

# NEW TRENDS OF LABOUR EMIGRATION FROM INDIA TO GULF COUNTRIES AND ITS IMPACT ON THE KERALA ECONOMY

S Irudaya Rajan

*“the sun does not rise or set anywhere without shining  
on some members of Indian community”*

Motwani, K Jagat, 1994.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Human migration is one of the most challenging issues facing the world today. Indian emigration has been taking place since centuries but never before in history India witnessed such massive movements of people from India to other parts of the world as in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Though no firm estimates available on international migration from India, it has been quite small relative to the India's billion plus population.

## II. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION FROM INDIA

A crude estimate by a co-convenor of the first Global Convention of People of Indian Origin, held in New York in 1989, puts the figure as 20 millions (Jagat, 1994). The High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora<sup>1</sup> in its foreword writes in December 2001 'the population of Indian Diaspora is estimated to be around 20 millions'. However, country wise estimates provided in the same report submitted to the Ministry of External Affairs (2001), New Delhi, puts the approximate number of Indians settled throughout the world in 133 countries is around 16.9 millions<sup>2</sup>; of which 51 percent of them belong to people of Indian origin<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, with the approval of Prime Minister of India, have decided to appoint a High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora with five members to review the status of persons of Indian Origin (PIO) and Non-Resident Indians (NRI) in 18<sup>th</sup> August 2000. The committee submitted its report in 19<sup>th</sup> December 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Estimates published in the latest report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora submitted to the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi. Please do note, this is not an accurate figures and it is an underestimate. Unfortunately, Government of India has no regular mechanisms to assess the number of Indians living abroad. Most often, high commissioners in respective countries provide the data on Indians living in their countries as per the request from the Ministry of External Affairs from time to time.

<sup>3</sup> A person who, at any time, has held an Indian passport or any one, either of whose parents or any of whose grand parents or great grand parents was born in and was permanently resident in India as defined in the Government of India Act 1935 and other territories that became part of India thereafter, provided he/she was not at any time a citizen of the countries referred in part 2 (b) of Ministry of Home Affairs notification No. 26011/4/98-IC.1 dated 30<sup>th</sup> March 1999 or the spouse of a citizen of India or person of Indian origin covered in the above categories of Persons of Indian Origin (PIO).

TABLE 1. Countries with Estimated Indians above 1 lakhs, 2001

Country	People of Indian Origin	Indian citizens	Stateless	Total
Australia	160,000	30,000	0	190,000
Bahrain	0	130,000	0	130,000
Canada	700,000	150,000	1,000	851,000
Fiji	336,579	250	0	336,829
Guyana	395,250	100	0	395,350
Kenya	85,000	15,000	2,500	102,500
Kuwait	1,000	294,000	0	295,000
Malaysia	1,600,000	15,000	50,000	1,665,000
Mauritius	704,640	11,116	0	715,756
Myanmar	2,500,000	2,000	400,000	2,902,000
Netherlands	200,000	15,000	2,000	217,000
Oman	1,000	311,000	0	312,000
Qatar	1,000	130,000	0	131,000
Reunion Islands	220,000	55	0	220,055
Saudi Arabia	0	1,500,000	0	1,500,000
Singapore	217,000	90,000	0	307,000
South Africa	0	0	0	1,000,000
Suriname	150,306	150	0	150,456
Trinidad and Tobago	500,000	600	0	500,600
UAE	50,000	900,000	0	950,000
UK	0	0	0	1,200,000
USA	0	0	0	1,678,765
Yemen	100,000	900	0	100,900

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, 2001.

There are about 10,000 Indians or more in 48 countries and more than half a million persons of Indian descent in 11 countries represent significant proportion. Among the emigrants of diverse nationalities, overseas Indians constitute a sizeable segment. In terms of sheer numbers, they make the third largest group, next one to the British and Chinese (Bhat et.al, 2002). Among them, around 0.5 million Indians were reported as stateless<sup>4</sup> population in eleven countries of the world – Brunei, Canada, Finland, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Myanmar, Netherlands, Philippines, Switzerland and Venezuela. The highest number of stateless Indian population is reported in Myanmar with 0.4 million. The break-up of India's population by three categories (people of Indian origin, Indian citizens and stateless Indians) is not available for three countries in the world. They are: United States of America (1.7 million), United Kingdom (1.2 million) and South Africa (1.0 million). The non-resident Indians<sup>5</sup>, as per the latest report, are

Most of them have taken citizen of the country of residence and strength of their ties with India dies with the passage of time.

<sup>4</sup> Stateless population is defined as Indians who stay without proper valid travel documents in respective countries.

<sup>5</sup> Non-resident Indians (NRIs) are Indian citizens holding Indian passports and residing abroad for an indefinite period, whether for employment or for carrying on any business or vacation or for any other purpose.

estimated around 3.9 millions (see appendix 1 for details) excluding the Indians reported in South Africa, United Kingdom and United States of America. Interestingly, around 3.3 million Indians (about 85%) live in six countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) in the Middle East.

Table 1 summarizes the estimated number of people of Indian origin in countries with more than 0.1 million. Out of 23 countries, only six of them report more than one million Indians in their countries (Malaysia, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States of America). Incidentally, People of Indian Origin (POI) contribute minimal remittances to the Indian economy as they stay with their family members (spouse and children). They don't transfer cash to the home countries to support their families. This is not true among Indians citizens who work as contract labourers or other professionals in most of the countries in the Gulf region. Among the Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia leads with 1.5 million, followed by United Arab Emirates (0.9 million), Kuwait and Oman (0.3 million each) and Qatar and Bahrain (0.1 million each). No break-up exists by gender at an all-India level.

### III. LABOUR EMIGRATION

Migration of workers from India to other countries is not a new phenomenon. Government of India, Ministry of Labour, maintain records of individuals who obtain emigration clearance<sup>6</sup> to work in abroad. Earlier, the destination of Indians workers was mainly to the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada and other developing countries. Indian migration to Gulf has a history of several centuries but it received a fillip only with the discovery of oil fields and the commencement of oil drilling on a commercial basis in this region. The oil price hike in October 1973 marked a major watershed in the migration process. The massive demand for labour was accounted for by the sudden growth of the construction industry as the Gulf countries, which became immensely wealthy overnight, embarked on a frenzy of building a new infrastructure of roads, ports and airports, as well as schools, colleges and administrative blocks, symbols of the new wealth. For the additional labour required, they turned to more distant, non-Arab countries such as India. The number of workers emigrated from India as workers in the contractual employment in abroad over the last several years were presented in Table 2. The number is very small compared to the total emigrants reported earlier because many emigrants do not require emigration clearance from Government of India. As per the Emigration Act 1983, seventeen categories of persons have been exempted from emigration clearance and have been placed under 'emigration clearance not required' (See Box 1 for details). The initial flow of contractual labour from India started with a low profile with just 0.16 million in 1985 reached a peak with 0.44 million in 1993 and then a slow decline and currently on the increasing trend with 0.37 million in 2002. We can divide the migration outflows into four phases. The first phase covers the period between 1985 and 1991, which witnessed the annual volume of emigration ranging between 0.11 million to 0.20 million. The second phase is the first half of 1990s (1992-97) when the annual flow of labour was more than 0.40 million. The third phase

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<sup>6</sup> All Indian passport holders need emigration clearance to visit any country for work in abroad. However, few categories of individuals receive a passport with emigration check not required. (see Box 1)

started since 1998 when a heavy fall in emigration took place in the annual outflow of the labour. The last phase is the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where the annual flow is on the increase and it reached close to 0.4 million in 2002.

TABLE 2. Trends in Workers Emigrated from India, 1985-2000

Year	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
In Million	0.16	0.11	0.13	0.17	0.13	0.14	0.20	0.42	0.44
Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
In Million	0.43	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.37	0.20	0.24	0.28	0.37

Notes: Figures given above do not include persons who run business in partnership with foreigners; those who emigrated on visit visa and stayed on for job and those skilled workers and professionals such as doctors and engineers who do not require emigration clearance.

