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## **Changing Pattern of Urbanisation in Kerala 1971-1991**

**N**EXT to the high rate of population growth, a major problem facing most of the developing countries like India today is the rapid growth of urban population. Even though the level of urbanisation is low, what is startling is the rapidity with which the process is taking place. In the matter of percentage of urban population to total population, India has only 25.72 per cent of her population living in urban areas according to 1991 census. The figure of Kerala is 26.44 which is above the all India average. Kerala has 11th place among states which shows that the state has not gone far in matter of urbanisation. The process has been also very slow. An analysis of the trend and pattern of urbanisation during 1971-1991 period will throw some light on the peculiar features of urbanisation in Kerala. The present paper is an attempt on this point.

The urbanisation neither occurs at a uniform rate nor it shows the same pattern of distribution throughout the world. It is never an even process and the rate has undergone change from time to time (see Table 1 which compares the urban and rural population growth

TABLE 1 : PERCENTAGE GROWTH OF URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION IN THE DISTRICTS OF KERALA DURING 1971-91

	<i>Urban decennial growth</i>		<i>Rural decennial growth</i>	
	<i>1971-81</i>	<i>1981-91</i>	<i>1971-81</i>	<i>1981-91</i>
Kerala	48.26	60.89	15.39	3.26
Kasargode	-	-	-	-
Kannur	101.84	86.94	12.39	-16.59
Wayanad	-	-	33.87	17.01
Kozhikode	8.67	64.54	29.75	-1.56
Malappuram	42.39	58.87	28.50	26.33
Palakkad	-3.46	81.07	24.91	8.96
Thrissur	106.04	39.83	2.44	4.70
Emakulam	57.68	36.81	0.31	-6.01
Idukki	76.66	14.01	25.21	10.92
Koltayam	-23.79	101.44	15.64	-2.22
Alappuzha	3.84	77.04	11.93	-9.21
Pathanamthilta	-	-	-	-
Kollam	94.90	32.24	9.92	6.22
Thiruvananthapuram	14.73	52.13	19.26	0.04

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variation in the districts of Kerala). Simultaneously, it can be noted that urban population as compared to rural population has been fast increasing during recent decades. The urban areas which had a very low rate of increase during 1971-81 showed a very fast increase during 1981-91. If we classify the districts according to the rate of growth of urban population of Kerala it can be noted that there were areas which had very low and even negative growth in 1981 whereas such areas are totally absent in 1991.

### Level of Urbanisation—1971-91

For the state as a whole, there is a steady increase in the level of urbanisation from 1971-1991 (see Table 2). This may either be due to the reclassification of towns or due to rural-urban migration—the natural increase is already low in Kerala. A wide variation in the levels can be observed in the case of districts in 1971, 1981 and 1991, while it varied from 3.3 to 30.83 in 1971, in 1981 it was from 4.60 to 39.56. The variation increased from 3.41 to 51.02 in 1991. An increasing trend in the level of urbanisation can be seen in 7 districts while variation in the levels can be observed in all others during the whole period.

TABLE 2 : LEVEL OF URBANIZATION, 1971-91

Kerala/Districts	% of Urban population to total population		
	1971	1981	1991
Kerala	16.24	18.74	26.44
Kasargode	-	4.94	16.46
Kannur	14.53	31.73	51.02
Wayanad	-	-	3.41
Kozhikode	30.83	27.18	38.42
Malappuram	6.73	7.40	9.13
Palakkad	12.70	10.11	15.75
Thrissur	11.74	21.10	26.32
Ernakulam	29.39	39.56	48.79
Idukki	3.30	4.60	4.73
Kottayam	13.56	9.37	17.56
Alappuzha	16.92	18.46	30.62
Pathanamthitta	-	5.53	13.06
KoUam	7.87	15.50	18.59
Thiruvananthapuram	26.00	25.26	37.95

If we assign ranks to the districts according to the level of urbanisation during the years 1971 to 1991, we can see from Table 3 that the change of status of Kannur from 1971 to 1991 is tremendous which may be due to rural-urban migration or natural increase. The status of Idukki and Malappuram remains as such throughout the period which shows the lack of development in these areas.

### Variation in the Number of Urban Settlements

The unequal opportunities of employment, the functional differentiation and the difference of physical setting give rise to changes in the status of towns. Kerala has seen a

TABLE 3 : STATUS OF DISTRICTS DURING 1971-1991 (COMPARABLE DISTRICTS)

<i>Districts</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1991</i>
Kannur	6	10	11
Kozhikode	11	9	9
Malappuram	2	2	2
Paiakkad	5	4	3
Thrissur	4	7	6
Emakulam	10	11	10
Idukki	1	1	1
Kottayam	6	3	4
Alappuzha	8	6	7
Kollam	3	5	5
Thiruvananthapuram	9	8	8

considerable change in the number of urban settlements during the 1971 -91 period. The total number of settlements and temporal variation can be observed from Table 4.

TABLE 4 : NUMBER OF URBAN SETTLEMENTS AND TEMPORAL VARIATION

	<i>Number of urban settlements by size class</i>			<i>Temporal variation</i>	
	<i>1971</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1971-81</i>	<i>1981-91</i>
I to VI	78	85	109	7	24
I	6	8	14	2	6
II	6	7	9	1	2
III	34	49	46	15	-3
IV	23	17	34	-6	17
V	8	4	6	-4	2
VI	1	-	-	-1	-

Though the number of class III and IV towns is more, there is no town of class VI category from 1981 onwards. This reveals a comparatively high growth of urban settlements and urbanisation in Kerala. Class V towns witnessed a stagnant position because of the absence of urban amenities and industries. The low rate of urbanisation is evident from the fact that only a very few towns have raised their status to be included in class I and II categories.

