

An Analitical Study On The Growth Of Education In Travancore As Indicated By The 1876 Census

Mrs. K. Malathi^{1*}, Dr. G. Pushparaj², Dr. Regi, S.³

^{1*}Ph. D Research Scholar, Research Centre of History, Holy Cross College (Autonomous), Nagercoil Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli-627012. (Reg No.20123041082001),

²Assistant Professor of History, Muslim Arts College, Thiruvithancode, Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli-627012.

³Associate Professor of History, Holy Cross College (Autonomous), Nagercoil Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli-627012.

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ABSTRACT

Modern Kerala was formed through the merger of Travancore-Cochin and Malabar. Among these three political divisions, Travancore had the most significant influence on Kerala's historical, political, economic, and cultural development. Travancore stood out among the many princely states in India for its remarkable progress in social and human development, ranking highly in these areas and surpassing many of its contemporaries. The state's commitment to education, particularly its emphasis on providing elementary education for all children, made it the most literate region of its time.

In ancient and medieval Travancore, education was closely linked to religious teachings, primarily of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Islam, though secular subjects were also included. The Portuguese and Dutch significantly contributed to the development of education in the region. Catholic and Protestant missionaries played a crucial role in modernizing education in the Travancore princely state. This article discusses the number and proportion of the educated population in the country, the standard of instruction, and the distribution of education across different religions. The educational status of Travancore considers the education of both children and adults, as well as the differences between educated males and females. The educational status across various castes is analyzed, focusing on the numbers and proportions of the educated within each caste. Additionally, the comparative educational conditions between the sexes and the educational status of different Taluks and Divisions are assessed.

Key Words: Travancore, education, caste, sex, religion, adult, children, population, taluk, male, female, educated.

Introduction:

Kerala, situated in the southern part of India, was officially formed on November 1, 1956, through the merger of Travancore-Cochin and Malabar under the State Reorganization Act. Kerala's notable achievements in education, healthcare, housing, and land reforms have collectively come to be recognized as the "Kerala Model of Development." Among these achievements, the most remarkable is the state's progress in education, including attaining near-total literacy and ensuring widespread access to formal education for all. This has positioned Kerala uniquely on the educational map of India. Prior to the 1956 reorganization of Indian states, the region now known as Kerala was divided into three political entities: Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar. Travancore and Cochin in the south were princely states, while the Malabar District and Kasargod taluk were part of the former Madras state. Each of these regions had its own educational institutions and systems. Among this three political divisions Travancore had a greater influence on its historical, political, economic and cultural aspects of Kerala.

Travancore distinguished itself among the many princely states in India with its exceptional progress in social and human development, achieving a notably high ranking that surpassed many of its peers. As the most literate state, Travancore's commitment to providing elementary education for all children set it apart,

particularly in the field of education. In ancient and medieval Travancore, education was deeply rooted in religious doctrines—primarily Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Islam—though secular subjects were also included. The Portuguese and Dutch significantly contributed to the development of education in Travancore. Catholic and Protestant missionaries also played a crucial role in modernizing education in the Travancore princely state. In terms of education, Travancore compared favorably with the well-governed provinces of British India, as evidenced by earlier censuses of the state. This article attempts to analyze the educational conditions in Travancore according to the 1876 census.

Analysis of the 1876 Census:

The Travancore State has 132,702 individuals who are literate, resulting in a proportion of 5.74 educated persons per hundred. In contrast, the "educated" population in the Madras Presidency constitutes only 5 percent of the total population, and the proportion is even lower in most of the Collectorates within that Presidency. The term "educated" should be understood with certain limitations. For the Census of 1876, the only information gathered under this category was whether individuals listed in the schedules could "read and write." In the next censuses, or forth coming its additional details, such as the language or languages in which people are educated, the level of instruction each individual has achieved, and whether they are pursuing studies in fields like law, medicine, or engineering were also collected. The impact of social movements and the evolving societal landscape led many to aspire to higher social status. Economic pressures and the demands of a competitive economy made the economic value of modern education more apparent to many.