Source: Compiled from various annual reports of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

BOX 1. Categories of Individuals Who do not require Emigration Clearance

1. Persons going abroad in managerial capacity in hotels, restaurants, tea houses or other places of public resort or possessing specialized degrees in these fields.	(i) who have passed final examination of 3 years B.Sc. Nautical Sciences Courses (ii) who have undergone 3-months Pre-Sea training at any of the Government approved Training Institutes
2. All Gazetted Government servants.	8. All holders of Diplomatic/Official Passports.
3. Income-tax payers (including agricultural income-tax payers) in respect of their individual capacity; Proof of assessment to Income-tax and actual payment of Income-tax for last three years to be insisted upto and not merely payment of advance tax.	9. Dependent children of parents whose passports are classified as ECNR. In the case of such children, ECNR classification to be restricted until they attain 24 years of age.
4. All professional Degree Holders, such as Doctors holding M.B.B.S. degrees or Degrees in Ayurved or Engineers; Chartered Accountants; Cost Accountants; Lecturers; Teachers; Scientists; Advocates etc.	10. Persons holding permanent Immigration visas, such as in UK, USA and Australia.
5. Spouses and dependent children of category of persons, listed from (2) to (4).	11. Persons holding Graduate or higher degrees.
6. All persons who have been staying abroad for more than three years (the period of three years could be either in one stretch or broken) and their spouses and children.	12. Persons holding Diplomas from recognised institutions like Polytechnics.
7. Seamen who are in possession of Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDS) and Sea cadets (Engineering Trainees) Dock cadets	13. Nurses possessing qualification recognised under the Indian Nursing Council Act, 1947.
	14. All persons above the age of 60 years.
	15. All visitors to Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, New Zealand and Australia.
	16. All persons going to any country in Europe or North America (excluding CIS states).
	17. Persons possessing certificates of vocational training from Government/Government recognized institutions.

Source: Ministry of Labour, *Annual Report 2002*.

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Where do they migrate as labour from India? Our analysis indicates around 95 percent of labour outflows reach the following six destinations (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar) in the Middle East in 1988 continued till 2002 with 75%. Few more countries such as Singapore and Malaysia are also added in the recent list of labour migration from India. In 2002, 24,399 labourers from India were migrated to Singapore and another 10,512 to Malaysia. Trends in this aspect are presented in Table 3. In 1994, Saudi Arabia led with 65 per cent annual labour outflows from India followed by United Arab Emirates. Even in absolute numbers, except in 1999, Saudi Arabia attracted large number of Indian labourers. This is also true for 2002. Available labour outflows reveals that Gulf countries became an important destination for Indians. The recent United Nations publication (2002) reveals that most of the countries listed above in the Gulf region felt that the immigration levels are too high and they would like to follow the policy of lowering the migration flows in the future. Migrant stock to the total population in United Arab Emirates is 74 percent (United Nations 2002) and Indian accounts for 33 percent (Zachariah, Prakash and Irudaya Rajan, 2002). This is also true for Saudi Arabia where 39 percent of migrants are from India (details, see Zachariah, Prakash and Irudaya Rajan, 2002). The United Arab Emirates imposed stringent restrictions on migrant unskilled labourers since 1996. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain also imposed stringent measures on migrant labour since 1997.

TABLE 3. Labour Outflows from India by Destination 1988-2002

Year	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Saudi Arabia	UAE	Others	Total
1988	8,219	9,653	18,696	85,289	34,029	9,348	165,234
1989	8,520	5,679	16,574	49,710	28,189	11,786	120,458
1990	6,782	1,077	34,267	79,473	11,962	6,300	139,861
1991	8,630	7,044	22,333	130,928	15,446	7,121	191,502
1992	16,458	19,782	40,900	265,180	60,493	13,971	416,784
1993	15,622	26,981	29,056	269,639	77,066	19,974	438,338
1994	13,806	24,324	25,142	265,875	75,762	20,476	425,385
1995	11,235	16,439	22,338	256,782	79,674	28,866	415,334
1996	16,647	14,580	30,113	214,068	112,644	26,162	414,214
1997	17,944	13,170	29,994	214,420	110,945	29,951	416,424
1998	16,997	22,462	20,774	105,239	134,740	54,952	355,164
1999	14,905	19,149	16,101	27,160	79,269	42,968	199,552
2000	15,909	31,082	25,155	59,722	55,099	56,215	243,182
2001	16,382	39,751	30,985	78,048	53,673	59,825	278,664
2002	20,807	4,859	41,209	99,453	95,034	106,301	367,663

Source: Compiled from various annual reports of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

In this context, let us assess the migrant stock scenario in the Gulf countries in West Asia and their views and policies on immigration levels (Table 4). Out of six countries under investigation, two countries report their percent of migrants to total population as above 70 and another two report between 40 to 60%. One-fourth of population in Oman and Saudi Arabia are emigrants. Four out of six countries felt that their immigration

levels are too high and formulate policies to lower the levels. During our recent visit<sup>7</sup> to the United Arab Emirates, they informed us about their proposal of Emiratisation and theory of demographic imbalance.

TABLE 4. Migrant Stock in Gulf Countries in West Asia, 2002

Country	Population (in million)	Migrants (in million)	%migrants to population	Immigration Levels	
				View	Policy
Bahrain	0.64	0.25	39.8	Satisfactory	No Intervention
Kuwait	1.91	1.11	57.9	Too High	Lower
Oman	2.54	0.68	26.9	Too High	Lower
Qatar	0.57	0.41	72.4	Satisfactory	Maintain
Saudi Arabia	20.35	5.26	25.8	Too High	Lower
UAE	2.61	1.92	73.8	Too High	Lower

Source: United Nations. 2002.

State-wise break of the number of workers granted emigration clearance is available for the years between 1993 and 2002 (Table 5). There has been continuous decline in the emigration of workers of almost all states under study until 1999, then a slow increase. Among the workers, Kerala accounts for the largest number of workers, followed by Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Some of the other states having sizeable number of total labour emigrants are Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab and Rajasthan. One of the reasons for the low labour migration in Kerala is that of persons holding Graduate degrees are exempted from emigration clearance (Box 1). Southern states such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal led with highest number of graduates in the country. We have no data on the state level exemption of emigration clearances but at an all-India level, it has shown an increase during the last 10 years (Table 6).

TABLE 5. Workers Granted Emigration Clearances by Major States, 1993-2002

State	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Andhra Pradesh	35,578	34,508	30,284	29,995	38,278	30,599	18,983	29,999	37,331	38,417
Karnataka	34,380	32,266	33,496	33,761	40,396	11,535	5,287	10,927	10,095	14,061
Kerala	155,208	154,407	165,629	167,325	156,102	91,720	60,445	69,630	61,548	81,950
Maharashtra	35,248	32,178	26,312	25,214	25,146	24,657	9,871	13,346	22,713	25,477
Punjab	14,212	12,445	11,852	11,751	12,414	26,876	15,167	10,025	12,422	19,638
Rajasthan	25,243	27,418	28,374	18,221	28,242	19,824	9,809	10,170	14,993	23,254
Tamil Nadu	70,313	70,525	65,737	64,991	63,672	69,793	47,402	63,878	61,649	79,165
Others	68,156	61,638	53,650	62,956	52,174	80,160	32,588	35,207	57,913	85,701
Total	438,338	425,385	415,334	414,214	416,424	355,164	199,552	243,182	278,664	367,663

Source: Compiled from various annual reports of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

<sup>7</sup> Government of Kerala set up a three-member committee to study to labour issues in United Arab Emirates in 2001. Besides me, other members are K C Zachariah and B A Prakash (more details on the report, see Zachariah, Prakash and Irudaya Rajan. 2002)

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TABLE 6. Suspended Emigration Clearances, 1992-2002

Year	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
In Million	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.16
Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
In Million	0.28	0.29	0.36	0.40	0.44

Source: Compiled from various annual reports of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

