

Kerala, 1956 to the Present

‘Kerala is different, but not in the way we think.’ Economic change in this southern state of India has fascinated economists. Most studies have focused on the state’s unusual human development, and asked how a poor and economically stagnant state could achieve high levels of education and healthcare. These works point to politics and government policy to answer the question. History, this book says, shows that the foundations of human development were laid before the formation of the state and were owed to many factors besides politics. The striking point about the state in recent decades is not human development but income growth, which has been faster than most states since the 1990s. The question this book asks is: how could an income-poor state break out of stagnation so dramatically? The answers consider past globalisation, labour mobility, a legacy of welfare spending, and the positive ways these features interacted since India’s economic reforms.

Tirthankar Roy is Professor of Economic History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has taught and published extensively on South Asian history and development. His most recent monographs include *A Business History of India: Enterprise and the Emergence of Capitalism from 1700* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) and *The Reserve Bank of India Vol. 5, 1997–2008* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

K. Ravi Raman is a member of the State Planning Board in the Government of Kerala. He is the author of *Global Capital and Peripheral Labour* (Routledge, 2010). His next monograph, *Political Ecospatiality: Livelihood, Environment, and Subaltern Struggles in Kerala*, is forthcoming from Cambridge University Press.

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While the national and international context will be discussed wherever relevant, the volumes primarily seek to clarify the distinctive features of a state's economic history and convey its unique historical narrative.

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Tirthankar Roy is Professor of Economic History at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Abhirup Sarkar is Retired Professor of Economics at the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

Anand Swamy is Professor of Economics at Williams College, Williamstown, MA.

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India's Miracle State

Tirthankar Roy
K. Ravi Raman



Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-52163-5 — Kerala, 1956 to the Present
Tirthankar Roy, K. Ravi Raman
Frontmatter
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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009521635

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First published 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-009-52163-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-52165-9 Paperback

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Preface

The series to which this book belongs began with the intuition that the pathway of economic change since independence from colonial rule (1947) differed fundamentally between the states of India because their prehistory, geography, political make-up and initial conditions were very different. So large is the difference that each case deserves a book. Contributions to the series will inevitably structure their work to adapt to the specific experience of the states and cannot follow a single template. In that decision, one thing matters: whether to write a chronological narrative or a thematic one.

There is no ideal choice. We decided to follow the thematic format because we wished to concentrate on the main drivers of economic change, like migration, trends in private investment or environmental change, which did not unfold in a coordinated way. We felt a chronological story suggesting that the 1970s saw one kind of change and the 1980s another would miss the point. Still, to keep chronology in the foreground, we discuss the changing character of the state's economy in the introduction and the conclusion (Chapters 1 and 9).

We wish to acknowledge the anonymous readers of the book proposal, and the reader of the manuscript, for their comments and suggestions that significantly improved the quality of this text. We thank Upasana Guha, who provided valuable research assistance, for her careful and diligent work. The help rendered by Rachel Mathew, Dulhaque S. and Benna Fathima is also gratefully acknowledged.

A note on placenames: Many placenames have changed since 1956. In every chapter, in the first usage we write both old and new names and use the changed name in the rest of the chapter. Chapter 2 on history uses the old names in subsequent usages.

T.R.
K.R.R.