.

²³G.O.L.R 5-5569/54/RD Dated 22/06/1954.

²⁴G.O.L.R 5-5570/54/RD/Dated on 22/06/1955.

²⁵J.Kurias, *Highranginte Kudiyetta Charithram*, AKCC Iddukki, 2012 December, p 116.

²⁶J.Kurias, *Highranginte Kudiyetta Charithram*, AKCC Iddukki, 2012 December, p 27.

century and the then dream land had lot to attract them. So they moved to Iddukki with a hope and dream of a better tomorrow and the same has realized in varying degrees in the course of years. Definitely this movement of the people had brought lot of progress to the society. Initially there were no restrictions for migration from the part of the government because that was the need of the time even for government. Today after 60 or 70 years those early migrants have been accused as illegal migrants and consider them as the destructors of the environment. Looking the whole process of migration from the context it happened this allegation cannot be justified on any grounds. Those people have invested everything including their life there indirectly for the well being of the society too.