

Impact of international migration on the status of women in Kerala

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The basic reason behind migration is different types of inequalities that existed in different countries of the world. Global inequality prevails in terms of wages, labour market opportunities, lifestyles, income distribution and resources and even in the field of political power. Migrants are moving from one place to another in search of better living conditions. The international migrants are usually concentrated in developed regions of the world. The inequality between sending and receiving areas that also promotes migration. Though international migration reduces inequality between sending and receiving countries, sometimes it increases the inequality in the same local area.

This study explains the local impact of international migration of women from Kerala. It is done by conducting a district level comparison of economic impacts, social impacts, demographic impacts, cultural impacts and political impacts. Here it is trying to compare only female education, female work force participation, Human Development Index, Gender Development Index, wages and sex ratio.

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Concepts

Migration: According to Webster's New World Dictionary migration means to "move from one place to another, especially to another country" or "to move from place to place to harvest seasonal crops". According to Weinberg human migration is the changing of the place of abode permanently or, when temporarily, for an appreciable duration as e.g., in the case of seasonal workers. It is used symbolically in the transition from one surrounding to another in the course of human life.

Emigrants: Emigrants are those persons who are usual residence of a household, migrated from Kerala and living outside India.

There are five different waves of migration from Kerala. The first generation of migrants from Kerala in the early 20th century were semi-skilled or quasi professional workers to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Malaya (to work on plantations) Burma, Madras, Calcutta, Karachi and Bombay. The second wave of migration after the Second World War was to Singapore, Malaysia and different parts of India – to big cities like Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras and Bangalore. Most of the people who migrated during the second wave from 1945 to 1960 were high school educated or semi-skilled workers (typists, secretaries, office workers and army personnel).

The third wave of migrants from 1960 to 1975 consisted of people with technical skills and professional training (professionals, nurses, clerks, technicians etc.). These three waves of migration and the consequent remittances helped a number of families to join the Indian middle class. The fourth wave from 1975 to 1992 (until the Kuwait war) saw mass migrations to the Gulf, USA, Germany and other countries in Europe and elsewhere. Mass migration was prompted by the demand for skilled labour required for construction and infrastructure development of oil based economies. Those who economically transformed Kerala are people with ITI and nursing education. The increasing demand for nurses in the health sector resulted in a chain of migration to the US, Germany etc. One nurse was possibly responsible for the migration of an average of 20 people (Samuel, 2011).

These patterns of migration and their consequences influenced every aspect of society: land relationships, decline of agriculture, growth of consumer and service sectors, rise of education as an industry and a relatively less skilled and knowledge based young leadership pool for political parties. This had a deep impact also in terms of the structure and leadership of political parties. Communities with a relatively greater stake in power structure of Kerala (Nair, Namboothri) that were economically well off through access to land and feudal relationships got into leadership positions in political parties (Samuel, 2011).

Sex Ratio:

The growth and development of women have direct impact on the general well-being of a society. Sex ratio is the most credible pointer towards the status of women in any society. Over the last one hundred years females have been outnumbering males consistently. According to the 2011 census, there are 1084 females per

1000 males. The major reason attributed to the increase in sex ratio is the decline in the female infant mortality rate and the increase in life expectancy of women. This is in sharp contrast to India's 940 females per 1000 males in 2011. The sex ratio is favourable to females in all the districts in Kerala – the highest is observed in Kannur (1133) Pathanamthitta (1129) and Kollam (1113) districts and the lowest in Idukki (1006) and Ernakulam (1028) districts. Table1 shows the sex ratio in the districts of Kerala. Sex ratio in Kottayam district is 1040, which is lower than the State's sex ratio of 1084, which may be due to large scale out migration of women from this district.

Education and migration:

Kerala is the most literate state in the country (93.91 percent).Table 2 shows the literacy rate by sex for the Kerala State and its districts. In the case of literary the difference between male –female achievement levels is narrower in Kerala than in India as a whole. In Kerala male –female literacy rates are 91.98 percent for females and 96.02 percent for males. Kottayam is in the forefront of education. It is the second most literate district in the state (96.40 percent). Male and female literacy rates are 97.17 percent and 95.67 percent respectively.

