

# GULF MIGRATION AND TRANSFORMATION TO PROSPERITY

An Analysis of the Dynamics of the Process

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. The Backdrop

The study is set in the context of fundamental questions on the nature and approach of the vast array of diaspora studies in general and studies on Kerala diaspora in the Gulf in particular. First and foremost is the question regarding the specific subjects who formed the focus of those studies. It is found that there exists serious dearth of studies on the category of ‘other workers’ who are in the low end jobs such as construction workers, both skilled & unskilled, such as masons, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, helpers, and domestic workers, manual labourers in the industries, bakeries and so on, constituting the highest group of Gulf migrants. This category of Gulf migrants always had to struggle through a ‘casual’ and marginal existence, in most cases, both before going to the Gulf and even while they were in the Gulf as migrant laborers.

The second question pertains to the epistemological frame in which the diasporic studies are commonly pursued. It has been found that there prevailed an epistemological bias towards objectivism resorting to mostly macro level migration surveys assessing the impact of outmigration and remittances. Such surveys generally look at the cost of emigration, trends of return emigration, causes of return and profile of return emigrants, economic consequences to the host region in terms of fall in remittance and economic recession and so on and so forth. Hence they tend to neglect a micro level understanding, exploring the subjective and local ramifications of the non-material and non-economic aspects of the migration.

The third question concerns the debate on ‘agency’ of the much acclaimed ‘Kerala Model’ of development, that ignores the contribution of the lower class population migrated to the Gulf who engage actively in the socio, economic, political, religious and cultural contours of the State that shaped the ‘Kerala Model’. The study thus intends to locate the ‘agency’ of the lower-class Gulf migrants in the developmental map of the Kerala Model.

## 2. The Problem and the Perspective

The study sought to take cognizance of the predicament of the low-end job workers to the Gulf before going to the Gulf and the transformations that have occurred after going to the Gulf at the subjective (personal and familial) and the objective realms (communitarian and societal) realms. Therefore, the study embarked on a journey from a multidisciplinary perspective, through the labyrinths of their Sojourn in Gulf with a view to unfold the dynamics of the process of their transformation in all spheres of their personal lives as well as the life of the society at large. A minimum period of ten years sojourn in Gulf was regarded for the inclusion of the subjects of the study so as to have reasonable time period for perceivable changes to be noticed.

The study focused on the causative factors (driving variables) of this transformative process and determined their road to prosperity from penury, facilitating and upward mobility with an entry to the middle class camp. Hence, the notion of ‘class’ constituted its conceptual frame and the specific academic task was centred around foregrounding the process of ‘middleclassisation’ – the transformation of the lower class to the middle class – in the lives of the Gulf migrants. To this effect, the study is designed as a longitudinal in terms of the time span that ran through three generations at the same time. The three generations included:

1. Generation of the parents of the migrant
2. Migrant’s generation and
3. Generation of the migrant’s children.

In this endeavour, the sociological category of ‘class’ constituted the key variable that is studied. More specifically, the study looked into how the lower-class (poor) has been able to transform themselves possibly into lower/middle middle class and perhaps still upwards. In this sense, the study analysed the process of *middle-classisation*– transformation to a middle class from the lower class – of the Gulf migrant and thereby that of the Kerala society, in the wake of poor people going to the Gulf region for better job prospects and earnings. In this endeavour, the variables such as income status, class position, education and health care, purchasing power, consumption pattern and possession of household utensils, electronic gadgets, and the use of

mass media and communication channels were put to close empirical scrutiny in order to unearth the processes of the dynamics of transformation of the lower class Gulf migrants to prosperity.

### **3. Methodology**

Situated in the epistemological frame of *interpretativism*, the study used the Weberian notion *verstehen* - empathetic understanding as a methodological approach. From a multi-disciplinary frame of reference, it embarked on a qualitative journey into the lives of the low end job emigrants from the Gulf, with a view to fathom the dynamics of the processes of the transformation in their lives first and then the Society at large. The major dimensions of the research questions it addressed included the following: 1) the socio-economic conditions of the three generations of the migrant, the parents, the migrant's before and after the migration, 2) the push factors that drove the migrants to the Gulf 3) the perceptible changes in the consumption pattern, living standard and the lifestyle of the migrant and his family after the migration, 4) the multifaceted processes and dynamics involved in the transformative sojourn in the Gulf, 5) the transformation that occurred in terms of the attitude and approach to consumption and possession of everyday consumables, and to the social developments in society after Gulf migration.

The study employed a concurrent embedded strategy of mixed method in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously. The emphasis was on the qualitative data in which quantitative data was embedded in order to provide a supportive corroboration. The emphasis on qualitative approach was based on the considered view that, it took into account the heterogeneity of the subjects, and captured better 1) the insider's points of view and their subjective perceptions, 2) the social processes and forces that reflected the unique experiences and values rather than seeking a set of fixed measures and estimates.

The low-end male Gulf migrants of the State of Kerala constituted the Universe of the Study. Twenty five cases were identified from the three zones of the State, namely, South, Central and North. Accordingly, cases were identified from Trivandrum, Quilon, Pathanamthitta & Malappuram districts which have the largest number of migrants in the State, according to the statistics of the Economic Survey (2016). An elaborate Interview Guide with certain standardized questions on the socio-economic and life style profile of the migrants was prepared

for the conduct of the qualitative interview. The interviews that lasted for a minimum of one hour duration, were audio recorded. The participants for the interviews were identified using snow ball method. Within the narrative rationality framework as against the formal rationality of logico-scientific model, narrative paradigm was used for the analysis of the qualitative data and the quantitative data was subjected to SPSS computation for processing and tabulation.

#### **4. Analysis and the Results**

The analysis and the result section of the study are organized in a logical schema in two chapters – Chapters 4 & 5, with Chapter five having three parts. Chapter four presented the socio-economic profile and the details of the subjects who participated in the study, situating the study in its background and foreground. Part I of Chapter 5, titled ‘Making of a Lower-class Gulf Migrant – Background and Foreground’ captured the socio-economic conditions and status of the family before embarking on the sojourn, the more specific background of the sojourn, the jobs/works in the Gulf and the accompanied struggles and hardships, the income, expenditure, remittances and earnings before and after going to the Gulf; Part II of Chapter 5, titled ‘Transformative Sojourn- from Penury to Prosperity’ probed into the processes of the dynamics of the specific areas of transformation from a three generational perspective and Part III of Chapter 5 with the title Triumphs, Trials and Tribulations unfolded the subjective (personal and familial) and objective (communitarian and societal) benefits, including that of the women, in the form of triumphs, and the accompanied trials and tribulations in realising those triumphs and the ways in which the migrants overcome their longing for the homeland.

##### **4:1 The Transformative Sojourn**

The study in general revealed the fact that the developmental trajectory of the modern Kerala and thereby the history of post independent modernity of the State since its formation, is integrally intertwined with the pangs and perils of the lower class Gulf migrants and the subjective and objective forms of transformation they have brought about in the State. Hence, the struggle filled sojourn of the lower class Gulf migrants and the resultant transformations at the personal and societal terrains have to be mapped as a distinctive locus in the development map of the modern Kerala.

#### **4:2 Making of a Lower Class Gulf Migrant – Background and Foreground**

The migrants belonged to the lower class (poor) in terms of their class position as they grew up in an environment of penury and hardships. Most of the parents of the migrants could engage only in menial and low-end jobs, hence had to struggle to make both ends meet. Several of the migrants had to help out their parents in their struggle to find some means of livelihood. Migrants in their turn also could find only low status jobs, although for several of them even those jobs were not regular and stable. Worse still, many of them could not find any job and hence unemployment was rampant in those days. The socio-economic condition of the State was not conducive for people from the lower class communities particularly, irrespective of their caste or religion, to build a decent life in the State. It was these adverse familial and societal conditions that forced the migrants to embark upon their sojourn to the Gulf amidst risks and uncertainties, In the Gulf too the migrants could find only low-end jobs given their backward educational and social capitals and so their life was intensely struggle-ridden. However, the life in the Gulf brought the migrants financial gains through increased earnings, and thus enabling them to meet the cardinal aim for which they had undertaken the hazardous sojourn with unimaginable difficulties.

#### **4:3 Embarking on the Sojourn to the Unfamiliar Shores**

The analysis of the processes of the dynamics of their sojourn in the Gulf revealed that it highly increased their purchasing power so as to translate their aspirations to a great extent. Resultantly, they achieved an upward mobility in terms of their class status to the middle class, though at varied levels, according to the consumption pattern and standard of living. Hence majority of them have gained their entry into the middle middle class universe and a comparatively smaller percentage into the either the camp of lower middle class or higher middle class. Their aspirational accomplishment as a consequent of the Gulf migration was most conspicuously manifested in owning a concrete house, in majority of the cases, double storied. Education was another important area in which, they have invested their earning from the Gulf. Realizing the importance of education in human life, especially in a market driven present day society, all of them invested a good portion of their hard earned Gulf income in providing quality education to their children.

Thus, one notices a mammoth change in the educational profile of the children of the migrants and the siblings in some cases, from that of their parents and grand parents, the two generations below them. Majority of the children of the migrants, both boys and girls alike, therefore have acquired higher educational degrees that fetched them high value in the job market. Given the conventional practice of the Muslim community, even if the girls were married off at younger age, the basic education that they gained brought them in-laws with good educational qualifications and thus good jobs. Thus, it appears that housing and education seemed to be the key areas in which the lower class Gulf emigrants, upon their elevation to the middle class, have invested their earning from the Gulf. Correspondingly, while housing vested them with social capital with high prestige and honour, education bestowed symbolic capital that could accrue them rich dividends in the future.

Similarly, in the wake of acquiring heightened purchasing power, unprecedented transformations occurred in the attitude and practice of health care, and in the buying habit of various consumables such as clothes, footwear, cosmetics, electronic gadgets, vehicles, and in the use of communication and mass media equipment including the New Media. In short, there occurred transformation from a state of penury to a state of prosperity that ultimately led to their entry into the middle class universe in Kerala.

#### **4:4 Triumphs, Trials and Tribulations**

While foregrounding the transformations, the study unfolded the personal, familial and the societal triumphs of the Gulf migration of the lower class migrants, by unravelling the subjective as well as the objective aspects of these transformations. In brief, by and large, the migrants with their enhanced entitlements, were able to translate their aspirations for a decent living with a good house, quality education to the children and the siblings, good food, health care, sufficient rendering of household and personal consumables, electronic gadgets, mass media and communication facilities. Further, it has initiated a new culture of philanthropy and social service that improve the lot of the vulnerable members of the community, especially among the Muslim community. Moreover, it contributed its mighty share in the socio-economic and cultural spheres of the society at large. At the same time, the middle class standard of living that was made possible on account of their Gulf migration, did not lead to a life of *westoxication* that exhibited

unbridled propensities for consumption at any cost with display of extravagance and wasteful affluence. Instead, several of them consciously experimented with a life of simplicity and modesty.

Another important unintended consequence of the migration to the Gulf was the quiet transformation that was enacted in the lives of the womenfolk in the wake of their husbands being away in the Gulf, labouring and toiling in order to fetch means for both ends meet. That several of them became enabled and empowered to shoulder the everyday household responsibilities such as the education of their children, banking and financing, supervision of house construction, attending social functions, purchase of stationeries, utensils and other consumables, in some cases, even arranging the marriages of their children and so on... All these wouldn't have been a possibility in an androcentric culture like ours where citadels of restrictions on the rights, opportunities and mobility of women in general are built up, if not for the Gulf sojourn of the migrants. It was a quiet because it was seldom visible in the sight of the academic discourses on migration, but very significant transformation, especially in Muslim community that imposes more rigid forms of social restriction on women, as the migrants themselves have shared.

The narratives also illuminated the fact that all these transformative triumphs were fraught with constant trials and tribulations. As part of circumventing those myriads of trials and tribulations that the migrants tend to construct imaginary homeland by showing great interest in the socio-political happenings in the homeland and engaging in private conversations and discussions on them, but in atmosphere of cordiality and mutual respect.

## **5. Suggestions and Recommendations**

The study came across certain critical elements that require considered attention and redressal from the part of the departments and agencies concerned.

### **5:1 General**

In a general plane, it has been pointed out that though low end job migrants contribute heavily to the day to day affairs of the many a socio-political organization in the State, their issues such as reducing the flight rates, are not taken up by any of those organizations, and worse still, they are

not given due recognition and representation in their official organs and forums. It is strongly recommended that the Government, departments and organizations concerned may pay serious attention to this unfortunate situation and creatively respond to it treating it as urgent.

## **5:2 Specific**

On a more specific term, the following suggestions and recommendations are put forward:

1. Several lower class migrants, especially those who have migrated to the Gulf in the 1970s and 1980s are by and large, do not know about the NORKA Roots, the Governmental organization for the cause of the migrants. So quite many of them do not get any support or assistance from NORKA. Thus, urgent measures are to be sought in making NORKA known to the migrants more widely and extensively, especially among those who are occupied in the low-end jobs in the Gulf, so that they are well informed about this department and the services it offers.
2. It seems the membership drive initiated in 2016 by NORKA in some of the Gulf regions and the heavy poll of membership documents to the tune of a few lakhs, accrued then has been piled up in the NORKA Office. It is also noticed that the NORKA Office suffers from real shortage of staff and of late, Government employing some members from the Kudumbasree, upon demand from some Associations. It is suggested that NORKA takes necessary measure to expedite the process and complete the registration of these incumbent members.
3. Migrants are pained at the not so helpful attitude of the Government in providing certain basic benefits to the migrants, particularly from the lower class population. For instance, denying an Income Certificate to a child, just because his/her father is a migrant labourer in the Gulf. This is to be treated as a genuine concern of the migrants of the lower strata and Government invoke the necessary policy notifications so as to facilitate a more sympathetic redressal of the same from the part of the Departments concerned.
4. It is a fact that many of those migrants returned from the Gulf do not have much saving as they had expended their earnings in owning a house and the education of their children, besides the daily expenditure of the family back home. Hence, it is strongly recommended that the Pravasi welfare fund may be raised to a minimum of Rs. 2000/-.



5. Some migrants due to certain unfortunate or unexpected eventualities, or being enchained in a debt trap, were not able to complete the construction of their long cherished house. Though Government has certain schemes to help complete such unfinished houses, it does not really reach the hands of the needy on time, since the migrants are made to run from pillar to post by the unscrupulous bureaucrats and/or politicians. It is high time that Government takes necessary steps to curb such undesirable elements and ensure that the benefits of the scheme reach the incumbents on time.
6. It is pointed out that Indian Embassy does not render timely and effective service to the migrants, for instance, in claiming insurance in the eventuality of an accident, or death, or reimbursing the travel expenses incurred in accompanying dead bodies to India etc.
7. Gulf migrants apparently have to spend a lot of money to send a dead body back home. Migrants are of the view that the Government should take steps to stop migrants from making payment for the same. They have reportedly brought this to the attention of the Government departments concerned a number of times, but in vain.
8. It is suggested that Government should either intervene and reduce the flight charge of a dead body, treating it as a luggage, when taken to the native place, or Indian Embassy may pay the expenses.

