

A Study On Labour Migration To Kerala: A General Perspective**Indumathi .C**

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ABSTRACT

The predominance of migrant labourers from different parts of the country is the striking aspect of the Kerala labour market today. Even though it is not a recent phenomenon, its nature has been changing over the years. The main objective of the paper is to give a general view of labour migration to Kerala, particularly the increasing number of migrant population, and shifts in the sources and destinations of migration. This paper shows that the economy largely depends on the migrant labourers especially for the manual and casual works.

INTRODUCTION

Kerala, the largest supplier of labour force to the gulf countries, among the Indian states, has been depending on the large number of migrant labourers from different parts of the country for the subsistence of the economy. According to the Kerala migration survey 2014, the number of emigrants in the economy has been increasing since 1988. In 2014, 24 lakh Keralites are living abroad and the state received rupees 71,142 crore as a remittance. The passion of educated Keralites for the white collar job opportunities in the rest of the world and the reluctance of the remaining native labourers to the blue collar jobs opened the doors to the labourers from other states. The inflow of huge remittances to the economy created a boom in the construction sector that demanded a rise in the manual labour force. The scarcity of manual labourers and the high native labour cost forced the employers to accommodate migrant laborers from the rest of the country. Comparatively the higher wage rate and the large employment opportunities attracted labourers from different parts of the country to Kerala.

Migration of Labourers to Kerala is not a recent phenomenon. Till 2001 the source of migrants to Kerala were mostly from nearest states; Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. They were mostly engaged in the jobs such as road works, earthworks, and street vending, etc. But the new trend of migration to Kerala is entirely different. According to the study by Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation 2013, labourers from farther states can be seen in almost all sectors of the economy. The report shows that West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Assam etc. are the major suppliers of labour force to the economy. The study also estimated the stock of the migrant population in Kerala as over 25 lakhs with an annual rate of 2.35 lakh and they are sending 17,500 crores annually to their home. The present study focused on a general view on labour migration to Kerala.

MIGRANTS FROM OTHER STATES TO KERALA

Internal migrants are not necessarily registered in both the places of origin and destination. So there is no solid estimation about the in-migrant labourers in Kerala. The only available major sources of information about the internal migrants in the country are the decennial Censuses of India (D series) and the quinquennial migration surveys by the National Sample Survey Office. Migration in the census of India is of two types- migration by place of birth and migration by place of last residence. Census defines a migrant by place of birth when he/she is enumerated in census at a different place than his/her place of birth. If he or she had last resided at a place other than his/her place of enumeration, considered as migrant by place of last residence. The district level data on migration are available only up to 2001 census.

The final migration D series of 2011 census is not published yet. As per the various census reports the number of in-migrants from other states has been increasing over the years.

TABLE NO 1
NUMBER OF MIGRANTS FROM OTHER STATES TO KERALA

Year	Total
1961	233245
1971	248775
1981	341160
1991	398470
2001	412849

Source: Sheeja. J 2014

The Table 1 shows that the number of migrants from different parts of the country is increasing since 1961. It has increased as 412849 in 2001 from 248775 during 1971. Both the Census and NSS capture only the permanent or long term migration. Whereas the recent trend of labour migration to Kerala is mostly a seasonal or short term in nature. The current data on labour in -migration to Kerala is provided by the labour department of the state. According to the labour department of the state, the number of registered in-migrant labourers in Kerala is increasing every year. As per the latest, there are 51579 migrant workers are registered with the labour department and it was 36841 in 2014.

SOURCE OF MIGRATION

The earlier migration to Kerala was mostly from the nearest states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. It is clear from the Table 2 that the share of Tamil migrants in Kerala is decreasing in recent years. During 1971, the 75% of in-migrants in Kerala were Tamils. While in 2015, the share of Tamil migrants to the total migrant population is declined as 3.09%. Till 2001 majority of the migrants were from nearest states. Now Kerala is facing a flood of labour migration from farther states in recent years. West Bengal, Orissa, Assam, Bihar etc. are the leading contributors in migration to the different sectors of the economy in these days.

