

About the book

reflections on Kerala economy' consists of articles on Kerala in different areas like Kerala's economic growth and its link with financial intermediation, the role of infrastructure etc. It also problems being faced by different marginalized groups like women and their labour force participation. Through the articles, the book endeavours to delineate the contemporary Kerala economy easily and comprehensively to elaborate on the views and findings of research scholars who have been relentlessly engaged in analysis and research. The present book would be useful for all those who are interested in the development of Kerala.

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Multiple Reflections on Kerala Economy

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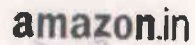
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Preface

Economic growth is a prerequisite for economic development. A sustainable development is the main track that needs to be followed by every economy which dreams for a better future. Sustainability is thus mainly attained through the three pillars viz. economic development, social development and environment protection. It is quite true that Kerala has made spectacular achievements in social developments, land reforms, education, health, infrastructure etc. since its formation. But in recent times, a handful of serious problems with far reaching consequences on its economy, society and environment have surfaced. In this context, the question as to how far the growth of Kerala economy can sustain itself is a matter of concern which needs to be discussed widely. However, it deserves to be reiterated here that the new initiatives taken by the state government to give a fillip to industry, information technology, higher education, tourism are expected to create a great constructive impact on different sectors of the State economy.

Past experience reveals that Kerala is the leading state in India in matter of education, socio-economic development and the related development aspects. Development indicators such as HDI, PQLI, and GDI etc are very high in Kerala. But at the same time we are facing many problems associated with the bad health conditions, social exclusions, marginalization etc. Growth and development of every economy are mainly channelized through the growth of urban agglomerations which in turn lead to the growth of more and more business establishments and high standard of living and better

deeply involved in studies pertaining to different aspects of Kerala economy and society.



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Dynamics of Kerala's Emigration: The Geographic, Religious and Demographic Dimensions

Rafeek. V. H.

1. Introduction: Migration is the movement of people from one place in the world to another, for the purpose of taking up permanent or semi-permanent residents usually across the political boundary, is as old as recorded history. Such movement of population falls in to two categories- one where the need or obligation to migrate because of political pressures, natural calamities, war and the like, the other whereby certain economic factors, such as marked differences in levels of earnings on wages, employment opportunities etc. While migration of the first category is often forced on the population, the latter type of migration is generally a voluntary phenomenon. Voluntary migration again can be divided in to two types of movements - one, within a country (in- migration or outmigration) and the other across countries (immigration or emigration).¹ So far, the world has witnessed so many waves of migration at different stages and the difference lies only in the scale or magnitude, direction and purpose and the socio-economic impacts arising out of the labour outflows and the inward income flow in the form of 'remittances'²

¹ For a detailed taxonomy of migration see ILO (1996), *Employing Foreign Workers*, ILO, Geneva.

² Remittance: the part of income earned by the migrants abroad which they send home to support their families and to make investment in desired lines.

Migrants and Society: Inter-State Migrant (ISM) Workers in Kerala

Mr. Vinil K.V.

Abstract

Migrant workers definitely contribute to the host economy everywhere. However, very often they are seen as a threat by the locals. Tension between the locals and migrants is common in every society. Very often the need for mutual dependence is not recognised. Various groups such as media, politicians and others misuse this situation and could lead to deteriorating relations between the migrants and the locals. This paper analyses the profile of the migrant workers in the state of Kerala, India, and investigates into their labour and employment conditions. It also examines the attitude of the society to the migrants. The paper opines that a better relationship is essential to ward off unnecessary stagnation in the economy.

Keywords: Migration, employment, labour, economy, society, workers, wages, savings.

Introduction: Migration is the movement of people from one place to another in search of employment. From the 1970's Kerala has witnessed a high rate of migration to the Gulf countries. The rate reached its peak in the early 90's. The outflow of labour and the inflow of the remittances of the workers have brought about radical changes in Kerala economy. It is significant to note that 36.3% of the NSDP of the state is from foreign remittances, which shows the importance of outmigration for the state. However, this large outmigration, increase in the per capita

Migrants and Society: Inter-State Migrant (ISM) Workers in Kerala Vinil K.V.

income, improvement in education, fall in the population growth rate etc. have led to acute shortage of labour in the state, which has resulted in high wage rate compared to most other states in the country.

