

School of Social Sciences  
MAHATMAGANDHI UNIVERSITY

Village Sustainable Development  
KRPLLD Project REPORT

Kottayam, 1999

## **Village Sustainable Development**

This is the Report of an action Project that sought to mobilise idle labour in an economically backward village with a view to achieving local level development. The paradoxical co-existence of labour shortage at various sites of rural services and the growth of idle labour in the villages was the problem the Project addressed itself. A preliminary study conducted by the School of Social Sciences on the extent of the contradictory situation of unemployment was the basis for the construction of a hypothesis for the Project to test. The Project involved two components: the theoretical or academic part and the action or the praxis part. The academic part is divided into the macro and micro aspects viz. the labour market situation in Kerala and socio-economic profile of the Project Village. So the Report is presented here in three sections. The first section deals with the Project, its hypothesis, strategies, activities, working, achievements, lessons and the current state of affairs. The second section deals with the academic studies that provided the theoretical foundation of the action project.

### **Section I : The Project**

The Action of the Project involved mobilisation, organisation, conscientisation, training, co-operativisation, registration, institutionalisation and operationalisation of a team of educated unemployed in the Mallooserry village of the Kumaranallur Panchayath and the Kottayam District.

#### **The Hypothesis**

The major assumptions about the paradoxical co-existence of labour shortage in the case of certain rural occupations and local idle labour were centred round the socially contingent unemployability of the educated. The educated unemployed are by and large unemployable, for they have secured no skills through education. Their education is too inadequate to have them equipped for an urban occupation. It is all the more inadequate for rural arts and crafts. Education has completely deskilled even those of them hailing from the family background of traditional occupations. We have assumed that to a great extent this unemployability is attitudinal and caused by factors like social contempt for manual labour, inferiority of the daily wage system, service insecurity, and uncertainty of the rural labour market. Our preliminary studies confirmed the assumptions. We have further been convinced that the social status of employment rested on its reward in the form of monthly salary, service security, leave benefits, permanency and instituted nature. Hence the lack of labour dignity about being a free individual labourer on hire. Though theoretically labour becomes encumbered and institution bound under the

salaried system, it is preferred by all to the free wage earning system which is highly insecure, unsteady and unattended to in the Country. So our hypothesis has been that the educated idle labour of a locality could be mobilised if we could adopt appropriate strategies for resolving the aforesaid attitudinal and other problems. The Project tried the following experimental strategies to confront the situation:

### **Strategies**

- ◆ To experimentally organise an enterprising team of the educated unemployed and train them in various services after ascertaining the local demand of arts, crafts and other skilled/unskilled labour.
- ◆ To conscientise them through continuous counselling to develop ability to fight inhibitions for being self-reliant and materially sustain the state of mind through institutional banner, uniform dress, better working conditions, facilities of sophisticated tools.
- ◆ To structure the trained workers into the instituted framework of a co-operative society and help them run the registered Society as a job contracting body by providing the facility of an office at the School of Social Sciences in order to secure work orders initially from the University and subsequently from the local community.
- ◆ To enrol them as regular workers and reward them under the monthly salary system through the registered Society.
- ◆ To provide financial support for maintaining a reasonable salary structure during the experimental phase and subsequently taper off the support as the Society tends to become cost-effective.
- ◆ To persuade the local administration to sustain the body of workers as a replicable popular method of resolving the problem of the educated unemployed in the economically backward villages.

### **Review of Activities**

The Project became operational by 17 January with the initial paper works, appointment of a field motivator, constitution of an advisory committee with the Vice Chancellor and people's representatives as patrons. We completed the activities of publicising the project objectives in order to evoke wider social response and selecting the clientele, by the end of the month. Short-listed as thirteen (ten female and three male) out of 147 applicants the target group represent the economically backward dependants with (no skill) to earn their living. The following were the main activities:

#### **1. Conscientisation Sessions**

Conscientisation classes were arranged initially for a week and subsequently one-hour each everyday for the next three months. Interaction and group review under the leadership of the Project Assistant. Conscientisation classes were arranged not in a usual classroom since it might stiffen further their inclination to white colour jobs. Our goal was to provide the trainees self-confidence in fighting the socially contingent inhibitions. Training in doing manual labour was imparted in the conscientisation classes. It was an organised effort of mental preparation and cultivation of volunteering habit. We yearned to develop in them a readiness to take up any job without any false notion about labour

dignity and with a real desire to be boldly on one's own legs. Regular and intimate discussions on the social origins of various inhibitions and false notions were effectively tried. The classes were so planned as to be totally different from sermons helping them know their objective conditions as plainly as possible by all efforts to render modern knowledge plausible in simple parlance. Most of the things entered their minds. But to get it realised through their behaviour and practice is not that easy. The use of audio-visual aids would have been a little more effective. However, some kind of awareness certainly made them different from what they used to be.

## **2. Civil Works Training**

Civil works Training was offered as a general training programme for all which was offered as one week basics and one week practical for a period of three months. After that advanced civil works practice was offered at the University Campus for a month. Then self-learning by doing construction works was arranged intermittently for a month at the campus of the School of Social Sciences. Specialised training to select candidates in masonry and construction works was given. Five persons (three females and two males) succeeded in acquiring professional competence in masonry.

## **3. Aluminium Fabrication**

Aluminium fabrication was another trade in which specialised training was offered. The basics about the craft were offered for all for one week and subsequently specialised training for the select four persons with aptitude for a period of two weeks. That included training in the execution of different kinds of aluminium fabrication/installation works. In the process one person emerged with professional competence in the trade.

## **4. Training in Chair Matting**

Training in Chair matting was offered for all for a period of two weeks in the basics. Subsequently for another two weeks arrangement was made for the practice of learning by doing oneself without anybody's help. A further specialised training was given to a selected six persons for another two weeks at the School of Social Sciences under an instructor. Seven persons (one male and six females) came out professionally competent after the training.

## **5. Training in Minor Electrical Works**

A one-week training was given for all in the basics of minor electrical works. Subsequently for a select few specialised training were given for another week in wiring and installation. Two workers (all males) turned out to be relatively well skilled in the trade.

## **6. Training in Screen Printing**

Two persons (one male and one female) were given training in screen printing for a month at an Institute. The trained workers in their turn trained a larger team consisting of eight members. As a team they became confident to undertake and execute printing jobs. The School of Social Sciences provided enough space with the essential set up of printing for the workers to undertake assignments on a commercial basis.

## **7. Outstation Exposure**

A two-day outstation training in and exposure to the co-operative endeavours of the marginal communities were given to all by taking them to Peerumed. The training was imparted under the initiative of the Peerumed Development Society. The trainees were given exposure to situations of challenges. As a contact programme it enabled the trainees to interact with the cooperativised tribal communities in the area.. They were encouraged to gain acquaintance with the tribal people to learn from first hand experience. It was an eye opener to them.

## **8. PRA Training**

A brief PRA training was arranged at the focal village primarily with a view to facilitating better social interaction between the Project workers and the local community. It was intended for rendering the Project workers some knowledge about the resources and requirements of their locality. It was further expected that this would facilitate local mobilisation for gaining social recognition for the trainees.

## **9. Preparation of Uniform Dress for the Workers**

A special uniform dress was prepared for the Project Workers. This was a part of the strategy to fight the workers' inhibition to manual/wage labour induced by social misconceptions about the dignity of labour. The uniform dress which is symbolic of official and formal institutional set up makes the Workers feel themselves different from the ordinary wage earners.

## **10. Preparation of a Tool Box**

A toolbox containing all instruments essential for the trades in which the workers were trained, was prepared enabling Workers' to launch themselves into the field of contracting services. The box was made to consist of sophisticated tools enhancing the dignity of the workers and helping them develop better self-respect.

## **11. Training in Work Contract**

A brief training was given in the execution of minor contract works of various kinds, which come within their trades. Such training was found essential to develop initiative in securing contract assignments. The training aimed at enhancing the competence of the workers to slowly develop resourcefulness to survive despite the dominance of local contractors.

## **12. Registration of Malloossery Gramodyoga Sangham**

The Project workers were organised into a registered society called **Malloossery Gramodyoga Sangham** with its own rules and regulations. The School of Social Sciences provided an office set up for the **Sangham** and the workers structured as its functionaries in rotation were made to run it. None of them was allowed to be full time office keepers as distinguished from those in the job-fields.

## **13. Social Contact Programme**

A social gathering was arranged to formally place the trained workers at the disposal of the local society in order to secure work opportunities and credibility. This was planned

to be achieved through social mobilisation. Two Workshops and bimonthly Advisory Committee Meetings were organised with the same goals.

#### **14. Self-reliance Training**

The Project did not have many staff. The only permanent person looking after the working of the Project was a research assistant at the School of Social Sciences. Others involved in the Project were hired as and when their services were required. One of the objectives was making the trainees self-reliant. They were made to look after the matters all by themselves. Necessary support was given to them for surmounting the initial difficulties in acting on their own by hoping that over the days they would acquire better efficiency.

#### **Working of the Project**

Project activities were mostly smooth and problem free. Training was very easy in the initial phase since the construction sites at the University Campus provided it under the supervision and input support of the University Engineer. The trainees were least inhibited to go ahead with their work despite the teasing and sneering of the professionals, thanks to the conscientisation classes. But soon the training slipped into the trap of exploitation and the Project authorities had to intervene. The contractors became non-co-operative and hence we had to wind up the training programme at the construction site. We shifted to the School of Social Sciences and tried to secure independent work orders for minor works at the School's campus. This became difficult since the PWD contract stipulations necessitated a solvency certificate to recognise the Society as an eligible contractor. The workers had not become competent enough to work on their own. They soon required more training. To train them further we required construction materials. But soon the Project resolved it by launching the programme of training the workers at the School of Social Sciences Campus under the tutelage of local artisans and craftsmen. Learning by doing registered remarkable progress within a very short duration of time. Those who secured training in aluminium fabrication got opportunities to work in the University Campus. But by branding the workers as trainees, the contractors tended to exploit these workers too.

After the training phase the Project went ahead with the programme of taking minor contract works. The University gave the **Malloosery Gramodyyoga Sangham** the contract for chair matting work which involved the matting, repairing and framing the seats and backs of about one hundred and sixty chairs. Simultaneously the **Sangham** undertook chair and cot matting/repairing works from the local households too. The workers had to be continuously motivated for striving to secure more and more job contracts. Most of them worked quite mechanically in the concerned trade. Despite continuous efforts to train them to be self-reliant, the required dynamism was not forthcoming from any of the workers. Compared to the male workers, the female counterparts used to take initiative in the organisation of campaigns for securing job contracts.

#### **Achievements of the Project**

The Project succeeded in achieving most of its goals such as training a team of educated unemployed in skilled/unskilled labour of local demand, their conscientisation,

organisation into a registered society, enrolling them as regular workers of the registered society, and providing them salary until their society became cost effective. The Project could not create satisfactory results in its attempts at preparing the workers as an enterprising group. The Project attempts failed in persuading the local administration to take up the responsibility of sustaining the registered society of the workers. The following factors can be adduced to as the major achievements of the Project:

1. The Project could successfully experiment with the task of training and organising the educated unemployed into a registered society, as a replicable strategy for productively mobilising the rural idle labour by fighting the attitudinal incompatibilities between factors like : education and employability; labour surplus and level of effective demand; notion of labour dignity and unemployment; unrealistic self-assessment and labour market reality; sites of employment and the over-crowding of unemployables; and so on.
2. The Project succeeded in co-operativising of the trained workers into an institutional structure, in substituting daily wage with salary and in proving system, a replicable model that any village in Kerala can adopt.
3. The Project could rehabilitate twelve educated unemployable in a system of sustainable development capable of confronting personal attitudinal and social institutional impediments in the horizon of Kerala's labour market.
4. The Project could set an example in the whole village for evolving institutional strategies to combat problems of under-employment and unemployability.
5. The Project became instrumental in building up the much-wanted vital links between the academic Department and the local community; between research and social needs; and between curricula and local level development activities.
6. The Project could instil to some extent the habit of savings among the Project workers, since it was made mandatory for them to save 15% of their total monthly income.

### **Lessons/Findings**

The Project as implemented helps us draw several lessons and leads to certain findings that might be useful as primary input for launching similar ventures as well as policy implications in future. On several occasions in the course of the Project activities, we had experiences quite contrary to the general hypotheses. A detailed conceptual appreciation of findings is given as appendix in the form of a full fledged research paper on the labour market in Kerala : Unemployment and unemployability. The following are briefly the few lessons and new causal relations we were able to draw:

- ◆ The larger chunk of unemployed/under-employed are unemployable not due to lack of labour demand but due to extra-market factors.
- ◆ It is not very much the dignity of labour that always determines the unwillingness of the educated unemployable to go for manual labour. Quite often it is hard labour that dissuades them.
- ◆ It is the nature of subjectivity that is decisive about attitudinal relations between employment and unemployable.
- ◆ Mere conscientisation will not do for the reconstitution of the subjectivity, which requires discursive fulfilment of various institutional and systemic factors symbolic of permanency of job and service security.