TABLE NO 2
NUMBER OF MIGRANTS FROM MAJOR STATES

State	No. of Migrants (%)						
	1971	1981	1991	2001	2013	2014	2015
Tamil Nadu	75.8	74.0	66.9	67.7	2.9	3.2	3.09
Karnataka	10.3	11.8	13.9	13.4	8.8	8.6	7.48
Andhra Pradesh	1.4	1.4	1.8	2.2	0.3	0.3	0.80
Uttar Pradesh	1.0	0.7	1.1	1.4	2.2	2.1	2.4
West Bengal	0.5	0.6	0.6	1.0	46.9	47.2	45.9
Bihar	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.8	8.8	8.6	9.4
Orissa	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.8	16.4	16.4	15.7
Assam	0.13	0.2	0.2	0.2	9.3	9.3	10.3
Others	9.88	10.2	14.1	12.1	4.1	3.8	4.8
Total	100.00	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Sheeja. J 2014, Economic Review 2014, 2015

Destination of Migration

Ernakulam district has been accommodating the largest number of migrants regularly except in 2011 (see Table 3). The district is known as the migration hub of the state. The table further shows that, in 2001, Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Palakkad and Idukki districts

received the largest share of in-migrants. However, in recent years, migrants are scattered over the entire state. They are mostly concentrated in the plywood industries of Ernakulam district, plantation fields of Idukki, and iron and steel industry in Palakkad, footwear industry in Kozhikkode, quarries in Malappuram district, fish processing in Alappuzha, apparel parks in Thiruvananthapuram and brick kilns in Kollam district (Peter Benoy and Verma Divya 2016). In short, the presence of migrant labourers can be seen in every nook and corner of the state.

Table 3. District Wise Distribution of Migrants (%)

District	2001	2011	2013	2014	2015
Thiruvananthapuram	12	5	3	3	3
Kollam	4	7	2	2	2
Pathanamthitta	3	3	6	6	4
Alappuzha	3	10	5	5	4
Kottayam	4	5	5	6	7
Idukki	13	2	3	2	2
Ernakulam	14	8	17	17	17
Thrissur	6	13	7	7	7
Palakkad	12	23	7	7	6
Malappuram	5	5	4	4	5
Kozhikkode	5	5	8	7	8
Wayanad	4	2	11	12	13
Kannur	7	9	13	13	12
Kasargode	8	3	9	9	8
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census of 2001 and Economic Review 2011, 2013, 2014 & 2015

SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF LABOURERS

The most noticeable aspect of the current wave of migration to Kerala is that they have engaged in almost all sectors of the economy. Table 4 illustrates that Kerala economy is highly depends on migrant labourers. As per the study conducted by the Labour Department of Kerala, each and every sector of the economy accommodates migrant labourers in these days.

TABLE NO 4
SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF MIGRANT LABOURERS IN KERALA

Occupation	Sector of Employment							Total
	Agriculture	Construction	Hotel and Restaurant	Manufacturing	Trade	Others	Not reported	
Carpenter		0.5		0.14	0.14	0.81	0.14	1.90
Electrician			0.14			0.41	0.14	0.68
Mason/flooring		3.57					0.14	3.68
Sales person	0.14	0.27	0.14		0.14			0.68
Tailoring				0.14		0.27		0.41
Skilled work	0.14	10.61	0.54	3.13	0.14	3.67	0.27	18.50
Unskilled work	2.04	43.40	5.44	4.22	1.36	11.56	1.50	69.50
Others		4.91	0.54	0.67		0.15		2.45
Not reported		0.27	0.14	0.14		0.68	0.95	2.18
Total	2.31	60.00	6.94	8.30	1.77	17.55	3.13	100

Source: GIFT 2013

Construction sector of the economy absorbs the largest share of migrant labourers. Around 60% of the migrant labourers are concentrated in the construction sector. Even though, they are mostly in the unskilled categories (69.50%), skilled workers are also employed in different sectors such as manufacturing, construction, hotels and restaurants. In general, migrant labourers are entered to all skills and non-skill sectors of the economy. It is very interesting to note that even the agricultural sector of the economy is heavily depends on the labourers from other states due to the reluctance of educated Keralites to the farm labor.

CONCLUSION

Labour migration to Kerala from different parts of the country is not a new phenomenon. But the facets of migration are changing over the years. The present paper gives a general view of migration of labourers to Kerala. The number of migrants to the state is increasing over the years. The current migration to Kerala is different from the earlier pattern. During the earlier periods migrants were mostly from nearest states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. But the new migrants are from the farthest states like West Bengal, Orissa and Bihar and Assam. Even though the Ernakulam district is the largest recipient of migrants in Kerala, their presence can be seen in all the districts. Along with the Construction sector, which is the largest sector of employing migrant labourers, all other sectors of the economy also depend labourers from other states for their existence.

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