The proportion of the "educated" population was highest among the Jews, at 18.90 percent. However, given the small size of this community, this figure did not necessarily indicate a high educational standard. Among the three major groups in the community, the Hindus had the largest number of educated individuals, totaling 94,725, but this represented only 5.57 percent of their total population. In contrast, the proportion among Christians is 6.69 percent. This favorable outcome among Christians is partly due to the high literacy rates among Europeans and Eurasians within this group, with 83.90 percent and 34.49 percent educated, respectively. The dedicated efforts of the Missionaries in the region have significantly contributed to the moral, intellectual, and material advancement of the Native Christian community, whose literacy rate was 6.56 percent. Meanwhile, the Muslim population, as in other parts of British India, lags behind in educational attainment, with only 6,610 individuals, or 4.72 percent, able to read and write.

Table – 1 Religion-wise Educational Status

Religion	Total Population	No. of Persons able to read & Write	Percentage to the Total Population
Hindus	1,700,317	94,725	5.57
Mahammedans	1,39,905	6,610	4.72
Christians ...	4,68,518	31,346	6.69
Others (Jews)	151	21	13.90

(Source: Report on the Census of Travancore, 1876)

The number and proportion of educated children and adults reveal that 19,976 children (of both sexes) in the country are reported as able to read and write out of a total of 795,466 children. This results in a proportion of 2.51 percent, which is admittedly small. However, this figure is influenced by the classification used in this office, where all boys over the age of 12 were excluded from the calculation. For girls, this exclusion likely has little impact, as most are unable to continue their studies much beyond that age. However, the majority of boys in our schools and colleges are over 12 years old and were not included in this calculation, which would have otherwise shown a much higher percentage. Among adults, the increase is more significant, with 7.44 percent of them being classified as "educated." The Taluk-wise educated children and adults is each sex is given in the following table.

Table – 2 Taluk-wise Educational Status

Sl. No	Name of Taluks	Total Population	No. of Children	No. of Adults	Male able to the Read and Write	Females able to read and Write	Total able to read and Write	Proportion of educated
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Thovalay	29,635	9,816	19,819	763	20	783	7.97
2.	Agusteeswaram	81,613	27,425	54,188	1,218	35	1,253	4.57

3.	Eraniel	1,06,712	38,543	68,189	1,690	29	1,719	4.46
4.	Culculam	62,146	22,250	39,896	579	23	602	2.70
5.	Vilavancode	69,553	27,248	42,305	906	3	905	3.29
6.	Neyyatrinkara	1,06,128	40,075	66,053	326	22	348	86
7.	Trivandrum South	49,927	16,633	33,294	351	7	358	2.10
8.	Trivandrum North	50,486	16,593	33,893	964	228	1,192	7.18
9.	Nedoomangad	47,668	17,146	30,522	1371	71	1,442	8.41
10.	Sheraingl	87,992	31,549	56,448	392	56	448	1.42
11.	Kottarakaray	58,137	18,920	34,217	458	12	470	2.48
12.	Puthanapuram	36,816	12,447	24,369	187	11	198	1.59
13.	Shenkotta	28,750	9,853	18,803	159	...	159	1.59
14.	Quilon	1,06,091	37,070	69,012	723	8	731	1.97
15.	Cunnattoor	59,947	19,918	40,029	108	2	110	.55
16.	Karunagapully	95,470	31,525	63,945	769	74	843	2.67
17.	Kartigapully	80,683	26,723	53,540	376	2	378	1.41
18.	Mavalikaray	1,09,191	35,219	73,972	1,264	396	1660	4.71
19.	Chengannoor	75,998	24,267	51,731	411	62	473	1.95
20.	Tiruvella	97,820	32,191	65,629	1,269	1	1270	3.94
21.	Ambalapulay	89,022	28,472	60,550	536	11	547	1.92
22.	Sharetala	1,14,931	38,130	76,801	259	39	298	.78
23.	Vycome	72,151	23,243	48,908	312	...	312	1.34
24.	Yettoomanoor	76,890	25,941	50,949	1,078	76	1154	4.44
25.	Cottayam	60,867	21,370	39,497	199	8	207	.97
26.	Chenganacherry	69,420	23,172	46,248	261	8	269	1.16
27.	Meenachel	53,140	19,497	33,643	349	56	405	2.07
28.	Moovattupulay	91,674	32,366	59,308	294	21	315	.97
29.	Todupulay	23,353	8,581	14,772	67	...	67	.78
30.	Cunnattunad	97,015	35,079	61,936	423	82	505	1.43
31.	Alengaud	64,903	22,904	41,999	394	40	434	1.89
32.	Paravoor	60156	21,191	38,965	116	1	117	1.55
Total		2308897	795466	1513.425	18372	1404	19976	2.51