Ministry of Labour has also published data on labour migration by category wise employment few years. The data are of questionable quality (See Table 7). However, surprisingly, 56% of emigrants left India on labour contract to work as labourer, helper, cook and housemaid or houseboy without any educational qualification or with few years of schooling. This is supported by an earlier study conducted in Kerala (Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2001a; 2001b). Using the proportion of migrants with secondary education or a degree as a measure of educational attainment, the out-migrants are better educated than emigrants and return emigrants. Even in a highly literate Kerala, about 60% of emigrants working in Gulf countries are less than secondary level of education. (Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003)

TABLE 7. Emigration Clearances Granted by Type of Work, 1988-1992

Category	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Carpenter	6,361	12,900	6,939	5,132	145
Cook	3,550	3,051	2,070	2,386	239
Driver	6,562	6,334	6,724	5,123	131
Electrician	3,494	3,689	4,496	2,832	112
Engineer	354	268	248	173	13
Fixer/Fabricator	1,904	2,008	2,827	1,052	29
Foreman	927	906	983	764	30
Paramedical staff	1,349	736	434	437	18
Labourer/Helper	91,196	40,657	58,779	45,028	17,345
Mason	8,550	8,731	8,913	6,323	246
Mechanic/AC also	3,562	4,476	3,263	2,467	111
Office Staff	3,916	2,211	1,385	1,087	56
Operator	1,309	1,855	1,342	1,001	39
Painter	2,273	2,501	1,867	1,866	65
Plumber	1,971	1,624	2,047	1,831	33
Tailor	5,115	4,361	3,722	3,231	163
Technician	3,539	1,450	3,389	2,642	136
Welder	1,497	1,222	3,272	1,291	55
Supervisor	1,021	813	1,069	444	21
Surveyor	461	264	218	234	12
Salesman	1,580	4,199	4,121	3,818	147
Housemaid/House-boy	891	2,965	0	1,400	1,938
Fitters	0	1,690	0	0	0
Agriculture	0	0		452	108
Others	18,284	17,778	2,565	19,302	3,074
Total	169,666	126,689	120,673	110,316	24,266

Source: Compiled from various annual reports of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

## IV. WORKER'S REMITTANCES

The money that migrants send home is very important not only to their families but also to their country's balance of payments. Many developing countries, remittances represent a significant proportion of their Gross domestic product as well as foreign exchange earning. In 1999, International Monetary Fund has published the list of 20 developing countries with the volume of remittances and remittances as percentage of GDP (Table 8). India ranked as number one in terms of the volume of remittances with 11.01 billion US \$ and contributed to 2.6 % of the gross domestic product. In terms of contribution to GDP, Philippines led first among Asian countries (8.8%), followed by Sri Lanka in Asia. Among the twenty countries listed, seven countries are from Asia: India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh (South and South-West Asia), Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand (South-East Asia). One-fifth of the GDP comes from remittances for Yemen and Jordan.

TABLE 8. Top 20 Developing Countries in the World in Remittances, 1999

Rank	Country	Remittances (US\$ million)	%GDP
1	India	11,097	2.6
2	Philippines	7,016	8.9
3	Mexico	6,649	1.7
4	Turkey	4,529	2.3
5	Egypt	3,196	4.0
6	Morocco	1,918	5.5
7	Bangladesh	1,803	4.1
8	Pakistan	1,707	2.7
9	Dominican Republic	1,613	11.0
10	Thailand	1,460	1.1
11	Jordan	1,460	21.2
12	El Salvador	1,379	12.3
13	Nigeria	1,292	3.5
14	Yemen	1,202	24.5
15	Brazil	1,192	0.2
16	Indonesia	1,109	0.8
17	Ecuador	1,084	5.8
18	Sri Lanka	1,056	6.9
19	Tunisia	761	4.0
20	Peru	712	1.2

Source: International Monetary Fund *Balance of Payments Statistics* and *World Development Report* of World Bank.

Let us assess the trends in remittances for India over a period of last 30 years. According to the estimates of the World Bank, the remittances have grown steadily from 80 million \$ in 1970, to 2.79 billion \$ in 1980, 3.42 billion \$ in 1991 and about 12.00 billion \$ in 2000 (Table 9). Similarly, the percentage of remittances to gross national product has increased from negligible 0.14 in 1970 to 2.50 in 2000 – tremendous contribution to the Indian economy. We also have data on private transfers (remittances) to various banks operating in India, compiled and published by the Reserve Bank of India for the last 20 years (Table 10). In Dollar terms, private transfers have shown a



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five-fold increase over the last two decades whereas money terms, it almost increased by thirty times. The Indian economy benefited directly by the liberalisation of the foreign exchange regime since 1991. According to one estimate, this 'wind fall' gain varied from nearly Rs 0.5 million in 1991-92 to Rs. 3.34 billion in 1999-2000 (Kannan and Hari, 2002).

TABLE 9. Trends in Remittances to India, 1970-2000

Year	Remittances (US\$ billion)	Gross National Product (GNP)	% remittances to GNP
1970	0.08	57.31	0.14
1980	2.79	172.67	1.61
1985	2.22	212.75	1.04
1986	2.34	227.05	1.03
1987	2.72	254.47	1.07
1988	2.23	281.10	0.79
1989	2.19	277.94	0.79
1990	1.67	312.13	0.53
1991	3.42	247.43	1.38
1992	2.51	239.76	1.05
1993	4.45	270.02	1.65
1994	7.53	317.47	2.37
1995	7.18	349.19	2.06
1996	11.71	379.95	3.08
1997	11.71	404.34	2.90
1998	9.34	415.51	2.26
1999	11.50	444.16	2.59
2000	11.59	470.48	2.46

Source: World Bank. Annual publications of *Global Development Finance*.

TABLE 10. Private Transfers to India, 1980-81 to 2000-01

Year	1980/81	1985/86	1990/91	1995/96	1996/97	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02
US\$ (billion)	2.71	2.22	2.08	8.51	12.37	12.29	12.87	12.13
Rs. (billion)	21.37	27.16	37.37	286.60	439.68	532.80	587.56	578.21

Source: Compiled from various annual reports of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

In 2002, emigrants transferred around Rs 578 millions to India or 12.13 billion \$ equivalent to the foreign exchange reserves in India. However, no systematic study exists in India to assess the impact on remittances on the economy and society. This is fulfilled by the recent study undertaken in Kerala (Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003) using the large- scale field survey covering all districts and taluks.

## V. KERALA EXPERIENCE

Among the states and union territories in India, Kerala leads with the highest number of emigrants in West Asia where most of the remittances come from. Migration from Kerala to other states in India and to countries has become so rampant that its impact is felt in every aspect of life. At present emigration has become all-pervasive in the

economic and social life in the State and outpaced migration within India. Almost all families in Kerala are affected by migration to the Gulf region in one way or another. Migration is affecting every facet of life in Kerala, economic, social, demographic, political and even religious.

Until very recently, Kerala was known more for its internal (within India) migration than for its external migration. There are two distinct phases (or turn around) in the historical trend in the migration experience of Kerala. The first turn around occurred in the 1940s when Kerala became closely integrated with the other states of India. It started with World War II and the Indian Independence in 1947. Until then, Kerala was a net in-migration state; more persons from neighbouring states came to Kerala than the number of persons who moved to these states. After the integration, for the first time, Kerala became a net out-migration state. The number of persons from Kerala moving to Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkatta, Delhi and other metropolitan centres exceeded the number who came to Kerala from other states. The second turn around took place in the 1970s, when Kerala became a major emigration state. Until then, international migration from Kerala was relatively small, at least compared to internal migration. The relative position of emigrants and out-migrants changed drastically after the oil boom of the 1970s. In the 1981-91 decade, net external migration (net emigration) was about 555 thousand persons compared with a net internal migration (net out-migration) of 189 thousand persons. Thus, Kerala's loss of population through external migration was almost three times than the loss due to internal migration. The first transition was a change from net in-migration to net out-migration. The second transition was a change from a predominance of out-migration to a predominance of emigration. Some of the out-migrants themselves became emigrants, moving to the country of destination directly from their state of domicile (for instance Mumbai in Maharashtra) in India.

