



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Economics**

**NAVIGATING THE GULF: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY MIGRATION STUDIES FROM INDIA.**

**KEY WORDS:** Emigration, Remittances, Household Development

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**ABSTRACT**

This research paper aims to conduct a comprehensive review of existing studies on Gulf migration. It intends to consolidate and synthesize the vast body of research on migration in the Gulf region, providing a holistic perspective. By analyzing the existing literature, this study seeks to identify gaps in knowledge, highlight emerging trends, and offer insights into the complexities of Gulf migration.

**INTRODUCTION**

Migration of people is initiated by a search for food for survival and, later, by the urge to raise standard of living. With the development of the concept of "nation-states" in the 19th century and the instruments of passports during the early 20th century that regulate the cross-border flow of people, the concept of international migration got the state of being in common or general use (Torpey, 1999).

The existing empirical literature on the reasons of international migration posits that the factors triggering international migration are manifold and complex. Broadly can be clubbed into sociological and economic factors and individual psychological factors. More significantly, these factors are broadly grouped under three main categories, namely, pull factors in the destination countries, "Push-factors in the origin countries, and facilitating factors (availability of social networks). These factors determine both the flow and direction of migration.

The study by Prakash (1978) examined the impact of Gulf migration on the socio-economic life of the family of emigrants on the basis of primary data from 95 emigrant households in October 1977 in Chavakkad village of Thrissur district in Kerala. According to the study, chain migration prompted by the encouragement and help received from the relatives and friends in the Middle East. The study also revealed that majority of the migrants was employed in unskilled or low skilled categories of jobs and worked as construction workers. According to the study, the remittances have helped the family of emigrants to improve their standard of living. With regard to earnings, more than 90 percent of the earnings were invested in land, buildings and a substantial amount was spent on marriages. The study found that the unproductive use of foreign remittances has resulted in an increase in the price of land, construction materials and wages of construction workers.

The Directorate of Economics and Statistics of Kerala (1987) attempted to evaluate the impact of Gulf remittances on the migrant households and on the state economy on the basis of 2568 sample households. The survey observed that the migrant households income were much higher than that of non-migrants and returned migrants which indicated that migration has increased the income of the migrant households. Moreover, the migrant households incurred higher expenditure on food, clothing, education, fuel, light, travel, entertainment, and medical expenses etc. migrant households were not investing much in productive activities and invested mainly in the construction of house, purchase of land and gold ornaments etc.

Seema Gaur and Prem C. Saxena ( 2005 ) studied the role of networks in perpetuating labour migration from India to Lebanon. Using the data collected from a sample of 402 semi-

skilled and unskilled migrant labourers from the states of Tamil Nadu and Punjab in India during 1998. The study found that huge demand for labour in the Middle East, the wage differentials between countries of south Asia and Middle East continue to be large enough to act as a strong pull factor motivating migration. The study further revealed that the key among the push factors that motivate migration is the desire to improve one's standard of living. The study found evidence that the channel of migration in both the states bring out the role played out by networks in furthering the migration process .This explains the migration pressure on them to migrate to countries where even with their low levels of education and being unskilled worker, they can earn more than their home country.

Generally, pull and push factors are more powerful at the beginning of the process of migration. Pull and Push factors along with facilitating factors rarely exert equal pressure in an individual's migration decision. These factors are not static, but dynamic. Their importance changes with time, place and socio-economic conditions of the migrant and his household and network factors become more important as migration streams mature. Network factors not only facilitate but also persist the migration flows (Nayyar, 2008).

Zachariah; Mathews; Rajan (1999) in their study based on the analysis of data collected from 10,000 households in state of Kerala stated that early phase of emigration of Keralites to Burma, Malaya, Singapore and Ceylon are the result of historic, cultural, demographic and political factors and established economic ties between states and receiving regions. This flows had enabled their families to improve their socio-economic status in terms of landownership, good housing and, better education for children. This demonstration effect led to large scale migration from Kerala to gulf countries in 1970s. Subsequently, agricultural stagnation, population growth, educational expansion, and the failure of the state level institutions to provide the required support and slow growth of secondary and the tertiary sectors of the state economy led to migration of Keralites to metropolitan cities and gulf countries. Emigration to gulf found to be costly venture. An average emigrant from Kerala spent Rs 44000 for going abroad. Most emigrants used more than one source to meet the transaction cost of migration. People migrated basically to improve economic conditions through occupational mobility. Most direct benefits of migration is remittances which contributed to poverty alleviation, improvement in standard of living by providing money for basic needs such as food, clothing, housing improvements and education. Moreover, the migrant households incurred higher expenditure than non migrants on food, clothing, education, fuel, light, travel, entertainment, and medical expenses etc migrant households were not investing much in productive activities and invested mainly in the construction of house, purchase of land and gold

ornaments etc. In the early phase of emigration facilitated social mobility and income equality, but now migration has negative impact like shortage of labour, inflation, rising land values, consumer inequality, social stratification and tension between new rich (emigrants) and old rich above all loss of human resources in productive age group.