All Religion											
Adults											
Males able to read and write	Females able to read and write	Total able to read and write	Proportion of educated adults to total adults	No. of Males	No. Of Females	No. of Educated Males	No. of Educated Females	Proportion of educated males to total males	Proportion of educated Females to total males	Total No. of Educated Persons	Proportion of educated persons to total Persons
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
2,566	9	2575	12.99	14310	15325	3329	29	23.26	.18	3358	11.33
6,206	152	6358	11.73	38799	42814	7424	187	19.13	.43	7611	9.33
5316	66	5382	7.89	52624	54108	7006	95	13.31	.17	7101	6.67
3372	69	3441	8.62	31,406	30740	3951	92	12.58	.29	4043	6.51
2911	41	2952	6.98	34618	34935	3817	44	11.02	.12	3861	3.35
4048	123	4171	6.31	53748	52380	4374	145	8.13	.27	4519	4.26
3805	151	3956	11.88	24820	25107	4156	158	16.74	.62	4314	8.64
5847	561	6408	18.91	25518	24968	6811	789	28.69	3.16	7600	16.05
2287	30	2317	7.59	24140	23528	3658	101	15.15	.42	3759	7.89
3129	105	3234	5.72	42867	45125	3521	161	8.21	.35	3682	4.18
2209	5	2214	6.47	26656	26481	2667	17	10.00	.06	2684	5.05
1170	30	1200	4.92	18441	18375	1357	41	7.36	.22	1398	3.80
982	...	982	5.22	13888	14808	1141	...	8.21	...	1141	3.97
3883	111	4094	5.78	52259	53832	4706	119	9.00	.22	4825	4.55
1544	16	1560	3.89	29955	29992	1652	18	5.51	.06	1670	2.79
3111	172	3283	5.13	46155	49315	3880	246	8.40	.49	4126	4.32
3534	86	3620	6.76	39375	40888	3910	88	9.90	.21	3998	4.98
3790	236	4026	5.44	54387	54804	5054	63	9.29	1.15	5888	5.21
1942	215	2157	4.17	38657	37341	2353	277	6.08	.77	2630	3.46
6929	97	7026	10.70	50133	47687	8198	98	16.35	.20	8296	8.48
5703	338	6041	9.97	44475	44547	6239	349	14.03	.78	6588	7.40
3365	156	3521	4.58	56517	58414	3624	195	6.41	.33	3819	8.32

4184	42	4228	8.64	36200	35951	4496	42	12.42	.12	4538	8.29
4670	349	5019	9.85	38178	38712	5748	425	15.05	.110	6173	8.03
4112	43	4155	10.52	30729	30138	4311	51	14.03	.17	4362	7.17
2758	87	2845	6.15	35141	34279	3019	95	8.59	.28	3114	4.48
2299	62	2361	7.01	26981	26159	2648	118	9.81	.45	2788	8.21
2800	77	2977	5.01	45431	46243	3194	98	7.03	.21	3292	3.58
807	11	818	5.53	11939	11414	874	11	7.32	.10	885	3.78
3706	68	3774	6.09	47868	49147	4129	150	8.61	.30	4279	4.41
2319	326	2645	6.29	32276	32627	2713	366	8.40	1.12	3079	4.74
3249	139	3388	8.72	30198	29958	3363	140	11.14	.47	3505	5.83
108753	3973	112726	7.45	1142688	1160202	127325	5377	11.08	.46	132702	8.74

(Source: Report on the Census of Travancore, 1876)