Table 1 Demographic indicator by Districts (Kerala) 2011 and 2001

Sl. No.	Districts	Sex Ratio (2011)	Life Exp. At birth in years	IMR	CBR	TFR	Mean age at Marriage Female (in years)	Full ANC (%)	Institutional Deliveries (%)	
									Public	Private
1.	Thiruvananthapuram	1088	75.2	11	16.4	1.6	22.6	71.8	67.3	32.6
2.	Kollam	1113	77.1	8	16.2	1.6	22.2	90.2	48.3	51.6
3.	Pathanamthitta	1129	76.7	8	14.5	1.5	23.2	84.8	27.5	72.4
4.	Alapuzha	1100	77.1	8	15.2	1.5	22.9	93.1	54.4	45.5
5.	Kottayam	1040	75.6	12	15.6	1.6	24.4	91.9	40.7	59.2
6.	Idukki	1006	72.4	20	17.0	1.6	23.0	82.1	25.4	74.5
7.	Ernakulam	1028	75.9	11	15.7	1.5	23.7	89.6	29.1	70.8
8.	Thrissur	1109	76.4	9	16.1	1.6	22.4	89.3	28.5	71.4
9.	Palakad	1067	76.1	11	17.3	1.8	20.9	86.2	30.6	69.3
10.	Malappuram	1096	75.6	10	22.4	2.4	18.7	78.8	31.4	68.5
11.	Kozhikode	1097	75.4	12	17.4	1.7	20.6	93.1	54.3	45.6
12.	Wayanad	1035	73.5	22	19.5	2.0	20.5	90.4	54.2	45.7
13.	Kannur	1133	75.6	12	16.6	1.7	20.8	90.2	35.9	64.0
14.	Kasargod	1079	75.7	10	18.9	1.9	20.6	75.4	11.1	88.8
Kerala		1084		14		1.7	22.7	86.1	38.0	58.9
Coe. of Variation (%)			12.0	-		14.4	6.9	7.6	38.2	23.9

Source: Human Development Report (2005), CDS, Thiruvananthapuram and Census of India, 2011
Sex Ratio - Females per 1000 males, Crude Birth Rate - per 1000 population, IMR- Infant Mortality Rate – per 1000 births, TFR – Total Fertility Rate

Table 2 Literacy rate by sex for Kerala state and districts (2001)

Sl. No.	State/ District	Literacy Rate		
		Persons	Males	Females
		2011	2011	2011
	Kerala	93.91	96.02	91.98
1.	Thiruvananthapuram	92.66	94.96	90.89
2.	Kollam	93.77	95.83	91.95
3.	Pathanamthitta	96.93	97.70	96.26
4.	Alapuzha	96.26	97.90	94.80
5.	Kottayam	96.40	97.17	95.67
6.	Idukki	92.20	94.84	89.59
7.	Ernakulam	95.68	97.14	94.27
8.	Thrissur	95.32	96.98	93.85
9.	Palakad	88.49	92.27	84.99
10.	Malappuram	93.55	95.78	91.55
11.	Kozhikode	95.24	97.57	93.16
12.	Wayanad	89.32	92.84	85.94
13.	Kannur	95.41	97.54	93.57
14.	Kasargod	89.85	93.93	86.13

Source: Census of India, 2011

The percentage of illiterate is minimum in Kottayam district (2.43 percent) (District hand book, 2003) .The highest numbers of schools are in Malappuram district (1336 schools and the lowest in Wayanad district (292 schools). The numbers of schools in Kottayam are 908. In Kerala there is a lower primary school (LPS) for every

3270 persons. There is one upper primary school (UPS) for every 6334 persons. As regards graduation and above Kottayam stands second in the state. In 2001 the difference between male female literacy gap is 21.69 for India and for Kerala it is 6.5 (Economic Review, 2007). Unlike in other states gender gap in school enrolment in Kerala is very low. Girls constituted 49.19 percent of the total enrolment in school education in Kerala.

Nursing:

The demand for nurses and caretakers abroad has resulted in an expansion of nursing education in Kerala. Table 3 presents the annual intake of students in nursing course of government colleges in Kerala. Apart from government nursing colleges, there are about 42 nursing colleges under self-financing sector with an annual intake of 50 students each.

