

LAND REFORMS AND WOMEN LAND OWNERS IN KERALA: A QUESTION OF POWER AND EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract: The performance of Kerala has been showing a very stable and high profile of development compared to the other states in India. This helped the state to stand equally with other developed countries in terms of its socio-demographic parameters, and comparably much better with other states in India in the implementation of land reforms. These high profile development indicators have played a crucial role in taking the case of 'Kerala Model of Development' into major discussion platforms across the countries. But how far the question of development addressed in terms of gender equality. So the present paper examines some of the issues in the context of Land Reform and the pattern of Agriculture land ownership in the state of Kerala compared to its all India averages. Sex disaggregated data on important variables like number of operational holdings, area operated and average size of holdings were compiled for the period 1995-96 to 2010-11 from Agricultural Census. The analysis of data reveals that the agricultural land ownership pattern in Kerala compared to all India averages has undergone significant changes over time. The findings highlight the fact that the females show a common pattern of unequal land holding status irrespective of the social groups, size classes and state or national averages.

Keywords: Kerala Development Model, Land Reforms, Gender Inequality, Development.

Introduction: The performance of Kerala has been showing a very stable and high profile of development compared to the other states in India. This helped the state to stand equally with other developed countries in terms of its socio-demographic parameters, and comparably much better with other states in India in the implementation of land reforms. These high profile development indicators have played a crucial role in taking the case of 'Kerala Model of Development' into major discussion platforms across the countries. But how far the question of development addressed in terms of gender equality. One of the important problems faced by Kerala is the persistent exclusion of the marginalised – including women – from partaking the benefits of development (Tharakan, 2006). The main reason behind this is the lack of property ownership, specifically the land ownership. 'Women are vulnerable because their land rights may be obtained through kinship relationships with men or marriage. If those links are severed, women can lose their rights' (IFAD, 2015).

Findings from different studies highlight the importance of 'effective independent land rights' to women (Agarwal, 1994). Greater access to property empowers her directly and indirectly. It can deter violence, improve her position in the family through bargaining power, help her to gain financial independence with a say on household decision making with regard to children's health and educational status, to take decisions about loans on their own, and also enhances many other capabilities hidden in her till then (Kodoth, 2005; Roy, 2008; Rosenblum, 2013). Access to, and control over, economic resources, especially immovable assets, is

the precondition to women's empowerment. 'Education and Employment factors does not have much influence on her decision making power and mobility as that provides by her property ownership' (Panda and Agarwal 2007).

So now, we should look at the larger research questions in order to address these problems, Do the high development indicators in Kerala reflect the real status of women in Kerala? Whether the women in Kerala have equal rights as their counterparts? Whether the land reforms and the subsequent land laws and its amendments addressed the problem of women land rights in Kerala? If yes, how does it have become successful in extending the right to ownership of land to women? 'These are some of the crucial questions in Kerala that we need to answer. If not the development of Kerala looks one sided.

Objectives: The main idea of this paper is to give an account of the current situation of Land owning women in Kerala and its pattern using gender disaggregated data based on number of operational holdings, area operated and average size of holdings from Agricultural Census. The objective is to analyse and compare the share of land (here only considering agriculture land) with women in different social (All social groups, SC's, ST's) and class size (marginal, small, semi-medium, medium, large and overall) categories so as to find out the pattern of land holding in each. This will help us to understand more about the position of non-conventional development indicators (gender-wise agriculture land ownership trends) in Kerala in the overall development scenario.

So, for this we consider the land ownership pattern in Kerala compared to its all India averages by taking only Agricultural land .However considering only agriculture land will limit our discussion.

Data and Methodology: The Data is taken from Agriculture census and Population Census . The data from Agriculture Census shows the primary characteristics like number of operational holdings and area operated by size classes(marginal, small, semi-medium, medium ,large)social groups (SC,ST and others)gender(male/ female)type of holding(here we consider only individual holdings)(Marginal : Below 1 hectare; Small: 1-2 hectare ;Medium: 2-4 hectare;Semi-medium:4-10 hectare; Large: 10 hectare and above) .And from this data ,the percentage share of Kerala ‘s performance compared to the all India averages has been calculated for a time period starting from 1995-96 to 2010-11.

