

# ***GROWTH TREND OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN PALAKKAD DISTRICT OF KERALA STATE***

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## **Abstract**

*Migration is a sort of geographical or spatial mobility of people with a change in their place of residence and socio-cultural environment. History of human beings is a history of migration. Human beings, with their basic nature, have been reluctant to stick on to their homestead, transformed themselves into a highly mobile class in search for better destination. It is migration that emerges as a major factor in cultural diffusion, ethnic diversity, and in the intermingling of different races, and in the racial diversification of world population. Hence the study focused on migrant workers in palakkad district of Kerala state. The study gathered data by using structured interview schedule; it was gathered from 166 respondents in palakkad district. The study observed that long distance migration from states like West Bengal and Assam dominated the inflow of migrant workers in recent years. While about one third of the sample migrants had prior migration experience to other places, the informal information networks through acquaintances that have already migrated plays important role in migration of workers to Kerala.*

**Keywords: Migration, Workers, Palakkad, Kerala**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Migration is a sort of geographical or spatial mobility of people with a change in their place of residence and socio-cultural environment. History of human beings is a history of migration. Human beings, with their basic nature, have been reluctant to stick on to their homestead, transformed themselves into a highly mobile class in search for better destination. It is migration that emerges as a major factor in cultural diffusion, ethnic diversity, and in the intermingling of different races, and in the racial diversification of world population. It also plays an important role in determining the size, composition and distribution of population, economic condition of people, social relations, etc.

Migration, as a phenomenon, in the sense of abandoning one's habitat in search for a better destination, is not confined to the human beings alone. All living beings change their place of habitat for their survival, sometimes due to natural hazards like earthquake, flood, famine, etc. in search for food and security. They become adapted to the new setting even biologically in the process of evolution. Those who can bring desired modifications in them will survive and others will become extinct from the very beginning, human societies had migrated from the place of origin to

other places due to different social, economical, political, and religious reasons. Unlike the migration of other animals, human beings utilise culture to adapt to the new environment. As the requirements of human beings are diverse compared to other animals, the reason for migration is also diverse and uncountable. In the modern times, besides the basic necessity, human beings had been on the move in order to meet their requirements of education and employment as well.

### Meaning and Definition

Migration usually involves abandoning one's social setting and entering into another. It usually describes movement over a significant distance. According to Paterson (1955), 'migration is a relatively permanent movement of people over a significant distance'. Migration is also defined as defines migration as a form of geographical or spatial mobility from one geographical area to another, generally involving a change in the place of residence from one place of origin or place of departure to the place of destination or arrival.(PCUS and IUSSP, 1958) Likewise, the new dictionary of Webster (1966) defines migration as 'the act or an instance of moving from one country, region or place to settle in another, the act or an instance of moving from one area to another in search of work.

### Types of Migration

#### Classification based on Geographical Boundary

- Inter-Continental
- Inter-National Migration
- Inter-State Migration
- Local Migration

#### Classification based on the Place of Origin and of Destination

- Rural-Rural Migration
- Rural-Urban Migration
- Urban-Urban Migration
- Urban-Rural Migration

#### Classification based on the basis of the Nature of Permanency

- Permanent Migration
- Semi-Permanent Migration
- Temporary Migration
- Irregular or Causal Migration

#### Classification based on Time Scale

- long-range migration
- periodic or seasonal migration
- daily migration
- periodic migration
- seasonal migration

#### Statement of the Problem

The present study focuses on a migrant labour in palakkad district of kerala state. They trace out their migration from Andhra Pradesh to Kerala through Tamil Nadu, and continue to maintain their cultural identity largely, in the context of migration, and in the phases of modernisation and urbanisation. The problems of the present research could then be stated thus: What is the route and history of their migration? What are the causes and factors of their migration? What is the nature of their adaptation strategies, of their relationship and affinity with the place of their origin and their other kin group settlements? And what are the cultural consequences of their migration?