#### A. Stock and Trends of Kerala Emigrants in the Gulf

The principal source of data for the study was a large-scale representative sample survey conducted during March-December, 1998. 10,000 households were selected from 200 Panchayats/Municipal wards, (at the rate of 50 households per Panchayats/Municipal ward), comprising all the districts and taluks of the State (Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2001a; 2001b).

As per the study conducted by the Centre for Development Studies, 1.36 million Keralites were working in abroad and among them 95 per cent live in the Middle East (Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003). Very few estimates of emigrants were available in Kerala using an untested methodology. The Economic Review published by the Government of Kerala, State Planning Board gives the number of emigrants as about 1.6 million in 1997 (Government of Kerala, 1998). Prakash, a scholar working in Kerala, gives an estimate of 1.4 million for 1996 (Praksah, 1998). Using the survey data, they did the backward projection upto 1973 (Kannan and Hari, 2002). Results indicate that the Gulf migration accounted for just 0.03 millions in 1973 reached its peak in 1998 with 1.32 millions. If we compare the migration to Gulf from Kerala as well as India, Kerala contributed 36 percent of emigrants. In other words, one out of three lives in Gulf is a Keralite.

## New Trends of Labour Emigration from India to the Gulf Countries

TABLE 11. Estimated Stock of Kerala and Indian Emigrants, 1973-2000

Year	Kerala emigrants in all countries (in million)	Kerala emigrants in Gulf (in million)	Indian Emigrants in Gulf (in million)	% of Kerala to India = (3)/(4)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1973	0.03	0.03	0.20	17.26
1974	0.04	0.04	0.23	16.93
1975	0.05	0.04	0.31	14.50
1976	0.05	0.05	0.35	14.52
1977	0.06	0.06	0.40	14.55
1978	0.07	0.07	0.46	14.57
1979	0.08	0.08	0.52	14.59
1980	0.08	0.08	0.60	13.22
1981	0.10	0.10	0.60	16.31
1982	0.16	0.15	0.74	20.50
1983	0.19	0.18	0.92	19.96
1984	0.20	0.20	0.93	21.57
1985	0.26	0.24	0.93	26.02
1986	0.28	0.28	0.95	29.25
1987	0.31	0.31	0.96	31.85
1988	0.40	0.38	1.10	34.82
1989	0.42	0.40	1.26	31.88
1990	0.53	0.51	1.45	35.23
1991	0.57	0.54	1.66	32.58
1992	0.66	0.65	1.86	34.74
1993	0.78	0.74	2.08	35.72
1994	0.88	0.86	2.34	36.83
1995	0.99	0.96	2.62	36.78
1996	1.13	1.10	2.94	37.38
1997	1.28	1.24	3.29	37.58
1998	1.36	1.32	3.69	35.75
1999	1.25	1.21	3.37	35.89
2000	1.14	1.10	3.09	35.75

Source: K C Zachariah, Kannan and Irudaya Rajan. 2002; K.P Kannan and Hari, 2002.

An overall measure of impact of migration on households is given by Migration Prevalence Rate (MPR) i.e, the ratio of emigrants to the number of households in Kerala. According to this measure, 21 percent of households had at least one emigrant in Kerala. Among the fourteen districts of Kerala, Malappuram (a predominant Muslim area) MPR is 49 per 100 households. One out of two households in Malappuram district had an emigrant in 1998. The Arab countries of the Middle East were the destination of nearly 95 percent of the emigrants from Kerala. Saudi Arabia alone accounted for nearly forty percent, in 1998. The other major Arab destinations were Dubai, Abudhabi and Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Outside the Arab world, the principal destination was the United States of America and it accounted for 2.2 percent of the total emigrants. The percentage of females among emigrants accounted for just 9 percent in Kerala. Thus emigration from Kerala is largely a male affair. The average age at emigrants in Kerala was 27 years for males and 21 years for females.

## B. Foreign Remittances to Kerala Economy

Few attempts were made earlier by the researchers<sup>8</sup> of the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, to estimate remittances to Kerala through direct and indirect methods (details see, Kannan and Hari, 2002). The recent estimate<sup>9</sup> made by Kannan and Hari provides trends in remittances in rupees and US dollars along with the percentage of remittances to the total state domestic product (Table 12). As per the recent estimates, the total remittances came to Kerala was about Rs. 136 billions - one-fourth of the state domestic product. Households with an emigrant receive both remittances as cash and goods in kind. According to our survey, 80 percent of emigrant households reported having received cash remittances and 50 percent of them received several items in kind – clothing, ornaments and jewellery, electric and electronic gadgets such as television, radio etc.

TABLE 12. Foreign Remittances to Kerala Economy, 1972-73 to 1999-2000

Year	Remittances	Exchange Rate	Remittances	Remittances as %
1972-73	0.07	7.67	0.01	0.57
1973-74	0.09	7.79	0.01	0.58
1974-75	0.19	7.94	0.02	1.06
1975-76	0.37	8.68	0.04	2.06
1976-77	0.92	8.97	0.10	4.51
1977-78	1.36	8.58	0.16	6.41
1978-79	1.29	8.22	0.16	5.52
1979-80	1.80	8.09	0.22	6.88
1980-81	2.92	7.90	0.37	9.11
1981-82	3.37	8.97	0.38	9.44
1982-83	4.32	9.66	0.45	10.20
1983-84	5.68	11.34	0.50	11.29
1984-85	7.80	11.89	0.66	13.80
1985-86	5.22	12.23	0.43	8.94
1986-87	8.61	12.77	0.67	12.64
1987-88	8.91	12.96	0.69	11.77
1988-89	8.24	14.48	0.57	9.80
1989-90	11.56	16.64	0.69	11.62
1990-91	8.73	17.94	0.49	7.77
1991-92	24.28	24.47	0.99	16.80
1992-93	30.25	30.65	0.99	18.19
1993-94	38.82	31.36	1.28	17.22
1994-95	60.84	31.39	1.94	22.34
1995-96	70.67	33.44	2.11	21.19
1996-97	95.21	35.49	2.68	24.50
1997-98	107.61	37.16	2.90	23.58
1998-99	108.17	42.07	3.57	19.95
1999-2000	136.52	43.33	3.15	22.63

Source: Kannan and Hari, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> The first attempt was by Gulati and Mody in 1983, followed by Nair (1989) Krishnan (1994), Issac (1997), Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan (2001), Zachariah, Prakash and Irudaya Rajan, 2002 and finally by Kannan and Hari (2002).

<sup>9</sup> Methodology, see Kannan and Hari 2002.

## VI. ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

Migration has provided the single-most dynamic factor in the otherwise dismal scenario of Kerala in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Mostly as a result of migration, Kerala has become virtually integrated with the world economy, with the Gulf economy to a large extent and with the economies of the United States and the West European countries to a lesser extent. Kerala has become part of the Gulf countries, if not geographically and politically, but very much so economically, socially, and culturally. What happens in the Gulf countries have repercussions in Kerala; and what happens in Kerala have, in turn their repercussions in the Gulf countries.

Migration has been one of the positive outcomes of the 'Kerala Model' of development. The State's dynamic social development in the past half a century and the relative stagnant in its productive sectors have created ideal conditions for an acceleration of migration from the state which had its historical origins in the World War II period. The accelerated process of migration, especially the more recent Gulf migration and migration to North America, have had their impact on every facet of Kerala's economy and society. It will take several more years before the full impact becomes evident. Behavioural changes are slow to come by and usually take a generation or more to become fully visible.

Most of the consequences, especially those taking place in the households of emigrants, are brought about through remittances and their utilisation. Socio-economic and demographic factors lead to emigration; emigration lead, in turn to remittances; remittances cause social and economic changes; and these changes, in the next move, become factors promoting emigration. The process goes on in cycles. Remittance, in this sense, is an intermediate determinant of the consequences. We shall assess the economic consequences on employment, poverty, housing and education and social consequences on women and elderly left behind.