## **6. Conclusion**

In the final analysis, the Gulf migration has definitely contributed to the making of a distinctive middle class section in Kerala, who have obtained on their own merit, increased purchasing power and higher consumption entitlements that enabled them to translate their middle class aspirations for a better living standard and life style into a reality. Their entry into the middle class universe bestowed them with a socio-cultural identity as *Gulf Returnee* and that provided them a distinct locale that is unique and separate from the other middle class populations in the State who have mostly been engulfed by the currents of consumer culture giving way to conspicuous and luxurious consumption in a post liberalized world. Conversely, this middle class contingent of the *Gulf Returnee* have initiated a life style that contained counter cultural values emphasising simplicity and modesty in life and the value of reaching out to the poor and needy in the community and neighbourhood that gave rise to new culture of gift giving, philanthropy and social service. This distinctive genre of the emergent middle class who contributed

enormously to the socio, economic, political and cultural development of the State and thereby contributing their share to the shaping up of the 'Kerala model of development' independently, in a way call for a revisit of the existing academic discourses and debates on Kerala Model.

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1:1 Introduction

Diasporas have gained greater momentum in the political and academic arena and there is a heightened recognition of the roles that these diasporic groups play as a resource for development in their countries of origin. The potential of diaspora communities in stimulating development and altering the social, cultural, educational and political matrices in the homelands has increasingly being recognized today. Migration and development literature of the recent years has been paying greater attention in examining measures to maximize the potential of diaspora contributions to development in homelands, along with the role of governments in creating a conducive environment for diaspora engagement (Tiwari 2014, Palackal 2013, John 2012, Rahman and Ullah 2012).

Discourses on diaspora engagement mainly centers around development debate, which focuses on the potential benefits of migration for developing countries. Diaspora studies largely examine how diaspora communities participate in the transformative process within their homeland (Yong and Rahman 2013, Terrazas 2010, Osella and Gardner 2004). Flows of migrant resources, both tangible and intangible, to developing countries are believed to influence processes of economic and social development. Such resources enter the home villages and towns of migrants through transnational social fields, with diverse implications for local economies, social structures, politics, and cultural orientations. The new 'development mantra' in the global parlance, therefore, revolves around the material and non-material migratory inflows.

Kerala diaspora of the modern era, which accounts for one-fifth of the Indian diaspora, was formed from the beginning of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when colonial plantations were developed in different parts of the world and there is hardly any part of the world where Malayalees are not

found today. However, the more recent history of migration of Keralites to the Gulf region began with the discovery of oil- fields and the drilling for oil on a commercial basis in the region, and it assumed massive proportions with the skyrocketing price of oil in the international market in early seventies (Zachariah, Mahew and Rajan 2002, Zachariah and Rajan 2012). The present study broadly focuses on this major Kerala diaspora in the Gulf regions.

There are several state-level studies such as the periodic Kerala Migration Surveys, which have shown that emigration from Kerala has been steadily on the increase, especially with the Gulf Migration and Kerala's economy is largely sustained by the remittances of the emigrants. (Zachariah and Rajan 2012, Zachariah, Mahew and Rajan 2002). It is an undeniable fact that Non-resident Keralites play a vital role in the development of the State. Their contribution to the development can be seen at the family level, community level and state/country level. At family level it has improved household earnings, food, consumption, health care, housing and educational attainments and for over three decades, remittances have been meeting the current account deficit of the State. According to Kerala Migration Study 2014, there were twenty four lakh Kerala emigrants in various countries and their remittances to Kerala's net domestic product was 36.5%. Around 50 lakh people in Kerala are dependent on Non Resident Malayalis. Country-wise, more than 85% of Non-Resident Malayalis are working in the Gulf region (State Planning Board, 2016).

However, there arises certain fundamental questions at the outset, concerning the very nature, structure, and modalities of the array of diaspora studies in general and studies on Kerala diaspora in the Gulf in particular. First and foremost is the question of the specific subjects who formed the focus of the studies. The Malayalee migrants to the Gulf, in fact, constitute heterogeneous and diverse group in terms their occupation, income status, education, region and gender. This heterogeneity has wide effects on their engagements both at the host and home lands and the formation of their identity. For instance, data from the Economic review (2016) shows that the Gulf migrants include 1) Professionals such as doctors, engineers, nurses, bank employees, IT Professionals including Office Workers, Teachers, Managers, Drivers, Business Men, Sales Men and Other workers. However, these groups are classified differently in different studies (Zachariah; Nair & Rajan 2006; Prakash 2000).

Notwithstanding, it is important to note that the category of ‘Other workers’, who are in the low end jobs, constitute the highest group of Gulf migrants. This category includes construction workers, both skilled & unskilled, such as masons, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, helpers, and domestic workers, manual labourers in the industries, bakeries and so on. Prakash (2000) has pointed out that this category of workers engaged in low-end jobs, have reported their job as unspecified. In fact, this is the category who are employed in the low end jobs and who live in the fringes of the society in every way, especially both in the occupational ladder as well as social structure, and at the same time active players as migrants interacting and engaging actively in the socio-cultural and economic spheres of both the host country as well as the home state. They seem to have had only ‘casual’ existence before they left for the Gulf and also while they were in the Gulf. This category of Gulf migrants always had to struggle through a ‘casual’ and marginal existence, in most cases, both before going to the Gulf and even while they were in the Gulf as migrant laborers. They are the most depressed group among them.

However, it is unfortunate that one finds in the vast array of literature on migration and diaspora, serious dearth of proper study that takes cognizance of the predicament and the transformation that have occurred to them at their personal lives and the life of the society thereof. This study, therefore, seeks to pitch the terrain of the study on the low-end job Gulf Pravasisin Kerala, journeying through the dynamics of the process of their transformation in all the spheres of their personal lives and the resultant transformations it brought in the Kerala society in general.

### **1:2 The Problem in Perspective**

The Malayalam film *Pathemari* (dhow) portrayed the travels of a man who takes a boat ride to the Gulf – it is set 50 years in the past – to make a living. Homesick, he later returns with a suitcase full of gifts for the family, but is forced to go back to make ends meet. The film also visualises the changes undergoing in the family of the migrant and the transformation, spanning three generations. The third generation (sons of the migrant) was showing the features of upper middle class community. The movie throws light on the life threatening struggles undergone by the gulf migrant in this process of transformation. The story of this poor migrant and tens of thousands of migrant laborers of the Gulf, like him, in-fact, constitutes an integral part of the

history of social change in Kerala after the formation of the State. The transformation caused by Gulf Migration has its influence in all walks of Kerala Society.

The present study focussing on these low-end labour migrants to the Gulf countries, is conceived as the Processes of the transformation that happened in their lives and the accompanied socio-cultural and economic transformations thereof. The specific task of the study is to take cognizance of the milestones of the changes in a typical family of a Gulf migrant who has possibly grown up in poor conditions in Kerala and engaged in low-end jobs in the Gulf. It seeks to capture the changes which are very conspicuous in the lives of low end job migrants who have spent a period of ten years at least in the Gulf. Ten years was regarded as the minimum number of years for some perceivable changes to be noticed because of the increase in the income of the migrant and how that increase has brought about the changes in the socio-economic profile and life styles of their family and the resultant transformation it brought to the Kerala society.

In this endeavour, the sociological category of “class” constitutes the key variable that is studied. More specifically, the study looked into how the lower-class (poor) has been able to transform themselves possibly into lower/middle middle class and perhaps still upwards. In this sense, the study analysed the process of *middle-classisation* – transformation to a middle class from the lower class – of the Gulf migrant and thereby that of the Kerala society, in the wake of poor people going to the Gulf region for better job prospects and earnings.

The study focused on the causative factors (driving variables) of this transformative process. In other words, it examined the making of the middle class in Kerala vis-à-vis Gulf migration of the lower class people. Hence, indicators of “class”, more particularly that of the ‘lower class’ with respect to the variables such as social status, economic profile, standard of living, life style, education and health were identified and put to scrutiny empirically in the study. Those causative indicators were examined in the transformative trajectory of the lower class migrants to lower/middle/upper middle class. To this effect, the study is conceived as a longitudinal one journeying through the lives of three generations of the migrant from the perspective of the migrant:

- 1) Generation of the parents of the migrant

- 2) Migrant's generation and
- 3) Generation of the migrant's children.

It has been observed that the huge remittance of the Malayalee diaspora has unleashed a debate on its impact on Kerala society and its development. For some, remittances underpin the very 'Kerala model' of development (Zachariah et al. 2001a, 2001b) that enhanced social welfare (Banerjee et al. 2002). Whereas for others, it created a consumer-driven economy marked by stark imbalances that sharpened socio-economic divisions which led to inflation in the local land prices and exacerbation of the polarization of landownership, reduction in agricultural production, stagnation in the industrial development, and continued high unemployment, wastage on unproductive forms of consumption expenditure in the display of opulent houses, purchase of land and so on (Kannan 2005). In sum, it undermined the local economic autonomy.

Thus, it is possible that the transformative trajectories of the low end Gulf migrant is entangled and intertwined with the making of the modern Kerala. The study also seeks to untie the 'development debate' of the modern Kerala and the making of the Middle Class conglomeration in Kerala Society with special reference to the low-end Gulf Pravasi and their transformative trajectory from the Gulf back to the God's own country.

### **1:3 Significance of the study**

Kerala diaspora, in fact, is one of the most studied diasporas in India with regard to the impact of outmigration and remittances. There are several state-level studies such as the periodic Kerala Migration Surveys on Kerala. It may be noted that most of these studies remained at the macro level, to the neglect of micro level studies, exploring the subjective and local ramifications. Hence, existing literature seem to be deficient in terms of 1) the near absence of the studies on low end job Malayalee Pravasis, 2) Micro level studies that unravel the process of transformation, at the personal and societal levels, especially the mobility in respect of the class positions of the subjects and its socio-cultural implications 3) the effects of Gulf migration on the non-material and non-economic aspects of the subjects, in other words, the cultural and symbolic aspects of their lives and their life-world.

The present study that focusses on the transformative processess of the low end Malayalee migrants thus assumes great significance, as it is undertaken as a micro level study that enables one to take cognizance of the real transformations it brought in the lives of the migrants as well as to the Kerala Soceity. It also illuminates on the role of low end Malayalee migration to the Gulf in the making of the middle class in Kerala and to the much acclaimed “Kerala Model of Development”. This indeed is a distinct contribution to the diaspora studies a having high pool of remittance centric, quantitative studies.

The study therefore, academically contributes to the existing literature on Kerala diaspora in the Gulf with distincitive focus on mapping the low end pravasi and the subjective and objective transformative processes and its ramfications to the Kerala Soceity in general. KILE will more specifically benefit, as the study will bring out the insider’s perceptions and recommendations from the prespective of the low end job migrant labourers and their predicaments.



## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### 2:1 Introduction

A literature search using books, journals and electronic resources, was conducted to review previous studies on gulf migration with special reference to the transformative processes of the migrant at the personal and societal levels. Even though there are many studies about migration, majority of them are about out employment and other labour issues of gulf emigrants and their demographic characteristics. Only a few studies are concerning the transformation and there is no study on the longitudinal analysis of dynamics of transformation process covering three generations.

This chapter is organized under three sections: 1) international, 2) national and 3) Kerala studies. However, at the outset it has to be noted that even though there are many studies about diaspora and migration, majority of them are about out migration, their employment, difficulties experienced abroad and their demographic characteristics, besides a high volume of literature that is remittance-centric. There are only a few studies that dwell on the transformations and changes on account of migration, and that too at the macro level. This chapter attempts to make a review some of those major studies and other relevant literature appropriate to the present study.

#### 2:2 International Studies

International studies include studies conducted in Middle East, Guatemala, Afghan , Pakistan and Iran on various aspects of International migration such as labour, economic, social and political. In addition to these, there are review articles which provide a comprehensive picture about the studies conducted among international migrants.

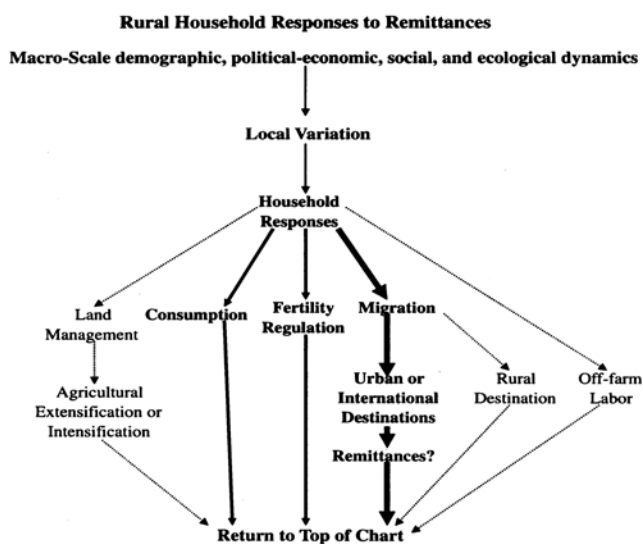
In the article “Migration in the Middle East: transformation and change” by Nazli Choucri (Choucri 1983) places contemporary migration in the Middle East in its historical context and then reviews the transformations in migration over the past ten years. It seeks to trace the evolution of migration processes. The article identified the following features of migration in the Middle East:

- i) It is a transfer from developing countries. Labour comes mainly from South and East Asian countries.
- ii) It is composed of both skilled and unskilled labour.
- iii) It is temporary in nature.
- iv) It is generated and maintained by underlying economic and political forces.
- v) The migration dynamics incorporate decisions made by different actors such as individuals, industrial firms, and governments.
- vi) The supply of and demand for labour place pressures on respective national governments for policy responses to regulate and facilitate the movement of labour across national boundaries.

The article concludes that the transformations in migration flows have been dramatic. New conditions generated in both sending and receiving countries, leading to demand for new sources of supply and the expanded role of Asians, influence the evolution of the next phase in Middle Eastern Migration.

In their review article, ‘The Education of Children in Im/migrant Families’, Angela E. Arzubiaga, Silvia C. Noguerón and Amanda L. Sullivan (Arzubiaga, Noguerón & Sullivan, 2009) conclude that an interdisciplinary, comparative, and longitudinal perspective is needed for research on and with children of im/migrant families. Research needs to account that immigration is not static but a complex interplay of time, context and people. Changes in time, context, or people without considering their interplay render comparisons across groups problematic. The authors further state that however, within the unstoppable mélange of histories and cultures, notions about who is entitled and whose knowledge counts need to be at the foreground. These issues are crucial for the education of the children of im/migrants and should be part of research and practice agendas on and their families.

Jason Davis and David Lopez-Carr in their study, ‘The effects of migrant remittances on population-environment dynamics in migrant origin areas: international migration, fertility, and consumption in highland Guatemala’ (Davis and Lopez-Carr 2010) revealed that international migration impacts origin regions in many ways. As examples, remittances from distant migrants may alter consumption patterns within sending communities, while exposure to different cultural norms may alter other behaviours. The study combines these insights to offer a unique picture on migration's environmental impact. From an environmental perspective, they asked whether the likely rise in consumption brought about by remittances counter-balanced by a reduction in fertility in migrant households following exposure to lower fertility cultures? Based on ethnographic case studies in two western highland Guatemalan communities, they argued that the near-term rise in consumption due to remittances is not counterbalanced by rapid decline in migrant household fertility. The conceptual framework followed in their study is given below.