Also, we have taken gender composition data from the Population Census of 2001 and 2011 to get a clear picture for the gender-wise comparison .As per the final census data 2011,The total population of India is 1,210,569,573 of which of which the percentage of male and female are 51.47 and 48.53 respectively. The percentage of SC’s and ST’s in the total population of India are 16.635 and 8.614 respectively. Similarly, the total population of Kerala as per 2011 census is 33,406,061 of which of which the percentage of male and female are 47.98 and 52.02 respectively. The percentage of SC’s and ST’s in the total population of Kerala are 9.099 and 1.451 respectively.

According to the latest Agriculture census report, there are 138.35 million (13.8 Crore) operational land holdings in India. Almost close to 5% of all the

agricultural land holdings account for about a third of all the agricultural land in operation. In comparison to 2005-06, there was an increase of 7% in number of these holdings. Out of these only 12.78% land holdings belong to women. The total operated area was 159.59 million hectare and the average size of the holding has been estimated as 1.15 hectare and it has shown a steady declining trend over various Agriculture Censuses over the years. The total number of operational holdings in Kerala accounts 6831000 in which the area operated is 1511000 hectares. In the total number of operational holdings and operated area for all social groups in Kerala women holds only 19% and 13.89% respectively.The SC women in Kerala holds only 25.60 % and 21.59% but in a better position compared to their counterparts in India i.e.,12.27% and 10.42% respectively. Also ,It is revealed that 54.79 percent of the ST population depends on agriculture whereas in the case of general population, the corresponding figure was only 19.52 percent. Though there is an excessive dependence of STs on agriculture for their livelihood the share of operational holdings and operated area among ST women in Kerala holds only 22.16% and 16.56 %of the total land given to ST’s.But the average size of land holdings with SC and ST women in Kerala is 0.05 and 0.27 which is lesser than the average of all India counterparts i.e.,0.68 and 1.34 respectively.

The following table shows the size group wise Number of operational holdings, Area operated and Average size for India and Kerala for All Social Groups, SC’s and ST’s.

Table 1: The Size Group wise Number of operational holdings, Area operated and Average size for India and Kerala for All Social Groups, SC’s and ST’s

Sl.No.	Category holdings	Operated Area(in hectares)	Kerala Total (All India Total) In absolute numbers		Kerala Total (All India Total) In %		Kerala Total (All India Total) Average size
			4 Number ('000)	5 Area ('000 ha)	6 Number	7 Area	
1	2 Size-Group	3 Size-class	4 Number ('000)	5 Area ('000 ha)	6 Number	7 Area	8 Average size
2	Marginal	Below 1.00	6580 (92356)	886 (35410)	96.32 (67.10)	58.63 (22.50)	0.13 (0.38)
3	Small	1.00 – 2.00 hectares	(24705)	282 (35136)	2.63 (17.91)	18.66 (22.08)	1.56 (1.42)
4	Semi- Medium holdings	2.00 – 4.00 hectares	57 (13840)	159 (37547)	0.83 (10.04)	10.52 (23.63)	2.78 (2.71)
5	Medium holdings	4.00 – 10.00 hectares	12 (5856)	64 (33709)	0.17 (4.25)	12.52 (21.20)	5.33 (5.75)
6	Large holdings	10.00 hectares and above	2 (1000)	120 (17379)	0.02 (0.70)	7.94 (10.59)	60 (17.379)
7	All Holdings	Total	6831 (137757)	1511 (159180)	100 (100)	100 (100)	0.22 (1.15)

Note: Total may not tally due to rounding of figures.

Source: Agriculture Census, 2010-11, Agriculture

Census Division, Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.

Table 1 shows that there exists an unequal distribution of land among different size groups .The marginal group has the maximum number and area

of holdings .As the size class increases there is a drastic decline in both. But the average size of holding is very high in large size class which clearly depicts the persisting inequality in distribution among the different size groups.