Table 3 District wise annual intake of students in nursing courses in Kerala –2007

Sl. No.	Nursing-Cum midwives (3 year course)	Annual intake
1.	Thiruvananthapuram	28
2.	Kollam	25
3.	Pathanamthitta	20
4.	Alapuzha	23
5.	Kottayam	20
6.	Idukki	20
7.	Ernakulam	30
8.	Thrissur	28
9.	Palakad	25
10.	Malappuram	26
11.	Kozhikode	26
12.	Wayanad	23
13.	Kannur	20
14.	Kasargod	20
15.	SC/ST nursing School Kollam	20
Total		354

Source: Economic Review, 2007

The likely demand for nurses in UK, USA and Japan is about 10, 00,000 in the next five to ten years. Migration plays an important role in the human resource development of the country of origin. There is an increase of population in secondary level education or education at the graduate level during 1999-2004. The improvement in education was highest among Christians. About 36.1 percent of the Christians have secondary level of education or are degree holders compared to Muslims (15 percent). During 1990s higher educated females have increased more than that of males due to the migration of educated males. The educated labour force has been absorbed both in the local and global market. There is a correlation between unemployment and education. Unemployment during this period is highest among Christian community and lowest among Hindus. Children's education is a major item on the budget of households. Christian households spend Rs.10315 /household, more than twice of the average of the Muslim households (Rs.4834).The average expenditure per non-resident Keralite household was Rs.7731 and Non Non-nonresident household was Rs.6143.Migration has an impact on the household expenditure on education (Zachariah and Rajan, 2004).

Female work force participation:

In 2001, women work participation rate of 15.3 percent is far below the all-India figure of 25.7 percent. Furthermore, while women work participation rate for all – India have increased between 1991 and 2001, it has fallen marginally for Kerala during the same period. District wise break up of women work participation shows that the pressure to work has been higher in backward districts of Idukki and Wayanad. The lowest work participation of women is seen in Malappuram (6.6 percent). This district is known for sending the largest number of men to the Gulf. The adjoining district viz, Kozhikode also registers very low levels of female work participation. Women's work participation is 13.9 percent in Kottayam district that accounts for the highest emigration of women among the 14 districts in Kerala. Hence it may be inferred that women's work participation is lower in Kerala and its districts. Districts that account for higher rates of emigration (men and women) show low levels of women's participation in the labour market.

Wages:

The wage rates are relatively higher in developed districts such as Kottayam, Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram than economically backward districts. Further wage disparity on the basis of gender is also greater in developed than backward districts. Despite the Equal Remuneration Act, women get low wages particularly in casual work, construction work etc.

Human Development Index and Gender Development Index:

HDI measures the average achievements in three basic dimensions of human development. As per UNDP, these dimensions are life expectancy at birth, adult literacy and a decent standard of living, as measured by GDP per capita. Kerala ranks first among States in India in the Human development index 2001 (0.773) but its per capita income lagged behind the all – India average till recently. Kottayam district ranks 2nd in HDI. What is remarkable here is that the district-wise human development indices of Kerala for 2001 all lie above 0.740. In fact, one district (Ernakulam) comes out with a HDI as high as 0.80. With an index of 0.749, the low-rung occupant in HDI is Malappuram district that accounts for large scale male emigration to Gulf. The hilly districts of Idukki and Wayanad are also in the same range as Malappuram. The low income indicated for Malappuram district, which is an outlier district and thus raises the variability, does not take into account the significant amount of remittances accruing to that district. More than 40 per cent of the total international migration from Kerala is accounted for by this district alone. Thus, it seems safe to assume only marginal inter-district variability in respect of the income dimension. Viewed from an all-India context, this should be reckoned as a remarkable achievement.

The Gender related development index (GDI) adjusts the average achievement to reflect the inequalities between men and women in human development. Kerala is also ranked at the top in the gender-related development index (GDI) among major States in India. The lowest rank was observed in Bihar followed by Uttar Pradesh. Further, there has been substantial improvement in the GDI in Kerala in tandem with the HDI. The GDI was 0.697 in 1997 and increased to 0.746 in 2001.

Among the districts in Kerala, Alapuzha has been in the fourth position with respect to HDI; however, it ranked first position with respect to GDI. Ernakulam district secured second rank, while Malappuram district is ranked in the lowest position with respect to GDI. Kozhikode district was in the eighth position in HDI; however, it is pushed to thirteenth position in respect of GDI. Kottayam district stands in 4th place in GDI. Analogous to HDI, the disparity among the districts seems to be insignificant with respect to GDI as well. The coefficient of variation in the GDI is only 3 per cent and it ranges between 3-12 per cent among the GDI component dimensions.

Educated women in Kerala plays a major role to change the economic position of the society as a whole.

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