### A. Housing

It is a common observation that, one of the first things an emigrant or return emigrant does is to improve the quality of his/her housing. This is done in several ways: by making improvements or additions to existing houses, purchase of buildings or building new houses. Whatever be the means, emigration to a large extent, and out-migration to a lesser, tend to contribute to improve the housing conditions of the migrant family. In the discussion, we therefore include households of all types of migrants: emigrants and return emigrants, and out-migrants and return out-migrants. In another context, we found that for emigrant's households, construction and repairs was the item next in importance only to consumption, education and repayment of debt (Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003)

Houses were classified into the following four categories based on the cost incurred: (1) below Rs 20,000; (2) between Rs 20,000 thousand and Rs 100,000; (3) between Rs 100,000 and Rs 500,000 thousand; and (d) above Rs 500,000. Weights were given to houses in each type, 1, 3, 10 and 30 respectively. An index of the cost is obtained by averaging the weights. The average indices for the four groups of households classified according to migration status are given in Table 13. As expected,

non-migrant households have the lowest and emigrant households the highest housing index.

TABLE 13. Index of the Value of House by Migration Status of the Household

	Index
All Households	4.98
Emigrant	7.05
Return Emigrant	6.44
Out-migrant	5.02
Return out-migrant	4.86
Non –migrant	4.30

Source: Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003.

For assessing quality, houses were grouped into the following five categories: (1) Luxurious (three or more bed rooms with attached bathrooms, concrete roof, mosaic floor); (2) Very Good (two bed rooms with attached bath rooms, concrete roof, mosaic floor); (3) Good (one bed room, brick and cement walls, concrete or tile roof) ; (4) Poor (Brick walls, cement floor, tin or asbestos roof); and (5) Kutcha (mud walls, mud floor and thatched roof). Since this classification is based on the subjective assessment of the field investigators, comparisons among groups within the same districts are likely to be more valid than comparison among districts. Nearly 70 percent of the houses are of high quality, of which only about 1.3 percent are characterised as luxurious. The poor and very poor (Kutcha) houses came to 28 percent. Housing quality of external migrants is found to be higher than that of internal migrants which, in turn, is higher than the housing quality of non-migrants. (Table 14)

TABLE 14. Percentage Distribution of Houses by Housing Quality and Migration Status of the Household

Housing Quality	All HHs	REM	EMI	ROM	OM	NOM
Luxurious	1.3	2.4	2.5	1.3	0.8	1.0
Very good	13.2	22.0	22.4	14.5	13.1	9.6
Good	57.2	60.1	64.4	60.5	65.9	54.3
Poor	17.7	10.7	7.1	13.9	13.3	21.9
Kutcha	10.5	4.8	3.7	9.7	6.9	13.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Proportion of Luxurious and Very good houses	14.5	24.4	24.9	15.9	13.9	10.6

Notes: REM: Return Emigrant; EMI: Emigrant; ROM: Return Out-migrant; OMI: Out-migrant; NOM: No Migrant.

Source: Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003.

The comparison among emigrants and among return emigrants themselves by periods of migration shows that the period and the duration of stay have strong influence on housing quality. Emigrants who came back after 1991 have better housing than those who came back later. The longer a return emigrant has been living in Kerala, the better

is his housing. Similarly is the case with emigrants who are still abroad. The longer has an emigrant been abroad, the better is the quality of his housing, see Table 15.

TABLE 15. Housing Quality of External Migrants by Duration of Stay (percent)

Housing Quality	Emigrants who went			Return Emigrants who came back		
	Before 1991	During 1991-95	After 1995	Before 1991	During 1991-95	After 1995
Luxurious	6.1	2.4	2.1	4.4	3.7	3.3
Very good	32.6	21.6	16.5	27.8	26.5	20.6
Good	56.0	66.8	67.4	55.6	56.7	61.0
Poor	3.1	6.1	8.9	9.1	9.1	10.2
Kutchha	2.2	3.1	5.1	3.1	4.0	4.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Proportion of luxurious & very good houses	38.7	24.0	18.6	32.2	30.2	23.9

Source: Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003.

Migration has a very significant effect on the quality of housing. This effect is independent of the effect of community or district. In fact, the interactions between migration and district and between migration and community are statistically insignificant. The effect of migration on quality of housing remains strong in all the districts and among all the communities.

## B. Housing Facilities

Migration had its effect not only on the overall quality of buildings but also on the fittings and furnishings in them. We have taken three common items for analysis of the impact of migration - electrification, toilet facilities and cooking fuel.

It is well known that Kerala has made tremendous progress in electrification of houses, in equipping houses with modern toilet facilities and in the use of modern fuels (eg: gas and electricity) for cooking. Progress in these areas began to be made much earlier than the recent large-scale migration to the Gulf countries. It is quite likely that the progress would have continued even without emigration. However emigration must have accelerated the process. Fifty years ago, electrification of houses was a luxury confined to rich houses in the major towns of the State. At the time of the survey, nearly three-fourths of the houses were electrified, but the proportions varied by migration status of the household, see Table 16.

TABLE 16. Percentage of Households with Facilities According to Migration Status of Household

Housing Facilities	EMI	REM	OMI	ROM	NOM	All HHs
Electricity	89.6	87.4	83.4	81.2	66.4	73.6
Toilet	91.1	85.6	85.5	81.6	71.3	76.1
Cooking Fuel	30.2	30.2	25.8	27.1	13.5	19.0

Source: Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003.

Households of emigrants have the highest proportion of electrified houses, nearly 90 percent. The households of return emigrants are not far behind with 87 per cent. The households of internal migrants (out-migrants and return out-migrants taken together) have slightly lower levels of electrification; they are however, much higher than the proportion among the non-migrant households (66 percent). The difference as between migrant households and return migrant households is not very large, either in the case of external migration or internal migration. Emigration is associated with an increase in the proportion of houses electrified by 23 percent and out-migration by 21 percent.

Kerala has made tremendous progress with respect to the use of modern toilet facilities in the houses. Taking the proportion of households with flush toilets as a measure of the availability of modern toilet facility, we find that more than three-fourths of the households have the facility; see Table 16. The highest proportions are among the emigrant households and the lowest proportions are among the non-migrant households. The proportions are lower, but only marginally, in the internal migrant household. The difference in the facility as between emigrant households and non-migrant households is the highest.

Another symbol of modern living is the use of non-traditional fuels for cooking. In Kerala as a whole, about 19 percent of the households use LPG for cooking. The proportion varies by the migration status of the household. More than 30 percent of the households of emigrants and return emigrants use LPG for cooking compared with only 13.5 percent among the households of non-migrants. Thus, emigration tends to bring in more households to the use of LPG for cooking, the difference between the two categories being nearly 17 percentage points. The proportions of households under the other migration categories are also extremely small. The proportion of users of LPG among households of internal migrants is lower than that among external migrants; however it is significantly higher than the proportion among non-migrant households. (See Table 16)

### C. Consumer Durables

It is well known that there has taken place sharp increases in the number and variety of consumer durables in the households in Kerala in recent years. It is also widely believed that the increase is associated mostly with the increase in the number of migrants. Recently, consumer durables of the latest vintage have become available within the state itself; households with migrants abroad and high disposable income at home, tend to buy more of them. Increase in household income, exposure to the use of these goods at the destinations and sheer necessity for using labour-saving appliances in the changing social and demographic set up are factors associated with the rising demand for consumer durables in the households of migrants. The difference in this respect between households of migrants and non-migrants is large, about 12 to 17 percentage points. The effect of migration on the possession of a larger number of household consumer durables may be demonstrated by two methods. In the first method, the incidence of the possession of household consumer durables (HCDs) in households with migrants is compared with that in households without migrants. Such a comparison shows that the incidence is much higher among the migrant households. In the second method, the emigrant households are compared among themselves by the duration of migration of the emigrants, the hypothesis being that households with migrants of longer duration will have larger number of HCDs than migrant households with emigrants of shorter



duration. In both these methods, we analyze differentials in the number of HCDs and the incidence of possession of specific consumer items such as TV or VCR. Information about the possession of 23 common household goods was obtained from all the households in the sample irrespective of whether they have a migrant or not. The HCDs include items such as car, television, radio, washing machine and telephone. None of the households had all the 23 items; the maximum number of goods a household had was 21 items. About 10 percent of the households did not have any of the 23 items.