**Source: Davis and Lopez-Carr 2010**

According to the study, 84% of the informants used remittances for new home construction. The second and third most common uses of remittances were the purchase of household maintenance supplies and to assist with a child's education through the purchase of school supplies, uniforms, and transportation, or to pay for private school tuition. Nearly half of all informants also stated that small amounts of remittances were used to assist with agricultural operations including the

purchase of soil amendments (i.e., fertilizers, pesticides) and seeds and to hire labour - principally when one or more family members were away. Remittances were also used to fund the occasional purchase of additional agricultural land. Nearly one quarter of all informants mentioned that migrant-sending households use remittances to launch small businesses and to purchase automobiles. A host of conspicuous consumption purchases were also reported including household appliances (i.e., refrigerators, washing machines), furniture, and entertainment equipment (i.e., cable, cell, televisions). This study throws light on the nature of subjective transformative trajectory of a migrant that may be found parallel to the Malayalee Gulf migrant in this study.

“International Labour Migration in Middle East: A Review of Literature and Research, 1974-84” by Ian J. Seccombe (Seccombe 1985) reviews the main trends in the literature and research on international labour migration in the Middle East over the period. This literature, which is characterized as descriptive and judgemental, into three broad categories: first, international and national overviews migration trends, remittance flows and their macro-economic impact; descriptions of government policies designed to organize and regulate migration; third, at the community and household scale, comparative of migrant and non-migrant behaviour in labour-sending countries. Significant gaps in our empirical knowledge and theoretical conceptualizations migration in this region are identified.

Seccombe (Seccombe 1985) observed that although international labour flows into and within the Arabian and Gulf region was first precipitated on a major scale by the exploitation of oil resources in the mid-1930s; academic interest in the phenomenon was negligible until the dramatic acceleration in the scale of labour movements which followed the oil price increases of 1973-74. The latter enabled the major oil-producing states to embark on large-infrastructure and industrial development plans which generated labour demands far in excess of their domestic supplies.

One important aspect of migration research is the examination of its social effect on migrant households remaining behind, and in particular on the role of migrant's wives during the absence of the household head. Azzam and Shaib's survey (1980) of wives of Lebanese migrant workers demonstrate the strain imposed on the wives of migrant workers, the problems they face

in household management and their attitudes toward emigration for employment. Khafagy's (1991) detailed micro-scale study of temporary migration from an Egyptian village (El-Quebabat) provides a comparative analysis of migrant and non-migrant households. He analysed selectivity of emigration, the role of remittance income in the commercialization of agriculture and changes in the role of wives of emigrant workers. Results from this work suggest that such women play an increased role in cultivation, in the management of financial affairs and other household decision-making. Contrasting conclusions reached by a similar study by Taylor (1984) demonstrated the differential impact of emigration as a result of variations in social and economic structure. The impact of temporary emigration depended on the family structure in which she is left to operate and on the stage of the family cycle. Taylor argues that the male migration has not led to permanent change in the life style or productive role of migrant's wives.

Abbasi and Irfan (1986), in their study, demonstrated the complexity of the community-level response to male emigration. The study compares the experiences of migrant and non-migrant households in both rural and urban areas. Households receiving remittance income are shown to have a lower female labour force participation and a higher school attendance rate for children, particularly girls. They reported that there has been little change in the level of household and family responsibilities assumed by the wives due to high rates of female illiteracy. Evidence in case studies (Mathew and Nair, 1978; from Kerala (India) drawn together by Gulati (1987) demonstrated that not only does male emigration strengthen informal family and kin networks, but it also leads to a more active role for women in family and household affairs. This increased responsibility may extend to banking, land purchase and housing construction. The study also presented data on the impact of emigration on levels of dowry and on marriage patterns. Similar evidence of increased female independence and confidence are reported from household surveys in Philippines by Go S.P, Post Rado and P.R. Jimenez (1986). The review concluded that international labour migration cannot be satisfactorily explained by economic criteria alone; it must be situated in a much broader context. Apparently, these studies can point to an important aspect of the transformative dynamics of the Gulf migration of the low end migrants, in terms of the transformations it caused on the womenfolk in the homeland. In fact, this constituted one significant facet of enquiry, which unravelled quite interesting elements in respect of the transformative processes and dynamics of the low-end Gulf migrants of Kerala.

In the article “The Transformation of the Afghan Refugee: 1979-2009” Maliha Safri (Safri, 2011) argued that in the last 30 years, the social and linguistic articulation of the Afghan in Pakistan and Iran has gone from muhajir [refugee], to migrant, and even to terrorist. This article provides an overview of that transformation to demonstrate that it depends more on external factors rather than any fundamental change in the conditions structuring Afghan migration. Examining the migration regime operating between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran further confirms the problems of a refugee/migrant dualism.

In short, international studies in general delve on the transformative trajectories mostly at the macro level in terms of the socio-economic, cultural and political changes, from a historical and evolutionary perspective. They focus chiefly on the transformations that occurred at the societal level as manifested in the consumption practices of the migrants and so on. The transformations that are perceived at the subjective levels – micro level – seemed to be nearly absent in these cases.

### **2:3 National Studies**

Studies covering Indian emigrants in the gulf in general as well as regional studies, other than from Kerala are included in the first section, that is national. The studies on gulf migrants from Kerala are reviewed in the following section.

Through ethnographic examples, Neha Vora (Vora 2008) explores two modes of diasporic subjectivity that was observed among the middle-class Indian migrants in Dubai-racial consciousness and consumer citizenship. However, she argues that the alignment of academic and diasporic informants' understandings of mutually exclusive domains such as culture, nation, economy, and state lead to the relative invisibility of this large population in most literature on South Asian diasporas, and she points to the need for theoretical and methodological explorations of anthropological research on how and when domains become distinct for migrant subjects, rather than taking them as a priori forms.

The study, *Diasporas Transforming Homelands Nuancing ‘Collective Remittance’ Practices in Rural Gujarat*, by Sudeep Basu (Basu 2016) was conducted in a village in North Gujarat. It aimed to entail an understanding of the values, structures and expectations that inhere in the acts

of giving. The study examined the specific contributions of the Gujarati diaspora to its homeland, given its complex migration history and the inherited cultural practices of philanthropy among non-resident Gujaratis (NRGs). The NRGs' contributions to the development of their state provided a diagnostic marker to map the scope, scale, and impact of these practices of "giving" to the homeland, epitomised through various charitable works undertaken by NRGs belonging to different castes, religion and creed. The major forms of charity/donations, other than the remittances/gifts at individual family levels, consist of contributions that were set aside for social causes, such as community-based amenities for drinking water, roads; institutional support for health and education, etc; aid during disasters and conflicts; besides support for building religious sites, crematorium, organising religious festivals, feeding the poor, providing scholarships to a local school, entertainment, etc.

This study also analysed the migration flows through collective remittances, apart from remittances to individual households as one of the ways by which emigrants keep helping their local communities or places of origin. It explored the meanings and expectations that inhere in "practices of giving" at a distance, since the social and physical distance between international migrants and their co-ethnics back home is far greater. Hence, the impact of time and space on relations between co-ethnics and communities across borders will thereby differ. While migration is enmeshed in a whole range of social, political, and economic factors, the focus of this study is not on why people migrate but rather on the effects and meanings that migration has on origin sites. What ties the emigrant/diasporas with the places of origin are collective meso-structures of village communities/associations and hometown networks which integrate and manage the changes induced by migration, in maintaining and constructing boundaries, village spaces, resources, hierarchies, norms, and practices. While reconstructing the local reception of the emergent practices of giving, principally that of charitable giving—the Indian equivalent of *dan* (donation) vis-à-vis philanthropic giving, the secular version—towards development works in a village setting, what impingements they may have on local development processes in place of origin are interrogated. In addressing the question of power and symbolic negotiations taking place between remittance senders and receivers/migrants and non-migrants and between receivers and non-receivers, this study revisits the notion of collective remittances, its uses and heuristics in apprehending stratification, village prosperity, social inequality, and change.

The study concluded that diaspora's engagement with collective giving, communicates their concern with "functions in public largely as an unproblematic indicator of Indian charity—a genus of Indian culture," partaking from the metaphysic of renunciation, collective remittances emanating from clear sources and travelling across national spaces through identifiable pathways can have one-sided results for a community in a village space. How to make possible the "culture of giving," given the particular context in which religious and secular practices of giving coexist and are in a state of "creative tension"? Clearly few individuals have the capacity and will to give repeatedly and freely without any kind of external reward. We also find competing claims by groups who seek to have a share of the diasporic offerings in both material and non-material terms that places the givers in a situation of resentment, particularly when realities on the ground are contrary to their expectations. Generalisation of social approval and esteem such that the practice of giving brings overt approval from others, recipients and non-recipients alike, and internalised reactions of good conscience and enhanced self-image is a way to ensure democratic inclusion, credibility and accountability within and between groups in rural social life touched by modernity. Non-membership of non-migrant communities in village associations/trusts is a major obstacle towards realising this end. The question local trusts/organisations and the diaspora have to ask is not only who do we represent but more importantly what do we represent— do we represent a village, a community or *kutumb*, forces of development, a region, a country, or an ethos. These significations does and can reconstitute the idea and materiality of the village, in which the original bounds of a village get stretched, while hierarchies/statuses get reconstituted around the axis of migration/non-migration. The centrality of migration among all groups in dry land regions points to the fact that migrant connections with their places of origin, have varied effects on not only those who have lived mobile lives but also "those who have stayed behind" as part of the unequal struggle for recognition, acquisition, and domination in a place. In the context where members of a particular community/association have the monopoly over norms and modes of giving and belonging, participating and contesting, a particular social project through diasporic giving fails to have the legitimating force that has worth and benefits for all villagers. States in setting their political and administrative goals need to work alongside migrant associations in villages, without excessive regulatory intent, identify non-beneficiaries of migration, set issues that are in common with transnational migrants, and integrate both migrants and non-migrants alike into the development processes in the region. Marketing Diasporas for



commercial or productive ends and the obligation to give on the part of diasporas in response to popular religious sentiment has to be carefully assessed taking into account how groups or individuals receive donations. In forging a transnational relation, philanthropic transfer should not be a one way street. Information from educators, non-governmental organisations and other professionals, and government agencies serving local communities in the country of origin, could help their counterparts in the diaspora, making them more effective and sensitive in their motivations and acts of giving, notwithstanding the relative social and historical differences between sending and receiving countries.

The edited volume by Judge (2015) 'Indian Diaspora Between Modernity and Tradition' captures the dilemmas and challenges faced by Indian emigrants who have travelled to the perceived 'modern' lands of opportunities, but are yet hanging between modernity and tradition. More specifically, it focuses on the distinct nature of the Punjabi diaspora, weaving together theoretical explanations, the distinct nature of emigration from Punjab and a range of aspects such as from caste–class configurations to the difference between colonial and postcolonial emigrants and their various shades. In the introductory chapter, the editor lays out the contours of the Indian diaspora, focusing on Punjabis, more particularly the Sikhs, and the changes over time in the process of emigration, including the internal dynamics and changes within the community. Following chapters examine case of Indian diaspora with special reference to the Punjabi diaspora settled in various countries. These chapters throw light on 1) the distinct nature of the trauma, turmoil and triumph of the Indian diaspora, highlighting specially the negotiations and coping strategies of immigrant women, 2) the identity issues, challenges, adjustments and dilemmas of Punjabi immigrants to the USA, their attachment to Indian culture and the challenges they face in the family and society, 3) the paradox of tradition and modernity through the analysis of socio-religious and socio-economic dimensions; 4) the patterns of migration, including illegal migration to Europe, and the intricacies of caste, ethnicity, kinship and religion of the Punjabi diaspora, 5) the relation of conflicts and structural changes occurring in different types of families, due to their attachments to traditional values; 5) the construction of everyday life of Punjabi migrants and the contradiction of tradition and modernity in different aspects of everyday life practices, such as marriage, religion and other behaviour patterns which lead to the contestations of modern and traditional values, between the two generations; 6) the lower living

standards of dalit emigrants in the gulf countries; 7) the role of transnational philanthropy and its effects on the reconstruction of the villages in the homeland. The book unfolds the long journey of the Punjabi diaspora to different parts of the world in terms of their contestations and challenges in the cultural historical locations of the host regions and the complex ties within their world, both in the foreign and native lands.

Srivastava, Sasikumar and Giri (2003) while reviewing the migration in India perceived that the internal and international migration, both of which are large scale, has impacted on the economic growth and poverty reduction in many regions of the country. They are of the opinion that remittances are the main benefit of external migration, providing scarce foreign exchange and scope for higher levels of savings and investments. Remittances over the past 30 years have financed much of India's balance of trade deficit and have thus reduced the current account deficit. They argue that the international migration has also had considerable impacts on demographic structures, expenditure patterns, social structures and poverty levels. Impacts include reducing population growth, enhancing the dependency burden within households; increasing consumption expenditure and reducing poverty levels.

More or less along the same line, Mukherjee (2017) has studied the flow of Social Remittances in the context of Barkas in Hyderabad, giving emphasis on the economic remittances from the Gulf. It is interesting to note that the author has identified that the majority of the migration remittances in India were used for renovation of the houses, buying property, purchasing land and education of the next generation invested with the hope of future economic security.

#### **2:4 Studies on Kerala Diaspora**

The book "Women, Gender and Everyday Social Transformation in India" Edited by Kenneth Bo Nielsen and Anne Waldrop contains a chapter titled "Gender, Work and Social Change: return migration to Kerala" by Berit Helene Vandsemb. It is a study focussed on gender and social change in the context of gulf migration from Kerala. The study looks into how migration reshapes the everyday lives of migrants' families. The respondents of the study were women and men returned from the Persian Gulf to Kerala and it explored the effects on work and gender relations within their households. The analysis is done by focusing on how the migrants' return

home affects women's agency. How does men's return migration have an impact upon women's control of their own lives? The discussion is based on secondary sources and qualitative data from a village in Thiruvananthapuram district and its aim was to include migrants' different voices to capture the multiplicity of their experiences of migration and return. The qualitative data has been gathered through pilot interviews with twenty villagers involved in or affected by Gulf migration – out of which eleven were return migrants. Seven of them were male return migrants who have been working either in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) or Oman for a length of time varying from 4 to 21 years, while four were women who have worked in Saudi Arabia, UAE or Kuwait from 4 to 6 years. Two of these women have returned migrant husbands; the third woman has been deserted, while the fourth has a migrant husband still working in the Gulf. The remaining nine informants are comprised of seven so called 'Gulf wives' whose husbands are working in Gulf countries, and the wives of two returned men.

In this study 'Agency' refers to men's and women's capability to make decisions and take control of their own lives. Agency includes control over resources; for instance, how to manage income and spending. The following indicators of agency were considered: decision making, control of money and mobility. The study concluded that Migration produced contradictory outcomes. Most of the informants have experienced economic improvement, but the social costs have been high for all and devastating for some. At the same time migration has paved the way for changing gender roles and relations. The success of migration depends to a great extent on the capacity of women and men to adapt and change their socially assigned roles so that they can work together to lift their household out of poverty. Women needed to take their place in society by taking responsibility and performing their agency. Women who have challenged the traditional gender roles by shouldering absent men's responsibilities or by migrating to earn an income may have become bolder and more assertive in their negotiations with husbands and other close relations. Thus, migration may have led to an extended agency for women because of either their experiences as de facto household heads or their own migration experiences. However, the picture is multifaceted. Among the informants, most women have kept their increased mobility, except one woman who was facing more restrictions after her husband's return, and another returned migrant woman who has now become a housewife. Most of the women were relieved to let their returned husbands take on the financial responsibility, but they

have a greater say compared to earlier and joint decisions were more common. However, two of the women were still in control of the money after their return, either because of the abandonment or because the husband is still in the Gulf. Thus, migration implied both continuity and change in women's agency and gender relations. This study, as mentioned earlier, points to the potential for unearthing the gender transformative dynamics in the present study.

