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## A STUDY ON OCCUPATIONAL STATUS & UTILIZATION OF REMITTANCES AMONG MIGRATED MUSLIM HOUSEHOLDS IN MALAPPURAM DISTRICT, KERALA

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### Abstract

Migration has become a worldwide phenomenon in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Migratory tendencies have been inherent in the context of Kerala, and it has been shaping the economic and social situation. The economic boom within the Gulf countries gave migration a considerable boost, reaching its peak in terms of both numbers and remittances. Ironically, Kerala, of late, is witnessing a reverse migration of labour.

**Keywords:** Emigration, Remittances, Return Migration, Gulf, Household.

### 1. Introduction

International labour migration has become a vital feature of the Indian economy due to several factors. Firstly, India is the country which receives the largest amount of remittances in the world. In 2018, total workers' remittances were estimated at US\$71 billion, with nearly half of all remittances originating in GCC countries (World Bank, 2019). Second, international labour migration has strong development links at the macro (national and state) as well as micro (individual and household) levels. Although the economic impacts of labour migration, particularly in terms of its contribution to foreign exchange reserves, are well documented, recent evidence from certain states in India with a high migration rate, such as Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, indicate positive impacts of migration on health and educational attainments as well as gender relations, especially in low-to lower-middle-income households (Rajan, 2013; Timothy and Sasikumar, 2012). Third, international labour migration is important as a means of providing some respite, at least in the short to medium terms, to the situation of excess labour supply, by offering an outlet for the mounting level of youth unemployment in India.

The geographical location of Malabar and availability of natural resources were closely associated with the initial settlement of the Arab trading Diaspora and the subsequent emergence of Mappila Muslim community in the coastal belt of Malabar region. In brief, the trade contact not only carried goods, services and ideas, but also left a Diaspora in Malabar. This Diaspora came into being through trade with Arabs from distant places, who married women from the coastal area and established settlements. This implies that Muslim communities on the West Coast of India are the result of the union of Arab sailors and traders with native women. The genesis of Mappila Muslim community has to be sought in these unions, temporary or permanent (Freitag 2003: 54-55; D'Souza 1959: 487; Koya 1983). In addition, Muslims from outside settled in these areas and some of the native inhabitants began to embrace Islam (Nadvi 1934: 478). Like any other trading hub of the world, different trading groups such as the Arabs, the Jews, the Persians, the Greeks and Romans presented themselves in the Malabar Coast in different periods of time. The spread of Islam in the initial stage at Malabar Coast is mainly connected with the commercial orientation of Islam. This is, of course, the historical reason for the bond of some sections of the Mappila Muslim community with trade and commerce. Therefore, trade and the link between foreigners and locals reinforced the formation and dynamics of the coastal society of Malabar in the initial stage of Arab settlement. This form of age-old bond with the trade and its related work was the integral part of the socio-economic life of the Mappila Muslims.

### 2. Objectives

1. To identify various categories of occupations engaged by Muslim migrants in Gulf nations
2. To find out the occupational status of migrated Muslim households in Malappuram district
3. To understand the utilization pattern of remittances among migrated Muslim households in Malappuram district

### 3. Methodology

For the purpose of this study the data were collected through the field work survey from the major Gulf migrant's area of Malabar. This study was undertaken at Kalikavu, Wandoor and Edavanna villages in Malappuram district, the erstwhile Malabar district of Madras Presidency of British India. The major source of income for the people of these three villages is Gulf money. The percentages of people who are economically engaged in agriculture and service sector are relatively low. Three villages are selected, because the significant share of their total population belongs to Mappila Muslims. The proposed localities are also the major Gulf pockets in Malabar, from where a sizable number of Mappila Muslims residents have migrated for their livelihood. The study area has a long tradition of internal and international migration of Mappila Muslims, both legally and illegally. In terms of such tradition of migration from the aforesaid areas may generally differ from other regions of the state of Kerala except a few.



The primary data was collected from 250 Muslim migrants in three villages with the help of Interview Schedule and Observation Techniques. The study covered the entire village, and its wards through these sample households. Apart from the interview schedule technique, discussion with various scholars who have already studied Gulf migration helped to understand the dynamics of the issue. Informal discussions with local leaders, village level age-old persons and 'Gulf Wives were also carried out to understand the changing scenario in the community over the years.

#### 4. Review of Literature

Migration to the Gulf region has transformed to a major subject of debate in the academic circles since the 1970s oil boom. The emergence of oil-related economy and the subsequent labour migration to the Gulf began to attract a massive scale of immigrant workers from different categories from the different parts of the world (Addleton 1992; Al-Ali 2002; Amjad 1989; Gardner 2004; Chouri 1986; Seccombe 1986; Shah 2004; Birks and Sinclair 1979).