- ◆ Unless conscientisation efforts succeed in dismantling the normalised idea that job means permanent Government-employment, it would be difficult to transform the unemployable.
- ◆ Despite all conscientisation efforts the central factor that motivated the villagers to become beneficiaries of the project was the false hope that participation in the Project would be a stepping stone towards University employment. They are too conditioned by it to be confident about their own co-operative venture.
- ◆ High rate of wage alone cannot attract the educated unemployed under-employed to a site of employment otherwise accessible to them. Labour market fragmentation is such that even a relatively low wage can mobilise unemployed to certain select spheres especially in service sectors.
- ◆ Labour can be mobilised away from home only by guaranteeing security of job. Otherwise leaving home for employment should mean going to a Gulf Country.
- ◆ In wage determination, bargaining does not seem to be a necessary preoccupation of the institutions. Determination of wage has developed its own mechanism in such a way that the kind of jobs targeted by the co-operative society has already reached fairly high levels.
- ◆ Labour mobility across jobs is found to retain or follow rigidly defined boundaries. Further, there is a strong tendency to withdraw from jobs by those volunteering even for daily labour contracts refusing to go for piecemeal labour.
- ◆ If the co-operatives formed for taking up “odd jobs” in the unorganised labour sector succeed in ensuring permanency, security and allied service benefits, labour can be mobilised irrespective of the socio-economic status of the job.

### **Current State of the Gramodyoga Sangham**

The Gramodyoga Sangham is continuing. The University has given it the status of a low category contractor and it is taking up minor jobs especially furniture repairs. The Sangham is getting works from a few other institutions also. It is running a small canteen too at the Campus of the School of Social Sciences. These provide the Sangham with some stability. Since the anticipated adoption of the Sangham by the Panchayath did not come true the continued institution of the salary system after the termination of the Project, became impossible. Now the members of the Sangham follow the system of sharing the returns. The School of Social Sciences continue the facilitator service as a part of its extension work. Some of the members (two males and two females) have left the Sangham either on securing employment in the city or on migration after marriage. Four new members have filled their vacancy (all females). The current rate of monthly returns of the Sangham is about Rs.16000/-.

### **Section II : The Academic Studies**

The following section embodies two academic studies, one focusing on the Project issue i.e. the question of unemployment in the state and the other focusing on the socio-economic profile of the Project site. The Project sought to draw knowledge about the objective conditions about the labour market as well as the subjective aspects of the knowledge itself from the studies. The strategies of the Project sought to respond to the

conditions and relations particularly, the socio-culturally contingent factors causing the paradox of labour shortage in certain traditional sectors of a labour surplus region.

Study I\*

## Socio-economic Profile of the Project Village

### Geographical Location

The village as a revenue unit consists of places such as Perumbaikkattusseri, Malloosery, Nattassery and Mudiyoorkara. The present study is confined to the Malloosery ward of the Perumbaikad village, Kumaranalloor panchayat, and Kottayam district. The Kottayam district lies between 9° 15' 0" and 10° North latitude and 76° 22' 0" and 77° 25' 0" East longitude bounded by the Districts of Ernakulam on the north, Idukki on the East, Pathanamthitta on the south and Alappuzha on the west. The total area of the district is 2203 sq. Km constituting approximately 5.67% of the geographical area of the state of Kerala.<sup>1</sup> The Kumaranalloor Panchayat is about 5 kms North of Kottayam and belongs to the Kottayam taluk. The Ettumanoor and Athirampuzha panchayats in the North, the Arpookara panchayat in the west, the Kottayam municipality in the South and Vijayapuram in the East bound the panchayat. The Meenachil River flows through the southeastern side. It has a total geographical area of 14.06 sq. km. Malloosery comes under the jurisdiction of the Perumbaikad village. The Perumbaikad village has a geographical area of 14.17 sq. km.

Erstwhile Malloosery was a part of Aimonam *pakuthi* in the Kottayam taluk<sup>2</sup>, bounded on the north by the Kaipuzha, Kudamlaoor, Perumbaikkattusseri, Ettumanoor *pakuthis* of Ettumanoor taluk on the East, the Vijayapuram *pakuthi* on the South, the Vembanad lake on the West, surveyed in the *pakuthis* of Thanneermukkam and South of the Shertallay taluk. The total area of the *pakuthi* as per survey is 8,649 acres and 58 cents. The *purambokku*, wastelands cover an area of 1,111 acres and 62 cents, more than 13,00% of the total area. Malloosery is the southernmost part of a 200 hectares region of hilly land lying 4.5 km north of Kottayam, bounded by Perumbaikkattusseri in the North, the Meenachil river and Vijayapuram in the South, the Aimonam village on the west and the Nattassery in the East. The northernmost part of the region is known as Thidampurkunnu. Pullarikkunnu is the region lying in between Thidampurkunnu and Malloosery. The Chungam -Pullarikkunnu road and Applepaddy - Pullarikkunnu road connects the area. Pullarikkunnu is mostly uncultivated.

### Population

The density of population is 830/sq. Km. The district has a total population of 5,85,595 persons of which 2,92,070 are male and 2,92,525 female.<sup>3</sup> Out of the total population, the rural population is 4,19,417 of which 2,20,912 are male and 2,10,291 female. The urban population is 1,66,178 of which 82,944 are male and 83,234 female. This shows that 71.62% live in the rural areas and 28.38% live in urban area. The literacy

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<sup>1</sup> *Census of India*, 1991, Series 12, Kerala Paper 3 of 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Revenue Abstract of Aimonam Pakuthi, Kottayam Division, 1909.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

rate of the district is 95.72%, which is higher than the state average 89.81%. Out of this male literacy is 97.46% and female literacy 94.00%, which is higher than the state average which, is 86.17%.

The population of Perumbaikad village is 39,352 of which 19,771 are male and 19,581 are female. Out of the total population, 50.20% are male and 49.80% are female. This shows that the sex ratio of the village (990) is lower than the District ratio (1012). The total geographical area of Malloossery is 500 acres (200.01.75) with a population of 3205 persons of which 1,521 are male and 1,684 are female.<sup>4</sup> About 47.50% of the total population are male and 52.50% are female. It is presented in Figure III.01. It shows the higher sex ration of female to male compared to the village sex ratio.

### Land Distribution

A.

Item	Extent (Acres)	Percentage
Wet land	650	19.00
Dry land	2491	72.00
Others	32.7	9.00
Total	3468	100.00

b.

Item	Area/Hector	Acre	Sqm
Purambokku	198	18	81
Wet land	169	08	69
Dry land	1050	33	06
Total	1417	60	56

Source: Village Records, Perumbaikad Village Office.

### Family Size

No of Members	No of Family	Percentage
0-3	128	18.55
4-7	537	77.83
8-11	25	3.62
12 or above	0	0.00

Source: Survey data

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<sup>4</sup> Survey data

## Land Holding Sizes

Area	No of Families	Percentage
Landless	34	4.90
0 – 5 Cents	162	23.50
5 - 25 Cents	415	60.20
25 – 50 Cents	36	5.20
50 - 100 Cents	25	3.60
100 - 300 Cents	15	2.20
Above 300 Cents	3	0.40
Total	690	100

Source: Survey data

## Local Resources

### Cropping Pattern

Coconuts, paddy and rubber are the main crops grown in Malloossery. The extent of paddy field has been on the decline.<sup>5</sup> The conversion of wet land into garden land or residential plot being an ongoing process the extent of wet land is steadily declining. Currently it forms 11.00% of the total land. About 40 acres are under paddy cultivation, which is 10.00% of the total. Seasonal crops like mango, banana, and tapioca are rare.

### Industry

There are three industrial units in the area viz; *K.K. Rubbers*, *Hembros* and *Decan Rubbers* which provide employment mostly to the non-local people.

### Institutions

*Jeevadhara*, a theological study centre situated in the heartland of Malloossery, is the leading institution of community service, seeking to bring about truth, justice and freedom in society. The Centre has worked for quite some time now to accomplish a *Swasraya grama* through the organisation of *Ayalkkuttams* for strengthening community unity and ensuring local level development. In order to facilitate the goal it started a periodical (Monthly) called *Swasraya Grama Pathram*.

The School of Social Sciences of the Mahatma Gandhi University, which is situated in the neighbourhood of the aforesaid Centre, collaborates with it through village/community extension programmes.

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<sup>5</sup> As per records, it has declined from 650 acres in the 1984-85 survey to 417 acres in the 1994-95 survey, Economics and Statistics Office, Kottayam.

The St. Thomas L.P. School is the only educational institution catering to the local needs in the area. There is no local high school to help continuation of education after the primary level accessible to the students of this poor village. So a majority of them discontinue their studies under the pressure of poverty.

There is a post office<sup>6</sup> in the area.

### Human Resource

The 690 households that were surveyed comprised 3,205 persons; 1,521 were male and 1,684 were female.

### Local Resources

#### Age Group

Age group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
0 – 5	120	143	263	8.21
5 – 15	270	300	570	17.79
16 – 21	150	152	302	9.42
22 – 30	318	324	642	20.03
31 – 55	511	550	1061	33.10
56 - 75	140	184	324	10.11
76 and above	12	31	43	1.34
Total	1521	1684	3205	100.00

Source: Survey data

The age wise distribution shows that there has been a concentration of population within the age group 31-55. Nearly 33.10% of the total population concentrate in this age group. About 8.21% belongs to the 'below 5' age group; 17.79% to the 6-15 age group and 9.42% to the 16-21 age group. The age group 22-30 constitutes 20.03% but the age group 56-75 has only 10.11%. Only 1.34% belongs to the 'above 76' age group.

### Religion-wise Population Distribution

The Hindus form 48.00% and 47.00% are the Christians. 4.00% are the Muslims and the others<sup>7</sup> constituting 1.00% of the total population.

Religion	No. of persons	Percentage
Christian	1512	47.00
Hindu	1539	48.00

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix II.

<sup>7</sup> Others represent people with no religion.

Muslim	127	4.00
Others	27	1.00
Total	3205	100.00

Source: Survey data

### Marital Status

Marital Status	No. of persons	Percentage
Married	1589	49.58
Unmarried	1465	45.71
Widowed	148	4.62
Divorced	3	0.09
Total	3205	100.00

Source: Survey data

Source: Survey data

About 49.558% are married, 45.71% are unmarried, 4.62% widowed and 0.09% divorced. There are instances of married women living aloof from alcoholic husbands to avoid harassment.

### Family Type

About 18.55% of the families are of three members, 77.83% are of 4 to 7 members and 3.62% are of 8 to 11 members. The average size of the family is five.

Type	No of Family	Percentage
Nuclear	503	72.90
Extended	147	21.30
Joint	40	5.80
Total	690	100.00

### Literacy and Education

By taking the literacy criterion,<sup>8</sup> the literacy is 92.20%, which is lower than the District average of 95.72% but higher than the state average of 89.81%. Male literacy is 93.89%, which is lower than the District average of 97.46%. Female literacy is 90.74%, which also is lower than the District average of 94.00%. Their educational status is limited to the school level. About 7.77% of the total population are illiterate; 27.49% of the total population have studied up to the lower primary level, while 34.70% are educated between Standard V - IX; 18.03% are SSLC holders and; 7.08% have Pre-degree education. Only 0.81% is post-graduates. There are 22 persons who are holders of the certificates like ITC, TTC, Nursing, and Hindi Vidwan, who constitute 0.69%.

### Education Levels

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<sup>8</sup> Ability to read and write.

Level of Education	Male		Female		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Illiterate	93	6.10	156	9.30	249	7.77
Up to Primary	425	27.90	456	27.10	881	27.49
Below SSLC	563	37.00	549	32.60	1112	34.70
SSLC	256	16.80	322	19.10	579	18.03
Pre-Degree	112	7.40	115	6.80	227	7.08
Degree	51	3.40	59	3.50	110	3.43
Post-graduate	12	0.80	14	0.80	26	0.81
Other Certificates	9	0.60	13	0.80	22	0.69
Grand Total	1521	100.00	1684	100.00	3205	100.00

Source: Survey data

The number of female members (9.30%) who are illiterate is much higher than that of the male (6.10%). The low level of education is primarily due to economic reasons. Poverty has forced them to discontinue their studies.<sup>9</sup> Majority in the age group 14-22 is addicted to alcohol.

### Labour Force and Non Labour Force

Labour force includes both the workers and the unemployed. A worker for the present study is defined as a person in the age group of 15-60 who participates in a gainful activity, by using his/her physical or mental efforts, during the month preceding the survey. Unemployed are defined as those active job-seekers in the age group of 15-60 who were not able to get any gainful employment throughout the past one month preceding the survey. If a person does not come under this category of labour force, he/she is treated as non-labourer.<sup>10</sup>

#### Labour Force Non-Labour Force Classification

Category of Population	Male		Female		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Workers	922	60.00	205	12.00	1127	32.20
Unemployed	113	74.00	159	9.40	272	8.50
Labour Force	1035	68.00	364	21.60	1399	43.70
Not in Labour Force	486	32.00	1320	78.40	1806	56.30
Total	1521	100.00	1684	100.00	3205	100.00

Source: Survey data

<sup>9</sup> To the question whether they wanted to study more, many answered that they wanted to study more but their poor financial situation compelled them to discontinue their studies.

<sup>10</sup> Includes children, the old, students, pensioners, and other dependants.

