

Politics of Expatriate Culture in Kerala Society

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Abstract: Kerala receives a major part of foreign remittance comes to India. Though it will adversely affect the existence of Kerala as a State, Kerala as a state is growing largely with the support of foreign earnings. It may question the sustainability and future of Kerala. This is the main reason for affecting the global financial crisis immediately on the economy of Kerala. In addition, brain drain is also increasing. Nevertheless, a decrease in this amount of foreign remittance can be seen in recent days. Today, most of the migrated Keralites want to settle in the migrated countries after getting Permanent Residence and also desire to take their families with them via dependent Visas. Hence this caused to the decrease in foreign remittance to Kerala. This decrease in the number of foreign remittances and the increasing number of expatriates will be going to deteriorate the Kerala society.

Keywords: Expatriate, Migration, Immigrants, Foreign Remittance, Economy

Introduction

Migration has always played a significant role in shaping Kerala's demographic and economic landscape. As of 2019, India holds the distinction of having the largest number of international migrations in specific from Kerala, with over 18 million individual relocating to various countries. Therefore, among the Indian states, Kerala has been a notable contributor to this migration phenomenon, with its residents venturing abroad in search of work and education purposes. Kerala tryst with international migration can be traced back to the 1970s when the Gulf migration wave began. Since then, the people of the Kerala state (Malayalees) have contributed to migrate to different countries, driven by a quest of employment and educational pursuits. In 2013, Kerala was home to a staggering 24 lakh non-resident individuals. However, by 2018, this number had declined to 21 lakhs. The dynamics of migration have been significantly impacted by the global covid-19 pandemic spread in 2020. However, European countries in particular have

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implemented relatively more open immigration policies during post-covid period. It has been resulting in a notable increase in migration to these regions. Subsequent factors like the pandemic and the prospect of acquiring citizenship in Gulf countries have contributed to a decline in immigration from Kerala to the Gulf.

Norka's Role

NORKA which is the department of Non-Resident Keralite Affairs, facilitates safe migration of nurses. Recruitments through the NORKA are being carved out in accordance with the agreements struck with the governments of foreign countries. This helps candidates seek employment in foreign countries directly without any intermediaries – said it's CEO Harikrishnan Namboothiri. Government authorities in Kerala realised that a very large number of youngsters from the state were studying in China only after Covid 19 breakdown. That was how NORKA introduced the 'student ID card' to update the database on Malayali students abroad. A NORKA ID card will help communicate with students and offer support when needed. Students spent 300 rupees to obtain card.

The migrating Malayalis are creating mini-Kerala across the world. Keralites are currently working in 182 of the world's 195 countries, according to a report released by NORKA Roots (Department of Non-resident Keralite's affairs) of the Kerala Government. That's 93 percent of the world nations. "Migration has become a part of *Malayalis* lifestyle " NORKA Roots CEO Harikrishnan Namboothiri said. "With this the concept of 'Global Keralam has evolved". Aside with this reality, the observation can connect with a famous Jock that, when Neil Armstrong set his foot on the moon, there was a Malayalis are welcoming him there.

Kerala faces replacement migration, which has close to 3 million migrants from other states who have replaced workers who have left for the Gulf countries. Impact of recent floods may find them leaving to their home states for better opportunities. This might require further migration and remittance to rebuild Kerala. Aging might affect the local economy in future. Hence, Kerala has to slowly move towards a new model from the remittance – dependent economy that it is today.

Migration of Different Religious Communities

There were indeed caste and community connotations in migration. People from the Christian community migrated relatively early due to access to early education and less stigma associated with skilled work and professions such as nursing. While the first three migrations were confined to certain regions of Kerala (Central Travancore, Kochi) the fourth wave of migration was much more widespread across caste,

community and regions. It is the fourth wave that had the greatest impact on social and political relations and the cultural landscape had major economic consequences. The fourth wave of migration included significant number of Muslims, Ezhavas and people from other communities. While the first- and second-generation migrants became professional, the fourth wave migrants belonged to lower middle class.

Kerala economy

The expatriates have emerged as crucial contributors of Kerala's economy. According to the Reserve Bank of India Survey on India's internal remittances in 2018, Kerala accounted for a remarkable 19% of the total remittances sent from abroad to India. In the fiscal year 2018-2019 alone, India authorised foreign exchange dealers facilitated remittances with huge volume of capital with an additional amount transferred through investment channels. This translates to a monthly average in NRI deposit held in banks in Kerala, coupled with private transfer.