Nearly 44 percent of the households with an emigrant or return emigrant have 10 or more items of HCDs. On the other hand only 15 percent of the households with no migrant of any type, have 10 or more items. While the number of HCDs that an average household has is 5.9, the households with an emigrant or return emigrant had about 9.0 items. Out-migrant households have on an average 6.6 items, but return out-migrants have, 7.1 items.

TABLE 17. Number and Percent of Households Possessing Household Consumer Durables

No of HCDs	Number of Households					Percentage of Households to Total				
	EMI	OMI	REM	ROM	NOM	EMI	OMI	REM	ROM	NOM
0	12	87	17	202	788	0.6	7.6	1.4	13.6	12.8
1-4	367	353	234	333	2694	17.5	30.7	19.3	22.5	43.8
5-9	794	403	432	462	1728	37.8	35.1	35.8	31.2	28.1
10+	924	305	531	484	942	44.1	26.8	43.7	32.7	15.3
Total	2099	1148	1214	1481	6150	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003.

The effect of migration on the number of household goods is demonstrated by a comparison of emigrant households with different duration of emigration. Nearly 57 percent of households which have an emigrant who emigrated before 1991 have 10 items or more; but only 23 percent of households with an emigrant who emigrated after 1995 had 10 items. The average number of HCDs per household was 10.2 for those who emigrated before 1991, 8.7 for those who emigrated between 1990 and 1995 and 8.1 for those who emigrated after 1995. Clearly there is a significant association between emigration and the number of HCDs possessed by the household. A larger proportion of households with an emigrant or a return emigrant has most of these household durables than those without any migrant. Households with an emigrant or a return emigrant are quite similar in this respect. Although internal migrants have a higher proportion of households with consumer goods than non-migrants have the difference is small. The highest difference is observed between external migrant and non-migrant households.

The positive association between migration and possession of HCDs is corroborated by an analysis of emigrants by duration of their emigration. The longer the duration, the higher is the proportion of households, which possess television, refrigerator, etc. A few illustrations are given in Table 18.

Thus, we find that a major result of migration has been the considerable increase in the number and variety of household consumer durables possessed by migrant's households.

TABLE 18. Percentage of Emigrants' Households Possessing Selected HCDs by Year of Emigration

Items of HCDs	Year of Emigration			All
	Prior to 1991	During 1991-1995	After 1995	
Telephone	41.7	31.2	22.6	32
Television	57.7	52.3	49.6	53
Refrigerator	52.3	35.0	26.5	40
Washing machine	22.4	12.5	12.2	16

Source: Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003.

#### D. Education

Data on the use of remittances indicate that a significant proportion of the remittances is used for educational purposes. In fact, the proportion spent on education comes next only to living expenses in the disposition of remittances. A comparison of the educational status of members of the households of migrants with households of non-migrants shows that the effect of remittances on education of the members of the family is not very large; see Table 19.

TABLE 19. Percentage Distribution of Households by Migration Status and Educational Level

Educational level	Migration Status				
	EMI	REM	ROM	OMI	NOM
Illiterate	6.3	4.0	5.5	5.9	8.3
Literate	3.3	2.3	3.5	3.5	4.3
Primary incomplete	12.8	11.4	8.4	9.5	10.8
Primary	20.5	20.9	17.2	14.5	20.5
Up to Secondary	34.8	33.9	30.7	34.3	31.5
Secondary	18.4	30.5	24.8	23.7	18.9
Degree	4.5	3.9	9.1	5.3	4.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Average years of schooling	7.1	7.0	7.6	7.8	7.3
Percentage of Households with members having secondary or Higher qualifications	22.9	34.4	33.9	29.0	23.7

Source: Zachariah, Mathew and Irudaya Rajan, 2003.

In fact, the average number of years of schooling of members of the non-migrant households (7.3 years) is higher than of emigrants' households (7.1 years) or of return emigrants' households (7.0 years). However, if we compare the proportion of household members with either a secondary school certificate or a degree certificate, we find that members of the households of return emigrants have the highest score. Households of return out-migrants have almost as high a score as those of return emigrants.

The lack of clear-cut differentials could be partly due to the selective nature of migration. If emigrants were selected from less educated households, they could still be

below the average household. All that it means is that the migrants' households, as a whole, have certainly not yet caught up with the rest of the Kerala households. However a multivariate analysis made with the proportion of the household members with secondary or higher education as the dependent variable and community, district and migration status as independent variables, show that migration has a significant effect on the educational status of the members of the migrant families particularly, on higher levels of education.

### E. Employment

This is, however, not the case with occupation. A major motive behind emigration, both internal and external, is improvement of economic conditions through occupational mobility. A comparison between the occupational composition of migrants prior to and after migration indicates that, in fact, there was considerable upward occupational mobility due to migration. About 62 percent of the emigrants changed their occupations after migration, all to "better" occupations. The proportion of emigrants without a regular occupation (unemployed, students, unpaid family workers) has decreased by 19 percentage points among the external migrants. Where as the proportion of migrants in high status occupations (government service, semi-government service, private sector, and self-employment) has increased by 16 percentage points among emigrants.

A major consequence of migration has been a reduction in unemployment. The Kerala Employment Exchanges reported an unemployment level of 0.37 millions in 1998. Our survey estimated an unemployment level (those not working and seeking work) of only 0.13 millions or roughly one-third of the estimate given by the Employment Exchange. This gives an unemployment rate of 11 percent. The number of unemployed males (0.65 millions) was not very much different from that among females (0.62 millions). However the unemployment rate gives a different picture. Female unemployment rate was 23 percent compared with a rate of only 7.5 percent among males. About 70 percent of the unemployed were educated (those with secondary school certificate or a degree). Migration has considerably eased the unemployment problem in the state. As a result of migration, the number unemployed has declined by 32 percent and the unemployment rate has declined by about 3 percentage points, from 14 percent to 11 percent. Reduction in unemployment due to migration was larger among those with less than secondary school education (37 percent) compared to those with secondary school education or a degree (30 percent).

### F. Poverty

Migration has had a very significant impact on the proportion of population below the poverty line. The proportion declined by over 3 percentage points as a result of remittances received by the Kerala households from their kith and kin abroad. If poverty level is about 29 percent, the decline in poverty level is about 12 percent. The decline in poverty was the largest among Muslims (6 percentage points). The best estimate of the decline in poverty as a result of the inflow of remittances from emigrants is around 12 percent.

## VII. SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

### A. Impact on Elderly

Migration is thought to have affected the elderly in many ways; in depriving them of the care from their children, in increasing loneliness and anxiety among them; in improving their economic and financial security; in enhancing their ability to seek expert medical help, etc. This study throws considerable light on some of these hypotheses.

- Emigration and out-migration have reduced the number of the elderly in the state while return emigration and return out-migration have increased it. The net change was an increase of 4.5 percent in the number of the elderly in the state. Thus migration has increased the old-age dependency in the state by increasing the number of the elderly persons and simultaneously decreasing the number of the working age population.
- Migration has increased loneliness among the elderly. It has increased the proportion of the elderly persons living alone without any younger persons sharing their household from 4.6 percent before migration to 6.9 percent after migration. Thus, migration increased loneliness of the elderly by 50 percent. Had there been no emigration or out migration, the number of elderly living without any younger person living with them would have been only about 155 thousand instead of the actual of 231 thousand.
- Elderly persons in emigrant households and out-migrant households felt loneliness as a problem more than the elderly in non-migrant households or return migrant households. Thus, migration has indeed contributed to the loneliness of the elderly.
- Surprisingly, a larger proportion of the elderly in non-migrant households complain of infrequent visit of children than the elderly in migrant households.
- More of the elderly in non-migrant households were afraid of burglary or theft than the elderly in migrant households.
- Anxiety is a problem among 15 percent of the elderly; the rate is much higher among the elderly women, especially women living in migrant households. Anxiety of the elderly is associated with migration from the household.
- Only a small difference is observed between the proportion of the elderly living in migrant households and that living in non-migrant households who possess land, house, bank account, or regular income. There is however significant difference in the level of economic dependence of the elderly on their children. It is larger among the elderly living in households with migrants than those living in households without migrants. Their children took care of more than 60 percent of the elderly in households with migrants. Among non-migrant households, children look after the needs of only 51 percent of the elderly. The proportion of the elderly living on income from own work is much larger among the non-migrant households. Thus migration from a household is a factor in the provision of livelihood to the elderly; however, children living abroad provide subsistence to only 8 percent of them.