About 35.20% are workers; 8.50% are unemployed and; 56.30% belong to the category of 'not in labour force'. Work participation rate <sup>11</sup> of the population is 35.20%, which is quite high, compared to the rates of the district, which was 32.68% during 1991 census. A sex-wise break up shows that 60.60% of the male and 12.20% of the female population are workers. The low level of female work participation rate may be the result of lack of employment opportunities in the rural areas. This situation requires the service of village agents to demonstrate the utility of schemes or projects with capital and technology where they are utilised.

The classification of population according to their current activity status has shown that there are 272 unemployed persons, 113 are male and 159 are female. This implies that 19.44% of the total labour force are unemployed. The survey reveals that 13.00% of the total unemployed have studies only up to lower primary; 42.00% have studied below SSLC; 26.00% are SSLC holders; 11.00% have studied up to Pre-degree level; 7.00% are either graduates or above and; 1.00% are certificates holders.

### Unemployment Education Level Correlation

Level of Education	No of Persons Employed				Total	
	Male		Female		No	%
	No	%	No	%		
Illiterate	0	0	0	0	0	0
Up to Lower Primary	20	17.70	15	9.00	35	13.00
Below SSLC	55	48.70	60	38.00	115	42.00
SSLC	30	26.50	40	25.00	70	26.00
Pre-Degree	5	4.40	25	16.00	30	11.00
Graduate and Above	3	2.70	15	9.00	18	7.00
Other Certificate Holders	0	0	4	3.00	4	1.00
Total	113	100.00	159	100.00	272	100.00

Source: Survey data

### Extent of Unemployment

Level of Education	Total Labour Force	Unemployed	% of Unemployed
Illiterate	0	0	0
Up to Lower Primary	250	35	14.00
Below SSLC	450	115	25.60
SSLC	320	70	21.90
Pre-Degree	227	30	13.20
Graduate and Above	130	18	13.80
Other Certificate Holders	22	4	18.18

<sup>11</sup> Work participation rate refers to proportion of total working population to total population.

Total	1399	272	19.44
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Source: Survey data

The rate of unemployment is low among Pre-degree/Degree holders and above. An unemployed person who has studied either at SSLC or above is considered as educated unemployed and all others are treated as uneducated unemployed. Among the total 272 unemployed persons, 122 belong to the educated category (44.90%) and 55.10% of the total unemployed are uneducated unemployed. The study identifies the existence of a considerable portion of the population as idle in the village.

This is the context of the Project for the local level sustainable development through the creation of employment opportunities in the area, which requires fuller mobilisation, and utilisation of idle labour.

### Current Activity Status

Current Activity Status	No of Labour Force				Total	
	Male		Female			
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Employed	922	60.62	205	12.20	1127	35.16
Unemployed	113	7.43	159	9.40	272	8.49
Students	312	20.51	448	26.60	760	23.71
House Wives	0	0	630	37.40	630	19.96
Others <sup>12</sup>	174	11.44	242	14.40	416	12.98
Total	1521	100.00	1684	100.00	3205	100.00

Source: Survey data

About 1127 persons constituting 35.14% of the total population are having the status of being employed. Students constitute 23.17% of the total population. About 19.66% are housewives, 8.49% unemployed and 12.98% categorised as others who do not belong to any of the above categories.

A male-female break up shows that among the employed category 81.80% are male and 18.20% are female. At the same time 60.62% of the total male and 12.20% of the total female in the population is having the status of being employed. About 7.43% of the total male and 9.40% of the total female are unemployed. The male constitutes 20.51% and the female 26.60% among the student category. Among 'others' the female population predominates over the male with the relative shares of 14.40% and 11.40% respectively. About 19.66% are housewives, which represents 37.40% of the total female population. An analysis of the current activity status reveals that 37.40% of the female population in the total population prefer to be labelled as housewives rather than as unemployed or underemployed, even though most of them are idling their time. Due to

<sup>12</sup> Others include persons such as old, the retired persons, etc.

economic compulsions, some supplement their income by making paper bags and cutting rubber straps.

It is seen that the largest number of workers is engaged in non-agricultural sector. The 'others', in this segment include doctors, teachers, nurses, etc. who form 20.10%. Agricultural labour absorbs 2.00% and the household industries 5.70%, construction 4.20%, business, trade and commerce 10.70%, government service 7.50% and transport 5.90%.

### Occupational pattern

Type of Activity	Labour Force				Total	
	Male		Female		No.	%
	No.	%	No.	%		
Cultivation	24	2.60	0	0	24	2.10
Agricultural	12	1.30	10	4.90	22	2.00
Non-Agricultural	396	42.90	59	28.80	455	40.40
Household Industries	36	3.90	28	13.70	64	5.70
Construction	44	4.80	3	1.50	47	4.20
Trade & Commerce	119	12.90	1	0.50	120	10.70
Govt. Service	69	7.50	16	7.80	85	7.50
Transport	67	7.30	0	0	67	5.90
Other Service	142	15.40	85	41.50	227	20.10
Gulf Countries	13	1.40	3	1.50	16	1.40
Total	922	100.00	205	100.00	1127	100.00

Source: Survey data

The agricultural sector provides employment only to 2.00% of the total employed persons. The non-agricultural sector absorbs 40.24% of the total employed persons, which indicates that the wage employment in primary sector is marginal. Most of the households have disposed their paddy fields due to its non-profitability. For several years now, the fields of many households have been lying fallow,<sup>13</sup> and some fields are alienated.<sup>14</sup> Out of 11 households who continue paddy cultivation now, 5 manage cultivation by themselves and 6 have leased their farmland to the tenants. They undertake cultivation only once a year (instead of twice a year as they used to do in the past).

Among cash crops rubber constitutes the largest share. Coconut, tapioca, and banana are seldom cultivated in the area though agriculture constitutes the principal industry of the District.

### Status of Employment

<sup>13</sup> Some households revealed that their fields are being kept uncultivated for many years because they cannot afford to bear the wages of labourers.

<sup>14</sup> Four households lost their portion of wet land with Land Reforms Act.

About 64.43% of the total employed male and 34.15% of the total employed female are daily wage earners. They have no certainty of employment and income. The percentage of the female workers on weekly payment basis is about 50.73%. Some of the female is engaged in paper bag making and strap cutting, etc. for the industries: Jembros and Paragon. About 24.30% of the total employed male and 13.66% of the total employed female are with monthly salary. However 4.77% of the total employed male and 1.40% of the total employed female are self-employed. Others include cultivators. 2.60% of the total employed male is engaged in cultivation.

### Employment Status

Status of Employment	Male		Female	
	No	%	No	%
Daily wage earners	594	64.43	70	34.15
Weekly wage earners	36	3.90	104	50.73
Monthly Salaried	224	24.30	28	13.66
Self-employed	44	4.77	3	1.46
Others	24	2.60	0	0

Source: Survey data

The survey data show that about 37.96% of the total population have full-time employment and 62.04% of the total population have no permanent job. Weekly wage earners are able to secure a relatively higher income compared to that of the daily wage earners. Self-employed persons are able to generate more income than what the monthly salaried people do. But they constitute a very small fraction. The survey reveals that 88.73% of the total employed persons have gone out of the local area for employment purposes. 1.42% of the total employed persons are in Gulf countries. About 8.49% of the total labour force are unemployed.

### Income Level of Assistance Recipients

#### a. Family Credit Plan

Below 500	1000	1500	2000	3000	Above 3000	Total
0	0	0	0	2	0	2
1. Self-employment Programmes: Sweet Makers, Pappadam, Chps						
0	1	2	0	0	0	3
Sewing Machine						
0	1	1	0	0	0	
Cycle Shop						
1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Small Buisness						
1	2	1	0	0	0	4
Auto						
0	0	2	1	0	0	3
Mill Press						

0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Ready Made Garments						
0	2	2	0	0	0	4
<b>b. Other developmental Programmes: Agricultural Development</b>						
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing for the Poor						
5	12	5	0	0	0	22
Total						
7	19	14	4	0	0	44

Source : Survey data

### **Other developmental Programmes**

Certain 44 households of the village received assistance under self-employment programmes and developmental programmes of IRDP and TRYSEM. About 27.30% of the beneficiaries of self-employment programmes are really benefited by the assistance and the remaining 72.70% have suffered due to the utilisation of the assistance for non-productive purposes. Most of the beneficiaries were of the income grouping 501-1000 (43.20%). About 31.80% belong to 1001-1500; 9.10% belong to 1501-2000 and; 15.90% belong to below 500.

Out of 22 households which received the assistance under self-employment programmes; only 6 are satisfied with their business and it has helped them to get self-employment and earn a living out of it. Others misused the amount and they are not able to repay the amount. Most of the households got benefited by the developmental programmes like housing for the poor (IAY) showing that the self-employment programmes as such could exert only a marginal impact on local unemployment problem. The development programmes seldom reached the lower strat where many still remain unaware of the schemes. Bureaucratic stipulations tangled those who sought the benefits of schemes often. In short, the rural development programmes could not attain their objectives in the area.<sup>15</sup>

The analysis reveals that the problem of unemployment is higher among women.

#### **Households and Source of Income**

Source of Income	No of Families	Percentage
Property	24	3.48
Occupation	581	84.20
Rent/Interest	14	2.03
Domestic Animal	30	4.35

<sup>15</sup> But the authority that provides assistance says that the people do not approach them for assistance. This situation requires the service of village agents to demonstrate the utility of such schemes.

Vegetable Cultivation	0	0
Pensions	41	5.94
Total	690	100.00

Source: Survey data

## Land

The distribution of land among households according to the size of holdings shows that 4.90% of the total households are landless and 23.50% are smallholdings of less than five cents each. About 60.20% have sizes of holdings between 5-25 cents and 5.20% have sizes of holdings between 25-50 cents. About 3.60% have sizes of holdings between 50-100 cents; 2.20% have sizes of holdings between 100-300 cents and 0.40 per cent have above 300 cents. The land use pattern shows that majority of the available area is used for residence and institutions like churches, temples, etc.

## Land Holding Sizes

### Distribution of Households and the Level of Income

Monthly Income Rs.	No of Households	Percentage
0 – 500	133	19.28
501 – 1000	201	29.13
1001 – 1500	207	30.00
1501 – 2000	55	7.97
2001 – 5000	80	11.59
Above 5000	14	2.03
Total	690	100.00

Source: Survey Data

The major portion of income is derived from occupation (84.20%). About 3.48% of total households derive their income from property; 2.03% depend on interest/rent, 4.35% depend on livestock, and 5.94% depend on pensions.

### Distribution of Households According to the Level of Income

The maximum number of households falls into the monthly income group of 1001-1500. 19.28% belong to the lower income group below 500. 29.00% belong to the income group of 501-1000. 7.97% belong to the income group of 1501-2000. 11.59% belong to income group of 2001-5000. 2.03% belong to the income group above 5000.

The maximum number of households falls into the expenditure class 1001 - 2000; 30.29% fall into the group 501 - 1000 and only 13.77% of the total households have

relatively very low expenditure less than Rs.500.! 0.87% have monthly expenditure in the range 2001 - 5000 and 0.29% of the total households have relatively a higher level of expenditure above 5000.

### Classification of Expenditure Classes

Monthly Expenditure Rs.	No of Households	Percentage
0 – 500	95	13.77
501 – 1000	209	30.29
1001 – 1500	309	44.78
2001 – 5000	75	10.87
Above 5000	2	0.29
Total	690	100.00

Source: Survey Data

An average household spends nearly 45.00% on food items. The people spend out of the total expenditure, about 6.00% on fuel and lighting, 4.00% on education, 5.00% on medicine 6.00% on smoking 28.00% on alcohol and 6.00% on clothing and 1.00% on entertainment. Alcoholism is widespread among the people of the surveyed area. The standard of living is measured on the basis of expenditure on food and non-food items.

### Expenditure Pattern of an Average Household

Items of Expenditure Rs.	Amount Spent	Percentage of the Total Income
Food Non Food Items	774.98	45.00
Fuel and Lighting	99.23	6.00
Education	66.44	4.00
Medicine	77.98	5.00
Smoking	110.49	6.00
Alcohol	448.33	28.00
Clothing	95.19	6.00
Entertainment	10.36	0
Total	1723	100.00

Source: Survey Data

### Food and Nutrition Intake

The quality and the quantity of the food intake are generally considered as a reliable index of poverty. In one of the leading studies on poverty in India, a minimum calorie intake of 2,250 per day has been used as the 'cut off point' or irreducible minimum<sup>16</sup> requirement for an average human in India. But there is no consensus on the minimum per capita requirement of calories for a population because a number of variables like age, sex, body weight, occupation, etc. affect the energy expenditure. The Planning

<sup>16</sup> V.M. Dandekar and N. Rath, *Poverty in India*, Indian School of Political Economy, 1971.

Commission has defined “poverty line” on the basis of the recommended nutritional requirements of 2400 calories per person per day for rural areas and 2100 calories per day for the urban areas.<sup>17</sup> The present study takes 2200 calorie as the modest norm per day calorie requirement for an average person in India.

### Balanced Diet Which Yields the Calorie Value of 2200

Food Items	Required Amount (gm)
Cereals	440
Pulses	45
Leafy Vegetables	100
Roots and Tubes	50
Milk	150
Oils and Fats	25
Sugar and Jaggery	20

Source: “Facts About Our Diets”, Food and Nutrition Board, Ministry of Agriculture, New Delhi, Table III, p.13.

