

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.

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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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India's Miracle State

Tirthankar Roy
K. Ravi Raman



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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).

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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.