### II. OBJECTIVE

1. To study socio economic conditions of migrant workers in palakkad district of kerala state.
2. To study trend of migrat labour in palakkad district of kerala state.
3. To find out causes for migration of migrant labour in palakkad district of kerala state.

#### Research Methodology

The study is based on primary survey data on the in-migrants workers in the palakkad district of Kerala, India. The selection of the Palakkad is based on the concentration of in-migrant workers in

different construction sites of the district. The sample unit in our survey is the migrant workers. From the help of the local people to find out the construction sites where the migrant workers are working and the places where they are living. The collected data by visiting both the places (either working sites or residence) whichever found convenient. In case of conducting interviews in the working sites we discussed with the employer or contractor under whom the migrants are working to identify the migrants who would like to give information about their migration and fix the most convenient date and time for interview so that their work would not be affected by the process of interview. In case of conducting interviews in the residing areas, we visited their dwellings mostly in the evening between 6-8 pm after they returned from work. Detailed data were not available on migrant labour in palakkad district of kerala state. Hence, total population is unknown. The study selected purposively 166 migrant labour in palakkad district of kerala state.

### **Findings of the Study**

#### **General Profile of the Sample Migrants in Palakkad District of Kerala State**

The sample is comprised of relatively young migrant workers; the average age is 26.42 years. About 25.3% of migrants are below 20 years and 32.5% are of 21-25 years. All the sample migrants are male. The social groups (caste and religion) composition reveals that Schedule Cast migrants dominate the sample. About 47% of migrants belong to Schedule Cast, whereas General, OBC and ST account for 7.2%, 7.8% and 6% respectively. About 96.4% of migrants are Hindu and the remaining is Muslim.

The average family size is 5 persons, with the maximum of 15 persons and minimum of two persons. More than three fourth of the migrants have a relatively smaller family size of bellow 6

persons. About 63.9% of the migrant workers are unmarried, whereas 34.9% are married, one worker is widowed and another one separated.

Looking at the number of earning members in the family (excluding the migrant) it is revealed that about 24% of the migrants have no earning members in their family, about 58.4% have earning members less than two, 16.87% have more than 3 earning members excluding the migrant. About 53.6% of the migrants have no dependent children (below age 14 years) in their home, whereas about 13.3% migrants have one, 20.5% migrants have two and 12.60% migrants have more than 3 dependent children at home.

For 84% of the migrants the respondent is the only migrant in the family, while the remaining 16% migrants have at least one migrant in the family. When the migrants were asked whether they want any other member of their family to join them, about 88% reported negatively.

#### **Economic Status of the Migrant Family**

The economic status of the migrant family is one of the important areas that have to be focused on, because literature suggests that the low economic condition of the family is largely responsible for large scale of migration. The average monthly household income (excluding the migrant) for which information is available (for 141 migrants) is Rs. 2280, with maximum of Rs. 10000 and minimum zero. About 30% migrants have no earning members in their home and 13.9% migrants reported their family income as subsistence level. On the average, for more than two third of the migrants monthly family income is less than Rs. 2500 it is detailly mentioned in below table.

Table No- 1: Household Monthly Income excluding the Migrants

Monthly Income level (in Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
No income (no earning member)	38	22.9
< 1500	23	13.9
1501- 2500	32	19.3
2501- 4500	22	13.3
4501- 6500	18	10.8
6501 and above	8	4.8
Reported as "subsistence income"	23	13.9
Do not know	2	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary Data

Collected information about the debt position of the migrants in their home as the people with higher debt levels are supposed to be less financially secured and more vulnerable and thus have higher tendency to migrate. Repayment of debt may be one of the factors that force the people to migrate. In our sample about 58.4% migrants have no debt in their home, while the rest have some amount of debt in home. The outstanding debt position of the migrants is given in Table 2. The average debt at home per migrant worker is Rs. 7500. Informal moneylenders are the major sources of borrowing (about 60.87%), followed by family/relatives (30%). The coverage of the banking system is very low. Only 8.69% migrants with debt borrowed money from commercial banks (see Figure 4.A). The spread of the micro credit is also very low; only one migrant has loan in SHG. This is both an indication and cause of weak financial situation of the migrants' families- as they not credit worthy so that cannot have access to commercial banks and further because of mall practices of informal moneylenders and high interest rates they tend to fall in debt.