In order to estimate the required expenditure for the balanced diet, a variety of items are taken from each food group and the prevailing retail price thereof in the chosen area is considered. In the case of rice, oil, sugar, their fair shop prices are also taken into account. After giving appropriate weights to each individual item, based on the level of consumption, the required expenses under each group is added and total amount needed for the balanced diet is worked out.

### Food Group Expenditure Pattern

Food Items	Required Amount (gm)	Market Price Kg. (Rs.)	Required Price. (Rs.)
Cereals	440	8.00	3.52
Pulses	45	14.00	0.63
Leafy Vegetables	100	8.00	0.80
Roots and Tubes	50	7.50	0.38
Milk	150	10.00	1.50
Oils and Fats	25	32.00	0.80
Sugar and Jaggery	20	12.00	0.24

Source: Personal computation from the data compiled.

According to the table given above, a family with 5 members requires Rs.41.35 day on food or Rs.1240.50 per month on food. 86.38 per cent of the total households in the area under study spend less than Rs.41.35 per day on food and only 13.62% can meet this expenditure in this area. In other words, nearly 86.00% of the total households lie below the poverty line. The analysis shows that the standard of living is deplorable in Malloosery.

<sup>17</sup> Draft Five Year Plan 1978 - 83, p.31.

### **Saving/Debt Position**

About 80.00% of the total households are not in the habit of saving, because of their hand to mouth subsistence. It is natural that there is no banking facility in the area and the people fall victims to the local moneylenders. The habit of small-scale savings prevails among a few low-income groups who do it through local *chittis*. A negligible percentage who do savings through banks and LIC are the educated and salaried. About ten households have bank deposits ranging from 15,000 to 25,000.

### **Indebtedness**

Debt Position Rs.	No of Households	Percentage
1 – 1000	108	30.68
1001 – 2000	29	8.23
2001 – 5000	56	15.91
5001 – 10000	77	21.88
10000 and Above	82	23.30
Total	352	100.00

Source: Survey data

About 31.00% of the total indebted households are in the range of 1 - 1000; 8.00 % in the range 1001 - 2000; 16.00% in the range of 2001 - 5000; 22.00% in the range of 5001 - 10000 and; 23.00% above 10,000. About 51.00% of the total households are indebted.

### **Borrowing**

Purpose of Borrowing	No of Households	Percentage
Domestic	148	42.00
Business	36	10.00
Housing	131	37.00
Marriage	13	4.00
Others	24	7.00
Total	352	100.00

Source: Survey data

About 352 households borrow for a variety of purposes. About 42.00% borrow for domestic purposes, 10.00% for business, 37.00% for housing, 4.00% for marriage and 7.00% for other purposes. It is observed from the survey that the low-income group is highly indebted to moneylenders. About 42.00% are indebted to moneylenders even though the rate of interest charged by them is much higher than the rate of interest charged by other financial institutions. The loans from moneylenders are taken primarily on unforeseen contingencies like illness requiring prolonged treatment and for

ceremonies like marriage. The analysis shows that 45.00% of the indebted households bear the debt burden of amount above Rs.5000 and 55.00% bear lesser debt burden of amount below Rs.5000.

What emerges from the study are:

About 86.00% of the total households lie below the poverty line. The standard of living is deplorable. The extent of indebtedness is very high. Majority of the households is with an average strength of five members each and belongs to the monthly income/expenditure range of 1001 to 2500. Saving habit is generally poor and it is relatively better among low-income group. Expenditure on alcohol and smoking is high. Unemployment is severe and there is occupational mobility of labour. There is exploitation of women labour, which is made very cheap through gender discrimination.

### **Living Conditions**

The following household goods are chosen as indicators of the living standard:

- a) Nature of the house
- b) Food habit
- c) Availability of water and sanitation
- d) Availability of electricity
- e) Provision for waste disposal
- f) Possession of Radio, Television etc.

### **Housing Facilities**

In Malloosery, most of the area is congested with houses. About 5.00% of the total households have concrete houses with better amenities, 29.00% have tile thatching with living cum bed room facility; 30.00 % are small houses with bear minimum facilities and; 36.00% are hutment without even the most essential sanitary facilities. About 87.00% of houses are electrified. Out of it 42.00% are under slab 2. Which is entitled to exemption of current charge payment. About 13.00% of the houses are not electrified.

### **Drinking Water**

The major problem in Malloosery is the scarcity of drinking water. Only 33.00% of the total households depend on their own well, but the majority of them have no water during the summer; 43.00% depend on others' wells, 4.00% have their own tap and 20.00% depend on the Panchayat tap. One Panchayat well in the settlement colony is dubbed with waste matter. Though World Bank's Programme of providing water through pipe system is opened in the area, they are not getting sufficient water.

About 38 % of the total households have Radio sets and 22 % have Television. However, about 83.00% of them are viewing the Television. About 57.00% of the total households are not interested in seeing movies and 43.00% are interested in seeing the movies. About 17.00% of them go to theatres for seeing movies at least once in a month.. Most of them revealed that they participate in religious ceremonies and festivals.

### Participation of Women in Decision Making

Participation	No of Family	Percentage
Yes	160	23.20
No	530	76.80
Total	690	100.00

Source: Survey data

In 76.80% of the total families, women have no role in decision making and only in 23.20% of the families; women have an important role in making decisions. Most of the women are doing household activities.

### Alcoholism and Smoking

Habit	No of Households	Percentage
Only Alcohol	9	1.31
Only Smoking	210	30.43
Both Alcohol	272	39.42
Neither	199	28.84
Total	690	100.00

Source: Survey data

Alcoholism is wide spread among the youth. It is observed that the percentage of the total income spent for liquor consumption is greater. This is acute among low-income group and about 61.20% of the total families are affected by alcoholism and smoking.

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### Study II\*

#### Labour Market in Kerala: Employment and Unemployability

This paper attempts to project certain tendencies in the labour market of Kerala, which are fundamental to the socio-economic experience of the present. Although correspondences between variables are made, it does not attempt any causal explanation of the phenomena of unemployment/employment. It explores the possible relations among the variables, which we call structure. However, the narrative does not revolve around the fulcrum of structures, for the overall perspective adopted here is poststructural.<sup>18</sup> It highlights the phenomenon itself in a format based on varying combination of sets of classificatory principle operationalised in the labour market. The phenomenon could be broadly characterised as the binary of employment and

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<sup>18</sup> We make use of conceptual perspectives developed by Foucault, M and Lyotard, J.-F here. For details see, Foucault, M. 1980 *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*. New York: Pantheon and Lyotard, J.-F. 1986 *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

unemployment, which is a normalised antinomy<sup>19</sup> to the researchers as well as the people. Instead of accepting the binary and invoking it in our discussion, the paper tries to problematise the binary itself by seeking to explore what the binary excludes in between. Apart from raising the possible hypotheses and propositions about the phenomena under examination, the paper attempts to delineate the possible relations between social and economic factors.

#### Facts and Figures of Unemployment

Within the statistical facts of India, Kerala gives a distinctive figure, the figure of unemployment. One of the best sites where we encounter this glaring distinctiveness is in the table presented in the N.D.C Committee on Employment.<sup>20</sup> It brings to light the field of labour market and more specifically unemployment rates of Indian States and Union Territories. Kerala's position in it is at the top when states alone are considered, and when we include Union territories also, the picture is slightly different (Table.No.1). The Union territory that outgrows Kerala in unemployment rates is its administrative satellite, namely Lakshadweep.

Kerala's distinctive position at the top end of the distribution of unemployment measures in the table makes it an empirically appropriate case. Let us try to look at the numerical values of Unemployment measures. The first observation that the Table No.1 facilitates is that all the three measurements are consistently high for Kerala and are quite substantial. The difference between the figures for Kerala and those for India is 13.30, 12.82 and 15.10 respectively for UPS (Usual Principle Status), CWS (Current Weekly Status) and CDS (Current Daily Status). This relative position of Kerala has been so since the year 1972<sup>21</sup>.

The Table given below shows that whatever be the measure of unemployment, it shows significant difference between all India averages and the measures for Kerala. Kerala's unemployment situation as the measures indicate is quite severe even when compared to that of any of the poverty stricken States. Next to Kerala, incidence of unemployment is very severe in Tamilnadu whose rate is less than half of that of Kerala.

Table.1: Unemployment & Poverty: 1987-88  
Unemployment Rates

States	UPS	CWS	CDS	Prop. Of the Educated	Poverty Ratio
1 Andhra Pradesh	3.90	5.10	7.35	30.17	31.7
2 Assam	5.62	5.02	5.09	41.84	22.8
3 Bihar	2.84	3.77	4.04	43.07	40.8
4 Gujarat	2.57	4.03	5.79	32.21	18.6

<sup>19</sup> Several academicians question the use of the antinomies/binaries in social scientific research. Some of the criticisms are well combined in Wallerstein Immanuel *et al.* 1996, *Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences*, New Delhi: Vistaar Publications.

<sup>20</sup> Planning Commission, 1992, *Report of the N.D.C Committee on Employment*, New Delhi.

<sup>21</sup> See NSSO Reports on employment for different rounds of survey during the respective years

5	Haryana	5.86	6.57	7.59	47.20	11.6
6	Himachal Pradesh	3.19	3.05	3.12	54.64	9.2
7	Jammu&Kashmir	2.67	5.36	5.57	65.82	13.9
8	Karnataka	2.44	3.28	5.06	54.38	32.1
9	Kerala	17.07	17.62	21.19	41.66	17.0
10	Madhya Pradesh	1.61	2.51	2.86	37.95	36.7
11	Maharashtra	2.86	3.63	4.67	42.22	29.2
12	Manipur	2.20	2.03	2.10	90.70	-
13	Meghalaya	0.31	0.32	0.32	38.89	-
14	Nagaland (Urban)	4.45	4.41	4.41	86.40	-
15	Orissa	4.66	5.16	6.44	35.85	44.7
16	Punjab	4.04	4.28	5.07	59.16	7.2
17	Rajasthan	2.68	4.21	5.74	20.82	24.4
18	Sikkim	3.83	2.77	2.88	20.00	-
19	Tamilnadu	5.25	7.61	10.36	35.84	32.8
20	Tripura	4.41	4.31	4.66	70.00	-
21	Uttar Pradesh	1.83	2.78	3.44	47.37	35.1
22	West Bengal	6.06	6.69	8.13	38.44	27.6
23	A&N Islands	4.01	4.52	5.77	43.75	-
24	Arunachal Pradesh	0.20	0.28	0.28	37.50	-
25	Chandigarh	8.55	8.91	8.80	51.03	-
26	D&N Haveli	0.42	0.68	0.95	43.00	-
27	Delhi	5.01	4.68	4.77	45.04	-
28	Goa, Daman & Diu	8.99	9.72	11.30	43.59	-
29	Lakshadweep	21.38	21.78	22.14	33.33	-
30	Mizoram	0.11	0.11	0.23	50.00	-
31	Pondicherry	7.73	10.70	21.14	38.86	-
	India	3.77	4.80	6.09	39.86	29.9

Source: N.D.C Committee on Employment, 1992, p.30.

Now let us have a comparative picture of these measurements for Kerala. To begin with, we compare between UPS and CWS. This shows the difference in the magnitude of regular and occasional workers. In the labour market of Kerala the occasional work force seems to be quite low in spite of severe incidence of unemployment, which seems, *prima facie* to be paradoxical. However, there are eight States and four Union Territories showing lesser difference between UPS and CWS than those of Kerala. But when one considers the high rate of unemployment in Kerala, the aforesaid difference is insignificant. The difference in all India figures is 1.03 (UPS = 3.77, CWS = 4.80), whereas it is only 0.55 in the case of Kerala (UPS = 17.07, CWS = 17.62). Generally when there is severe unemployment the usual tendency is to absorb labour force for any job whatsoever. This pushes the CWS upward and thus away from UPS. This is not the situation in Kerala.

It is quite understandable that in the States where there is low economic development,<sup>22</sup> virtually every one will have to engage in work regularly for subsistence and hence the CWS is close to UPS. Under such condition unemployment will also be low. The central question is that even when the unemployment is so severe why is it that there is not so much of occasional labour force in Kerala? This leads us to examine the calculation and basic information in the CWS measure of unemployment itself.

Since our direct interest here is to examine correspondence if any between 'reporting of work' and value of CWS, let us assume that there is sporadic job opportunities which labour force do take up in the sense that there is no voluntary unemployment. Thus, there could be under reporting of such jobs, which do not get captured in UPS and generally captured in the CWS. States and Union-territories that show insignificant difference between the two measurements are mainly regions of economic under-development. For these regions the figures of unemployment (Table No.1) are very low and even poverty ratios could not be computed! Punjab, which is economically the most developed State, is of course an exception. This State could afford to generate sufficient usual-employment (that gets counted in UPS) in such a way to bring down even the value of its UPS with high productivity. Most of the States that show very low differential measures fall within the Northeast and mountainous regions of Indian map. This economic map seems to help us see the closeness between the UPS and CWS and the corresponding fact that unless one works every day he/she will have to face economic crisis and even one's own perpetuation of life (Perhaps it is more true to the State of Mizoram than to any other states). It could also be safely assumed that there is no under-reporting of engagement in once-in-a-week or odd jobs in these States.