Tamil Nadu Migration Survey (2015) was conducted by Center for Development Studies to study on patterns, processes, causes and consequences of migration in Tamil Nadu along with the impact of remittances on the families, economy and society. Using the data collected from a sample of 20,000 households in all the 32 districts of Tamil Nadu. The study found that oil rich Gulf countries during the oil crisis made 'petro-dollars' and required huge labour for modernisation. India and particularly the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu responded by sending huge labour force to the Gulf region. The study revealed that gulf countries are major destination of Tamil emigrants besides Singapore. The average cost of migration incurred by an gulf emigrant from Tamil Nadu is Rs.90,340. The channels through which the migrants move out were dominated by the licensed, unlicensed and individual agents handling 41.7 per cent of the total emigration. Friends' and relatives' network channel accounted for 35.6 per cent of the emigration. A vast majority of household's wives (81.5 per cent) could see a leap in their financial status owing to the migration of their husbands. It was observed that 85 per cent of the households received remittances for their day-to-day needs. Some of them could repay their debts, construct their own houses, purchase gold ornaments and provide good education to their children. Majority of them gained social status and dignity in their social circle. Their life style and quality of living were considerably improved after migration. The total remittances to Tamil Nadu in 2015 were estimated to be Rs.61843 crores according to the TMS 2015, equivalent to 14 per cent of the state's domestic product.

Sushanta, K., Banerjee, V, Jayachandran, Roy, T.K (2002) in their micro level investigation on the impact of migration in Kerala summarized the ultimate impact of the migratory movement on the living standard of the migrant household. Study is based on the data of National Family Health survey (NFHS-1) with sample of 1011 emigrant households. It was observed that better economic oppurnites was the most important reason for migration among emigrants. These emigrants are mainly semi- skilled/unskilled young men with a low level of education. Study highlights that the living condition of migrant households has changed substantially through the inflow of foreign remittances. The longer the duration of stay abroad, the better is the economic status of native household. The improvement health services were observed from nutritional status of the children and a lowering of infant mortality rates. Study further sheds light on remittances utilization pattern of emigrants households. Construction of own house has been reported as the most preferred choice of investment among the emigrant households. The emigrant households also have a strong tendency to invest remittances in land and gold/jewellery. Besides, remittances have also been invested in business and personal car. Comparative study between emigrant and non-emigrant households indicate that general the economic condition of the migrant households is much better than its non-migrant counterparts clearly points out the positive impact of emigration on the economic status of the household.

According to Kholi (2014), Indians large scale gulf emigration was driven by Gulf States, policy of inviting foreign manpower in order to offset the mismatch between the availability of local workforce and the requirement to sustain the rapid modernisation of these economies. Further the study pointed out that for highly populated developing countries such as India, with low levels of per capita income and high

unemployment rates, migration has two advantages at macro level: first, migration outflow addresses the issue of unemployment; and second, it brings in vital foreign exchange, necessary to address the persistent current account deficit. At micro level, unskilled and semi-skilled workers to the Gulf offsets his low skill levels with higher paying opportunities and significant earnings and enhances financial status of households through investment in property, savings and education, but also enables them to secure capital gains that would be otherwise unimaginable when working in India.

Chinnmay, Tumble (2011) in his paper "Remittances in India: Facts and Issues" based on 64th round of NSSO data on migration pointed out that the remittances constitute major source of finance for household consumption. Findings regarding on utilization pattern of remittances, majority of households reported remittance utilized for education, construction of houses, debt repayment, savings or investment. The study further revealed that in states Kerala and Tamil Nadu, remittances were mostly utilized for debt redemption incurred during migration.

Nair, P.S. (2005), in his study on analysis of socio demographic characteristics and economic impact on the household in Kerala. Based on National Family Health Survey data (1992-93), adopting systematic, multi-stage stratified sample of household revealed that most of the migrants (88.6%) had migrated to the Gulf countries. Migrants were mostly married men, with poor education. Employed as labourers in the construction sectors. The pattern of utilization of the remittances by the household members, showed major investment on housing and gold purchase reported more by female headed households. However, with regard to overall status on improvement of households was reported by 16 percent, while a third perceived that it had actually worsened.

Zachariah; Prakash ; Rajan (2004) in their study of Indian migrants in Dubai based on primary data of 361 sample migrants reported that majority of the Indian workers were poorly educated with low skills employed in manufacturing, construction and transport sector, whereas only one fifth of them skilled migrants. Majority of migrants were accommodated in labour camps, with four to six persons in one room. The study also observed that migrants were paid low wages. Cases of non-payment of salaries, denial of wages and non-wage benefits stipulated in their work contracts, refusal to release passport and nonpayment of air-ticket fare for return were reported. Besides, study highlights the new policies of gulf countries aims towards demographic balance, encouraging locals in employment and mechanization and thereby restricting flow unskilled foreign labour and so forth. Future demand will be for skilled workers, aspiring migrants from Kerala need to focus on skill development as per demand and requirements of destination countries.