Table 2 : Percentage distribution by sex of operational holdings, Area operated and Average size for India and Kerala for All Social Groups

All size classes									
Year	No of operational holdings (in %)			Area Operated(in %)			Average size/ holding		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1995-96	76.59 (89.84)	23.41 (10.14)	100	82.06 (92.32)	17.99 (7.67)	100	0.28 (1.38)	0.2 (1.02)	0.26 (1.35)
2000-01	79.12 (88.27)	20.87 (11.72)	100	83.8 90.88	16.12 (9.11)	100	0.23 (1.3)	0.17 (0.99)	0.22 (1.27)
2005-06	80.59 (87.62)	19.4 (12.37)	100	84.74 (90.12)	15.25 (9.87)	100	0.22 (1.2)	0.17 (0.93)	0.21 (1.17)
2010-11	80.22 (86.52)	19.77 (13.47)	100	85.04 (89.06)	14.95 (10.93)	100	0.22 (1.14)	0.16 (0.9)	0.21 (1.1)
Marginal									
1995-96	76.01 (88.63)	23.98 (11.36)	100	78.5 (89.82)	21.3 (10.17)	100	0.16 (0.39)	0.14 (0.35)	0.15 (0.39)
2000-01	78.72 (87.1)	21.27 (12.89)	100	81.24 (88.16)	18.75 (11.83)	100	0.14 (0.4)	0.12 (0.36)	0.14 (0.39)
2005-06	80.25 (86.6)	19.74 (13.39)	100	82.23 (87.58)	17.76 (12.41)	100	0.14 (0.38)	0.12 (0.35)	0.14 (0.37)
2010-11	79.92 (85.58)	20.08 (14.41)	100	82.37 (86.65)	17.62 (13.34)	100	0.14 (0.39)	0.12 (0.36)	0.13 (0.39)
Small									
1995-96	84.49 (90.74)	15.11 (9.25)	100	84.83 (90.78)	15.16 (9.21)	100	1.33 (1.42)	1.32 (1.41)	1.33 (1.41)
2000-01	86.87 (89.04)	13.12 (10.95)	100	86.68 (89.09)	12.96 (10.9)	100	1.32 (1.41)	1.31 (1.41)	1.32 (1.41)
2005-06	87.61 (88.37)	12.38 (11.62)	100	87.45 (88.54)	12.54 (11.45)	100	1.33 (1.38)	1.32 (1.35)	1.33 (1.37)
2010-11	88.57 (87.28)	12 (12.7)	100	88.04 (87.5)	11.59 (12.49)	100	1.58 (1.43)	1.56 (1.4)	1.57 (1.42)
Medium									
1995-96	87.09 (92.28)	12.9 (7.71)	100	86.13 (92.42)	13.44 (7.57)	100	2.54 (2.73)	2.64 (2.68)	2.55 (2.72)
2000-01	87.67 (90.87)	12.32 (9.12)	100	87.97 (91.01)	12.56 (8.98)	100	2.51 (2.71)	2.52 (2.67)	2.51 (2.71)
2005-06	89.55 (90.11)	10.44 (9.88)	100	89.01 (90.32)	10.4 (9.67)	100	2.56 (2.67)	2.56 (2.6)	2.56 (2.66)
2010-11	89.09 (89.25)	10.9 (10.74)	100	90.13 (89.48)	10.52 (10.52)	100	2.8 (2.71)	2.77 (2.65)	2.8 (2.7)

Semi-medium									
1995-96	84.21 (93.88)	10.52 (6.11)	100	87.62 (93.96)	12.37 (6.03)	100	5.23 (5.82)	5.2 (5.74)	5.23 (5.81)
2000-01	86.66 (92.92)	13.33 (7.07)	100	88.46 (93.02)	11.53 (6.97)	100	5.27 (5.78)	5.19 (5.7)	5.26 (5.78)
2005-06	85.71 (92.17)	7.14 (7.82)	100	90.27 (92.31)	9.72 (7.67)	100	5.26 (5.7)	5.21 (5.59)	5.26 (5.69)
2010-11	90.9 (91.43)	9.09 (8.56)	100	91.37 (91.54)	8.62 (8.44)	100	5.28 (5.73)	5.39 (5.65)	5.29 (5.73)
Large									
1995-96	2 (95.06)	Neg (4.93)	100	93.87 (94.86)	(8.16 5.14)	100	23.69 (15.94)	14.92 (16.65)	22.7 (15.98)
2000-01	2 (95.34)	Neg (4.65)	100	91.76 (93)	(5.88 5.59)	100	19.13 (15.67)	16.66 (15.52)	18.92 (15.66)
2005-06	1 (94.29)	Neg (5.59)	100	93.1 (93.66)	(6.89 6.34)		19.48 (15.45)	15.35 (15.23)	19.17 (15.43)
2010-11	1 (92.76)	Neg (7.23)	100	96.77 (92.82)	(3.22 7.17)	100	25.17 (15.75)	17.9 (15.45)	24.77 (15.73)