This scenario, along with the push factors of the respective states, attracted labourers from other states to Kerala. In 1990's labourers from the neighbouring states started migrating to Kerala in search of jobs. This has now reduced due to the faster growth rate and increasing employment opportunities of these states. However, the new millennium has witnessed a greater inflow of labourers from Northern and North-Eastern states of the country.

Profile of ISM workers in Kerala: It was estimated that over 25 lakhs Interstate Migrant (ISM) workers were present in Kerala in 2013. While out-migrants from the state comes to 24 lakhs. The contribution of the ISM workers to the state economy is very significant. While educated unemployment is high in the state, acute shortage of workers doing unskilled and semi-skilled manual labour is experienced in the state. This has resulted in a very high rate of increase in the wages. ISM workers contribute to the labour supply in the state and help to check the increasing wage rate.

Majority of the ISM workers come from the states of West Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. There are also others from Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra etc. About 56% of them work in the three Districts of Ernakulam, Wayanad and Kannur. The major push factors behind migration are the widespread unemployment, poverty and lack of profitability in agriculture in the states of their origin.

Majority of the ISM workers i.e., 63.8%, are Hindus, while 30.2% are Muslims and 6% Christians. 80.4% of the ISM workers belong to backward classes. Of this 71.4% are OBC, while 15.9% are SC and 12.7% ST respectively. This shows that the majority of the migrants are from the backward classes, however, the proportion of the Scheduled castes and tribes are comparatively less.

91% of the ISM workers are aged below 25 while 32.2 % between 25 and 35. 23.8 are between 36 and 50. Only 2.8% are above 50 years of age. This shows that 73.2% of them are below 35 years. A good number of those above 35 years of age are from the neighbouring states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

9.3% of the ISM workers are illiterate, while 17.2% are literate but, have not had any formal education. Only 2.3% had more than SLC. This also shows the lower levels of education which makes them not suitable for any sophisticated employment opportunities. It is also important to note that a good number of those coming from the Northern and North Eastern states are not able to speak even Hindi fluently. This makes it very difficult for them to communicate with the locals.

90% of the ISM workers have at least one identity card among Election Identity card, Aadhar Card and Ration Card. About 69% have Election Identity card, while 30% have Aadhar card and 17% have Ration cards of the place of their origin. It is a requirement from the part of the Govt. of Kerala for the ISM workers to register themselves to avail government assistance. Only 2.6% have done it so far. The state or the central government do not have the details of the ISM workers. Moreover, the continuous movement of the migrants makes it difficult to track them.

7.5% of the ISM workers in Kerala do not have ownership over land in the states of their origin. 45.7% of them have upto 50 cents of land. While others own more than 50 cents of land in their states of origin. This shows that not all the migrants are that worse off as many of them have land sufficient to cultivate. However, the lack of profitability and infrastructure for agriculture make them discard agriculture.

The living conditions of the ISM workers are very poor. 61.8% live in rented houses or rooms, 25.8% in dormitories, 11.9% in temporary sheds. Only 0.5% own houses of their own. Most of

them live in shared rooms with at least five individuals. Very often cooking and storage of provisions is also done in the same room.

Labour and employment of ISM workers: The quantity and quality of labour determines the growth and stability of the economy. Most of the ISM workers are unskilled labourers. Nevertheless, without their contribution Kerala economy could face a standstill situation. 48.2% of the labourers work in the construction sector. 24.9% as koolie, 10% in the manufacturing sector, 6.8% in hotels and restaurants. In 2013 it was found that over 60% of them were working in the construction sector. Now they have diversified themselves as there is an increase in the number of Koolies. They do not specialise in any regular work, instead they are willing to do any kind of work required of them provided they are paid decently.

The working conditions of these men are very poor. Very often they lack any kind of safety measures. Accidents during work is quite common and they are often not compensated by the employers. In addition, they have to also work under inhuman conditions and are discriminated from the locals. They are forced to work longer hours and paid less compared to the natives. Often they do works which locals refuse to do.

The ISM workers receive comparatively better wages than those of their native states, still their wages are less than those paid to their counterparts in the state. This is a discrimination which they have to face in Kerala. From table 1 it is clear that only 17.4 receive Rs. 400 and below as wages. Majority of them receive wages between Rs. 401 to 600. 22.1% are paid more than Rs 600. However, we have to note that the average daily wage paid in agriculture is Rs.590 and for construction, Rs.783 in Kerala according to the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India. This shows that they are paid less than average.