But in Kerala how could there be insignificant difference between UPS and CWS, is it that there is only regular work taking place and there is no occasional jobs at all? It cannot certainly be true for the state is considered to be developing and poverty is not very much felt<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, we will soon see that there have been specific economic activities with increasingly felt labour shortage<sup>24</sup> during, at least, the last couple of decades. This is so, even though these activities are not so much undignified or poorly paid, even for non-poverty stricken economy. Thus the initial hypothesis can be transformed into a question: how sporadic work or labour expended in once-in-a-week work gets under-reported?

Respondents cannot necessarily be the ones who have inherent ravings to mislead enumerators. When one responds that s\he did not work during the week not even a day or so although sought for an opportunity, it means that s\he did not expend her\his labour capacity in the labour market in the way s/he wanted. In a situation of severe unemployment together with high levels of social development indicators as in Kerala,

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<sup>22</sup> One of the first systematic studies of the Kerala Economy, treated as a comprehensive system, is the one conducted by the United Nations/Centre for Development Studies, *Poverty, Unemployment and Development Policy: A Case Study of Selected Issues with Reference to Kerala*, New Delhi: United Nations, 1975. There are several studies since the publication of this book.

<sup>23</sup> The consumption in Kerala has doubled between 1960 and mid-nineteen ninety, for details see, Krishnan, T. N 1994, 'Foreign Remittances: Consumption and Income, ICKS-A 2.

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Tharamangalam, 1998, 'The Perils of Social Development Without Economic Growth: The Development Debacle of Kerala, India', in *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, vol.30, no.1. p.28.

such response cannot be summarised as 'under reporting' although we use the phrase following the usual practice. It would be better to view it as reporting or over-reporting of the state of being unemployed. Perhaps the way in which the respondent views work, its worth and form in one's own relative scale, would enframe him<sup>25</sup> and quite often lead to consider already expended labour (not inclusive as UPS) during the week as good as 'non-work' or as 'not worth mentioning'. The respondent would be highlighting his/her willingness to work, which enables one to be included in the labour force, but only those regular jobs are counted as work. To put it differently, given this situation in Kerala, while CWS captures the subjective and qualitative aspect of the unemployment, UPS captures the quantitative and normalised aspect of employment. The low difference between the UPS and CWS shows more of over reporting of unemployment than absence of sporadic job opportunities.

In the notion of work, it could be said that, there is a binary opposition. Between the work and non-work there is no intermediary possibility of events that can be classified as work. Either one is usually employed or unemployed. That is the representation we get even though in actual practice there could be large-scale occasional work force and sporadic job opportunities. For the already expended labour power to be considered as work, it should be fit for being counted as UPS. Otherwise, the sporadic labour force cannot consider it as work, but something else, say, non-work. It is this representation of work and its residue of non-work that makes unemployment a social problem. In this antinomy between work and non-work intermediary possibilities of events that can be classified as CWS, get omitted.

The state of being Employed and its residue Unemployed are constituted in the subjectivity that binds one to one-self as a worker and in the representations of working subject.<sup>26</sup> As a working subject one situates and recognises her/his existence and self-identity primarily as a particular individual worker. The attributes of the work would be transformed into the worker and this is real in one's relationship to one-self. The level at which one divides the clear-cut opposition of work/non-work could be linked to the subjective expectation about the waiting period for the job, which enables him/her ascription of usual status. The waiting period of each one will be related to the 'certificates' that one holds. Perhaps it is not only the respondent but also the enumerator who would be in the similar subjective position although he/she is already part of the work force. Under high incidence of poverty the dividing line between work/non-work cannot be as steadfast and obsessive anywhere as in Kerala.

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<sup>25</sup> In Kerala there is a strong revealed preference for white-collar jobs by people in rural and urban areas so also by the educated and uneducated. For details see, Mathew, E. T, 1995, 'Unemployed and Self-Employed: Job Preferences and Employment Perspective', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, November, 4.

<sup>26</sup> We are not using the term subjectivity as the binary of objectivity as it is in epistemological discussions. Here, it is a behavioural category to examine the intricacies of self-identity and inter-positional relation of individuals. For an explanation of the notion of subject and subjectification See, Foucault, M. 'Subject and Power' in Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Rabinow, Paul 1983. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

High value of UPS requires many statements other than the above ones. In the above paragraphs we have seen that it is not so much of frequency of actual labour power expended that gets reflected in the CWS or the difference between it and UPS. But it is the self-representation as an imagined (which is real to one-self) worker in the future and representations of working subject worker that is the critical parameter of unemployment. Even if one engages in work, which is regularly available, for instance, short-term contracts that perpetuate employment without much discontinuance, there will be over-reporting of unemployment. The main reason is that such work chances fall on the lower half of his/her work/non-work divide causing under estimation of one's own status in the work force. That is, over-reporting takes place even when one is engaged in some activity that is classifiable as 'usual status work' but without explicit permanent contract between employer and employee. This in turn pulls down the frequency of the 'usual status work' allowing the UPS to bulge.

We will introduce another variable namely proportion of the educated among the unemployed as to see who is reported unemployed. Full dimension of it could be brought out in a circuitous manner, but with more benefit, using the Table.1. Numerical values of this variable do range between 90.70 of Manipur and 20.00 of Sikkim. Kerala shows a figure in the lower half of the range i.e., 41.66. There could be no doubt that where there is high level of education and severe incidence of unemployment as in Kerala, their quotient is to be expected at a higher position and falling in the upper segment of the range. But it could be inferred from the figures that while in Manipur it is the educated who are reported to be non-working, whether true or untrue; in Kerala it is the uneducated who get reported to be non-working. Even though the quotient for Manipur is much higher it should not be taken at its face value, for the absolute magnitude and severity of the uneducated among unemployed is far greater in Kerala that has an incomparably higher UPS. One question this throws up is that if an undeveloped state like Manipur can absorb its large uneducated labour power into work force resulting very low rates of unemployment or low UPS and presenting only the educated as unemployed, how come that in Kerala with a substantial service sector and informal employment practices, capable of absorbing even unskilled labour force, the uneducated remain so severely unemployed? It is not only the difference between the UPS and CWS that is insignificant here but also their low magnitudes.

In the current discussions on unemployment, the general tendency is to prioritise the problem of educated unemployed,<sup>27</sup> and they circumvent the paradox of very high proportion of uneducated among the unemployed. Even in a semi-rural area such as Malloosery, this observation is true.<sup>28</sup> The predominance of uneducated unemployment in Kerala should have received sufficient enquiry by analysts and policy makers. Whether with the expected outcome of invisible underemployment or not, how is it that even the

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<sup>27</sup> Mathew, E. T, 1995 'Educated Unemployment in Kerala: Some Socio-economic Aspects', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol.30, February.

<sup>28</sup> See the Table on Unemployment given in the next section of this report. For details see, Omana Mathew, 1995, "Malloosery: An Socio-economic Study", Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, School of Social Sciences, Kottayam.

uneducated remain not absorbed into the work force in Kerala, if not on a usual status at least on a weekly or daily status?

It could also be equally true that in Manipur the notion of work is not as clearly and binarily formed as in Kerala. Rather it leaves a spectrum of possible instances to be treated as work with or without conformity to one's expectation of employment status. There are lesser chances that the uneducated and perhaps even the educated would tend to undermine UPS type of work in those North Eastern States and Himachal Pradesh. On the contrary, primary identity of the educated and uneducated alike would be that of the job seekers in the case of Kerala. The over reporting of unemployment and undervaluing of usual work status could emerge, therefore, from both the educated and uneducated, which result in considerable over-estimation of unemployment rates. The main implication is that there exists a firm binary of work /non-work which forms strong choice in what one should consider as work. Moreover, both educated and uneducated are embedded in this unquestioned antinomy of work/non-work.

If Table speaks truth, then the first Table shows beyond suspicion that economic underdevelopment and poverty together engender employment of some kind as testified by North-eastern States in general and Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh etc, in particular although invisible underemployment can be invariant in such occupations. If this is true the analysis of unemployment should focus more on the subjectivity which both the respondents from the labour force, the enumerators, the educated and the uneducated share in common and perpetuate. Assuming this to be valid, let us try to look for difference in it across rural/urban and male/female divides. What we have is the classification of employment and unemployment in terms of Work Force Participation Rates (WFPR) and Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPR). The difference between these two gives the magnitude of those who express willingness to participate in work, 'at the market rate of wage', but remain without it.

Table 2. LFPR-WFPR

Place	Male	Female	Male	Female
Kerala	6.0	6.3	5.2	5.0
India	2.8	1.0	1.0	0.8

Source: Calculated from, Hand Book of Manpower Planning

Figures in the Table.2 help to see certain patterns:

The disparity between rural and urban unemployment, that is its extent, is minimal in Kerala compared to the situation in India;

The difference of it between rural and urban is minimal in terms of disparity between female and male unemployment magnitudes;

Just like the UPD, SWS or CDS rates this figure also shows a substantive high unemployment rate for Kerala in the comparative sense.

This tells us that structuration of unemployment in Kerala does not get formalised through the differentiation in terms of gender and population density (urban/rural divide) compared to that of India as a whole. Unemployment does not differ across these two categories. There is not much difference in the subjectivity of work in terms of this divide. Unemployment in Kerala seems to be a peculiar phenomenon. There is a form of subjectivity whose endurance does not show any significant difference in terms of the classificatory principles of gender, population density, educational level, and work status.

Now let us take a detour to invoke into our discussion, the third measure of unemployment, namely CDS. This measure is the most comprehensive one available to us for analysis, which captures the visible underemployment dimension as well. Further, as it is composite, its connotative potential is at best in its complementarity with other measures. Since magnitudinal difference between UPS and CWS being minimal and one being free to choose any one of the figures for comparative purpose, let us choose CWS. While UPS and CWS show open-unemployment, CDS provides a comprehensive measure of visible underemployment<sup>29</sup>. It provides only visible underemployment, but given the development in the socio-economic infrastructure of Kerala, occurrence of invisible underemployment can be assumed unproblematic. The invisible underemployment can be measured by comparing CDS and poverty levels. Whether we take CWS or UPS the variation of this with that of CDS is lower for Kerala compared to the average for India.<sup>30</sup> Among various States Kerala has the widest gap. When the numerical value is 3.57 for (CDS) – (CWS) of Kerala, it is only 1.29 for India. That is, the extent of visible underemployment is very high for Kerala although incomparable to a unique extreme of 10.44 managed by Pondicherry, which flays any logic of capital and economic rationality of productivity.

Let us now dwell upon the disaggregate figures of both the measures. We generalised elsewhere that structuration process of unemployment does not respond to the differentiation of either gender or population density categorisations. Now let us invoke the above observation in conflating CDS and CWS. Going back to the 43<sup>rd</sup> round of NSSO, we can bring in both the measures disaggregated in terms of gender and population density. Table.3 shows (CDS) – (CWS) disaggregated into four, for Kerala and India separately.

Table 3: (CDS) – (CWS): 1987-88

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<sup>29</sup> “UPS and CWS estimate opens unemployment while CDS provides a measure of visible underemployment. An idea of invisible underemployment could be had by comparing these rates with poverty levels, Planning Commission, 1992, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> This is so even after adjusting for the difference between the numerical values of each measure for Kerala and India, by dividing the respective difference between measures with respective averages. CDS-UPS/average of the numerator (Kerala) = 0.2369; CDS-UPS/average of the numerator (India) = 0.2154; CDS-CWS/average of the numerator (Kerala) = 0.1840; CDS-CWS/average of the numerator (India) = 0.1184.

Place	Male	Female	Male	Female
Kerala	7.9	7.3	2.3	4.1
India	2.3	2.8	0.4	2.3

Source: Calculated from the Hand Book of the Institute of Manpower Planning

It is self evident from the Table: 3 that underemployment in Kerala is far more severe than that of India. But, to common sense and economic rationality what is more critical is that the visible underemployment in Kerala is far greater in urban areas. The familiar metaphor of underemployed rural economy seems to be questionable, provided the incidence of invisible underemployment does not counter balance the former. But without any dispute one could state that in Kerala invisible underemployment is only a remote possibility even in rural segments<sup>31</sup>, because of the pervasive social and administrative infrastructure development of the welfare state.<sup>32</sup> At the general level, if underemployed surplus labour needs to be diverted to more productive activities, surplus labour flow or migration from urban to rural should commence.

How could underemployment get highly localised among urban work force? Is it that the urban centres clustered with public administrative and judicial machinery and various other service sector activities sustain underemployment while it's rural allies fail to afford that. Does over-crowding in specialised public institutions of city force to bear underemployment to minimise the extent of unemployment and negative outcomes of the excess crowding? Is there any job preference towards such activities that ensures underemployability? One might like to pursue these questions but they are not within the scope of this paper.

Since urban/rural divide does matter to the distribution of underemployed,<sup>33</sup> let us look at gender composition within each of it. Gender seems to be a significant principle to disaggregate underemployment within rural but not in urban sector where both show almost equal rates of underemployment. In rural sectors it is female population, which participate more in underemployment compared to their integral other. One can hypothesise alternatively, instead of viewing underemployment in terms of population density it is possible to see it in terms of gender. Then one can formulate that where underemployment is high there is not much gender difference in its distribution, but wherever visible underemployment is low gender differentiation is critical. There are more underemployed rural women than men. Among the comparable categories the difference between underemployment in Kerala and India is greatest among rural men, which marks nearly six folds. Gender is also crucial in the difference between rural areas of Kerala and those of India.