Note: fig in the bracket show All India gender-wise composition. Source: Computed from Agriculture Census

Table 3: Percentage distribution by sex of operational holdings, Area operated and Average size for India and Kerala for SC's

All size classes									
Year	No of operational holdings (in %)			Area Operated(in %)			Average size/ holding (in hec)		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1995-96	74.13 (90.63)	26.56 (9.36)	100	77.08 (92.51)	20.83 (7.48)	100	0.09 (0.89)	0.07 (0.7)	0.08 (0.87)
2000-01	76 (89.65)	24.16 (10.35)	100	80 (91.43)	20 (8.56)	100	0.08 (0.84)	0.06 (0.68)	0.08 (0.83)
2005-06	77.08 (88.53)	23.43 (11.45)	100	80 (90.32)	20 (9.67)	100	0.07 (0.82)	0.06 (0.68)	0.07 (0.8)
2010-11	74.43 (87.07)	25.56 (12.92)	100	80 (88.92)	22.85 (11.07)	100	0.07 (0.8)	0.06 (0.67)	0.07 (0.78)
Marginal									
1995-96	73.61 (89.99)	26.38 (10)	100	76.74 (90.99)	23.25 (9)	100	0.08 (0.35)	0.06 (0.31)	0.07 (0.35)
2000-01	75.71 (89.11)	24.28 (10.88)	100	76.92 (90.01)	20.51 (9.95)	100	0.07 (0.36)	0.06 (0.33)	0.06 (0.36)
2005-06	76.6 (87.98)	23.39 (12.01)	100	77.77 (88.93)	19.44 (11.08)	100	0.06 (0.37)	0.06 (0.33)	0.06 (0.36)
2010-11	74.29 (86.55)	25.7 (13.43)	100	77.41 (87.5)	22.58 (12.5)	100	0.06 (0.37)	0.05 (0.34)	0.06 (0.37)
Small									
1995-96	2 (91.89)	Neg (8.1)	100	75 (91.94)	25 (8.08)	100	1.26 (1.39)	1.15 (1.39)	1.24 (1.39)
2000-01	3 (90.82)	1 (9.17)	100	75 (90.89)	25 (9.1)	100	1.29 (1.4)	1.37 (1.38)	1.31 (1.4)
2005-06	2 (89.76)	Neg (10.23)	100	2 (89.87)	Neg (10.12)	100	1.31 (1.37)	1.37 (1.36)	1.32 (1.37)
2010-11	2 (88.29)	Neg (11.79)	100	2 (88.45)	Neg (11.54)	100	1.29 (1.41)	1.27 (1.38)	1.28 (1.41)