The study titled "Gulf Migration, Social Remittances and Religion : The Changing dynamics of Kerala Christians" by Ginu Zacharia Oommen (Oommen 2017) attempts to investigate whether the reorientation of Syrian Christian immigrants lives in the host country (Gulf countries) and the newly created wealth there, has brought about any major change in the lives and practices of Christians back home (in Kerala). The study also investigated whether migration-centred religious reorientation of Kerala Christians is abetting commodification of religion, assertion of communal identity, proliferation of radical religious groups, rise of Prosperity Gospel/Tele Evangelists and the emergence of new forms of worship in the Christian community.

This empirical study was based on the field research in Kuwait and Kerala. The main methods of documentation were through detailed interviews of immigrants and observations at various cultural performances and festivities. The religious restructuring and the ghettoization of immigrants have inadvertently affected the socio-cultural realm of sending society (Kerala). The change in religiosity and religious practices were in turn influenced by the migrant experiences based on their religious beliefs in their host countries. These differential experiences made them reinvent their own religions in a transnational environment but exclusivist in spirit, in the home state of Kerala.

This study argued that the socio-cultural influences from host settings would be transmitted directly to the sending society through multifarious transnational networks including the religion. The transnational religious networks play a significant role in the reorientation of the societal space in the sending society. The change in immigrants' lives and the restructuring of their beliefs have a direct impact on the religious realm in the home society as well.

Currently there are nearly 60 Malayalam Churches in the GCC countries that include both Syrian Christian and Catholic denominations, besides various neo-Pentecostal and charismatic groups. It

was observed that religion is salient factor in a migrant's day-to-day life, as it fills the emotional hole created in the context of extreme social isolation that migrants experience in foreign countries. The Christian immigrants of Kerala in Kuwait have noted that in the last one decade or so, the spirituality and the role of religion have increased exorbitantly among Kerala migrants.

Radical religious groups such as the neo-Pentecostal and Evangelical Christian denominations, Muslim groups with strong Wahabi traditions such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, and Hindu fundamentalist groups like the RSS and various cults like Matha Amrathandamayee have made deep inroads in the lives of Kerala immigrants in the GCC states particularly Kuwait. These religious groups are transnational in nature and they are actively linked to both home and destination countries. Moreover, the lack of social interaction with the local people and social alienation felt by the immigrants in GCC countries have only strengthened their quest for spiritual and religious identity.

The re-assertion of belief among the immigrants has some personal reasons also. The stress in the life of a construction worker to earn the requisite money in the limited contract period or the anxiety over the extension of the period of stay deepens this assertion. Interestingly, the major activities of the transnational religious groups are mainly in labor camps, which were neglected by the mainstream host society for many years, thereby garnering a vast majority of discipleship from the working class section. Geo-political churning, socio-political isolation and the exclusion of immigrants from the social structure of the host society have further consolidated the religious space.

In the contemporary context, religion provides the opportunity for immigrants for community formation and produce intense conflict between the mainstream and popular/conservative religious groups and also helps to carve a unique —denominational/Born Again identity. Moreover, the host settings have paved the way for the emergence of popular religion and it creates unique global identity which transcends the national boundaries. The dynamics in the host setting has a direct bearing on the life style, consumer patterns, spiritual and worship modes, architecture and the outlook of the Kerala society. Successful migrants have invested remittances and savings in culturally significant arenas –marriages, education, temples, churches etc. The absence of migrants in the home society is filled through his spending patterns, contributions in

religious institutions and charity. Migrants' contribution to the religious institutions is manifested as his presence even if he/she residing in the Gulf. The Syrian Christian tried to display his social mobility through the renovation or construction of churches, parish halls, parsonages, cars for Vicars, arch gates, flag staffs, and memorial halls.

This process of obtaining social mobility by acquiring religious capital often disrupts the existing power structure within the community. The society witnessed the emergence of new class generally known as —New Rich. It is noted that significant growth of new rich had upset the rural power structure. The position and status enjoyed traditionally by a few landed and aristocratic families are now challenged.

The study concluded that the Gulf migrants and their families are invariably using the trajectory of religion to achieve social mobility and prestige in the sending society. The transnational nature of neo-Pentecostal churches has a direct impact on the religious space of Kerala society and the Diaspora networks are playing a crucial role in restructuring the home land churches. The impact of social remittances is quite visible in the religious spheres and the Gulf connections are directly responsible for an Americanised version of Christianity in Kerala. Gulf migration perhaps has eroded the traditional nature of Syrian Christians, giving rise to a more exclusionary, dogmatic and a consumerist version of spirituality. Rituals and ceremonies have become the avenue to display the mobility and also to strengthen the honour of the family. In Kerala, religion is being used as a strategic platform to transform the economic capital earned from migration to achieve social prestige, status and legitimacy in the home society, and to maintain links with Kerala and facilitate easier-entry of the migrants to the home community. In other words, the religious spaces are being utilized by the migrants to display the newly acquired socio-economic mobility and also to demolish the feudatory class structure. The aspirant new rich migrants is inadvertently relying on spirituality and religion to erase the past and to elevate into the status of erstwhile upper classes. This study therefore seems to have unraveled the transformative dynamics of migration with special reference to religion.

“Migration, money and masculinity in Kerala” is an article by Filippo Osella & Caroline Osella, (Osella 2000) which examined migration, styles of masculinity and male trajectories through the life-cycle in Kerala, in a region with a long history of high migration, most lately to the Persian

Gulf states. This Ethnographic study suggests that migration may be integrated into wider identity projects and form part of local subjectivities. The article considered four important local categories: the gulfan migrant, typically an immature unmarried male; the kallan, a self-interested maximizer or individualistic anti-social man; the pavam, an innocent good-guy, generous to the point of self-destruction; mature householder status, a successful, social, mature man holding substantial personal wealth, supporting many dependents and clients. Another theme to emerge was the relationship between masculinity and cash: migration appears as particularly relevant to masculinity in its enhanced relationship with money, an externalizable (detachable) form of masculine potency: maturity means being able to use such resources wisely.

Migration patterns and their socio-economics by K.C. Zacharia, E.T. Mathews and S. Irudaya Rajan was concerned with analysing the characteristics of gulf migration and examined its consequences on the society and economy of the state ( Zacharia, Mathews & Rajan 1998). The study also aimed at helping formulation of policies for development and solution of problems caused by migration.

According to the study, the number of persons going out of Kerala has been increasing ever since the 1940s. The composition of the migration flows has changed in the 1980s from predominantly out-migrating to predominantly emigrating. Another finding was that a slowdown in the economy of the Gulf countries could be a factor in the possible declining trend of emigration. Similarly, suffer competition which the Kerala workers face from well-trained workers from other countries in South and South East Asia, could result in yet another setback. But the study concluded that emigration will continue to increase for some more years, but return migration would increase at a faster rate, resulting in a period of net negative international migration.

K.C. Zacharia, E.T. Mathews and S. Irudaya Rajan in another study, titled “Consequences of migration: Socio-Economic and Demographic Dimensions”, examined various aspects of the impact of migration on Kerala’s economy and society and published it as a working paper (Zacharia, Mathews & Rajan 1998). The study concluded that the families of emigrants -those which became single or two member, or woman – headed, or with young wives removed from their husbands were serving their self-interests; but there was also a considerable spin-off effect which served the interests of the state. They brought in remittances, expertise, contacts with the

outside economy etc. They have a right to receive help from the community when they needed it. The panchayats and the other local government organisations should be sensitised about these problems. They should develop local level policies and programmes to deal with them.

“Working in Gulf: employment, wages and working conditions” was a study financed by NORKA and conducted in UAE by K.C. Zacharia, B.A. Prakash and S. Irudaya Rajan. They aimed at four aspects of Kerala Emigrants in United Arab Emirates such as changes in the labour demand for different categories of emigrant workers, emigration policies, employment, and education and training requirements of future emigrants. It also listed major issues confronted by emigrants in UAE and made suggestions on how to deal with them (Zacharia, Prakash & Rajan 1998).

“Kerala’s Gulf Connection: Remittances and their Macroeconomic Impact” was a study conducted by K.P. Kannan and K.S. Hari, focusing on the remittances made by emigrants and their impact on the economy of Kerala. The study aimed to quantify the remittance income from abroad to the Kerala economy since 1972 and to examine the extent to which the remittances have influenced income, consumption and savings in the Kerala economy. This study found that by the early nineties remittances to the Kerala economy assumed significant share of the state income. The Kerala economy benefited directly by the liberalisation of the foreign exchange rate since 1991. The increase in per capita income as a result of remittances helped to increase the consumption in Kerala. After 1978, the per capita consumer expenditure in Kerala exceeded that of India (Kannan and Hari 2000).

## **2:5 Conclusion**

The literature review clearly shows that there is not much studies involving indepth analysis of the struggles, challenges and progress, exploring, the life and livelihood of Pravaasis qualitatively, There is no comprehensive study, longitudinally, analysing the three generational transformation of the migrants and their families and the resultant changes in Kerala society. Moreover, there is near absence of any study that makes an enquiry into the role of Gulf migration in the making of the middle class and accompanied propensities of modernity in Kerala in the post independent era. This study in a way seeks to directly address these gaps in the diaspora



literature, especially on Kerala and hence it embarked upon an inquiry that will help us to unravel the processes and dynamics of transformation of the low-end job Gulf pravasi at the micro as well as the macro aspects and thereby mapping the changes both at the subjective (personal) and objective (societal) realms of the migration to the Gulf.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3:1 Title of the Study

Gulf Migration And Transformation To Prosperity: An Analysis of the Dynamics of the Process

#### 3:2 Methodology in Perspective

The major deficiency identified in the literature review raises a critical question concerning the approach and method of the proposed study. The review on migratory and diaspora studies in general are mostly quantitative in approach employing survey method (Titus 2013; Zachariah, Nair & Rajan 2006; Prakash 2000). Such surveys generally look at the cost of emigration, trends of return emigration, causes of return and profile of return emigrants, economic consequences to the host region in terms of fall in remittance and economic recession and so on and so forth.

The basic approach of these studies seems unable to embark upon a journey along the subjective trajectories of the subjective and objective transformations occurred on account of the Gulf migration of the low end pravasi Malayalees and analyse the dynamics of the processes. The inherent weakness of these surveys seems to be its objectivist epistemology that has a built-in prejudice towards quantitative approach. The plethora of scholarship appears to inhere a bias towards economic remittance and hence a quantitative methodological inclination.

It is needless to say that rather long and mostly turbulent and perilous sojourn of the a low end job migrant cannot be fully fathomed and analysed by modelling the macroeconomic effects and problems, which operate from within the ontological and epistemological frameworks of demography and economics. Such studies do not seem to provide the scope for penetrating

investigations and explanations, other than a closed presentation of ‘facts’, ‘numbers’ and ‘figures’. Hence, a disjunction seems to prevail in the migration studies in general, and the studies on the dynamics of the transformative processes of the low end migrants in particular that grossly neglect the non-material, that is socio-cultural dimensions of their life, although the focus of the study is on the transformation that occurred in the class character of the migrants. But this shift in the class position of the migrants, if any, is apparently intertwined with corresponding changes in the value systems and other socio-cultural aspects in the lives of the migrants as well as Kerala Society.

The pilot conversations that I had held with a couple of low-end job Gulf Pravasis in Kazhakootam, in Thiruvananthapuram in lieu of the preparatory work in designing and outlining this proposal revealed to me the fact that 1) the long migratory life of the Pravasis are multidimensional in character, 2) they are not simply economic entities alone and 3) their transformation is not solely financial in nature, rather they are intertwined with several other aspects and factors that are non-economic and non-material. Thus, it appears that only a multi-prong and holistic approach can unearth these critical non-economic and non-material factors which in a way are not only entangled with, but also condition the economic and material transformation that is integral to the movement of their class position.

It is more than evident that in order to take cognizance of these multidimensional aspects and ramifications of their transformative sojourn and to map the socio-cultural and value-laden transformations, a more empathetic understanding - *verstehen*, to use the Weberian phrase and diagnosing of their micro reality becomes imperative. It points to emphasising an interpretative epistemology and qualitative methodology in capturing and analysing the dynamics of the processes of the the low-end job Pravasi emigrants. Therefore, employing a multi-disciplinary frame of reference, the present study proposes to embark on a qualitative journey into the lives of the low end job emigrants from the Gulf, with a view to map and analyse the dynamics of the processes of the transformation in their lives first and then the Society at large. Accordingly, the following research questions are framed:

### **3:3 Research questions**

- What are the socio-economic conditions and standard of living of the parents of the Gulf migrant?
- What are the socio-economic conditions and standard of living of the Gulf migrant before migration?
- What have been the perceptible changes in the socio-economic profile and standard of living of the family of the Gulf migrant after migration?
- What are the factors and conditions in the homeland that drove the migrants to seek job in the Gulf country?
- What are the various processes, problems and difficulties that came on the way in the course of the preparation for the migration?
- Is there any change in the subjective perceptions of the migrant labourer regarding the self and identity in the wake of being a Gulf migrant?
- What are the transformations that occurred in the standard of living in terms of the education of the children, health care, consumption pattern, construction/renovation of the house, transportation facilities etc.of the dependents of the migrants back home?
- What are the changes in the social relations and networks of kinship, friendship, religion and caste of the migrants and their family?

### **3:4 Objectives**

In the light of the above research questions, the study proposes to closely examine the following objectives:

#### **3:4:1 General Objective**

To embark upon a journey into the lives of low-end Gulf migrants before and after they set out on their migration to the Gulf regions and capture the perceptible transformations in terms of their class position.

#### **3:4:2 Specific Objectives**

1. To document the three generational socio-economic profile of the Gulf migrant – parents, the migrant, and his family - from a longitudinal frame.

2. To understand the condition of the Gulf migrants in the homeland that necessitated their migration to the Gulf country.
3. To probe into various struggles, stress and strain involved in the process of Gulf migration.
4. To look into the transformation, if any, in the subjective perceptions on money, relationships, the self and identity as a Gulf migrant.
5. To examine the changes and effects in the familial and interpersonal relationships on account of migration.
6. To unearth the changes in the life-style of the dependants of the migrants back home, including the education of the children, health care, consumption pattern, and construction/innovation of the house.
7. To fathom the changes in the social relations and networks in terms of kinship, friendship, religion and caste of the migrants and their families.

### **3:5 Variables & Indicators**

**3:5:1 Dependent Variables:** Transformation in various facets such as,

Education, Income, Class position, income, Savings and Debts, Purchasing power, House, Food, Health care, Household consumables, Clothing, Chappals and Cosmetics, Vehicles, Electronic gadgets, Life style, Consumption pattern, Gender, Mass media and Communication equipments, Standard of living

**3:5:2 Independent Variables:** Gulf migration

**3:6 Major Indicators:** Standardized data will be collected across the longitudinal frame of three generations on the major indicators of the variables that are examined; they include,

- School/educational institutions studied,
- Frequency and nature of the consumption of food on a daily basis, luxury goods, branded items, dressing pattern, pairs of dresses, slippers, cosmetics, gadgets etc.
- Nature of occupation/job
- Salary – daily/weekly/monthly,

- The type of dresses worn and their number,
- Bank savings and Accounts,
- Type of house
- Type of hospitals for health care
- Mode of transportation
- Media and technology access – news paper, radio, TV, computer, internet, mobile phones etc & Use of social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp etc.
- Communal, Political and National interest

Based on the data gathered on these indicators, the study developed the class indicators for the lower class and middle class in Kerala.