Some key factors were responsible in converting the Gulf States into a pivotal land for expatriate labourers from different parts of the world. The introduction of large scale industrialisation programmes in the Gulf countries necessitated a good number of labours for the initial stages of construction work and diversification of various sectors by utilizing oil revenue. The available data shows that the size of the national population and its participation in the labour forces were extremely small in the Gulf. Participation in terms of the skill and quality formation of the native labour forces was also not different in the region (Joseph 2002; Madavan 1985; Zacharia and Rajan 2007; Weiner 1982; Sinclair and Briks 1979)

Kareem (1989)<sup>87</sup> in his study examined the development implications of educational backwardness of Muslims. He found that Muslims are socially, educationally and politically backward and this is due to the high incidence of poverty, illiteracy, low income and irregular employment. He also found that Muslims were late to enter social transition and their educational backwardness has a negative effect on their socioeconomic standards in terms of asset ownership, employment structure, assistance received from financial agencies etc. Thus the study found Muslims are caught in a vicious circle of low economic status that leads to educational backwardness, which in turn prevents Muslims from reaching higher employment categories.

Adams (2005)<sup>50</sup> conducted a study about the impact of remittances on household expenditure and investment on the basis of data collected from Guatemalan households. He analysed the expenditure pattern of the households and found that the remittance income compared to other sources of income is more likely to be spent on education.

It is important to note that Mappila Muslims comprise the major proportion of the total number of migrants to the Persian Gulf (Weiner 1982; Kurian 2002; Shekar 1997). In fact, the intensity of Gulf migration from Kerala is high in the Malabar region where Mappila Muslims are the dominant community. For example, according to the census of 2001, Muslims constitute less than a quarter (24.7 percentage) of the total population in Kerala (Census of India 2001, Kerala), albeit their proportion is doubled among the emigrants. A study of CDS, Trivandrum, estimated that the total migrant population from Kerala in the Gulf was 18.48 lakh in 2007, of which 8.83 lakh was Mappila Muslims. In 2004 and 1999, the share of migrant population of Mappila Muslims was 43.7 and 41.9 percentage respectively.

Despite the monetary remittance is mainly used for purchasing gold ornaments, conducting marriage ceremonies, the construction of mansions and the purchase and maintenance of land (Kurian 2002; Nair 1989, 1983; Prakash 1978, 1998; Ganesh 2007), the Gulf money is also largely being invested in trade related firms. In the light of Gulf money, Ganesh noted, "economy is oriented entirely towards consumption and substantial group that survive by the growth of new luxury tastes among the people. Thus the "life world of the people" has shifted from production to consumerism, and it has resulted in a "make-believe world of artificial prosperity" (Ganesh 2007:57).

#### 5. Analysis

##### 5.1 Economic Activity and Occupation of Emigrants

It's a fact that people from Kerala usually migrate for employment purpose to the Gulf. The major employers are none other than the private sector companies or organizations. It is clear that migration is a search for employment as shown in Table 5.1 where it can be seen that the percentage of job seekers (21.3 percent) drops to nearly zero after migration.



**Table 5.1: the shift of Economic activity, before to after the Migration**  
(KMS 2018)

Economic Activity	Before Migration	After Migration
State/Central Govt.	0.8	2.2
Semi Government Aided School	1.1	1.5
Private Sector	27.7	59.6
Self-Employment	9.7	5.4
Unpaid Family Work	0.5	0.1
Agriculture Labour	1.6	0.1
Non-Agriculture Sector	17.1	16.3
Job Seekers	21.3	0.6
Job Not Required	0.5	0.1
Students	7.1	6.1
Household Works	4.3	4.2
Too Young To Work	7.9	3.6
Others	0.2	0.1

Source: secondary data-Kerala migration survey 2018

### 5.2 Occupational Background of the Muslim Migrants on the Eve of Migration

The occupational profile prior to emigration is another important element in understanding the trade related interest of Mappila Muslim community. The sample survey shows that the number of unemployed at the time of emigration was comparatively low. Table.5.2 indicates that most of migrants (18 percentages) were engaged in small type business field. Here the small type business means a variety of jobs-petty shop runners, street hawkers, fish sellers, and business brokers and so on. The next major categories belong to salesman and shop keepers representing around 14.8 and 13.2 percentages respectively of the total number of people surveyed at the time of their emigration. While, the proportion of drivers is 12.4 percentages, Hotel cooks and Helpers share 8.0 percentage of the total sample of migrants studied. The rest of the respondents represent various jobs prior to migration, namely coolie workers, Electricians, Farmers and Agricultural Labourers. The total representation comprised by these categories is around 30 percentages. It is found that 8 percentages of migrants were engaged in other types of activities prior to their migration. Most of them were teachers, engineers or doctors.