Medium									
1995-96	Neg (92.91)	Neg (7.08)	100	1 (92.99)	Neg (7)	100	2.42 (2.66)	2.36 (2.62)	2.41 (2.65)
2000-01	Neg (91.72)	Neg (8.27)	100	1 (91.89)	Neg (8.1)	100	2.48 (2.66)	2.46 (2.61)	2.47 (2.65)
2005-06	Neg (90.9)	Neg (9.09)	100	1 (91.06)	Neg (8.93)	100	2.44 (2.65)	2.64 (2.6)	2.47 (2.64)
2010-11	Neg (89.61)	Neg (10.38)	100	1 (89.81)	Neg (10.18)		2.6 (2.66)	2.31 (2.59)	2.58 (2.65)
Semi-medium									
1995-96	Neg (94.22)	Neg (5.77)	100	Neg (94.34)	Neg (5.65)	100	5.52 (5.7)	4.53 (5.57)	5.29 (5.69)
2000-01	Neg (93.7)	o (6.29)	100	Neg (93.67)	o (6.38)	100	4.77 (5.7)	o (5.61)	4.77 (5.69)
2005-06	Neg (92.59)	o (7.4)	100	Neg (92.62)	o (7.37)	100	5.6 (5.67)	o (5.65)	5.6 (5.67)
2010-11	Neg (91.41)	Neg (8.58)	100	Neg (91.37)	Neg (8.62)	100	4.77 (5.67)	4.02 (5.62)	4.73 (5.67)
Large									
1995-96	o (95.91)	o (4.08)	100	o (95.08)	o (4.91)	100	o (15.63)	o (19)	o (15.77)
2000-01	Neg (95.34)	Neg (4.65)	100	Neg (94.38)	Neg (5.61)	100	24.13 (15.56)	41 (16.02)	28.35 (15.59)
2005-06	o (94.73)	o (7.89)	100	o (93.2)	o (6.79)	100	o (14.86)	o (13)	o (15.1)
2010-11	o (91.89)	o (8.1)	100	o (91.82)	o (7.99)	100	o (15.25)	o (15.52)	o (15.28)

Note: fig in the bracket show All India gender-wise composition . Source: Computed from Agriculture Census

Table 4: Percentage distribution by sex of operational holdings, Area operated and Average size for India and Kerala for ST's

All size classes									
Year	No of operational holdings (in %)			Area Operated(in %)			Average size/ holding (in hec)		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1995-96	82.19 (92.75)	17.8 (7.24)	100	87.5 (93.6)	12.5 (6.4)	100	0.47 (1.76)	0.34 (1.54)	0.44 (1.74)
2000-01	82.22 (91.11)	18.88 (8.89)	100	85.29 (92.3)	14.7 (7.69)	100	0.4 (1.7)	0.29 (1.45)	0.38 (1.67)
2005-06	79.31 (90.36)	20.68 (9.63)	100	83.33 (91.57)	16.66 (8.42)	100	0.37 (1.59)	0.27 (1.37)	0.35 (1.57)
2010-11	77.89 (88.66)	22.1 (11.32)	100	82.35 (89.94)	17.64 (10.05)	100	0.38 (1.46)	0.27 (1.28)	0.36 (1.44)
Marginal									
1995-96	80.64 (91.97)	19.35 (8.02)	100	85.71 (92.69)	14.28 (7.3)	100	0.23 (0.49)	0.19 (0.44)	0.22 (0.48)
2000-01	80.24 (90.13)	18.51 (9.86)	100	83.33 (90.6)	16.66 (9.39)	100	0.22 (0.49)	0.19 (0.46)	0.22 (0.48)
2005-06	78.48 (89.56)	21.51 (10.43)	100	81.25 (90.04)	18.75 (10)	100	0.21 (0.48)	0.18 (0.46)	0.21 (0.48)
2010-11	76.74 (88.04)	23.25 (11.95)	100	82.35 (88.64)	17.64 (11.32)	100	0.21 (0.49)	0.16 (0.46)	0.2 (0.48)
Small									
1995-96	85.71 (93.23)	14.28 (6.76)	100	90 (93.2)	10 (6.79)	100	1.36 (1.42)	1.37 (1.42)	1.36 (1.42)