### **3:7.Research Design**

The study employed a concurrent embedded strategy of mixed method (Cresswell et al. 2011) in which both qualitative and quantitative data are collected simultaneously. However, there is a primary method that basically guided the study and a secondary database that provided a supporting role in the procedure. Since the focus of the study is on the dynamics of the social processes of the transformation that happened in the lives of a low end job Pravasi, it basically employed a qualitative method with an emphasis on the content analysis of case narratives. Given less priority, the secondary method of quantitative data is embedded, or nested, within the predominant qualitative method. The embedding of the quantitative data into the qualitative design is to enrich the description of the sample participants and to better illuminate the three generational indicators of transformation that contributed to the shift in the class position of the low end migrant labourer. Both types of data are collected simultaneously during a single data collection phase.

The emphasis on qualitative approach is based on the view that, it took into account the heterogeneity of the subjects, and captured better 1) the insider's points of view and their subjective perceptions, 2) the social processes and forces that reflected the unique experiences and values rather than seeking a set of fixed measures and estimates. It is believed that an intensive journey into the lives of a cross section of the low-end Gulf migrants, provided a

comprehensive and holistic understanding of the processes of the dynamics of the transformation of the migrant Gulf labourers.

### **3:8: Universe**

The universe consisted of low-end male Gulf migrants from the state of Kerala.

### **3:9 Unit of Analysis**

The unit of the study included a single low end male Gulf migrant.

### **3:10 Data Collection**

The subjects of the study constituted male Gulf migrants who have engaged in low-end jobs for a minimum of ten years in the Gulf and who may have returned or is still working in the Gulf. Twenty five cases were identified from the three zones of the state of Kerala, namely, South, Central and North zones. Accordingly, cases were identified from Trivandrum, Quilon, Pathanamthitta & Malappuram districts which have the largest number of migrants in the State, according to the statistics of the Economic Survey (2016). The number is delimited to twenty five, as it was perceived to be a reasonable number for a qualitative study and a sizeable number to arrive at some common findings and conclusions on the standardized data on the socio-economic and life style profile of the participants of the study.

The restriction on male migrants was with the specific intention of closely capturing the dynamics of the processes of transformation into a higher class status, since that forms the singular focus of the proposed study.

An elaborate interview guide with certain standardized questions on the socio-economic and life style profile was prepared for the conduct of the qualitative interview. The interviews that lasted for a minimum of one hour duration, were audio recorded. The participants for the interviews were identified using snow ball method.

The primary method that guided the research was therefore, qualitative and a secondary database that provided a supporting role in the procedure was, quantitative. As the study

followed a concurrent embedded strategy of mixed methods design, certain amount of quantitative data on a three generational plane were also collected in the course of the qualitative interviews, in order to draw on certain common findings and conclusions. Hence, a set of standardized data on the socio-economic and living standard along the indicators listed above, were collected from the participants.

The audio records of the qualitative interviews were subjected to a two tier data processing; First, preparation of the case narratives through a verbatim transcription and second, entering the three generational quantitative estimates on certain specific indicators of the processes of transformation into SPSS. Later, both the qualitative and quantitative data were subjected to rigorous and systematic analysis using the respective modes of analysis. Accordingly, qualitative narratives were subjected to systematic content analysis, based on the themes developed on the basis of the research questions and the standardized set of quantitative data were subjected to quantitative analysis to draw some common findings and conclusions.

In the final analysis, narratives of the qualitative interviews of the twenty five cases constituted the primary type of data. I have used narrative paradigm, based on a notion of narrative rationality by the 20<sup>th</sup> century communication theorist Walter Fisher (1984, 1985) in contrast to the conventional model of formal rationality where human communication is expected to follow the rules of formal logic (logico-scientific mode). Here narrative is regarded as a common mode of communication. The notion of narrative as a mode of communication stemmed from a conception of the human being as *Homo narrans* (Fisher 1984), as enacted narrative as a basic form of social life (MacIntyre 1981/1990:120), which has been elaborated by several Social Anthropologists (Burke 1945, Geertz 1980, Turner 1982, Czarniawska 2002). In this sense, narrative is regarded as a fundamental mode of knowing (Bruner 1987) which consists in organizing experience with the help of a scheme assuming the intentionality of human action. Thus, stating the importance of narratives in human lives, Barthes said: "...narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the history of mankind and there nowhere is nor has been a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives" (1977:79).



## Chapter 4

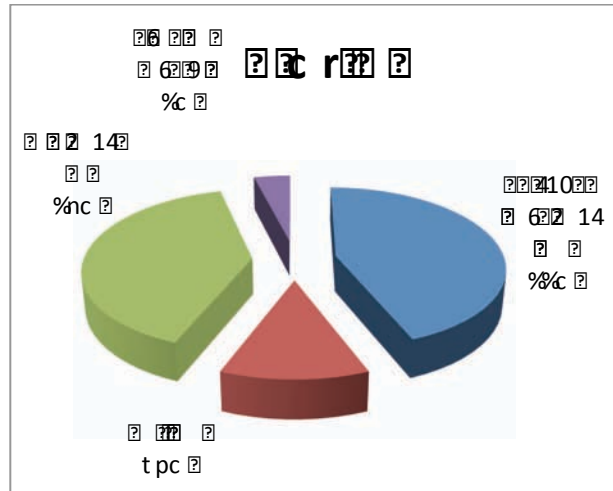
### **MAKING OF A LOWER CLASS GULF MIGRANT: BACKGROUND AND FOREGROUND**

This chapter provides the basic socio-economic profile and the details related to the Gulf migration of the subjects who participated in the case study. As elaborated in the methodology chapter, the study followed a mixed method design, wherein primacy is given to qualitative method. Accordingly, twenty five case studies were conducted and the case narratives were prepared which will be subjected to theme wise systematic content analysis in the next chapter. As part of the concurrent embedded strategy of the mixed method, using a standardized set of questions, quantitative data of the twenty five cases was collected simultaneously along with the qualitative data. The standardized questions basically contained questions on the socio-economic profile and migration details of the subjects and questions on some aspects in the lives of three generations of the migrants that would indicate the nature and processes of transformation that was brought about in the lives of the low-end job pravasi on account of Gulf migration. What follows is a detailed presentation of the profile of the subjects and the details of their migration to the Gulf. The List of Tables are given in Appendix 1.

The subjects of the study were chosen from four districts in Kerala, namely Malappuram, Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Pathanamthitta. However, as evident from Diagram 4:1, Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram were given primary focus, because, according to the Migration Survey 2014 (Zacharia and Rajan 2015), these two districts have the largest population of migrants. Hence, majority of the subjects to the tune of 84 per cent hail from these two districts comprising of 10 (40%) and 11 (44%) subjects respectively from Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram respectively. Only nominal cases of subjects were chosen from Kollam (3 Cases) and Pathanamthitta (1 Case) districts to ensure some representation of those districts

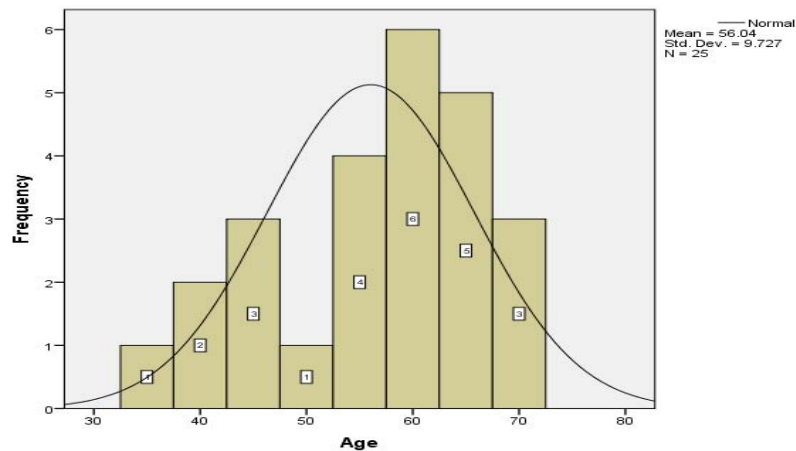
known for the migration of specific communities, namely Latin and Syrian Christians who are considered as important communities in the migratory map of Gulf migration (Oommen 2017).

**Diagram 4:1**  
**District-wise distribution of the Subjects**



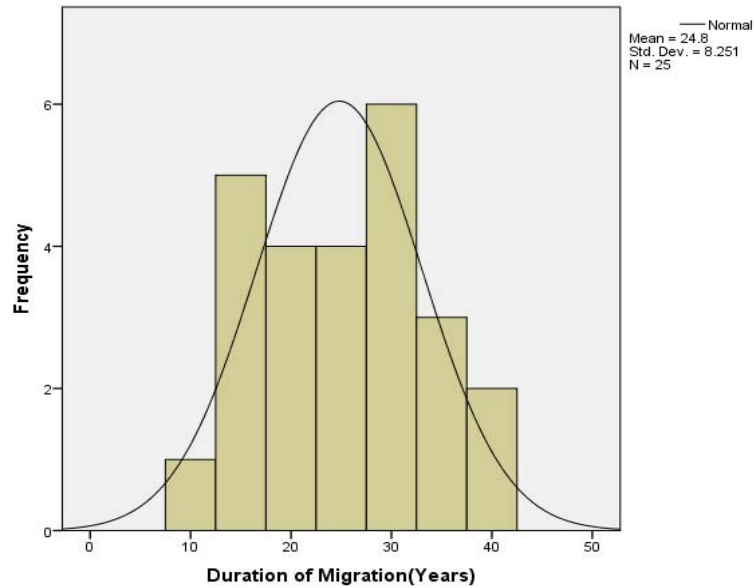
The distribution of the subjects in these four districts included the following areas. In Thiruvananthapuram the respondents were from Kaniyapuram (2), Murukkumpuzha (4) , Kazhakuttom (1), Pulluvilla (1) and Vennicode (3). In Malapuram, the respondents belonged to Kannath (4), Chilamilakai (1), and Muduvaloor (5). In Kollam and Pathanamthitta the respondents where from Nindakara (3) and Pandalam (1) respectively.

**Diagram 4:2**  
**The Age of the Subjects**



The current age of the subjects, as shown in Diagram 4:2, ranges from 35 to 70. The youngest among the subjects was aged 35 comparing to the oldest case who was aged 70. The average age of the subjects was 56 and the standard deviation is 9.73.

**Diagram 4:3**  
**Number of years spent in the Gulf**



When Diagram 4:2 is read along with Diagram 4:3, it points to the fact that most of the low end job migrant labourers, whether young or old, migrate to the Gulf at a very young age and spend their youthful years in the Gulf, laboring and toiling there, as portrayed by Benyamin, in his Kerala Sahyithya Academy Award winning Novel, *Aadujeevitham*, (2012) to make a decent living back home.

Diagram 4:5 further reiterates the fact that the majority of the subjects, as high as 80% first migrated to the Gulf in their early twenties. Surprisingly, two of them were only nineteen years of age, when they first went to the Gulf as a migrant labourers. On the other spectrum, one subject went to the Gulf for the first time when he was 37 years old, and he still continues to work there.

**Diagram 4:4**  
**The Year first Migrated**

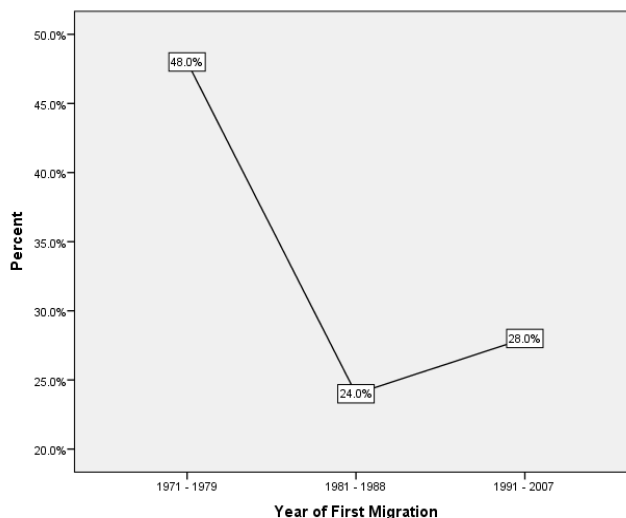


Diagram 4:4 that shows the year of first migration to the Gulf confirms the fact that several of the Gulf migrants in Kerala, especially of the previous generation, tend to spent their youthful age in the Gulf. The year of first migration goes as far as the seventies and some subjects who belonged to this batch seemed to have worked in the Gulf for more than three decades. Almost half (12 Nos.) of the total of twenty five subjects belonged to the group who migrated to the Gulf in the seventies. The most recent year of migration is in 2007, who still continue to work in the Gulf. In fact all those who went to the Gulf after 2000 are still working in the Gulf. Those of whom had migrated in the 70's have worked there very long durations as long as 30 years and more.

As regard their home visits, as shown in Diagram 4:6, majority of the subjects visited their homes once in two years, though a few had the opportunity to visit their homeland often. On the other extreme, some of them could make it only once in a while. The possibility of coming home mostly depended on being able to afford the expenses oneself and getting leave from the employer, since they belonged to low end job category, paid home visits were not within their reach. A rarity in this case is that one respondent was able to visit his homeland once a month, This is mostly due to the nature of his employment.