Table 1. Wages of ISM workers

| | Frequency | Percent |
|------------|-----------|---------|
| Below 200 | 18 | 1.8 |
| 201-400 | 156 | 15.6 |
| 401-600 | 605 | 60.5 |
| 601-800 | 191 | 19.1 |
| 801-1000 | 25 | 2.5 |
| Above 1000 | 5 | 0.5 |
| Total | 1000 | 100 |

Source: Primary Data

The average monthly income of the migrants are even better than that of salaries paid to white collar jobs in the private sector. As 27.5% have income between 10001 and 15000. In addition, 27.5% have income greater than 15000. This is because ISM workers in Kerala are hardworking and absenteeism from work is comparatively less.

Table 2. Average monthly income of ISM workers

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
| 5000 and below | 15 | 1.5 |
| 5001-10000 | 110 | 11.0 |
| 10001- 15000 | 600 | 60.0 |
| 15001-20000 | 204 | 20.4 |
| 20001 -25000 | 51 | 5.1 |
| 25001 and above | 20 | 2.0 |

Source: Primary Data

The savings of the ISM workers are comparatively poor. Majority of what they earn are spent in the state itself. 47.6% say that they have either no savings or the total savings in a month is less than Rs. 1000. Nonetheless, 38.8% are able to save more than Rs. 5000 a month, which is very promising. These savings are remitted to their families in the states of their origin.

Table 3. Average monthly savings of ISM workers

| | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| No savings | 304 | 30.4 |
| Thousand and below | 172 | 17.2 |
| 1001 - 5000 | 136 | 13.6 |
| 5001-10000 | 294 | 29.4 |
| 10001 - 25000 | 82 | 8.2 |
| Above 25000 | 12 | 1.2 |
| Total | 1000 | 100.0 |

Source: Primary Data

ISM workers and the society: Though the ISM workers are contributing very much to the economy of the state of Kerala, they are often looked down by the society and are seen as a threat to social security. There is a general feeling that the rate of migration is increasing at a rate that goes out of control and that the remittances to the states of their origin is skyrocketing. There are reports of tension between the locals and migrants in Kerala. There is an increasing demand from the public to the government to take adequate measures to contain the migrants.

There has also been media hype projecting the criminal activities of the migrants and trying to conclude that all the migrants are dangerous and criminals. This has caused a great panic among the people. In addition, the awareness about the unhygienic living conditions of the migrants have made the locals to keep them at bay for fear of communicable diseases. There has not been any initiative to understand the culture of the migrants or to make the locals more familiar with their habits. Hence, all what they do are viewed with suspicion.

The ISM workers are also exploited by the locals. They are provided shabby sheds or rooms to live without proper sanitation at very high rent. The construction workers usually stay at the worksite, without basic facilities. The conditions of the rooms are very poor as usually those old buildings which are not demanded

by the locals are given to them. They do not have proper drinking water source as 80% of them depend on open wells or ponds. 66% have only common latrine and 1% do not even have latrine. The drainage facilities in their places of dwelling is very poor and often the wastes are accumulated there which could lead to epidemics.

We have to note that they do not receive any of the governmental assistance, such as subsidised provisions etc., which they are entitled to at the places of their origin. The hostile attitudes of the local government and police also aggravate their plight.

This is a precarious situation as labour supply is very much necessary for the smooth functioning of the state and without ISM workers the economy of the state would be facing negative growth rate as very many productive activities would be affected very drastically. This could also lead to sharp increase in the wage rate and stagflation. At the same time the concern of the locals are also to be addressed.

Conclusion: The need to appreciate the contribution of the ISM workers to the state economy is very essential in Kerala. At the same time the fears of the locals are also to be addressed. Hence the government has to take steps to address this situation.

A majority of the migrants have some form of identity card, for ensuring security, proper verification procedures for the ISM workers have to be developed. This could also help in providing governmental assistance to them. The health department should also visit the dwelling places of the ISM workers to ensure that they are not being exploited by the locals and that they have decent and hygienic living conditions. Very often it is the greed of the local people that lead into indecent and unhygienic living conditions of the ISM workers.

The hostile attitude of the locals very often create insecurity among the migrants which could lead to conflicts in the society. Hence, more inclusion of the ISM workers in the society and constant vigilance from the part of the police and the local authorities are

required to avoid such problems. Therefore, more awareness classes to the locals regarding the culture and habits of the ISM workers and the ways to deal with them are to be evolved.

Furthermore, there could be also initiatives to educate the ISM workers regarding the need for hygienic living conditions and necessary steps to avoid communicable diseases.

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