Rajan, Jayakumar & Vargesh (2010) examined international recruitment cost and practices in India based on information collected from recruiting agents, return migrants, current emigrants, emigrant households and Indian embassy from select destination countries. Study discloses the recruitment costs from social network and recruiting agents points of view and disparities of cost involved such as such as passport fees, visa procurement fees, emigration clearance fee for government, medical check-ups, insurance, travel airfare, payments to recruiting agencies, etc. The findings shed light on the reasons agents as well as sub-agents may collect higher fees from workers than legally permitted for providing recruitment services. Findings highlight excessive payments made towards transaction cost of migration due to rigid regulations. The study reports that government stipulated recruitment fees are based on the assumption that employers pay most of the recruitment costs. However, as the prevailing business model for international recruitment remains

overwhelmingly an employee-pay model. Paper recommends creation of a new institution namely, Indian Migration Management Authority (IMMA) which ensures equal opportunity to emigrants.

Moshe and Anastasia (2008) studied economic well-being of emigrant of Philippines households. Four major labour exporting areas in Philippines were selected with a representative sample of 2,388 households during the year 1999-2000. The findings of the study suggest that labour migrants who were previously unemployed or underemployed were able to remit large amount back to home. Further, remittances improved economic stability of households in turn raised standard of living of the households receiving remittances. However, remittances besides improving living standards of the migrant families has also contributed to inequalities in terms of living standards of migrant households and non migrant households.

Study made by IOM (2016), on the migration episodes of workers from India and Nepal to UAE. Study focuses on understanding the existing recruitment practices, problems and challenges faced by low and semi skilled worker and recommend measures for orderly migration. The snowball sampling technique was used in identifying potential interview partners and survey participants, including 2421 workers, and 316 recruiters, employers, government officials, and other relevant key informants. The study demonstrates that most Indian and Nepalese worker end up paying higher recruitment fees in the form of commissions to agents. The study further highlights that complaints and redressal mechanisms in the labour exporting countries and destination remain challenging due to high costs of litigation and socially unfavourable in origin countries and fear of blacklisting of workers in destination countries. The study reveals that lack of coordination between countries of origin and destination can contribute to additional exploitation of workers. This was evident in the Indian e-Migrate System, which was developed to protect workers vulnerable against exploitation; the system has ironically created further potential costs for workers to satisfy its requirements for additional documentation. On the other hand, the possibility of converting tourist visa to the UAE into work visas, makes workers to circumvent recruitment agencies and associated costs, but excludes them also from protection mechanisms in their countries of origin and makes them more vulnerable to exploitation in the UAE. Study makes recommendations for establishment certified ranking based recruitment agency and create an incentivised complaints mechanism for workers, and increase awareness of complaints and redressal mechanisms in the UAE through bilateral agreements on recruitment between government in countries of origin and destination.

The study made by The Asia Foundation (2013) examined trends and patterns of labour migration in Bangladesh, India and Nepal based on primary data. The study found that the most of the respondents were found to be young, migrating due to economic problems. Furthermore, migrants were found to completely dependent on middlemen for completing documentation process required for migration. It was found that migrant workers reported cases of breached contracts, nonpayment salary, harsh working conditions for long duration, absence of medical facility. Besides low access to embassies. Paper concludes recommending conduct of evidence-based study for protection of migrants rights.

Rahman (2001), examined gulf labour migration from two district of Bihar state, examined the impact of gulf money on 300 migrant households. Migrants were motivated by higher economic oppurnuites in gulf. He pointed out that gulf money has an improved the economic and living conditions of household migrants by construction of good houses, purchasing of land, ornaments, jewelry and household items,

and attendance of children in good educational institutions. Migration remittances further improved social position in terms of wealth, power and prestige of emigrant households.

### Concluding Remarks

Based on the above review of empirical studies, it can be said that migration and remittances have gradually evolved over the years, especially as new streams and patterns in the migration area. Further, these studies establish diverse factors, instincts and causes behind migration. Synthesis of these studies reveals characteristics and features of Gulf emigration from India. Migration is seen as an essential component of processes of socio-economic change and development, largely due to the factors of distress and development that it drives. Migration is seen as a strategy adopted by the household unit to increase income flows and raise the standard of living of the family. Migration is further facilitated by social networks such as intermediaries or visa traders, who are present in the community and are generally referred to as migrants by family and friends. Besides, migration has had a far-reaching impact on individuals, households, society, and the economy at large. Remittances contribute to household income, thereby reducing the financial constraints of families and leading to consumption smoothing. This also helps families achieve better living standards and access to better educational and health care resources. This pattern of use of remittances by migrant families have spill over impact on both non-migrant families as well as on rural society.

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