#### **Distribution of Urban Population by Size Class**

The distribution of urban population in different size class of towns reveals the variation and the greater concentration of urban population from small to large size urban centres. The majority of the population prefers to live in large towns as is evident from Table 5. This

tendency has become more distinct in the last decade 1981-91. It is again significant to point out that class VI urban centres have completely lost their identity from 1981. The tendency of concentration from small to medium and large urban centres is clear by the fact that the population of class V centres has considerably been reduced in 1981 and 1991. This type of tendency certainly reflects the imbalance of distribution but at the same time it indicates the more definite and dynamic pattern of urban development.

TABLE 5 : PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION IN DIFFERENT SIZE CLASS URBAN CENTRES OF KERALA—1971-91

<i>Class</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1991</i>
I	49.70	53.14	66.34
II	11.52	9.51	7.22
III	27.57	31.87	19.08
IV	9.14	4.78	6.78
V	1.94	0.70	0.58
VI	0.13	-	-

### Patterns and Change in Urban Concentration

Concentration index ( $LJR \times 100$ ) has been calculated to find out the pattern of urban concentration in the districts. Based on the concentration index the areas of very high (above 0.90), high (0.55-0.90), medium (0.30-0.55) and low (below 0.30) urbanisation were designated (Table 6).

TABLE 6: CHANGE IN CONCENTRATION

	<i>Very high</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
1991	Kannur Kozhikode Emakulam Thrissur Alappuzha Thiruvananthapuram	Kasargode Palakkad Kottayam	Malappuram Pathanamthitta	Wayanad Idukki
1981	Kannur Kozhikode Trissur Emakulam Alappuzha Thiruvananthapuram	Kollam	Malappuram Palakkad	Kasargode Kottayam Pathanamthitta
1971	Kozhikode Alappuzha Emakulam Thiruvananthapuram	Kottayam	Malappuram Palakkad Thrissur Kollam	Idukki

The areas of urban concentration spread from north to middle region. The highest concentration lies in the northern parts of Kerala. In the southern region, the concentration was high only in the district Thiruvananthapuram.

#### Extent of Urban Influence

The degree of urbanism in the districts is determined by calculating the hypothetical extent of influence exercised by each town. Assuming that the extent of urban influence of each town will be circular in shape, the radii of influence have been computed (Table 7).

TABLE 7 : RADII OF INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPAL CLASS I TOWN IN EACH DISTRICT

<i>Principal town</i>	<i>Radii</i>
Kochi	18.03
Thiruvananthapuram	22.12
Kozhikode	12.60
Kannur	11.80
Kollam	19.82
Thrissur	10.42
Alappuzha	12.97
Palakkad	23.00
Kottayam	13.98
Malappuram	17.08
Chertala	5.66
Chavakkad	7.12
Kasargode	14.34
Vadakara	7.33

The radii vary from 5.66 in Chertala to 23.0 in Palakkad. Palakkad town seems to have the highest influence. The interaction of 2 towns can be observed in the districts of Kozhikode, Thrissur and Alappuzha.

#### Speed of Urbanization

The speed of urbanization was (Table 8) calculated by using the formula  $\frac{[(U_2/T_2) - (U_1/T_1)]}{(U_1/T_1)} \times 100$ . Though the speed with which the districts Kollam, Idukki, Ernakulam and Kannur became urbanised was high during 1971-1981, it became low during 1981-91.

TABLE 8 : SPEED OF URBANISATION 1971-81,1981-91

<i>Districts</i>	<i>1961-71</i>	<i>1971-81</i>	<i>1981-91</i>
Kerala	-7.04	15.39	41.09
Kasargode	-	-	233.20
Kannur	-42.34	118.38	60.79
Wayanad	-	-	-
Kozhikode	37.08	-11.84	41.35
Malappuram	-6.4	9.96	23.38
Palakkad	34.9%	-20.39	55.79
Thrissur	-38.18	79.73	24.74
Ernakulam	-1.34	34.60	23.33
Idukki	-47.12	39.39	2.83
Kottayam	39.22	-30.90	87.41
Allappuzha	-1.57	9.10	65.87
Pathanamthitta	-	-	136.17
Kollam	-40.42	96.95	19.94
Thiruvananthapuram	20.76	-2.85	34.40

### Davis Index of Urbanisation

This index shows (Table 9) that Kannur is the highly urbanised district followed by Ernakulam. The least urbanised areas in 1991 are Idukki and Malappuram. Thiruvananthapuram, Allappuzha, Ernakulam, Kozhikode and Kannur are above the state level.

TABLE 9 : DAVIS INDEX OF URBANISATION 1971-91, KERALA

<i>Districts</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1991</i>
Kannur	4.93	4.65	10.20
Wayanad	-	-	0.68
Kozhikode	5.50	5.44	7.68
Malappuram	1.58	1.48	1.83
Palakkad	2.01	2.02	3.15
Thrichur	4.27	4.19	5.26
Ernakulam	7.16	7.91	9.81
Idukki	1.13	0.92	0.95
Kotlayam	1.93	1.88	3.52
Allappuzha	3.28	3.18	6.12
Kollam	2.67	2.63	3.72
Thiruvananthapuram	4.95	5.05	6.79
Kasargod	-	-	3.29
Pathanamthitta	-	-	2.61
Kerala	3.62	4.74	5.29

Thus it can be concluded that in the districts there is a fast increase in the urban population compared to rural population. Very low or negative growth is totally absent in the urban areas during 1981-91 period. The district of Kannur seems to have undergone heavy change in term of population, in its status, in term of index of urbanisation and number of urban settlements. Though the increase in the number of settlements in the different size class towns shows an increase in urbanisation, the low variation in the class I and II towns shows the lack of developments in the districts of Kerala.