The figures given in the above table are highly encouraging, indicating that education was valued across all castes and classes in the Travancore State. Each community had a select group proficient in reading and writing, and the desire for intellectual advancement had spread throughout society. While 50 percent of the male Brahmin population was literate, even the most remote and isolated Vaden community can claim 19 literate individuals per 10,000. Starting with the Malayala Soodras, 46,373 males were educated, making up about 21 percent of their total male population. The Native Christians had 29,057 educated males, which was 12.42 percent of their male population. The Brahmins had 10,188 educated males, representing 50 percent of their male population. Other groups include 5,928 educated Ezhavas, 4,621 Tulookkens, 4,294 Vellalars, 4,266 Cummalens, 2,887 Pandi Soodras, 1,966 Cunians, 1,924 Shanars, 1,744 Chetties, 1,315 Ambulavases, 1,311 Marans, 1,178 Konganies, 1,153 Vaniens, and fewer than 1,000 in each of the other castes. In terms of the proportion of educated males relative to their total numbers, Europeans ranked first, with 131 males educated, or 87.33 percent of their male population. The Plappullies had a 60.46 percent literacy rate, followed by the Moodalecs at 57.54 percent, the Kshetriyas at 52.02 percent, and the Eurasians at 45.97 percent. Among the Canians, 42.41 percent were educated, while the Arabs had 38.58 percent, the Vellalars 36.19 percent, the Elayathoos 34.36 percent, and the Pandi Soodras 31.59 percent. The lowest percentage of educated males was found among the Vadens or hill tribes.

Table – 3 Caste-wise Educational Status

Sl. No	Name of Caste	No. of Educated Males	Percentage to total males	No. of Educated Females	Percentage of total Females
1.	Bramins	10,188	50.18	241	1.33
2.	Kshetryas	645	52.02	116	9.56
3.	Elayathoo	634	34.36	16	.99
4.	Kongani	1,178	15.92	4	.06
5.	Ambalavasi	1,315	31.67	65	1.52
6.	Plapputh	26	60.46	...	...
7.	Maran	1,311	18.44	46	.81
8.	Malayala Soodra	46,373	21.27	2,656	1.19
9.	Vellalen	4,294	36.19	30	.24
10.	Moodalee	103	57.54	3	1.91
11.	Pandi Soodra	2,887	31.59	6	.06
12.	Chetti	1,744	20.24	17	.20
13.	Vadookan	112	13.08	1	.11
14.	Patnoolkaran	215	27.35	...	...
15.	Krishnavaka	772	19.31	6	.14
16.	Chalian	305	9.34	1	.02
17.	Sunkumpundarem	438	8.26	4	.07
18.	Panan	119	10.79	...	...
19.	Elavanian	114	8.47	...	...
20.	Vanien	1,153	9.50	6	0.4
21.	Cummalen	4,266	8.92	37	.08
22.	Chemboothattee	5	20.00	...	...
23.	Ponden	24	10.86	...	...
24.	Maraven	137	5.55	...	...
25.	Edayan	275	8.96	1	0.03
26.	Koshaven	96	2.59	...	...
27.	Chalooppen	12	3.13	...	...
28.	Valuthaden	275	4.31	1	.01
29.	Chemman	14	2.78	1	.21
30.	Kshowraken	417	5.78	7	.09

31.	Cunian	1,966	42.41	34	.76
32.	Munnan	280	3.42	9	.11
33.	Paraven	27	.64	...	...
34.	Thundan	65	.71	...	...
35.	Noolian	15	2.04	...	...
36.	Elooven	5,928	3.15	93	.05
37.	Shannan	1,924	3.99	8	.01
38.	Mookkooven	92	1.19	2	.03
39.	Cackalen	13	2.66	8	1.43
40.	Malayaraen	28	.45	...	...
41.	Vaden	7	.19	...	...
42.	Pullen	13	.47	...	...
43.	Oolladen	6	.43	...	...
44.	Coraven	58	.21	...	...
45.	Purian	192	.60	...	...
46.	Poolian	183	.19	...	...
47.	Other Hindus	1,029	6.79	33	.22
	Hindu Total	91,273	10.82	3,452	.40
1	Pathan	375	22.89	2	.13
2	Syed	337	10.67	...	...
3	Moghul	19	16.66	...	...
4	Toolookken	4,621	8.39	83	.15
5	Lubbay	776	8.73	1	.01
6	Arab	120	38.58	...	...
7	Sikh	90	21.18	...	...
8	Others	186	24.18	...	...
	Mohammedan Total	6,524	9.27	86	.12
1	Europeans	131	87.33	88	79.28
2	Eurasians	320	45.97	157	22.85
3	Native Christians	29,057	12.42	1,593	.68
	Christian Total	29,508	12.57	1,838	.78
1	Jews	20	27.77	1	1.26
	Total for all Religions	1,27,325	11.08	5,377	.46