Diagram 4:5  
Age at First Migration

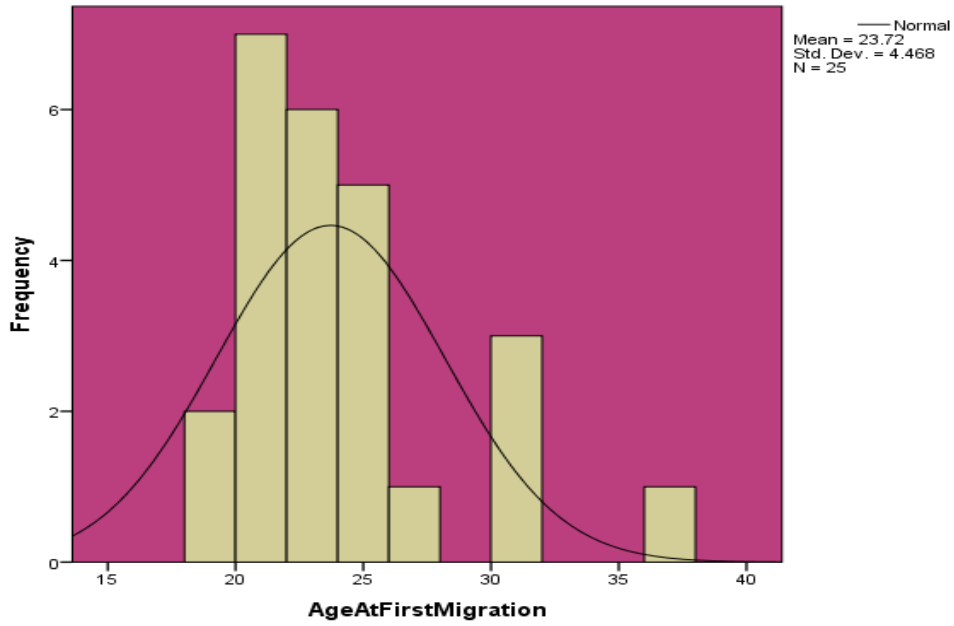


Diagram 4:6  
Frequency of home visit

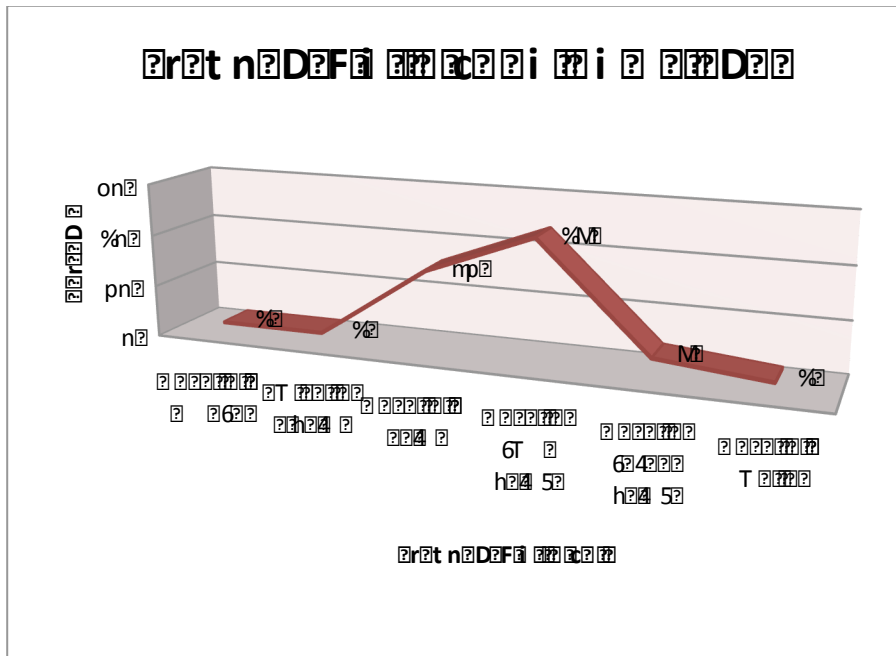
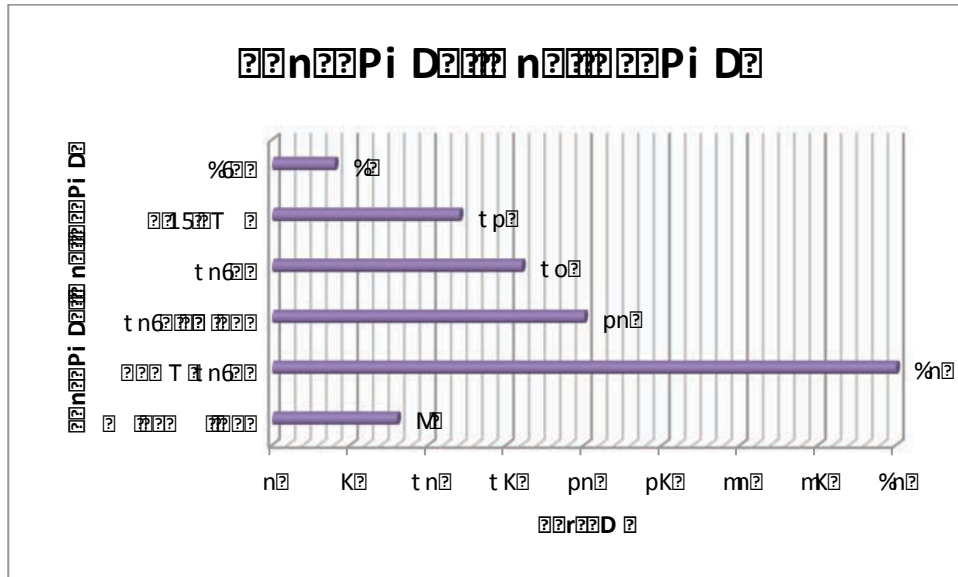


Diagram 4:7  
Educational Qualification of the subjects



The educational qualification of the subjects, as displayed in diagram 4:7, shows that the majority, to the tune of 80 per cent (20 subjects) has studied either only up to (36%) or below (44%) 10<sup>th</sup> standard. Only two of them have studied plus two, which was known as Pre-degree at that time. And it is to be specially noted that two of them did not have any formal schooling. The low end job status of the subjects in a way is a direct commentary on the low level of the education of the subjects. In fact, beneath these two mutually reinforcing categories, namely low level of education and low end jobs of the migrants, lies the crux of the study - the dynamics of the process of transformation to prosperity, if any. This will be unfolded in the next chapter wherein the narratives as the real life episodes are subjected to rigorous scrutiny.

Diagram 4:8 vividly presents the kind of works in which the subjects had been engaged in. As the study focussed on those low end job Gulf migrants, it is natural that the types of works ranged from from baker to manual labourer. However, four of them in the array of these wide range of jobs, namely, electrician, mason, driver and labourer appeared to be more prominent as more number of subjects were employed in these jobs. Interestingly, one of them was employed in the army, which was a rare case. A few of them have had the opportunity to get promoted in their work from a welder or electrician or baker, for instance, to supervisors or managers of their respective fields. This was possible because they have proved their mettle by exhibiting their

exceptional skill and ability acquired through long years of sustained hard work and ingenuity and above all, through the integrity of character that gained the trust and confidence of their employers.

**Diagram 4:8**  
**Type of work subjects were employed in the Gulf**

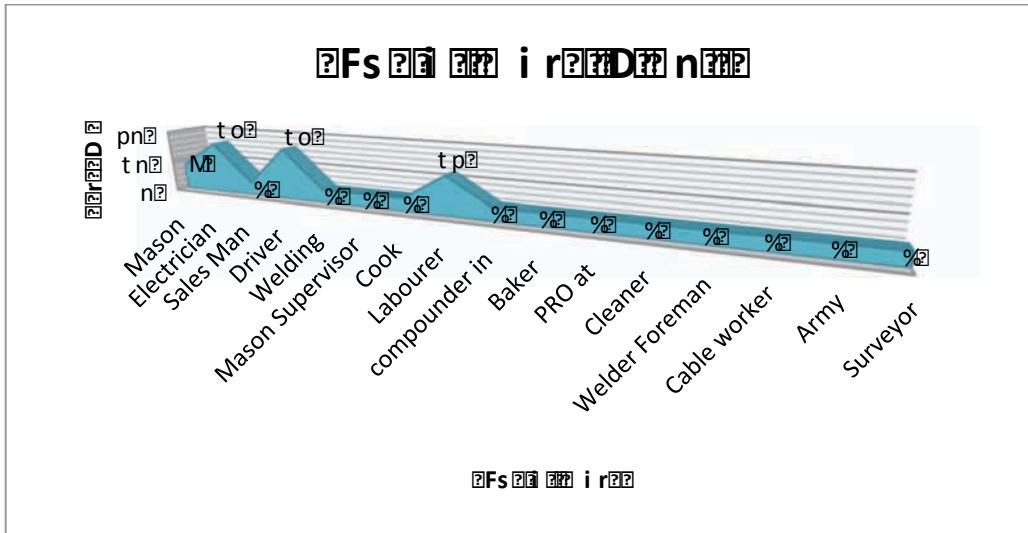
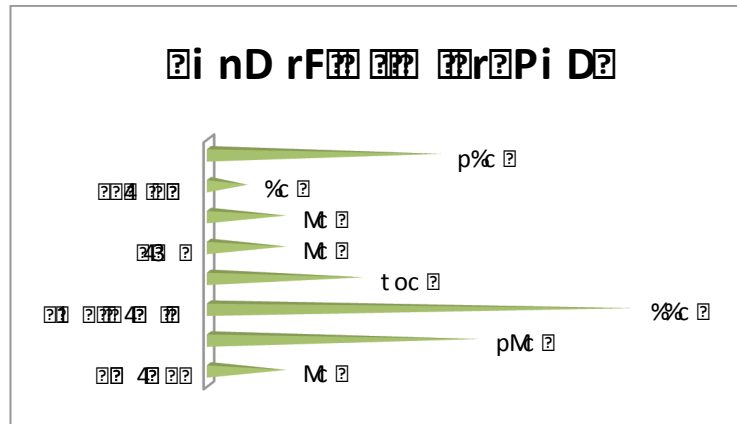


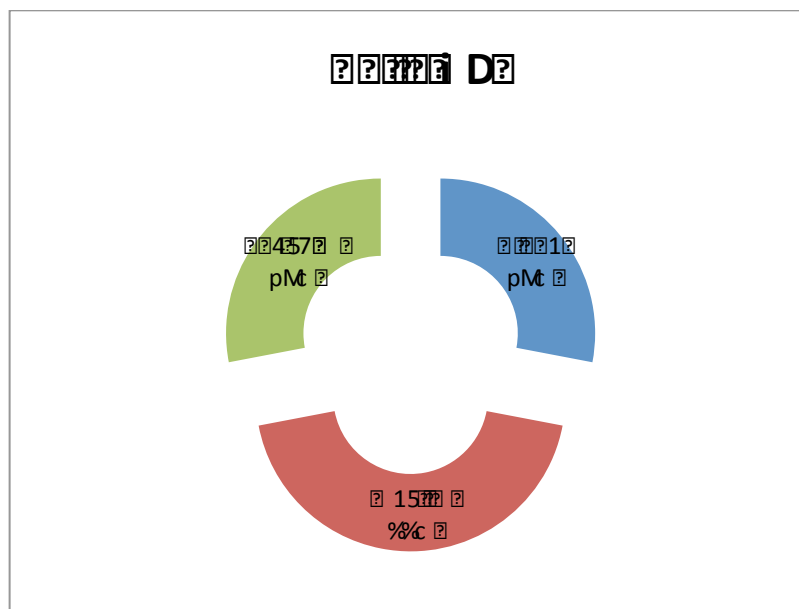
Diagram 4:9 maps the countries to which the subjects have migrated to. As it is evident from the diagram, a disproportionately high percentage (44%) of the subjects migrated to Saudi Arabia. The main reason is that in early 70s and the beginning of 80s several migrations to the Gulf occurred with the migrant first going to Saudi Arabia for the religious purpose of Umra and then continuing to stay there illegally until a formal Visa is obtained. Saudi Arabia thus became the cherished destination for several low end migrant laborers from Malappuram. Oman and Sharjah are the countries the subjects have least migrated to. Bahrain, Iraq and Qatar seems to be a fair choice among the respondents. The remaining Dubai and Abu Dhabi are at an average with 7 and 6 respectively, which shows that these two countries are most migrated to after Saudi Arabia.

**Diagram 4:9**  
**Country of Migration in the Gulf**



The study focussed on all three prominent religions in Kerala. It is a common fact that migration to the gulf countries are more prominent among the Muslim community. The predominance of the Muslim community is thus reflected in the selection of the subjects of the study, who contributed to 44% of the total subjects. The Christians and Hindu community were equally distributed with seven each out of the 25 subjects which contributes to 28% each. This religion-wise distribution of the subjects, more or less reflects the situation of the migrants in the State in terms religion.

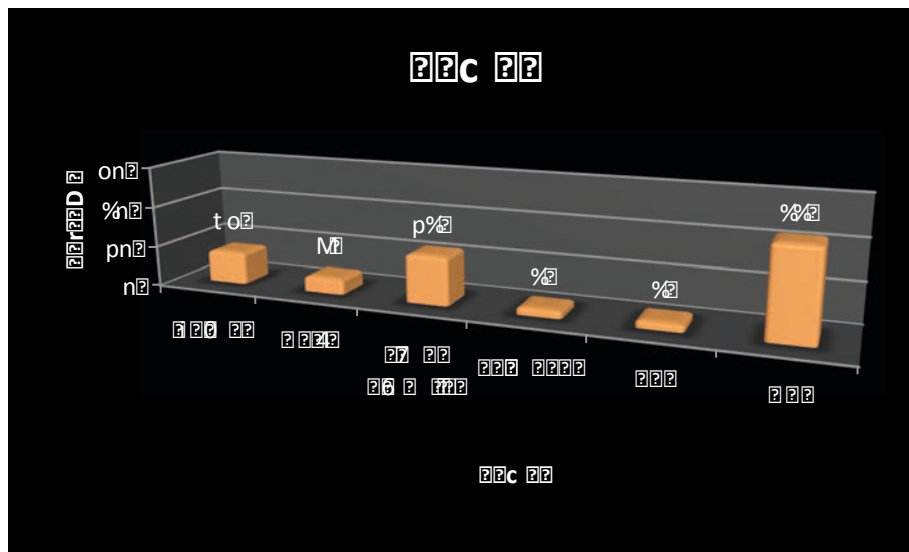
**Diagram 4:10**  
**Religion-wise distribution of the subjects**





The caste-wise distribution of the subjects as shown in Diagram 4:11, reveals that we came across the study can be seen in the chart above. The caste of the Muslim migrants were recorded as “NA” meaning ‘not applicable’ and thus they constitute the largest group in the caste-wise distribution.

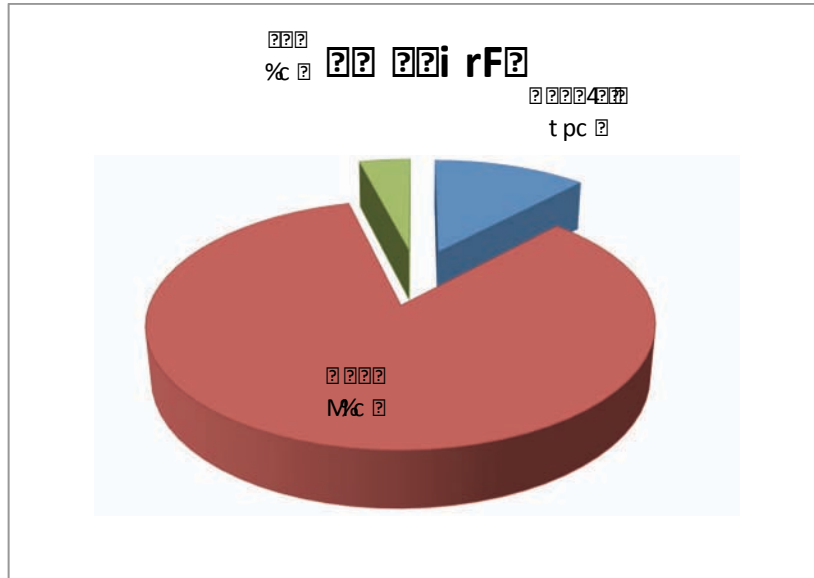
**Diagram 4:11**  
**Caste-wise distribution of the subjects**



Apart from that the caste that stood out in the study was Latin catholic, a major denomination of Christianity (24%), which is followed by Ezhava (16%) of Hindu religion, which, in a way reflect the caste-wise distribution of the migrants from Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam Districts. The rest of the caste/denomination included Nairs (8%), Thandan (4%) and Syrian Christians (4%) were the other caste/denominations.

In a category-wise analysis as evident in Diagram 4:12, those belonging to the OBC category dominated with 84% and the scheduled caste has the smallest share with 4%, whereas the general category contributed to 12% making it second after the OBC category. Correlating this to the previous diagrams 4:5 & 4:6, which showed the religion and caste of the subjects in which Muslims formed the majority in respect of religion and in respect of caste, Ezhava, Latin Catholic and Thandan formed a sizable chunk of the subjects, all of them belonged to the OBC category.