- Surprisingly, fewer of the elderly in non-migrant households reported illhealth as a problem. Among females, the largest proportion of the elderly with health problems was in return emigrant households (67.7 percent), and the lowest was in non-migrant households. Among males, the largest proportion was among emigrant households; and
- Migration is associated with the health of the elderly. While 53 percent of the elderly in migrant households thought that they were unhealthy, only 43 percent in non-migrant households thought so.

## B. Impact on Women

When we speak about the consequences of migration on Kerala society, what comes immediately to mind are the huge size of remittances which emigrants send back home, the enormous Non Resident Indian deposits in Kerala banks, the palatial houses which many migrants have built all over the Kerala rural landscape, and the sophisticated household gadgets and electronic equipment which the migrant households keep in their kitchens and living rooms. Few among us would think about the enormous transformation that has taken place to Kerala women and its potential impact on Kerala society. Migration has consequences for both men and women. In the case of men, the consequences come about mostly because of their own migration. In the case of women, however, consequences can come about, not only because of their own migration, but also because of the migration of their husbands.

Women follow men in migration from Kerala; men follow women in return migration to the state. Women are the last to migrate out, but they are the first to return home. Most of the female migrants are married at the time of migration than male migrants. Female migrants are better qualified than male migrants, but fewer of them are gainfully employed. Migration causes separation of wives from husbands. Their numbers are the same. But women migrating without the husbands are infrequent, but men migrating without wives are more the rule than the exception. Few married men are left behind by their migrating wives whereas many married women are left behind by their migrating husbands. Both men and women have their own separate gains and losses arising from migration, but women are less equipped to handle them alone without help from their spouses. They have greater problems in dealing with the trauma arising from separation. For many, the trauma was worth the trouble, for, at the end of the day, they came out like gold in a melting crucible with 99.9 percent purity, well equipped to face the world on their own.

Emigration from Kerala is essentially a male affair. In 1998, female emigrants numbered 0.13 millions out of a total of 1.36 millions (9.3 percent). Among emigrants, only 1 out of every 10 was a woman. Female emigrants were better educated than male emigrants. Among those who reported their educational attainment, 28 percent of the female emigrants had a degree, but only 9 percent of the male emigrants were degree holders. About 38 percent of the female emigrants had passed the secondary level of education, but only 29 percent of the male emigrants had secondary education. Among emigrants 7.4 percent were females, but among degree holding emigrants as much as 20 percent were females.

As expected the economic activity rate is lower among females than among males. The same relationship holds at all stages of the process: before migration in Kerala, after migration at the destinations, and after return to Kerala. Females tend to drop out of

economic activity after a stint at emigration. The differential among the emigrants is only 45.3 percent before emigration but is as much as 76.3 percent after return to Kerala. Thus emigration tends to increase labour force participation of females. However, their return is associated with lowering of economic activity and labour force participation rates.

In the State as a whole, the number of married men in the sample was 10,712 and the number of married women 12,253, an excess of 1,541 married females over the number of married men. The difference, as proportion of the number of married women was 12.6 percent. Thus, a minimum of 12.6 percent of the married women was living away from their husbands due to migration. Applying the ratio to the total number of married females of the State, we find that nearly a million married women in Kerala are living away from their husbands. The absence of husband causes several hardships for wives; but at the same it brings several benefits also. For example it could give the Gulf wives an opportunity to develop their talents, expertise, status, independence, etc, to their full potential. In that respect the initial handicaps could be turned into a blessing for the family and the society in general. In the opinion of the Gulf wives, the principal problems arising from their husbands' emigration were, in the order of importance, the following (a) Loneliness; (b) Added responsibilities; (c) Adverse effect on children's education; (d) Debt incurred to finance emigration; (e) Increased anxiety, and (f) Financial gains not up to expectation.

As a problem among the Gulf wives, loneliness was more serious than anything else. More than half the number of young wives considered loneliness as their number one problem arising from their husbands' emigration. Loneliness was measured quantitatively by (1) the length of the period of separation and (2) the frequency of communication between the Gulf wife and her husband. The longer the average period of separation, the higher would be the degree of loneliness. Similarly, the less frequent the communication between the husband and wife, the higher would be degree of loneliness. In the case of about 2.4 percent of the Gulf wives (about 24 thousand women), their husbands had left for the Gulf within days after marriage; almost a-third left within 3 months from marriage, and about 45 percent left during the first year of marriage. Thus, separation from husbands soon after marriage is indeed a real problem among the Gulf wives. The situation is much worse among the younger wives, about 2.7 percent whose husbands had left for Gulf immediately after marriage.

The problem is partly ameliorated by frequent communication between husband and wife over the phone and through letters. Almost all Gulf wives (99 percent) communicate with their husbands in one form or another. Nearly 70 percent communicated through letters and phone, and 30 percent communicated through letters alone. Nearly half the number of Gulf wives communicated once in two weeks. The majority of those who wrote letters also communicated over the phone. Such frequent communication ameliorated the problem of loneliness to a large extent. The ability to communicate whenever needed was a great help for the wives to carry on the load of added responsibilities, especially responsibilities related to the financial management.

Nearly a-third of the Gulf wives, especially the older among them, complained about added responsibilities because of husbands' migration: responsibilities to take care of children's education, family finances, family health, and fulfilling family obligations in social, cultural and religious areas, etc. Taking care of children's education is a major added responsibility. Most of the Gulf wives had children. More than 75 percent of those with children had one child or more in school. As the father is not in station the

mother is responsible to get them admission in school, to arrange for their transport to school, to find tuition master, to arrange for transport to the tuition place, and to help the children with their home work. Only a few of the Gulf wives actually take their children to school, but about 8 percent take them to the tuition master, and 75 percent of them help them in their school work.

Migration results in considerable increase in family finances. Management of the old and new family assets and income is a major added responsibility of the Gulf wives. Their husbands were unaccustomed to such responsibilities as there was no money in the house at the time they left home. So there were not many precedents to follow. The problem is particularly difficult, as they don't have the full freedom to spend the money the way they like. They have to follow the husbands' directions to a great extent and keep the in-laws in good humour.

Problems arising from emigration should be balanced against benefits from it. Economic gains arising from remittances are the principal benefits of migration. Almost all Gulf wives stressed the economic benefits in one form or another as the principal gains from their husbands' emigration (56 percent mentioned financial gains, 28 percent mentioned ability to own a good house, and 6 percent mentioned ability to pay back debt). Basically, the source of all benefits was remittances. Almost all emigrants (97 percent) send home remittances and 80 percent of them sent them in their wives' names. As a result, the status and the authority of the Gulf wives in their households have risen considerably. On an average, the remittance was about Rs 35,000 per year or about Rs.3000 per month. The receipt of large remittances in their own names and entrusting them with the responsibility of managing the finances were major factors which have raised the status of the Gulf wives and improved their autonomy, independence and expertise in managing their affairs. Half the number of the Gulf wives had houses or lands in their names; 4 out of 10 had their own income which they kept under their control; 7 out of 10 keep bank accounts, but most of them spend money according to directions from husbands. But in the matter of daily household expenses, personal requirements, children's needs, etc, women spend money at their discretion. These are important indicators of the autonomy and economic independence of the Gulf wives.