2000-01	85.71 (91.52)	14.28 (8.51)	100	88.88 (91.47)	11.11 (8.52)	100	1.31 (1.41)	1.28 (1.41)	1.3 (1.41)
2005-06	83.33 (90.67)	16.66 (9.32)	100	87.5 (90.7)	12.5 (9.29)	100	1.3 (1.38)	1.33 (1.38)	1.31 (1.38)
2010-11	83.33 (88.8)	16.66 (11.19)	100	87.5 (89.02)	12.5 (10.97)	100	1.3 (1.43)	1.38 (1.4)	1.31 (1.43)
Medium									
1995-96	3 (93.43)	Neg (6.63)	100	85.71 (93.36)	14.28 (6.63)	100	2.36 (2.67)	2.27 (2.68)	2.36 (2.68)
2000-01	2 (92.22)	Neg (7.84)	100	20 (92.18)	20 (7.78)	100	2.37 (2.67)	2.29 (2.65)	2.36 (2.67)
2005-06	1 (91.31)	Neg (8.68)	100	- (91.45)	Neg (8.54)	100	2.47 (2.65)	2.46 (2.61)	2.47 (2.65)
2010-11	2 (89.64)	Neg (10.35)	100	83.33 (89.78)	16.66 (10.21)	100	2.42 (2.69)	2.28 (2.65)	2.4 (2.69)
Semi-medium									
1995-96	Neg (93.97)	Neg (6.02)	100	1 (93.99)	Neg (5.98)	100	4.78 (5.77)	4.85 (5.73)	4.8 (5.77)
2000-01	Neg (93.11)	Neg (6.88)	100	2 (93.2)	Neg (6.77)	100	5.26 (5.78)	4.87 (5.68)	5.23 (5.77)
2005-06	Neg (92.46)	Neg (7.53)	100	1 (92.6)	Neg (7.39)	100	4.82 (5.74)	5.06 (5.63)	4.83 (5.74)
2010-11	Neg (91.33)	Neg (8.66)	100	2 (91.42)	Neg (8.54)	100	5.36 (5.72)	5.59 (5.62)	5.39 (5.71)
Large									
1995-96	Neg (95.04)	0 (4.95)	100	Neg (95.1)	0 (4.89)	100	30 (14.78)	0 (14.6)	30 (14.77)
2000-01	Neg (94.28)	0 (5.71)	100	Neg (94.14)	0 (5.85)	100	20.4 (14.94)	0 (14.97)	20.4 (15.33)
2005-06	Neg (92.3)	0 (6.59)	100	Neg (93.76)	0 (6.3)	100	18.89 (16.28)	0 (15.33)	18.89 (16.03)
2010-11	Neg (91.56)	0 (8.43)	100	1 (91.97)	0 (8.02)	100	39.27 (15.74)	0 (15.71)	39.27 (15.74)

Note: fig in the bracket show All India gender-wise composition. Source: Computed from Agriculture Census

Findings:

- Sex disaggregated data on operational holdings ,area operated and average size of holdings are drawn from Agricultural Census from the period of 1995-96 to 2010-11 for Kerala, indicates a high level of disparity in landholdings of men and women.
- The year 2005-06 shows an increase in number of operational holdings and area operated in almost all classes and groups(All India All social groups ,All India SC's , Kerala ST's) .
- Compared to male , the share of female ,(eventhough increasing) is very less in all classes irrespective of the category she belongs to. But the increasing trend can be considered as a sign of hope.
- Kerala is showing much better performance compared to the All India averages of female

shares. But a shocking fact is that unlike the All India level shares of female which has shown an increase over the years , the Kerala female share has shown a decline over the years in percentage share in number of operational holdings,area operated and average size.

- In both All India and Kerala ,as we move on from the marginal to large class, the share of operational holdings ,area operated and average size has shown a decline for female and an increase for male which again is an evidence that female category holds smaller size of land holdings compared to male

Finally, to conclude, The All India share of number of operational holdings and area operated for males are more compared to their state share whereas the all India share of number of holdings and area operated for females are less compared to their state share. The average size per holding is also more for national than the state level for both male and female. The increased population has a major effect on the decline in the average size of holding .And

because of these small and fragmented holdings land remains nonviable. However, the share of female land holding almost at every level is much lesser than their male counterparts. Thus ,finally this analysis highlight the fact that the case of females show a common pattern of unequal land holding status irrespective of the social groups ,size classes and state or national averages

Conclusion: This paper has discussed the patterns of Agricultural land ownership in Kerala. It has undergone significant changes since Land reforms but the landowning and ownership among women in all social groups and size classes remain very meagre. The present high socio-demographic indicators on

women in Kerala does not has much impact on their empowerment. Under the mask of matrilineity, the patriarchy is prevailing now. So the gender and development discourse continues even after half a century of history in Land reforms. To make these paradoxes into parities and to empower women communities within the household and society ,an equitable distribution of land has to be under the policy considerations. And this agenda can be made in practice through a framework of gender inclusive welfare oriented policies on land reforms. Thus government should reframe the old land reform policies so as to remove gender inequality from its roots.

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