**Diagram 4:12**  
**Category-wise analysis of the subjects in terms of Caste/Religion**



**Diagram 4:13**  
**Nature of the place of residence, whether Rural or Urban**

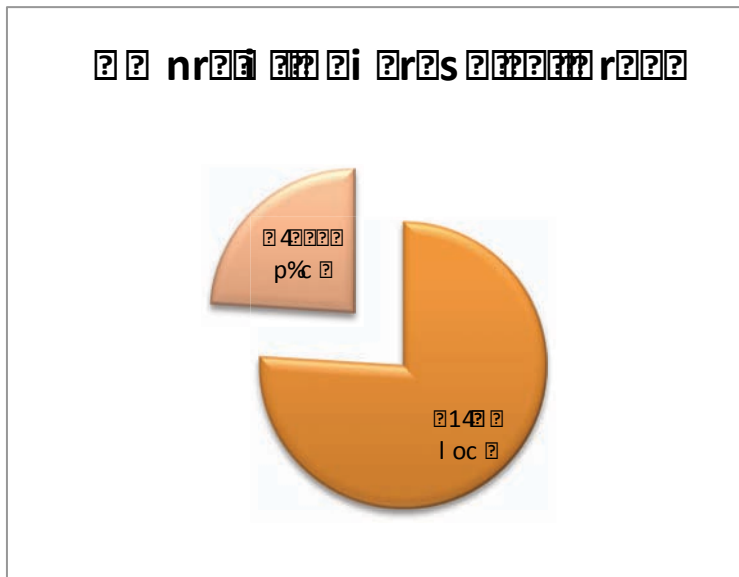
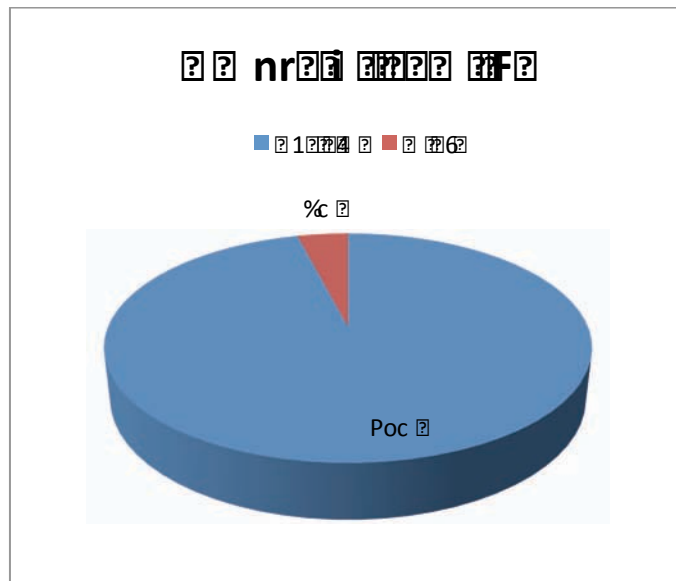


Diagram 4:13 shows the nature of the area where the subjects reside at present. The majority of them (76%) belonged to rural area and the remaining 24% percentage lives in urban area. This

perhaps is an indication of the type of migration that occurred in the seventies and eighties in Kerala, that it was mostly from the rural areas, where there was shortage of employment and decent means of livelihood, that people looked up to the deserts in the Gulf as dream lands where they could make a living and redress their existential predicament.

In terms of the marital status of the subjects, all of them were married; however, most of them got married after they started working in the gulf, only a very few had married at the time of migration.

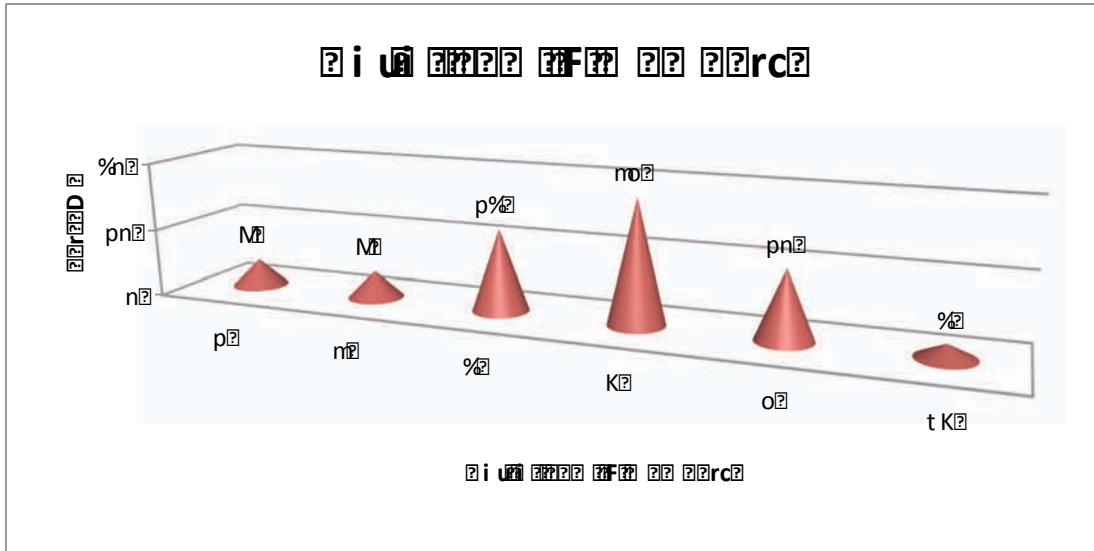
**Diagram 4:14**  
**Nature of the family of the Subjects**



As diagram 4:14 shows that nearly all the subjects (24 Nos.) of the study belonged to the nuclear family and only one subject belonged to joint family which contributes only as low as 4% of the total. A fact regarding this is that more than half of the respondents have reported to have belonged to a joint family and shifted to a nuclear family after they got married. It was their job in the Gulf that enabled them to build a house of their own, which opened up the possibility of living independently.

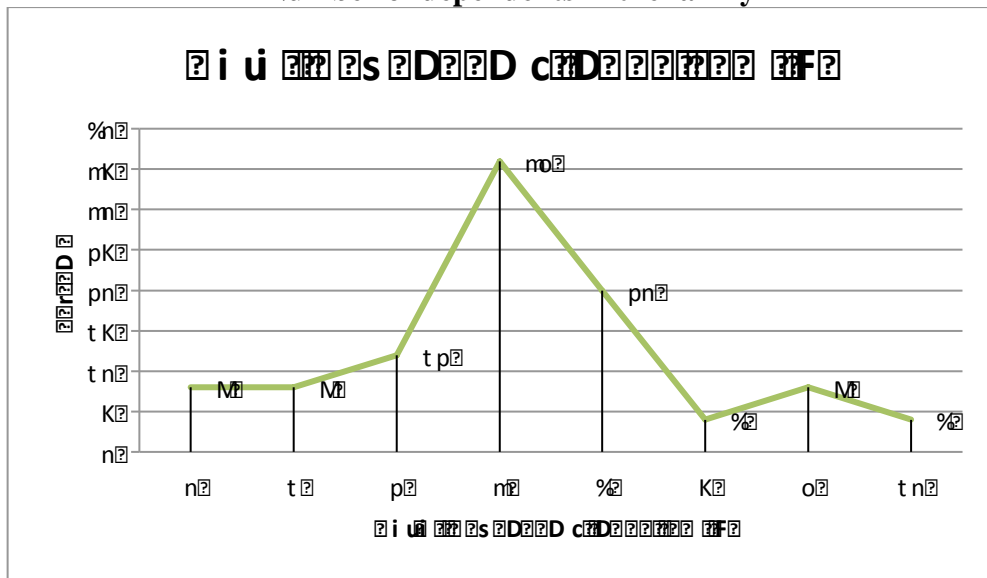
Diagram 4:15 reveals that the families of the subjects consist of members varying from 2 to 6 and only in one case having 15 members in the family and that was the joint family. The mean number of the members in the family is five and the standard deviation is 2.34.

Diagram 4:15  
Number of members in the Family

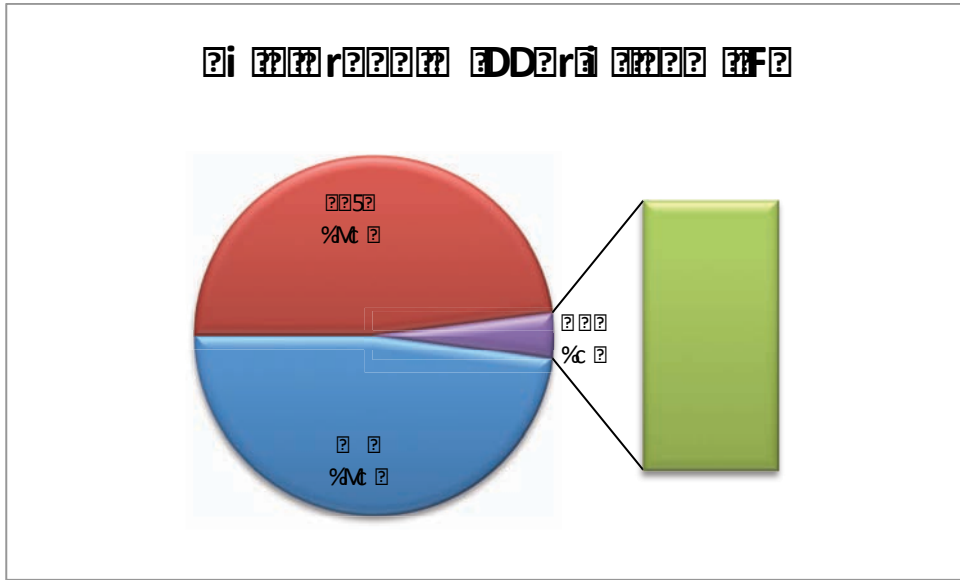


The diagram 4:16 displays the number of dependents in the family from the perspective of the subjects. Majority of them has three dependents in their homes which accounts for 36 percentage of the total and it appears that the average number of dependents is also three as that is the mean and the standard deviation is 2.

Diagram 4:16  
Number of dependents in the family



**Diagram 4:17**  
**Whether the subject is the sole bread winner**



In respect of the question whether the subject is the sole bread winner of the family, as diagram 4:17 reveals, there was equal percentage of affirmation and negation. The affirmation, it is perceived, has come from mostly junior respondents whose children are still in their dependent status, either studying or seeking employment and conversely, the negation has come from the senior ones who have crossed sixty years of age, as their children have some gainful employment and thus are able to share the burden of the subjects in taking care of the family.

## Chapter 5

### TRANSFORMATIVE SOJOURN

#### Part I

#### Embarking on the Sojourn to the Unfamiliar Shores

##### 1. Introduction

The primary aim of the study is to embark upon a journey into the lives of low-end Gulf migrants before and after they set out on their migration to the Gulf regions and to capture the perceptible transformations in terms of their class position. This chapter, divided into three parts, seeks to capture the result of this journey, by unfolding the dynamics of the processes of transformative sojourn. As mentioned in the Introductory chapter while setting the 'problem in perspective', the focus is on capturing the milestones of the transformations that took place in both the lives of low-end Gulf migrants as well as the changes accompanied by it in the Kerala society at large. The key to unfolding the dynamics of these processes of transformation, is to excavate the changes, if any, in the class position of the migrants before and after they embarked on their sojourn to the Gulf countries as migrant labourers. To this effect, through a sociological prism, a three generational gaze from the perspective of the migrant, was undertaken, namely 1) generation of the parents of the migrant; 2) generation of the migrant, 3) generation of the children of the migrant. The major focus of this three generational gaze has been on fathoming the transformation, if any, in the class status of the family of the migrant labourer, in this longitudinal graph revolving around the migrant himself. If a marked change is perceived in the graph in terms of the class status of the migrant labourer, it is presumed that the key factor that induced such a change would be his migration to the Gulf and the income that he got on account of it. Hence, migration to the Gulf, is identified as the key independent variable, like a reagent, of the perceived transformation.

The sociological gaze on the transformative graph of the three generations was carried out using a concurrent embedded strategy of mixed method, emphasising qualitative method. Accordingly, the necessary quantitative data on a three generational framework with the help of a standardized set of questions, was gathered along with a rich pool of qualitative data from twenty five typical cases. Anchoring primarily on the epistemological prism of narrative paradigm, the qualitative data is processed, scrutinized and analysed here. This chapter provides a detailed presentation of the analysis of this three generational sociological inquiry based on the narrative paradigm.

The processing of the supplementary quantitative data came in handy in identifying the major themes and categories under which the deliberations of the qualitative analysis are organized. Given below are those themes and categories used for the analysis of the narratives which were then used to map the transformative milestones of the migrant:

1. The class position of the migrants
2. Nature of occupation/job
3. Earnings/Income/Savings
4. Expenditure
5. Education obtained and the School/educational institutions studied
6. Frequency and nature of the consumption of food on a daily basis
7. Use of luxury goods, branded items,
8. The type of dresses worn and their number,
9. Use and quantum of slippers, chapals, cosmetics, gadgets etc..
10. Type of house; renovation/construction of houses
11. Type of hospitals for health care and treatment
12. Mode of transportation; ownership of vehicles
13. Media and technology access – news paper, radio, TV, computer, internet and mobile phones
14. Use of social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp etc
15. Status and condition of the womenfolk – mother/wife
16. Communal, Political and National interest & involvement
17. Membership and participation in associations, organizations and political parties.

What follows is the analysis and commentaries on the dynamics of the process of transformation that occurred to the migrant labourer as a result of his migration to the Gulf according to the indicators listed above. The analysis is carried out on a longitudinal frame involving three generations from the perspective of the migrant. The focus is on the perceptive transformations in the lives of the migrant after he took out his sojourn to the Gulf countries, in the backdrop of the lives of two generations below and above the migrant labourers themselves. The chapter is organized into three parts:

**Part I: Embarking the sojourn** – the socio-economic conditions and status of the family before embarking on the sojourn, the more specific background of the sojourn, the jobs/works in the Gulf and the accompanied struggles and hardships, the income, expenditure, remittances and earnings before and after going to the Gulf

**Part II: Transformative Sojourn from Penury to Prosperity**—unravelling the processes of the dynamics of the specific areas of transformation from a three generational perspective

**Part III: Triumphs, Trials and Tribulations**—Unfolding the subjective (personal and familial) and objective (communitarian and societal) effects, including that of the women, in the form of triumphs, and the accompanied trials and tribulations in realising those triumphs and the ways in which the migrants overcome their longing for the homeland, and the critical areas that require the urgent attention of those responsible for the redressal and welfare of the migrants; and finally ending up with a discussion on these three analysis sections.

All the names of the participants depicted in this chapter has been changed in order to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the subjects who took part in the study placing their trust and confidence in me, giving a genuine account of their saga of transformative sojourn to the Gulf countries.