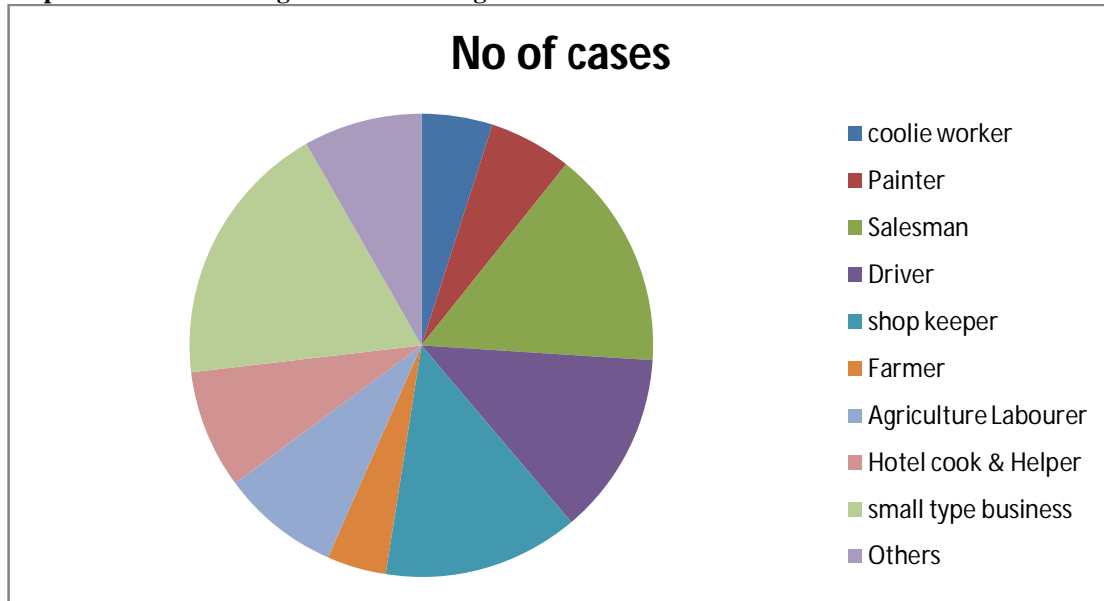
**Table 5. 2. Occupational Status of Migrants Before emigration**

Occupational Category	Number of Cases	Percentage
Coolie worker	12	4.8
Electrician& Plumber	8	3.2
Painter	14	5.6
Salesman	37	14.8
Driver	31	12.4
Shopkeeper	33	13.2
Farmer	10	4.0
Agriculture Labourer	20	8.0
Hotel Cook and Helper	20	8.0
Small Type Business	45	18
Others	20	8.0
Total	250	100

Source: Field survey



Figure.5.1: Occupational Status of Migrants Before emigration



As per the data provided in Table 1, people from all walks of life joined in the migration stream and most of them were belonged trade related work.

### 5.3 Occupational Status of Muslim Migrants in Gulf

The occupational status of the Muslim migrants in the sample data reflects the nature of jobs, in which they were engaged in the Gulf countries. Here, the demand for labour was mainly in construction sector. In fact, the number of Mappila Migrants in the construction sector is relatively low. Most of the Mappila Muslims were mainly engaged in the small type of trade and business and agricultural related occupations as prior to their emigration to the Gulf. Although the new generation of Mappila Muslim migrants has been engaged in some form of official work in the Gulf, a good number of the Mappila Muslim emigrants continue their business-related work even in the Gulf region. If one examines the sample survey data, it is clear that a majority of the Mappila Muslim migrants were engaged in business and related occupations, such as shop keepers, Salesmen, Hotel cooks, Drivers and so on. Most of them simultaneously worked and managed Cafeterias, Fruit shops, Textile shops, Supermarkets etc

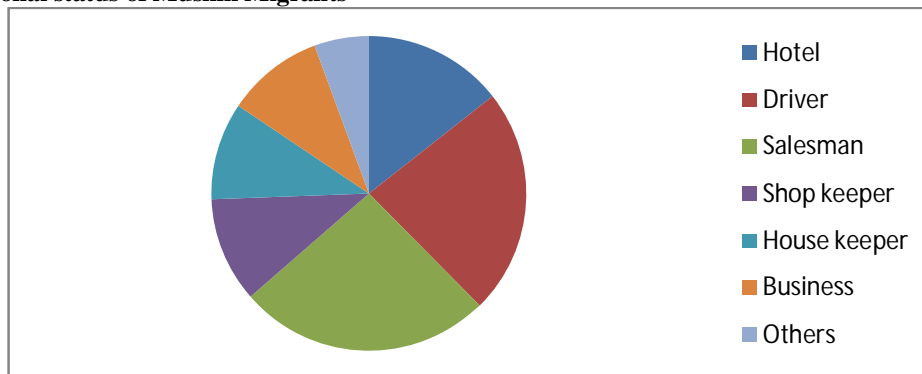
Table 5.3: Occupational Status of Muslims Migrants in Sample Area