There are positive as well as negative consequences of migration of their husbands for the Gulf wives. On balance, what is the consequence? The responses of the Gulf wives to the two questions we asked for stated below. First we asked: "Would that not be nice if your husband leaves the Gulf job and return home?" Surprisingly, nearly 60 percent of Gulf wives replied that they really wished their husbands back home. For them, the added responsibilities and the loneliness weighed too much on them. But for the other 40 percent, the economic benefits out-weighed the costs. Second, all the Gulf wives were asked another question: "If you have a daughter of marriageable age, whom do you like her to marry? Someone working in Kerala, someone working in another state in India, or someone working in the Gulf countries?" None (less than three percent) of the Gulf wives wanted a man working in another state in India as her son-in law. Had the same question been asked 30 years ago, the answer would have been overwhelmingly in favour of persons working in a metropolis in India, such as Bombay or Bangalore. But today the situation seems to be totally different. Only about 14 percent preferred persons working in the Gulf countries. An overwhelming 83 percent preferred a boy working in Kerala as their son-in-law!

Having gone through the experience of a Gulf wife, they seem to have second thoughts about their husbands' emigration. It is all right from the economic point of

view, but not so if all factors are taken into consideration. Those who have gone through the trauma of separation would prefer jobs in Kerala, if they could. For them, all that glitter in the Arabian sands is not gold. There is considerable sacrifice involved on their part at the destination and on the part of their wives and children back in Kerala. There is still another side to the whole question of the balance sheet. What is described above is the short-term point of the individual Gulf wives. The picture is different if we take the long-term perspective and from the point of the society in general. More important than the visible economic benefits to the Gulf wives, but partly as a result of them, are the subtle changes in the women's self-confidence and in their ability to get things done in the man's world. Loneliness yes, mental strains yes, hard work yes, minor problems with in-laws and children yes, but at the end of the day, they would have developed an inner capacity to get things done, not only within households but also in the community. The ISD and the internet cafes in every corner of the state have come handy to prevent the problems of loneliness from getting out of hand. The husband is physically away, but his helping hand is close by just, at the other end of the communication line. The husbands' absence, increased economic resources at their disposal, and the ability to communicate with their men whenever needed all have become instrumental in transforming the shy dependent girls into a self confident autonomous managers with status that is equal to those of any men in the neighbourhood. They get a larger vision of the world around them. The subtle transformation that has taken place among the gulf wives would have a more lasting imprint on the Kerala society than any material changes which migration has brought about.

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## Appendix 1: Estimated Size of Overseas Indians by Country, 2001

Country	People of Indian Origin	Indian citizens	Stateless	Total
Afghanistan	500	0	0	500
Algeria	5	40	0	45
Andorra	0	200	0	200
Angola	45	250	0	295
Argentina	1,200	400	0	1,600
Armenia	0	200	0	200
Australia	160,000	30,000	0	190,000
Austria	3,005	8,940	0	11,945
Azerbaijan	0	250	0	250
Bahrain	0	130,000	0	130,000
Barbados	2,100	100	0	2,200
Belarus	0	70	0	70
Belgium	0	7,000	0	7,000
Belize	500	0	0	500
Benin	450	0	0	450
Bhutan	0	1,500	0	1,500
Botswana	3,000	6,000	0	9,000
Brazil	1,500	400	0	1,900
Brunei	500	7,000	100	7,600
Bulgaria	0	20	0	20
Burundi	300	0	0	300
Cambodia	150	150	0	300
Cameroon	250	0	0	250
Canada	700,000	150,000	1,000	851,000
Cape Verde	4	0	0	4
Chad	125	0	0	125
Chile	39	611	0	650
China	5	300	0	305
Colombia	1	19	0	20
Comoros	50	0	0	50
Costa Rica	1	15	0	16
Cote d'Ivoire	30	270	0	300
Croatia	10	0	0	10
Cyprus	0	300	0	300
Czech Republic	20	400	0	420
Denmark	900	1,252	0	2,152
Djibouti	280	0	0	280
Dominica	0	20	0	20
Ecuador	0	5	0	5
Egypt	40	1,350	0	1,390
Eritrea	30	1,723	0	1,753
Ethiopia	34	700	0	734
Fiji	336,579	250	0	336,829
Finland	410	750	10	1,170
France	55,000	10,000	0	65,000
G.Bissau	25	0	0	25
Gambia	135	0	0	135
Germany	10,000	25,000	0	35,000
Ghana	2,000	1,800	0	3,800

# New Trends of Labour Emigration from India to the Gulf Countries

Appendix 1: Estimated Size of Overseas Indians by Country, 2001 (*continued*)

Country	People of		Stateless	Total
	Indian Origin	Indian citizens		
Greece	0	7,000	0	7,000
Guadeloupe	40,000	0	0	40,000
Guatemala	22	0	0	22
Guyana	395,250	100	0	395,350
Hong Kong	28,500	22,000	0	50,500
Indonesia	50,000	5,000	0	55,000
Iran	0	800	0	800
Iraq	50	60	0	110
Ireland	600	1,000	0	1,600
Israel	45,000	300	0	45,300
Italy	36,000	35,500	0	71,500
Jamaica	60,000	1,500	0	61,500
Japan	1,000	9,000	0	10,000
Jordan	30	900	0	930
Kazakhstan	0	1,127	0	1,127
Kenya	85,000	15,000	2,500	102,500
Korea	200	2,505	0	2,705
Kuwait	1,000	294,000	0	295,000
Kyrgyz Stan	100	0	0	100
Laos	18	107	0	125
Lebanon	25	11,000	0	11,025
Libya	400	12,000	0	12,400
Lithuania	0	5	0	5
Madagascar	25,000	3,000	1,000	29,000
Malaysia	1,600,000	15,000	50,000	1,665,000
Maldives	1	9,000	0	9,001
Mali	20	0	0	20
Mauritius	704,640	11,116	0	715,756
Mexico	400	0	0	400
Mongolia	0	35	0	35
Morocco	25	350	0	375
Mozambique	20,000	870	0	20,870
Myanmar	2,500,000	2,000	400,000	2,902,000
Namibia	32	78	0	110
Netherlands	200,000	15,000	2,000	217,000
New Zealand	50,000	5,000	0	55,000
Nigeria	8,000	17,000	0	25,000
Norway	0	5,630	0	5,630
Oman	1,000	311,000	0	312,000
P N Guinea	0	1,000	0	1,000
Panama	211	1,953	0	2,164
Peru	10	135	0	145
Philippines	24,000	2,000	12,000	38,000
Poland	75	750	0	825
Portugal	5,000	5,000	0	10,000
Qatar	1,000	130,000	0	131,000
Reunion Islands	220,000	55	0	220,055
Romania	2	489	0	491
Russia	44	16,000	0	16,044
Saudi Arabia	0	1,500,000	0	1,500,000
Senegal	13	8	0	21

Appendix 1: Estimated Size of Overseas Indians by Country, 2001 (*continued*)

Country	People of		Stateless	Total
	Indian Origin	Indian citizens		
Seychelles	2,000	3,000	0	5,000
Singapore	217,000	90,000	0	307,000
Slovakia	0	100	0	100
Solomon Islands	0	20	0	20
South Africa	0	0	0	1,000,000
Spain	16,000	13,000	0	29,000
St. Lucia	0	200	0	200
St. Vincent & The Grenadines	0	160	0	160
Sudan	300	1,200	0	1,500
Suriname	150,306	150	0	150,456
Sweden	9,000	2,000	0	11,000
Switzerland	8,400	4,800	300	13,500
Syria	1,800	0	0	1,800
Taiwan	1,800	0	0	1,800
Tajikistan	0	400	0	400
Tanzania	85,000	5,000	0	90,000
Thailand	70,000	15,000	0	85,000
Trinidad & Tobago	500,000	600	0	500,600
Tunisia	0	70	0	70
Turkey	0	300	0	300
United Arab Emirates	50,000	900,000	0	950,000
Uganda	7,000	5,000	0	12,000
United Kingdom	0	0	0	1,200,000
Ukraine	0	3,400	0	3400
United States of America	0	0	0	1,678,765
Uzbekistan	40	650	0	690
Vanuatu	0	50	0	50
Venezuela	400	280	0	680
Vietnam	0	320	0	320
Yemen	100,000	900	0	100,900
Zambia	10,000	3,000	0	13,000
Zimbabwe	15,500	1,200	0	16,700
India	8,626,437	3,909,458	468,910	1,688,3570

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 2001.