While meeting the expenditure of marriage and other social functions is the major reason of borrowing for about one fourth of migrants with outstanding debt, expenditure in

agriculture, day to day household expenditures, medical expenditure, and building houses & purchasing land are the other important areas for which the migrants borrowed money. However, borrowing for starting a business and financing education of dependents is found to be very less among the migrant workers.

Table No- 2: Migrants classified on the basis of Outstanding Debt

Amount of Debt (in Rs.)	Frequency	Percent
No debt	97	58.4
< 5,000	15	9.0
5,001- 15,000	24	14.5
15,001- 30,000	21	12.7
30,001- 45,000	5	3.0
45,001 and above	4	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Primary Data

Looking at the asset position of the migrants at home we found that the average land holding of the migrants' home is 3.05 bigha. About 34.34% migrants have no agricultural land at home, whereas 21.69% have land less than 2 bigha, 26% have between 2-5 bigha and the 8% have more than 5 bigha of agricultural land at home (Table 3). It is also found that 13 migrants have no homestead land.

Table No- 3: Agricultural Land Holdings of the Migrants at Home

Agricultural land	Frequency	Percent
No	57	34.34
Less than 2 Bigha	36	21.69
2 bigha-5bigha	43	25.90
Above 5 Bigha	30	18.07
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100.00</b>

### Sources and Reasons of Migration to Kerala

West Bengal and Assam dominated the sources of migration to Kerala in the sample. About 58% migrants are from West Bengal and another 37.3% are from Assam (see Table 5.A). The other migration sending states to Kerala are Andhra Pradesh, Utter Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Orissa, but the number of migrants from these states in our sample is very less. However, it does not imply that

all the migrant workers in Palakkad district are from only West Bengal and Assam. The concentration of migrants from West Bengal and Assam in our sample may be because of the area that we covered in our survey is fully dominated by migrants from these two states. This is not an exceptional phenomenon, because migrants from the same place prefer to stay in the same locality and as we observed that most of the migrants have been migrated to a place through acquaintances that have already migrated (see Figure 5.A). More than 58% migrants in our sample have migrated to Kerala through information from their friends and relatives, and another 41% have migrated through acquaintances that have already migrated to Kerala. This suggests that informal networks play important role in migration of workers to Kerala.

We investigate about the prior migration experience of the migrants to other places, because if the migrants have earlier experience of migration it will be easy for them to migrate to another place and also assimilate with the new conditions. While about two third of migrants migrated to Kerala for the first time, the remaining one third have earlier experience of migration to places like Karnataka, Assam, Delhi, Nagaland, Rajasthan, Meghalaya, Gujarat, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Bhutan. We also found

that about two third of the migrants have first migrated after 2006, 23.49% migrants have first migrated in between 2001-2005 and 11.43% have first migrated before 2000 (see Figure 6.A). Considering the instances of migration to Kerala, about 50% migrants have migrated to Kerala within one year, 28% migrated within 2-3 years, 17.5% migrated within 4-8 years and 4.2% migrated before 9 years (see Table 6.A).

Several overlapping factors have been identified behind the migration story. The major reason of migration in our sample is found to be the poor economic condition and low wages in native region. On the average about 76% migrants reported the reason of migration as getting employment/better employment, another 46% reported as meeting household expenditure and 33.73% reported as accumulation of savings (Table 4). The other reasons reported by the migrants are to repay debts, financing education of dependents and marriage of dependents, etc. This suggests that migration is possibly for the creation of outside support system for livelihood. Further, dominance of economic reasons also suggests that it is primarily the differences in economic opportunities between different states that is pushing for movement of labor.