Occupation	Number of migrants	Percentage
Hotel	36	14.4
Driver	58	23.2
Saleaman	65	26
Shope keeper	27	10.8
House keeper	25	10
Business	25	10
Others	14	5.6
Total	250	100

Source: Field Survey



Figure 5.2: Occupational status of Muslim Migrants



Here it is observed that there is a link between the work status of Mappila Muslim migrants in the Gulf countries and their socio-economic background prior to their first migration. As per the work status data given in the table, the majority of the emigrants work in business related sector in the Gulf. As given in the table, 26 percentage of the migrants works as sales man in the gulf followed by diver 23.2 percentage, hotel job 14.4 percentage. The representation of shop keeper, House keeper are 18.8 and 10.0 percentages respectively. Shop keepers and House keepers are relatively less than 30 percentage of the sample which shows their status in more standard jobs than earlier.

5.4 Utilization of Remittances

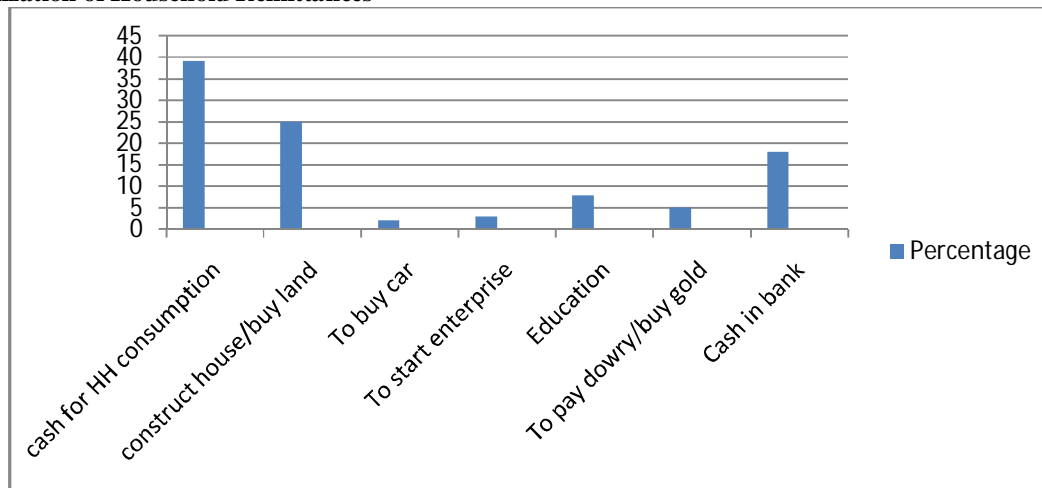
Table 5.4: Utilization of Household Remittances

Components	Percentage
Cash for HH consumption	39
To construct house/buy land	25
To buy a car	2
To Start enterprises	3.0
Education	8.0
To Pay Dowry	5
Cash in Bank	18
Total	100

Source: Field survey

About 39 per cent of household remittances were used for household consumption on regular base and to meet their immediate other household needs. The survey found that the emigrants are now concentrating more in buying land or constructing houses and they utilizing eight percentage of their cash for their children’s education, five percentage for paying dowry and buying gold, 3 percentage for starting an enterprise. From the survey, researcher could find that 18 percentage of total remittances deposited in banks and other financial institutions. Due to globalization, sending of goods from abroad has been affected, as most goods are available from all over the world.

Figure 5.3: Utilization of Household Remittances





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## 6. Conclusion

This study has attempted to question the general argument that the Gulf remittances are largely spent for satisfying the consumer needs of migrants and it has fostered the 'culture of consumerism'. It was disclosed through the discussion of the dialectical relationship between the spending and the consumption pattern of Mappila Muslims and their occupational background prior to migration. The economic capital of the migrants was converted to the 'symbolic capital' and it can be considered that the Gulf money has a larger social meaning the emergence of the 'culture of consumption' and spending more on unproductive sectors has already invited the attention of scholars in the area of migration. But the meaning of spending pattern and the economic behaviour of the migrants has not been properly investigated so far in the context of Kerala.

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