When we compare Kerala's visible underemployment with the Indian situation the first observation is that in both it is the rural male who engaged the least. It amounts to almost negligible for India although not for Kerala. The question then arises: Is incidence

<sup>31</sup> We know that the rural poverty and relative consumption are not significantly different in the urban area.

<sup>32</sup> Ramachandran V.K, 1997, 'On Kerala's Development Achievements' in Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen (eds.) *Selected Regional Perspective*, New Delhi, Oxford.

<sup>33</sup> Mathew, E. T, 1995, pp. 2815-16.

of invisible underemployment present in rural India? To have a broad idea of invisible underemployment, unemployment rates are to be compared with the fifth variable in the Table: 1, i.e. Poverty Ratio (PR): The disparity between PR and any of the unemployment rates suggests incidence of invisible underemployment.<sup>34</sup> Then we can safely propose that incidence of invisible under-employment, which is equal to the presence of poverty, is quite lower in Kerala compared to that of India and all other states for which PR's are available. The underemployment problem caused by the nature of work in urban economies alone is sufficient to complicate the labour market mechanisms and institutions. Incidence of invisible underemployment is not grave in Kerala but could be present in the Indian situation in spite of its lowest visible underemployment in rural sector.

### Unemployment: A Determinant of Wage

The Co-existence of very high rates of unemployment and underemployment has been a persistent one at least from early seventies onwards in Kerala. It would be interesting to ask after the description of the phenomena in the above section, what were the conditions that sustained these phenomena? To answer this we will incorporate into the discussion another variable called wage. Traditional economic knowledge would expect wages to clear the labour market. But persistence of the above two phenomena alludes that:

market clearing wage does not exist, and  
effective demand for labour does not exist.

These could be the rudimentary starting points that can be dropped as we progress. The nature of wage that exists in Kerala and the nexus that it generates in the economy could be examined in terms of its flexibility and differential. As a part we would also explore some of the non-economic foundations of the labour market variable. We may not deal with the trends in the wages as much as their variability across occupational categories and within each category.

### Wage Flexibility

Wage is downward sticky in the sense that it is not very sensitive to production and market conditions, although it could be so in its upward movement. Nominal Wages as well as Real Wages in general do not seem to have declined for at least half a century. If the question is asked, how far wage can be downward sticky under the condition of chronic and severe unemployment, we have the best empirical site of one fifth of unemployed population and an economy endowed with basic factors of production still sustaining wages from not falling.

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<sup>34</sup> This poverty ratio cannot be taken as a definite indicator of poverty in Kerala. There seems to be severe underestimation of consumption. For instance, Kannan. K. P clearly shows that the poverty ratios in Kerala are not low and the incidence of poverty is declining. Kannan. K. P 1995 'Declining Incidence of Rural Poverty in Kerala' *Economic and Political Weekly*, October, 14-21.

We also witness unions, for instance: CITU and INTUC to mention two among others, preventing entry to the existent 'outsiders' through various ways of licensing and 'badging'.<sup>35</sup> Insiders also prevent employers to exercise free choice to have contract with 'outsiders'. This is especially true in the case of short-term contracts of few days and spot contracts. Even in the non-unionised sectors<sup>36</sup>, wage is downward sticky. Wages seem to be structurally linked in such a way that if they are made sticky or substantially increasing in any one of the sectors, they in other sectors would also catch up with the trend. There could be a demonstration effect of wage-increases, although the initial mechanisms that increased wage or at least sustained it in the wage-leading sector are absent in others.

Nominal wage has been on an increase and fluctuations have been marginal. At least for the last quarter of a century it had been increasing consistently. Since I am not referring to the standard of living of the wage earners here, real wage is not considered. Although the rate of growth may differ from sector to sector, unit to unit and across occupational categories, agricultural and rural wages increased almost in correspondence to the industrial and service sector wages. Both in the organised and unorganised sectors nominal wage increased. These are the general facts that we know. I would like to highlight three propositions here:

Even if unit price of output remains the same, wage component of the total cost may increase and the rate of growth of wage can be higher than the increase in the prices of the products that these wage earners produced;

Changes in wage are not in correspondence with the supply of or demand for labour;

c. Wage could change independent of the productivity per worker.

I shall elaborate these observations with the aid of concrete examples. Admittedly there is no attempt to generalise upon this. In the farm sector, especially in the traditional agricultural sector, the wages have been increasing and profit margin has been either stable or declining. Prices of neither the products nor productivity marked any increase compared to wage and thus income advantage of the employers decreased in this sector. Paddy and Coconut cultivation are well known instances. The profit is on the move towards zero. Conflating the demand trend into this one, we see that at least for the last half a decade or more, lack of labour supply at the appropriate time had been on an increasing slope in this sector in spite of high wages. That is, increasing wage seems to have failed to attract unemployed labour force into the activities of the sector. It also does not seem to aid the logic of capital. Although paddy cultivation had centuries of historical continuity with numerous social norms surrounding it, dwindling relative profit made many to transform paddy lands into garden lands and enter the land market of multiple gains. Land is more of a means of exchange and construction than a site of agricultural

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<sup>35</sup> See, Sasikumar. S. K and Raju.S 2000, Dynamics of Labour Market in Kerala, New Delhi, NLI Research Studies Series No.: 002/2000.

<sup>36</sup> For example, in construction industry the wages are high and it is a sector where there is no union activities.

production and agricultural labour. Even high wage fails to attract labour and dwindling profit margin deflects the capital flow<sup>37</sup>.

To analyse changes in labour productivity, while avoiding parochialism of 'productivity measures', let us resort to words than aggregate figures. For quite sometime now people frequently use the phrases like 'one works like those in olden days' tacitly recognising a discontinuity in the efficiency of labour. The past labour is often associated with high efficiency and the present one with a corresponding inefficiency. This is true in the traditional agriculture as well as in several other unorganised and organised sectors. At least at the stage of dwindling profits, as the economic logic informs us, higher wage should have led to higher efficiency! This does not seem to have taken place or the other way round. Wage can be independent of product per worker. Some studies show that productivity change in paddy agriculture which is highly labour intensive, and coconut cultivation which is perhaps least labour intensive, has been very minimal if not negative. It is well known that generally wages in Kerala are much higher compared to the all India average. However, the product per worker is not higher than the all India average. It is lower in Kerala in secondary and tertiary sectors. It is not clear whether increase in productivity leads to increase in wages. Empirical information at micro level would perhaps reveal this in a more meaningful way. It is possible to say that irrespective of productivity change wage may increase, for wages seem to move independent of productivity. Even if we assume that in the past productivity had an effective role in the returns to the labourer, at present bifurcation between the two has already occurred. In this way there is an anomaly to the laws that bind productivity and wage.

The wage that a labourer earns could be independent of the farm gate prices of their products, especially when the products themselves are invariable components of the consumption basket. This rather strange dilemma of price emerges from not so much of economic factors, but from the broader socio-political milieu such as the State Policies. We will take paddy and coconut again as two concrete instances, where the patterns that we recognise could be true of agriculture in general. Prices of these products at farm gate had been either stabilised around a marginal range or increasing at a rate far below that of the nominal wage prices of other inputs and prices of commodities that the cultivator buys from market. At least in these sectors wages seem to take their own course leaving the price behaviour of a worker's products.

Wages move along with product prices of other workers. If a worker has to maintain the real wage rate irrespective of his specific output, its prices, and disadvantageous terms of trade to his employer, what would be the relative share between profit and wage? This question is left here, and we see thus an associative field between nominal wage and prices of commodities of 'other' workers than the prices and value of one's own commodity.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Oomen, M.A 1979 *Inter-State Shifting of Industries*, Department of Economics, University of Calicut mimeo.

<sup>38</sup> See, Sasikumar. S. K and Raju.S 2000, p.40.

The wages seem to have firmer relations more with other wages within the Kerala economy. This applies not only to the vertical distribution of wages within a firm alone or intra-occupational ones but also to occupational earnings in general. Let us put this generalised statement in another form, i.e. wage for the job  $X_1$  given by an employer would be related to wage given to any job  $X_i$  by another one irrespective of sectoral, industrial and occupational differences as well as irrespective of productivity differential and profit margins. Without going into the symbolic, political and economic factors involved in this dynamics let us highlight the referential relation among the wages. To depict the nuances involved in it, let us invoke expressions that repeat in the confabulations as well as collective bargaining for higher wage: 'We need higher wage for rest of the people are getting high wage'. This 'rest of the people' is never defined. It is left as an amorphous average figure. 'We need higher wage, for cost of living has increased' is also a phrase that takes the logic of wage out of the site of the work and economic outcomes of the work itself. Both of the expressions are conceptually quite different from infrequently used expressions like: 'we need higher wage for we produce more', or 'give us due share from the value that we added' or 'apportion more wage from the bulging profit'. In this second set of expressions wage is linked to the economic process that the particular worker in question is involved, whereas in the former the reference is always to the macro conditions of the economy. The first set articulates logic that bypasses the micro conditions of production and distribution of surplus and reproducibility of the work itself. The latter confines itself to the micro conditions alone and permits to reproduce the worker and employer. The logic of capital at the micro level is satisfied, perhaps the logic of labour as well.

The first set of expressions connotes the non-micro character of redistribution of value generation and the conditions that validate such expressions meaningful and useful in the bargaining strategies. It is not so much about the wage differential but inter-weaving of wages in an associative field of all wages in the economy and consumer price index (which is sensitive to the wages). Further behaviour of wages can be indifferent to both product price (product of a particular worker), productivity or exchange value of the product. In this specific pattern, which does not characterise the whole labour market but is one of the patterns that is prominent, we see a structural link in the behaviour of a micro variable to several macro values. However, this link is not founded on the principles of economic rationality behind value generation and its distribution.

We observed that wage gets associated with other wages and prices of other's products in their determination. Wage gets formed structurally in the inter-referential relation among wages and other variables in the economy have lesser influence on it today. The rationality that gets articulated at the micro level in the determination of wage is indifferent to economic calculus of sustainability of the specific micro level employment and the specific process of production. Given the socio-economic scenario of Kerala, it can be premised that interest of the worker has already been identified with the collectivity and thereby it was central in characterising the political economic system that persists. At least in the exemplars that we have already observed above and in the Patterns that we are going to see later, the argument is hardly grounded in the rationality of production and of the economy. Its ground could be deciphered in the way the

ideology of work and wages is privileged and generalised. Now let us move on to the wage differentials, in which we will come across some of the statements that are pertinent to pursue the above issues as well.

### Wage Differentials: 'Wrongful Claims and Rightful Dues'

Wage differential between organised and unorganised sectors of Kerala economy seems to be minimal, whatever be the definition of the unorganised sector. To site concrete example, the average daily wage of a semi-skilled worker (in garden or paddy land) would be, say, Rs.80 per day on an average.<sup>39</sup> This would be so in both the forms of organisation, be it organised or not. The organisational form does not over-determine the general wage differentiation. This dualism of organisational form does not categorise wage differentials in Kerala with any special benefit or precision which is the necessary outcome of use of binary opposites in analysis. Even if we replace this binary with another one such as formal and informal, it makes no difference in depicting difference in wage. But if we stratify this aggregate further in terms of other variables then it generates differentiable patterns within these organisational categories. Non-skilled person in the informal/unorganised sector would earn an average of Rs.300 to Rs.800 per month (especially in commerce and allied sectors) and be satisfied with the fact that one would not toil on earth. On the contrary a 'temporary' or a short term contract worker in the organised sector would get per month wage ranging between Rs.400 to Rs.800. A teacher in a privately managed school earns wage as low as Rs.300. A night watchman or a guard in the government organisation earns about Rs.750 per month for thirty days of work while their counter parts that have long-term contract would earn something like four to seven times more from the same employer. Within the organised sector we can see the widest differentiation in wage. There are also realms where there is no gap between organised and unorganised sector wages. Here the wage differential has little to do with the nature of organisation of production/employment.

Traditional-modern binary does not provide any pattern of wage differential when it is taken alone as classifying principle of distribution of wage.<sup>40</sup> It is true that the post-industrial information and other expertise in economic fields like export oriented commerce and service sectors, do pay modern wage. Unlike the traditional, the modern wage is independent of all the micro or macro economic variables of the domestic economy. It is also in tune with international relative profits and other external forces. But our question does not directly address itself this issue here. Wages in traditional agricultural practice like paddy cultivation and modern agronomic practice like rubber tapping may not be different. There are also several processes where rural/urban divide does not exhibit any significant wage differential.

If we use traditional-rural and traditional-urban, as against the category traditional, rural or its opposites singularly, the wage differential is substantial. The traditional-rural

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<sup>39</sup> Most of the information contained in this sub-section is based on the ethnographic field survey conducted in the year 1999.