Table No- 4: Reasons of Migration

Reasons of Migration	Frequency	Percent
Get employment/better employment	126	75.90
Meeting household expenditure	77	46.39
Accumulate savings	56	33.73
Repayment of Debt	12	7.23
Marriage of dependents & Financing education of dependents	14	8.43
Purchase of land/ Construction of house	1	0.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Primary Data

Further enquire the major reasons behind migration to Kerala. The major reasons of migration to Kerala are found to be higher wage, availability of work and better working condition.

On the average about 90% migrants reported that they migrated to Kerala specifically because of higher wage rate in Kerala, whereas 12.65% migrants reported availability of work, and another

7.83% reported better working conditions as the main reasons of migration to Kerala (Table 5).

Table No - 5: Major Reasons of Migration to Kerala

Reasons of migration to Kerala	Frequency*	Percent*
High wage	150	90.36
Availability of work	21	12.65
Better Working condition	13	7.83
Accumulation of Savings & repayment of debt	6	3.61
Relatives and Acquaintances in Kerala	10	6.02
Others	6	3.61
(e.g. no job, Kerala is secured than other places, etc.)		
<b>Total</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Primary Data

### Economic Conditions of the Migrants: Pre- And Post-Migration Period.

#### Employment Status and Skill Level of the Migrants.

Before migrating to Kerala about 12.7% of the migrants were unemployed and another 4.2% were students, whereas about 36% were employed in the informal sector, 27% were self-employed in agriculture and about 20% were self-employed in the non-agricultural sector (Table 6). Further, about 62% migrants were engaged in unskilled works before migration and only about one fifth were engaged in some kind of skilled works (Figure 1). Further, about 16.3% of migrants have no formal education, about 30% have primary education and 53.6% have secondary education, whereas only one sample migrant has experience of studying at the college level (Figure 2). All these provide an indirect indication that the nature of migration is forced migration, not prosperity driven.

### III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study analyzes the economic condition of the in-migrant workers in the Palakkad district of Kerala. The analysis is based on data

from a sample of 166 in-migrants workers in the Palakkad district, While existing studies provide evidences for short distance migration from nearby states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh to Kerala, the study observed that long distance migration from states like West Bengal and Assam dominated the inflow of migrant workers in recent years. While about one third of the sample migrants had prior migration experience to other places, the informal information networks through acquaintances that have already migrated plays important role in migration of workers to Kerala. Poor economic conditions along with several other overlapping factors have been identified as the reason of migration, of which the most important are getting employment/better employment, meeting household expenditure and accumulation of savings. The major reason of migration to Kerala is reported as the higher wages, availability of work and better working conditions.

There has not been any change in the nature of employment of the workers even after migration as almost all the migrants engaged in temporary work and about 70% of them engaged in unskilled areas. Though a higher proportion of migrants of each skill level remained in the same skill level after migration, we notice both upward- and downward-mobility of skill level after migration, however; some working in skilled areas before migration are working in unskilled and semi-skilled areas and others working in semi-skill or unskilled areas are working in skilled areas after migration. However, there has been a shift from the low-income brackets before migration to high-income brackets after migration. Though no specific relationship is observed between age and income of the migrants after migration, we observed positive relationship of skill level and instance of migration with income level. Notwithstanding the improved income level the

living condition for most of them is deplorable. Most of them live together in either poor rented houses or work sites with one room shared by many and no provision of hygienic sanitation.

The amount and pattern of food expenditure is found to be more or less same for all the migrants irrespective of their other characteristics as more than 90% of them stayed and cooked together, whereas that of non-food expenditure varies from person to person. We observed positive association between income level and expenditure of the migrants. However, as against expectation we found positive association between monthly expenditure and instance of migration to Kerala and no association between age and expenditure of the migrants. The savings and investment habit among the migrants is found to be very poor, whatever money remain after consumption they send to home. Even larger amount of remittances sent to home are used for meeting household expenditure and very little are invested in agriculture, education of dependent, buying land and building house, etc. and used for repaying debt.

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