The emigration and remittances have played a predominant role in enabling households in Kerala to meet their fundamental needs and to invest in assets migrants use over 45% of their remittances on purchasing land, construction and repayment of housing mortgage. One in every five households in Kerala has a migrant. Among religious groups, one in three is a Muslim, one in five is a Christian and one in ten is a Hindu. This shows the remittance to the state have increased with Keralites in the Gulf climbing the social ladder and earning higher wages. With depreciating rupee, more can be remitted to families in Kerala than earlier. But the trend has reversed with emigration from Kerala is falling and return migration is on the rise. The long history of migration from Kerala to the Gulf is in its last phase.

In brief, the global movement of the *malayalis* is cutting Kerala both ways. If it is helping the economy with the remittances sent from abroad, there is also the outflow of funds when it comes to students going abroad to study. "In developed countries, Keralites are often identified as Indians, rather than specifically as *malayalis*. However, in gulf countries, *malayalis* maintain a distinct identity, being referred to as 'malabaris' or 'madrasis' by the local Arabs." A Canadian *malayals* observed. Not just the gulf countries or the west, even conflict-ridden places aren't off – bounds for Malayalis. They are employed in warzones like Palestine, Syria and Ukraine, as well as countries like Somalia, Sierra Leona and Afghanistan, which are facing governance challenges. Malayalis are present in the entire spectrum of countries. They contribute their skills in countries like Turkmenistan, which has dictatorial leadership, Myanmar that is ruled by a military junta, and in both the oldest country Iran, and the newest country, South Sudan. They are in Russia, the world's largest country and the Nation, the world's smallest. Keralites are pursuing education in 54

countries across the world, including in places like. Jamaica, Curacao, Bangladesh and the Isle of Man. The two countries where there is a total absence of Malayali Diasporas are Pakistan and North Korea. Norka don't have the data of individuals with student's visas who have transitioned to work permits, permanent residency or citizenship. Many people haven't registered with Norka. That's why several experts say that the number of Malayalis working across the globe is many times more than the official projection.

The two streams of Kerala Migration

There are two migratory pathways. The first set are those heading to the GCC (Gulf migration cooperation council) countries -UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain – and are mostly unskilled labourers. Though unskilled, they are the pillars of Kerala's economy and they return to their home state after working abroad and sending back money for years. This trend of working in the Gulf countries started after the oil fueled boom of the 1970s. The second set are the better skilled and educated, migrated to western developed countries. Malayalis have migrated to the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and other European countries. Many of this group get permanent residency or citizenship, and their likelihood of returning to Kerala is minimal. This actually hints at the brain drain of Kerala.

The Outflow of Fund from Kerala

The migration story has two sides to it. If it is helping with the remittances, it is also widening the outflow of funds. In addition, it is also emptying out Kerala villages and leaving college classrooms empty. According to IIM Kozhikode report, Malayalis typically finance their overseas migration through family saving, bank loans, and loans from friends, with the amount ranging from Rs.2 to 10 lakh. This creates outflow of money in Kerala. Then there are students taking education loans and going abroad, which too aids in the outflow of funds.

The new way of emigration however helped level the economic playing field of the state. The return of the Gulf Malayali to Kerala has also helped bring about a better food scene and better standards of service. Unfortunately, Kerala just does not have the kind of economic and financial opportunities that other states in India or foreign countries offer. The pandemic has however brought one important change into the mainstream in Kerala - remote workers. Many families talk of young people with jobs in places like Bangalore and Hyderabad coming back home and finding it much easier to continue working remotely even after pandemic related restrictions were lifted across India. There are also people coming back to Kerala



from places like Singapore. Such people are required to go back just for a few weeks a year so essentially their higher salaries can be stretched in the state.

New Trends in Migration

An approach document presented at the Loka Kerala Sabha, a common platform for Keralites living across the globe, said the migration to the West Asian countries from the state is on the decline whereas Canada, Australia, New Zealand and European countries are becoming new destinations of migration. The document said the emergence of development in educational standards and skill development of the job aspirants from Kerala. The LKS members include all the state ministers MLAs and MPs apart from 182 expatriates from various countries and other states in India.

Conclusion

In sum up, expatriates have played a huge role in Kerala's financial empowerment. Keraleeyam characterize, Expatriates have emerged as crucial contributors to Kerala's economy. According to the Reserve Bank's Survey on India's Internal Remittances in 2018, Kerala accounted for a remarkable 19 percent of the total remittances sent from abroad to India. Today, expatriates from Kerala have played a key role in improving the financial health of the state. Beginning with Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore they reached Africa to send money back home. Later, the next generation found the Gulf countries greener. Today expatriates working in Gulf countries, UK, US and Europe form a big part of Malayali diaspora who propel the economy of Kerala.

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