(Source: Report on the Census of Travancore, 1876)

In terms of the number of educated females, the Malayala Soodra class ranked first, with 2,656 women able to read and write. Native Christian women follow, with 1,593 educated individuals. Together, these two groups account for nearly 80 percent of the total educated females, leaving only 1,128 educated women across the remaining 57 castes in the country. Among these 57 classes, the Brahmins had 241 educated women, the Eurasians 157, the Kshetriyas 116, the Ezhavas 93, the Europeans 88, the Ambulavasies 65, the Marans 46, the Cummalar 37, the Cunians 34, the Vellalars 30, the Chetties 17, the Elayathoos 16, and the Munnans 9. All other classes combined account for just 93 educated women. Notably, there were no educated females in other castes which were listed in the margin in the Census Report. However, this ranking changes when considering the proportion of educated women within each caste. From this perspective, Europeans led with 79.28 percent of their women being educated, followed by Eurasians with 22.85 percent. Among the Kshetriyas, 9.56 percent of women were educated, while the Moodalies had 1.91 percent, the Ambulavasies 1.52 percent, the Cackalens 1.43 percent, the Brahmins 1.33 percent, and the Malayala Soodras 1.19 percent. All other castes had less than 1 percent of their women educated.

Therefore in his Administration Report for 1049 M.E. (1873-74 A.D.), then Dewan A.Sehayya Sastri noted that "as a general fact, females on this coast are educated in a much larger proportion than elsewhere in India." The census of 1876 confirms this observation, showing that 5,377 females are reported as able to read and write, which equates to 46 women per 10,000. This figure might be underestimated due to the general reluctance of women to disclose such information, yet it still indicates a significantly broader spread of education here compared to the Madras Presidency, where only 16 women per 10,000 are educated. Of the total 5,377 educated females 3452 were Hindus, 86 were Mahommedans, 88 were Europeans, 157 were Eurasians, 1593 were Native Christians and 1 was Jew. Among Hindus, 40 women out of every 10,000 were educated. Among Muslims, 12 in every 10,000 were educated, while among Christians, the number rises to 78 educated women per 10,000.

When combining the educated individuals of both sexes in each caste, the proportions were as follows: Europeans lead with 83.90 percent educated, followed by Plappullies at 34.60 percent, Eurasians at 34.49 percent, Moodalees at 31.54 percent, Kshetriyas at 31.02 percent, and Brahmins at 27.13 percent. Comparing the educational attainments of the sexes, one could find that on average across the country, there were 42.23 educated females for every 1,000 educated males. Among Hindus, there were 37.82 educated women per 1,000 educated men. Among Christians, this ratio increased to 62.29 women per 1,000 men, while among Jews, it was 50. Among Muslims, there were only 13.18 educated women for every 1,000 educated men. For Europeans, the ratio was significantly higher, with 671.75 educated women per 1,000 educated men, and among Eurasians, it was 490.62. From among the Castes, the Cackalens ranked very high in educational status, with a ratio of 615.38 educated women for every 1,000 educated men. However, these figures only represented proportions. The actual numbers were 8 educated females to 13 educated males, reflecting a relatively low level of education overall. Thus, high proportions in the table do not necessarily indicate widespread education but rather that the sexes are nearly equal in their level of education or lack thereof. For Europeans, the proportion of 671.75 educated women per 1,000 educated men suggested a close approximation between the sexes in terms of knowledge. In contrast, the high proportion among the Cackalens reflects a similar level of ignorance between the sexes.

Conclusion:

Travancore's remarkable achievements in social and human development, particularly in education, distinguished it from other princely states in India. Its unwavering commitment to providing elementary education for all children, along with efforts to modernize education through the involvement of religious and colonial influences, laid a solid foundation for the state's literacy and educational progress. The state's well-structured educational system, encompassing both general and technical streams and supported by a robust infrastructure, further highlighted its dedication to advancing education for everyone. By promoting English education, empowering women, and expanding access to higher education and vocational training, Travancore showcased its vision for social progress and economic development. The establishment of vernacular and English medium schools underscored the state's inclusive approach to education, ensuring that all segments of society could benefit from its advancements. Travancore's educational legacy continues to shape Kerala, making it one of the most literate and socially progressive states in India.

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