<sup>40</sup> This distinction between rural and urban is not generally valid for Kerala, which is accepted by many of the authors on Kerala economy. For instance Mathew. E. T 1995, p.2815.

agriculture still retains sediments of institutions with effective genealogies of employer-employee links, which is an overriding factor in wage determination. If it is a modern economic process, it may not show any wage differential across urban/rural divide. When tradition gets involved in wage setting in the rural area, it has no role for the same in the urban sites. The popular conviction that there is no strong rural/urban divide seems to wane at this instance. The best example to illustrate this would be the Palghat District, which is one of the sites of coexistence of traditional agricultural practices with modern level labour unionisation. Here agricultural wages would be Rs.50 while their counterparts in urban areas would receive Rs.100 or more per day. Tradition enters into wage determination in the traditional economic activities and not normally in the modern rural economic practices or in the so-called organised rural sectors. In urban sites it hardly enters into the realm of wage determination, be the activity modern or traditional. This is not because there is no genealogy of employer-employee links in urban area but because the genealogy is disfunctional there.

The distinction between traditional and modern sectors decomposed in terms of gender highlights another pattern very clearly. In most of the traditional works wage differential in terms of gender is quite apparent. The site of extremes would be, say, agricultural labour in general and agro-processing like tea, cashew etc., and the traditional manufacturing processes like weaving, matting etc., in particular, show continuation of a set of gender based work organisation which facilitates more wage advantages to male workers – of course with marginal variations over time. Even if the rate of growth of wage does not reflect much of wage differentiation, gender based wage differential fixed at some 'initial condition' still persists without increasing disparity. Diachronic wage differential between comparable occupations takes place through segmentation of work and restrictive mobility from one to other through gender based reservations. Although tradition involved in wage determination does not influence any more to widen the gender based gap that it activated, its presence is given forth through maintaining the techniques of work organisation and the notion that wage to femininity is lesser to that of masculinity for its productivity difference. Is gender an economic category? No, obviously it is not. Still it enters into wage differentiation.

Gender classification seems to be particularly significant in the case of the garment industry to the so called 'women run enterprises' to 'sales' or trading sector in the urban centers. These activities show gender preference, through which employers manage to keep the wage very low, of course with the partial consent of the workers; in labour absorption there is a bias towards women. These are all modern economic activities in which hire-and fire principle is easily applicable and may not have any explicit work contract. Even traditional activities will not show such a substantial gender bias in work differentiation engendering such a low wage. Even the traditional-rural wage of women labourers would be much more than the one existent in this sector. Wage per month in this sector would be rupees three hundred or so for a modern 'sales girl'. Population of this group is substantial compared to the total of the 'usually employed'.

Gender classification by nature of labour contract is significant to see another difference. Generally speaking in the long term contracts gender based wage differential

is minimum although minor biases in occupational distribution can be present and even this is fast disappearing. Contrary to it, in the short term, spot and implicit contracts, this would be more apparent and severe. When the genealogy of a modern manufacturing is pushed back to the beginning of this century or beyond, the traces of 'tradition' in the work organisation and wage setting would be present irrespective of the nature of the contract.

Kerala is a conglomerate of commercial activities and has a worker centred politico-ideological system. While commercial activities with implicit work contracts pay least to the workers the traditional economic activities pay maximum daily wage. It is obvious to any one in Kerala that market dependence of any average household is very high, and the consumer price index for workers in the State is highest among others. Commercialism in Kerala thus manages to gain higher traders by retaining lower wage component of their cost and charging higher unit price for the merchandise – as reflected in the consumer price index.<sup>41</sup> Only this sizeably large profitable sector manages low wages. Trade is the surest way to profit making in Kerala and the low-paid jobs in this sector is bulging.

Distinctive wage differential patterns emerge not so much when we use any of the binary economic/social category in isolation but they do when they are conflated with other principles of classification.<sup>42</sup> All the three classificatory principles invoked above have foundations much less in the rationality of the economic sphere than elsewhere. However, for the discipline of economics it is still critical, as its presence is generative of patterns in the economic dynamics. Whatever processes that are immanent in 'tradition', be it symbolic, religious or anything else, when activated in economic dynamics like wage determination, they are no more the same processes. Their nature and functional space go drastically different. The way tradition operates in the rural, urban or any other sites such divisions would be different. That is, if any other process that enters economic domain and gets aligned with its variables the 'other' process gets altered. It is the non-fixity of these processes that enables them to be active within rational economic activity. So what is important is to know how a process that belongs to a non-economic sphere behaves within the economic? In determining wage these classifications are differentially employed by the agents as well as the economic sites. Both extreme wage differential and specialised use of work and labour classification in calculus of the labour market show the multiple possibility of the economy. Labour market realises the economy of these classifications.

There are spot contracts where there is no wage differential between half and full day's work, that is, even for half a day's work one day's wage can be received. Work time is divisible over a day but wage calculation makes no difference between, say, three hours of work and six hours of work. The instances where these types of contracts take place, the extent of wage differential is on an increase. The extreme instance is that of manual labour, involving skill or not. This is true of any work that is part of building construction, which makes up a substantial portion of the domestic product of Kerala. A

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<sup>41</sup> Kerala has been showing higher consumer price index for consumables for the last two decades, as it is evident from the statistics of consumer price index of labourers from Shimla.

<sup>42</sup> So-called paradoxes emerge when we follow simply any one binary opposition and try to explain a given phenomenon.

spot contract which engages a person for half a day denies him\her other chances of full day work. This is the argument commonly found in wage bargaining. The argument assumes availability of alternative work opportunities elsewhere. Thus wage gets determined not solely on the basis of the actual labour power expended. Other factors like the imagined transfer earnings also play a role in it. The employer is made to bear the cost for being unemployed during the remaining day after the contract hours. In this way wage has a structural relationship with unemployment. It shows that unemployment is structurally linked to the determination of wage, not to bring down the wage nor to stabilise it, but to increase it independent of the value of the outcome of labour.

The level of wage is affected under condition of relative surplus of labour too. Mere 'weekly status of employment' or 'infrequent job opportunity' is projected in collective bargaining to legitimise higher wage. The macro economic phenomenon of general unemployment enters into micro economic behaviour between the employer and the employee. In both the ways of negotiating for higher wages the employer is constrained to pay a higher wage for (i) most of the time deferment of such works is not possible without loss; (ii) the employer is ethically bound to share the social burden of unemployment.

Irrespective of the factors like supply, demand and actual work done, the unemployment in a prominent way enters into the labour market by structurally linking it to wage behaviour.<sup>43</sup> Elements other than those already immanent in the economic calculus of employment, would determine one of its indispensable variable namely, wage. Perhaps the rational economic logic would find it as an anomaly. However, it would be one of the ways in which wage declares its relative autonomy to output, productivity and other micro-economic forces and enters into relations with other wages and unemployment. These tendencies would be clear when the relationship between the ethical foundation of the labour economy and the wage behaviour is analysed.

During the last couple of years, the above kind of wage negotiations have been undergoing an apparent transition from the daily wage system to work contract, where labour-expended time is not considered at all, but the 'workload'. What is predominant is contract of the total work and its remuneration as against piece-wage. Both the total quantum of work in distinction to hours of work and its remuneration are fixed before hand. Apparently one may think it to be a reversal of the above instance though in actual practice it only relocates the reasoning. Instead of labour-expended time, which is more of a quantitative variable, 'workload' is the basis of reference. But the 'workload' is arbitrary and its scaling is extremely difficult to any kind of Tayloristic assessment by a common employer. This form of work contract system sidelines reasoning based on unemployment and calculation of work by man-hours in the settlement of wage. It is a form of labour contract, which even the employer might share although not equally well, for it undermines the labour supervision time.

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<sup>43</sup> It is also true that 'being unemployed' is a condition that can enter as a reason in the bargaining for higher wages.

For a person in Kerala the best criterion for choosing a job is its permanence. The preference of permanence to wage status is a deep-rooted feature of the Kerala psyche. All other requirements like wage, equality in promotion possibilities, dignity of labour etc., are important but secondary to an unconditionally guaranteed permanence of the contract. Not only the job seekers but also incumbent workers, employers and those who are voluntarily unemployed reproduce the notion of permanence of job in material and cultural practices of everyday life. The relation between 'permanence in job' and 'security in life' is already well internalised by the society. As we move from long-term contracts to the spot contracts the intensity of permanence equated to security dilates. The present condition of one's being is to a great extent defined by 'work', that is one identifies himself/herself primarily on the basis of his/her position in the referential realms of work. It is possible here to link this argument with under-reporting of work. Only the permanent or near permanent engagements are considered to be worth calling work, other activities are classified into non-work. One would be pitied for not having a permanent work not only by others but also by oneself.

Thus a pertinent aspect of wage differential could be understood more meaningfully, if we distribute wages in terms of permanence/security of life. What is important is to see the nature of the contract. Thus the credibility of the employer in guaranteeing permanence also enters into the calculation of wage. To highlight an extreme situation, the wage given to *Angan Vadi* workers, is only Rs.300 per month, perhaps one of the lowest wages paid to a worker in the State Government. This is exceptional in the sense that it is sub-minimum wage lower than what is stipulated by the State itself. But here the employer has the highest credibility in guaranteeing permanence among employees and naturally despite the very low wage, *Angan Vadi* labour contract is temporary, for its workers are employed under the daily wage system wherein no permanence is assured nor long-term contract is anticipated. However, the employees always optimistically hope that one-day they would be regularised as permanent staff. Daily-contract is perpetually renewed, provided employer-employee relation remains more or less the same.

Perhaps it could be an innovation of a technique of contract that bypass the stickiness of wage, by giving a wage which is much lesser than the prevailing one. This impermanence of job contract seems to be canonical to the employer in two different ways: (I) at low wage and minimum supervision, a standard level of output is ensured, and (ii) maximum labour power is realised without future obligations that are legally attached to long term contracts. This is so since the employer has high reliability, which makes the employees feel themselves the potential permanent staff. Thus temporary or part time incumbent workers tend to voluntarily maximise expenditure of their labour power. Workers who accept such contracts are in this way engaged in a performance bond with the employer. In favour of secured/permanent work, higher monetary gains and better working conditions are quite often forsaken, and one should not feel that it is abject poverty that leads an employee to prefer it. Within such permanence-linked temporary work contracts by the State as well as other credible employers, there could be variations in wage. It generally differs from the lowest Rs.300 to Rs.700. This variation is again directly linked to the technical and procedural formalities that each employer would be following as if irrevocable.

Low permanence and high credibility of employer can be conditions of low wage and high labour efficiency with minimum managerial effort. This type of daily wage contract with apparent permanency potential issued to extract maximum labour power. This is a situation where we discern an inverse relation between wage and labour productivity. Efficiency wage hypothesis can be reversed in the case of implicit long-term contracts. It is the performance bond that makes the reversal possible. Classification into unionised and non-unionised helps us understand the initial conditions; say during 1960s, of a sizable increase in the bargaining power and corresponding hikes in wages. This correspondence might have continued till the seventies. But contemporary situation shows that relation between the wage and unionisation is relatively remote. Unionisation is highly needed in the aforesaid case of 'Angan Vadi' employees weltering in the misery of low wage and the mirage of permanence, but not even sloganeering exists there.

Without the aid of unions agricultural wages increase. Say in the Palghat District wages go up due to out bidding between the employers especially when the labour intensity of the work is very high and sensitive to timely application of labour. Another instance is the construction and related activities where without the aid of labour unions and collective bargaining, wage increases. In the new multinational corporations and allied services also unions do not seem to be active to have any role in wage determination. Increasingly these firms are becoming the wage setters and exhibit higher labour efficiency. Probably we owe the appointment of the recent Pay Commission of India to them. In short non-union wage level has begun to influence the union wage sectors.

Union's role is predominant in the sector of long term contracts. Density of unionised worker is the highest in the sector where wage and permanence are reasonably high. Employment guaranty increases with the size of the firm in the case of the private corporate sector due to permanency of large-scale capital investment and the legal validity of employment contracts. Unionisation of head load workers (namely CITU, AITUC, INTUC etc., the muscle tanks of political parties) on a pan-Kerala basis and the resultant high bargaining power exemplify a tendency to unionise even the spot contracts where permanence/security of employment is absent. These unions make use of the unemployment syndrome in their strategies of wage bargaining.

A totally different dimension of unionisation is evident in the case of Malayalam film industry workers. In this industry, the contracts are either spot or short run, and the possibility of getting another contract is quite uncertain. Both employer turn over rates and labour turn over rates are very high and site of work is distributed spatially far between. Yet there exists unionisation. It is unionised on the basis of the trade. There are two associations in the sector: technicians' association and artists' association. Their separate entity is not as opposing or competitive against each other as in the case of head load associations. Though differ in trade, they share common objectives and fight together. These unions were formed not to enhance bargaining power over wage determination, but to fight against government policies and ensure social security of the members. They are different from the head load workers unions that fight independently

under the banners of political parties. Unionisation of the above two types shows beyond doubt that collective action is possible even if labour contracts are either spot or short term with high employer turnover rates. At the same time, surprisingly trade unions are not able to intervene in several sectors where wages are very low and chances of permanence/security of job nil.

There are certain tendencies and patterns in the behaviour of wages in Kerala in relation to their associative fields. Long term contract of employment corresponds to high wage, high unionisation, high under-employment and low gender based preference. Such a correspondence cannot be generalised in the cases of short-term contracts, implicit contracts and spot-contracts. Here wage differential could be understood only by conflating various classificatory principles centred around the categories of gender, population density, progress, skill, education, security of life, permanence, bargaining power, organisation etc. It still remains to be an amorphous field of knowledge about the labour market because these classificatory mechanisms are fluid in the redistributive context of justified assertions. The panoply of differentiation in the behaviour of work, wage and labour response to the specific demands suggests that market levelling has not yet taken place. Plurality in the wage determination and differentiation of work is at the maximum in the above sites. The plurality is increasing in its magnitude and extent within the labour market of Kerala. If the non-formalisation of work, which seems to be the macro trend, is operative in Kerala also as a part of the globalisation project, this plurality could be economically used. Given the predominance of the tertiary sector in the State, non-formalisation is likely to be a potential trend too. But it helps whose relative gain is not clear.

In general we have the following patterns of wage behaviour: One is high unemployment and under-employment with higher wage and permanence. Another is that of high under-employment posited against the extreme of low wage and low security. Yet another is that of extra-economic factors determining economic variables and macro variables entering in the arguments or assertions in micro-conditions. A still different pattern is that of active and reluctant realms of interaction between unionisation and wage level including bifurcation of them. There is approbation of high wage debunking the substantive logic of capital with the functional logic of production. This is especially true in the case of paddy, coconut and other crops of traditional production processes. Various features co-exist and make the labour market all the more complicated to thinking within the discipline of economics. For instance, Supply Response of Labour and Differentiated Wages with polar extreme values corresponding to diversely stratified categorisations of work and worker co-exists. Similarly, severe unemployment/under-employment and shortage of labour supply to the highest paid daily wage and short-term works co-exist.

What prevents flow of labour from the stock of unemployed to the fields of excess demand is not clear.<sup>44</sup> Given the conditions, it is impossible to withdraw people from the occupations that provide chance for under-employment in the urban and organised government sectors, for wages are not correlated to productivity. What is required is to

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<sup>44</sup> This is a serious question that has not yet been answered well, although the importance of this question is well recognised. See, Mathew, E. T, 1995 and Tharamangalam, J, 1998.

attract labour to the rural and urban traditional occupations, which offer high wages and experience severe, labour shortage or labour absorption capacity. This is especially crucial when propensity to migrate in search of jobs is very high in Kerala, which proves potential of inter-regional and inter-occupational mobility and flexibility of flows. The fields where such a trio exists are glaringly visible in traditional agriculture in general with differing intensity across cycles of production process. In the plantations like rubber, coffee, construction industry (irrespective of the modern, traditional, rural or urban) there has been a severe shortage of both skilled and unskilled labour for several years now, in spite of the extensive absorption of the Tamil migrant labourers. The informal small-scale manufacturing sectors of semi-skilled labour are other sites where high wage and lack of supply response of labour are increasingly felt. Shortage of labour has been present in the labour market for quite some time.

Even though employer turnover rate is very high in many of these activities, work opportunity is more or less continuous such that they are within the 'usual status of employment'. This has been a persistent phenomenon for at least a decade now which is a sufficient gestation period to mobilise labour force. It cannot also be a failure of the wage mechanism, for in most of these sectors wages responded at relatively higher rates, compared to those of M.B.B.S Doctors of urban private clinics. One reason usually put forward is the sudden lack of skilled personnel due to labour migration from Kerala to the Middle East economies since eighties. Given its persistence over a decade with both the uneducated and the educated unemployed, there should have been supply response. But that has not taken place as yet. Duration of such skill adoption hardly exceeds a decade. Out migration might have initially dwindled the strength of this occupational category, but soon the issue has been the non-regeneration of the displaced strength. Lack of supply response to the agricultural sector had its bearing on the increase in nominal wage during the period. As we noted earlier, the agricultural wages increased over the last few decades considerably. We also saw how the outbidding of employers pushes the wages in these sectors, especially when the activity in question is highly labour sensitive. The intermediaries between the potential employer and the employee appear and earn profit and it is through the intermediary that wage and number of workers made available to a particular employer are settled. This situation evidences one of the dimensions of the lack of supply including arrival of a new actor between the employer and employee who requires a share in the exchange. This combined with high wage effected several outcomes like, shift in the cropping pattern from paddy to garden or construction site, absence of subcontracting system and thus less forward linkages for industrial investment, large flow of finance capital to out-side states etc. Agricultural labour and many other traditional and modern skilled labour have ceased to be worth reproduced. Unemployed labour force does not get enticed even by the economic advantage that it offers.

#### Unemployability and Subjectivity

Although one cannot at present talk about the magnitude of excess demand and supply shortage, it is evident that it gives rise to situations similar to the above-mentioned one, which are born out of the shortage in a wide range of work sites. The 1960s and 70s saw an over-crowding of labour force in most of these sectors with severe under-employment

and conflicts between employer and employee inviting coercive force into paddy lands. The cost of under-employment was the burden of the employer. Contrary to this, from 1980s onwards there has been lack of supply in a grave manner in the wake of these labour sensitive and intensive agricultural and other processes.<sup>45</sup> In the rural sector the composition of workforce decreased by 3.41% in the agricultural sector between 1981 and 1991.<sup>46</sup> As against the opposition to mechanisation, it is promotion of it, which has been the norm of the post seventies due to lack of supply response. The absolute number of work force in several sectors has been decreasing, as one exists from work force either due to age or out-migration. Neither modern education nor its absence seems to be a sufficient condition to mobilise the unemployed labour force for the fields of excess labour demand. This is especially so in the agricultural sector where the problem is perennial.

Whatever it is, education has always been thought to increase or generate development and employability of the population.<sup>47</sup> But Kerala presents a contrary situation. Therefore, education could be conceived as capable of enhancing not only employability but also unemployability and, the least permissible, under-employability. As far as the general curriculum education is concerned, the lesson one draws from the labour market is that it works to create unemployability to many and employability to a few. This fore closing is not through deskilling, but by placing one in the attitudinal relation between education and job. The educated in Kerala are by and large made to aspire for white collar jobs and denigrate the human condition of labouring with nature. Through the educational system and its institutions, a general hierarchy of job has been created and normalised in the modern working subjects. Education works more as a means to attain employment of a particular kind than a process of enhancing capabilities or efficiency, in any material sense. It is a sign that refers to the individual's imagined labour power. Unemployment necessitates longer period of education, which in turn shrinks the spectrum of occupational choice between exceptional jobs of higher scale, and jobs where one can be under-employed.

Period of job search and duration of higher education quite often coincide. This is especially so with respect to the University education. As the synergy between unemployment and education holds well, education not only makes people employable in white-collar jobs alone, but also makes them unemployable elsewhere. The consequent over-crowding gives rise to under-employment in the white-collar sector. Through education unemployment thus generates unemployability and under-employability far more than employability. The social impact of education in terms of attitude to and dignity of labour is so wide spread that even the uneducated are unemployable in the

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<sup>45</sup> Shaji K. Francis, "*Kuttanatan Tolil Vipaniyile Marrangal*", (Malayalam) *Kerala Pathanangal*, 2,1993.pp.254-62.

<sup>46</sup> Arun Kumar A. V, Vani, B. P and Vyasalu, Vinod, 1994, 'Structure of Employment as Seen from 1981 and 1991 Censuses', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Se[te,ner, 23, Table. No. 5, p. 2377.

<sup>47</sup> Gopinathan Nair. P. R, 1997, *Social Development in Kerala: Sources, Processes and Pay Offs*, Research Project on Strategies and Financing for Human Development, Trivandrum: Centre For Development Studies.

fields where there is excess demand for labour. In one of the recent field studies of Kottayam, it is found that more than half of the unemployed is unemployable.(9)

As far as policy makers are concerned the uneducated unemployable do really pose serious problems that are new and demanding deeper reasoning. Curriculum education seems to be influencing `labour force' (in distinction to work force) to maintain strong preferences and high expectations about their potential work status. With the result they virtually remain unemployed. There is the anomalous coexistence of high level of uneducated labour force without working and its corollary of low income, increasing shortage of labour supply in select sectors which also offer higher wages and lack of effective demand that can absorb the kind of unemployables. This coexistence is illustrative of a schism in the labour market.

The term `unemployability' can be retained till we get a better alternative. Unemployment by definition connotes external factors as the cause, which compels the labourer to be an outsider to the work force. The situation of unemployment is detached from the unemployed, because he has the will to search for job. But the term unemployability captures not only external factors that restrict one to be unemployed but also the forces that make one so through the working of restraints. These restraints could be due to a number of forces. Some of them are identifiable in the technology of the self , i.e the technologies that work to situate one in relation to an abstracted concept of `oneself' and with others in one's life-world.<sup>48</sup> They are also visible in the technologies that operate in the material practices of organisation of production, i.e the technologies that categorise the work and the worker. If we consider the subjectification of people as working or labouring ones, the processes that go into the constitution of such events and individuals could be meaningfully worked out.

How does unemployability derive its sustenance can partially be explored through formulating three hypotheses. Although the State domestic production is low, its income is much higher due to remittances of migrant labourers (both international and inter-State migrants)<sup>49</sup>. This along with the income of the work force is bearing the unemployable and thus sustaining unemployment itself. Unemployment compensating wage that these unemployable get once in a while also supports their general unemployability. We have seen elsewhere that high wage is reasoned through unemployemnt. High wage is legitimised by interpreting it as the subsistence wage for the worker and his/her future unemployment as well as the unemployable dependants. The unemployable are also supported at the level of the micro unit, the household. Another possibility is the strong and restrictive job preferences, both among the unemployed and the employed as well as the educated and the uneducated. It can be said that strong and restrictive job preferences are considered to be a necessary quality of `individuality' that no one should forgo. Yet another possibility is the sustenance of unemployability through welfare or social security measures of institutional and non-institutional types, without generating much

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<sup>48</sup> For details See, Martin Luther, H; Gutman Huck and Hutton Patrick, H, 1988 *Technologies of The Self*, London: Tavistock.

<sup>49</sup> George, K.K. 1993, *Limits to Kerala Model of Development: An Analysis of Fiscal Crisis and Its Implications*, Centre for Development Studies, Trivandrum.

tension between the supporting agencies and the unemployable dependants.<sup>50</sup> This could be so, for both the parties involved at the level of household share the same subjectivity. It is not clear as to whether there is any relation between the high incidence of suicides and mental derailments in Kerala with the schisms in situating oneself in the life-world of work. Wage led economic development in productive activity is proved to be absent in Kerala. That is, a redistributive mechanism based on economic determinants like wage seems to be a barricade against the march towards economic growth. The relatively higher wages in many sites of high labour demand did not attract the labour. Although monetary gains from work have been the predominant consideration, social relations of production do not get mediated and regulated through economic or monetary factors alone.

Even if wages respond to the changes in the market forces they seldom clear the market. If existing employment opportunities are not filled, market mechanism does not seem to be capable of clearing the labour market. Can the economy absorb unemployable labour force in the labour deficit sites while maintaining the logic of profit? We have seen that there is severe over-crowding in urban-institutionalised service sector with high underemployment. Will it be possible then to absorb more workers? Will it be tantamount to generation of employment for its own sake causing underemployment? Is the existing Government practice of prioritising employment to value generation sustainable? Within the structural adjustment phase, will there be a high wage along with permanent job contracts? If so which would be the sites of such contracts? Can unemployment and other non-economic factors structure the wage behavior (within the occupational and intra-occupational wage disparities and changes thereof) in a market oriented economy? How would the economic development founded on the substantive aspect of capital respond to these extra-economic and non-productive aspects in the labour market? How to keep reasonable tradeoffs by maintaining ecologically sustainable development programmes which seem to be the recent curiosity?

In general the labour market is characterised by the coexistence of global economic rationality, and the local and specific politico-ethical subjectivity of both the employer and the employee (society in general). The economic parameters of the labour market are over-determined by politico-ethical reasoning at least in caricaturing work and worker, and in moulding the behaviour of wage. Labour is not yet a general category but invested with multiple principles of categorisation that are founded more in the exterior of instrumental rationality of economic calculation. However the heterogeneity in the concept of labour is functional in the economic strategies of the both employee and the employer. The outcomes of the functionalisation of the heterogeneity at times favour the interest of the employee and some other occasions that of the employer. This brings forth specificities to the wage and profit determination. Instead of a conclusion we can say that schisms in labour market are least in trading commercial and modern service sector. Logic of profit is exceedingly realised by the merchants (merchants of 'packed goods', health, education, information and other services) in Kerala through higher 'mark-up' and by restricting wages at subsistence or even lesserr level. Labour market of these sector experiences no labour shortage even at deplorable wage while there are sectors with high

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<sup>50</sup> Sasikumar, S. K and Raju.S, 2000.

wage and shortage of labour. In the sectoral growth of the Kerala economy, it is the success of traders that is most luminescent. From the point of view of the logic of profit and logic of employment, Kerala could be called a conglomeration of merchants and unemployables, a sector that exemplifies over-swelling of trader's-margin and possibility of keeping the wage even at subsistence level. Kerala labour market is a paradise of 'merchants' with their docile consumers, and half-hearted and 'cheap' work force. It is a force of individuals that can also be called as unemployable along with the usually unemployed.

If we apply labour theory of value to get around the value of a commodity produced in Kerala, it will definitely involve inconsistency and if we use the relative prices, it will be too far-fetched. Wage should not be linked to labour. It should be detached from the economics of production and its determination should be situated within the relations among the flexible social groupings and their artefacts including representations about themselves.

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