## **2. The Low-Class Status of the Migrants**

Koya, a migrant from Malappuram narrates the socio-economic condition of his family before he embarked his sojourn to the Gulf pastures:

*Before going to Gulf I used to work as a coolie. While building foundations, I would work in filling it up for which I would be paid enough to buy 1kg of atta and 1/2kg of sugar so somewhere around 5 rupees for a day's work and on the day after such days breakfast*



*would be a sure thing at home because we would have bought atta the day before and that was inspiration enough to try and find work that same day. When we used to work in construction or change tiles, the owners would provide us with food in the afternoon because in those days such work would be carried out mostly at rich people's places (Koya).*

Koya's words are clear pointers to the the class position of the migrants of this study who embarked on their journey to the unfamiliar shores of the Gulf with the sole motive of making a living for themselves and their families that they were leaving behind, which they found would not be possible in their homeland at that critical juncture of their lives. We have the following pronouncements to substantiate:

*To have food three times a day was a luxury back in the day. What mainly was our food in those days is that there used to be tapioca vendors and we would go to the place where they collect or sell them and we used to gather these discarded pieces bring that home cook and eat that, so that was our main source of food. Also we would go to places where they were engaged in cleaning the wheat and we would collect leftovers and make a meal out of that as well. We didn't have enough land to cultivate and also in those days if you were occupied in cultivating your land and in the evening, there will be nothing to feed on (Koya, Malappuram).*

*We didn't have any of the items like food, clothes, even tooth paste... mine was a struggling middle class family with five members in it. (Sebastian, Pathanamthitta)*

*My father was a coolie and he wouldn't have work every day. On days that he did have work he would get paid about 20 to 30 rupees a day (Beeran, Malappuram).*

*In my childhood, life was really difficult. I was living in utter poverty and we didn't even have a cent in our name... When I was about two years old, my father abandoned my mother and he married another women and had a family with her ... When I grew up, those who took care of us left us, and my mother and I were left to fend for ourselves and in order to survive I used to do many odd jobs and I used to earn very little doing them (Muhammed, Malappuram).*

*In the beginning there were lots of difficulties, there were times when our father was out of work. So during my childhood, life was really tough... my father didn't have a stable job. He was working in a beedi company, rolling out beedis which didn't earn him much of an income back then. It was really difficult to get food supplies. Today it is easily available. Back then there wasn't much and whatever was available was expensive. So during those*

*days we lived through lots of difficulties... we were not able to go to school regularly ... even if we went it was very difficult (Saju, Kollam).*

*It was tough when I was growing up...I started working when I was seven years old and from that day onwards I have never stopped working a day in my life. But I am happy about that, because that's how one is supposed to live also because I worked hard I was able to marry off my sisters. When my father died, my youngest sister was just 2years old and today she has 5 children. I bought land for her, so that her family could build a house in it (Khadar, Malappuram).*

*My father didn't have any particular job, he had some land and we used to manage with the produces we got from that land. Occasionally he used to go to Wayanad and pluck peppers this was something seasonal. back then we didn't have enough money to buy News paper and allso when I was around 7 yrs old if we wanted to read we would go to the Vayanashala (Library). I also worked as a paper boy when I was around 9 or 10. I used to cycle for about 30 kms. delivering the newspaper called, "Janayugam"... I used to deliver up to 300 papers a day ... I don't think I was ever paid but then again probably they (local party men) got the commission because they were the ones who hired me... (Sasi, Thiruvananthapuram).*

As per the age of the migrants (cf: Diagram 4:4), it was in late 1960s and early 1970s that majority of these subjects went to the Gulf, in the face of penury in their homes. The narrations of the respondents clearly point to the fact that they belonged to poor families who could claim no ownership of means of production, other than that of the labour power, according to the Marxian frame of reference. In this sense, the participants of the study in general belonged to the lower class category and hence the term 'low-end migrants'. Further the narrations also reveal the fact that the socio-economic condition of the State during that time was bleak and there was widespread incidence of unemployment and poverty in the State. It is also important to note that those who were witness to this backward condition of the State are spread over all the four districts from where the subjects of the study are chosen and they also represent the major religions in the State. These elements reiterate the fact that the poverty-stricken condition of the State was general and pervasive cutting across districts, regions and religions, and not confined to any particular pocket, category or community in the State. Hence, it may be surmised that poverty and unemployment that prevailed in the State was the main push factor for most of the poor migrants, especially in the late 1960s and 70s to look up to the Gulf countries, although amidst insecurities and uncertainties, in order to re-construct their lives with some means of livelihood.

## 2. Embarking on the Sojourn

*Mostly it was the difficult circumstances of my family that prompted me to go (to the Gulf). I was able to arrange for a visa through my friend and I paid the required amount for it with my sister's help (Sankaran).*

*(I went to Gulf) since here there was no work and it was difficult to find work also... The mind set was like that because whoever went abroad was doing very well for themselves (Peter)*

As Sankaran and Peter, migrants from the capital city, say in plain and simple words, it appears that the migrants had only one and the same reason for going to the Gulf, namely “utter poverty and joblessness back home” that they were unable to make both ends meet. The above accounts of the participants also provide us with a clear picture of the nature of the occupations of the participants’ fathers –that is the first generation in the study - and the economic situation thereof in the families of the migrants. Understanding the occupations of the parents of the migrants – which is the first generation in this study - will definitely help us to better recognize the socio-economic situation that in a way forced the migrants to embark upon their Gulf sojourn. Here is an account from Koya, a migrant from Malappuram that is highly indicative of the typical occupational profile of the parents of a migrant – the first generation:

*My father used to roll beedi for a living and for that he would get paid some Rs. 2/- , then my father was in Bombay for a while, he would sell blankets and stuff to those going for Hajj and this was only during the Hajj season and sometimes my father used to send to home Rs.500/- a month and Rs.100/- out of that was spent for expenses and the rest that is 400 was saved... (Koya).*

The occupations followed by the migrant’s parents as shown in Table 5:1a, range from farmer to labourer to petty teashop to petty business to including a doctor and policeman also interestingly a few returnees from abroad (Singapore) as well. However, the main occupation of the parents seemed to be farming (Hamsa, Mustafa, Sebastian, Koya, Gomez) with limited areas of cultivation that would not bring them sufficient income for a decent living. Hence, as Hamsa recalls, typical of the farming families in Kerala, the migrants themselves had to invariably work in the field from their childhood onwards, although they would have to find some other odd jobs to contribute to their daily sustenance as they grew up.

Hamsa, a migrant from Malappuram witnesses thus:

*My father was a farmer...Mother and children also had to help him in the farming. Income was meagre and sometimes nothing at all when the harvest wasn't so good or during monsoon also. We also cultivated tapioca to harvest and whenever the harvest wasn't so good we used to sell tapioca and sustain ourselves (Hamsa, Malappuram).*

Some others of the first generation also earned their living by engaging in petty hotel/teashop to petty stationery store (Fathers of Pillai, Nazar & Sankaran) beedi roller to selling blanket for those going for Hajj (Koya's father in Mumbai); compounder in a medical clinic (Madhavan's father), Teacher in an LP School to Chitty (Sasi). In this context, it is to be taken special note that the mothers of the migrants – the first generation – normally did not go for any job outside, except those who helped their husbands in farming and tea shops. It is clear that most of the occupations of the migrants' parents, have brought them in general penury and deprivations and almost all of them were struggling to make both ends meet, even though two of them had rather high status occupations such as doctor and policeman.

**Table 5:1:1**  
**Occupations of Generation 1**

Occupation	Generation 1	
	Frequency	Percent
Teacher & Chitty	1	4.0
Clerk	1	4.0
Tea Shop	1	4.0
Abroad	3	12.0
Business	3	12.0
Salesman	1	4.0
Worker - timber shop	1	4.0
Agriculture & Cattle rearing	1	4.0
Worker at hotel	1	4.0
Agriculture	4	16.0
Compounder at clinic	1	4.0
Beedi rolling	2	8.0
Labourer	1	4.0
Fisherman	1	4.0
Actor	1	4.0
Police officer	1	4.0
Doctor	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0

Given the background of economic backwardness and poverty of their families, most of the migrants, before embarking to the Gulf, in their turn, also had to engage in someworks. But with the poor education that they could afford because of their poor economic condition in the families, they could engage only in some of the very low end jobs. Table 5:1:2 presents the specific works the migrants of the study were engaged in while they were growing up as they were left with no option but to fend for their as well as their family's means for survival.

**Table 5:1:2**  
**The nature of Occupations of Generation 2 –**  
**Migrants Before Going to the Gulf**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Generation 2 (Before Going to Gulf)</b>	
	Frequency	Percent
Mason	2	8.0
Electrician	1	4.0
Construction Works	2	8.0
No Job	8	32.0
Welder	2	8.0
Aluminium Fabrication	1	4.0
Cook	1	4.0
Cattle Rearing	1	4.0
Labourer	1	4.0
Madrassa teacher	1	4.0
Driver	2	8.0
Tutor	1	4.0
Hotel worker	1	4.0
Fisherman	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0

The following accounts elucidate that phase of struggle they underwent in terms of their works in the homeland before embarking on their journey to the Gulf:

*Whenever I went for work (beedi rolling) I was paid daily. But I wouldn't have work everyday. The days I worked I would get an average of Rs. 10/- a day. So in a month I would have work for about 10 days and rarely for 15 days. On other days I worked in our*

*tea shop. There I wouldn't get paid a dime but I used to steal according to my need. So you could say in a month I had about Rs. 200/- (Pillai)*

*I had worked in a tea shop and I used to buy the provision for the shop, take milk to people. I haven't had a childlike childhood. I was really tired of working in the tea shop (Moses).*

*I was working, but it was all small jobs and mason work was very limited (Sasi).*

*I did work at the Mosque for a very meagre salary (Hamsa).*

*I went to work so that I could meet my needs. I have worked in construction sites... I did but without my mother's knowledge even if I told her she wouldn't believe me. In those days I was paid Rs.100/- for a day's work which I mostly spent at hotels because like I said at home we had very simple food so I would splurge a little (Hassan).*

*I used to teach in a tuition centre. I was paid only Rs. 10/- a month because the students who came to the centre also couldn't afford to pay a better fees. So whatever we earned from it was also less. But one good thing about this was that I got to interact with many people and I got to learn more. At that time when you turned fifteen one cherished eagerly to work and earn. So together with a few of my friends we started a tuition centre. The money I got from this I used for my own needs, at times I used to buy shirts with it (Sebastian).*

In sum, whatever be the kind of work, it becomes more and more clear that the migrants in general were not able to make a decent living and that finally forced them to fall for the attraction of the oil boom of the Gulf. But in those days embarking on the journey and reaching the Gulf was a very difficult and perilous process as Muhammed narrates:

*To go to the Gulf I borrowed Rs.1000 from 10 people to cover for the expenses and the fee for visa. Once I started working in the Gulf I paid everyone back. It cost Rs.12,000/- to travel by the ship that's how I went the first time, since I went there illegally I had to hide and work in secret. Later on I got a proper visa and came back to India and went back stayed and worked there for about 18yrs (Muhammed).*

For those who belonged to the Muslim community, one of the main ways to go to Saudi was under the pretext of Umra and worked there for sometime illegally and then with great difficulty acquired a job visa and continued there.

### 3. Work sites in the Gulf - The Struggle Fronts

With the not so bright baggages from the homeland containing poor socio-economic background, poor education, some certificates from ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes) or experience of apprenticeship, the migrants would naturally end up only in the low-end job sites in the Gulf. And these low-end job sites, especially in the booming oil/industrial/construction job market of the Gulf, would be hard core hardships and struggles awaiting itstakers, as the following excerpt from the narrative of Hassan, a migrant from Malappuram loudly speaks:

*In Oman I had to work 16hrs a day for which I was paid 2 Riyals. So in a month I got 60 Riyals. When I went there I understood how difficult life was there. I had to manage my expenses with this 2 Riyals which included my daily needs, the cost of the visa, medical cost and this 2 Riyal they used to pay us daily. Whatever was left I would send back home. So whenever I was about to come home here I wouldn't have any money to spare. So I used to borrow from others and when I come home I wouldn't tell anyone that the money I have brought with me is borrowed. I would come like any other NRI. I would dress up neatly, put on some spray and bring things for everyone and whatever I used to bring was not for my family alone. It used to be for everyone both in my family and others. So that's how it was and back then people never asked what do you do I mean what is your occupation. For them, people like me are working abroad so that itself was something big (Hassan).*

*After 3 months I went back and I was going back to another life where I had to work for 16 hours a day and when I say I had to work it is not like how people laze around with breaks in our place. There we had to strictly work for those hours and we could't say I didn't want to continue in this line of work anymore because my father had to face a lot of difficulties to get this visa for me and I was now the breadwinner of my family so a lot was depended on me and if I complained to the Arab, he would simply say 'if you are not happy here you can leave'. So we would adjust beyond our capacity. When I went back after my marriage I returned only after 3 years my wife she still complains about that. So that was how it was in the beginning (Hassan).*

As shown in Table 5:1:3, in the Gulf regions, the migrants worked in a number of fields/areas, and some of them jumping from one field to another, something typical of a low-end job migrant. Thus we have cases such as Hamsa as sales man to business man, to driver to operator in a cement filling company and finally as Assistant in a doctor's office; Pillai- beginning as labourer in a construction site, finally ending up doing everything – from plumbing to electrical to selling lottery tickets; Muhammed and Mustafa as coolies doing hard core manual works; Madhavan as

cable worker; Satyan as surveyor; Nazar as cook; Saju as supervisor; Shibabudin as baker and salesman, Sasi as mason but like a coolie doing all kinds of work, Sebastian as electrician; Shaji as a welder to boat driver and so on...

Nevertheless, these people indeed belong to that group of Malayalee migrants to the Gulf about whom Benjamin, the acclaimed writer in Kerala on Diaspora Malayalees. In his book which is written in Malayalam *Kudiyettom – Pravasathinte Malayali Vazhikal* (Migration – the Malayali Path of Diasporic Life) he wrote “one group huddled in a small unelectrified room with six or seven persons” (2016:54) in contrast to the other group of Malayalees who are “lucky enough to enjoy the sights of their gardens with family in government quarters”. Thus, Benjamin recalls that in the last work site he was overseeing, ‘the man who comes every afternoon with tea and snacks and the

**Table 5:1:3**  
**Occupations of the Generation 2 - Migrants in the Gulf**

Occupation	Generation 2 (After Going to Gulf)	
	Frequency	Percent
Mason	1	4.0
Electrician	3	12.0
Security	1	4.0
Welding Supervisor	1	4.0
Driver	3	12.0
Mason Supervisor	1	4.0
Cook	1	4.0
Labourer	3	12.0
Compounder at doctor's office	1	4.0
Cleaner	1	4.0
Boat Driver	3	12.0
Cable Worker	2	8.0
Foreman	2	8.0
Army	1	4.0
Surveyor	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0

architect are Malayalees’ (Ibid.:54) through it he portrays Malayalees who are poles apart, manifesting the two contrasting facets of the migration of the Malayalee to the Gulf. The subjects



of the study constituted completely of, migrants who belong to the first group who had to face myriads of hardships and miseries, and thus to be neatly categorised as ‘low-end Gulf migrants’. These are the people, who may be metaphorically represented as portrayed in the movie *Pathemari*, who jumped many kilometers far from the shores from a dhow. Given below are some of the first person voices, narrating the hard stories of their struggles in the work fronts:

*It was tough in the beginning. I had worked as a labourer in construction sites where I would have to carry about 50 sacks of cement a day which I would have to bring 10 to 20 storeys up. Then I was able to manage a visa there and for a while I sold lottery tickets after that for about 15 years I worked in a doctor's office as a compounder where I did almost everything (Hamsa).*

*I worked there for almost 18 years as I said earlier. I had to work there as long as the Arab wanted me to. A working day, there began at about 8am in the morning and I had to stay back till 11pm. That is till the shop was closed and sometimes we get exhausted and without sleep it was very difficult. When I started working there, I was paid about 600 to 800 Riyals and in the end I was paid about 1500 Riyals (Muhammed).*

*When I first went there (Qatar) it was winter and I couldn't stand the cold weather. So my goal was to work and pay off the debt and go back to my country. At first my job was to break open the marked spots wherever it was blocked. It was hard labour. My hand would be worn out from holding this heavy hammer and sledging all day with it. But all the while I couldn't go back because of the debt and there were others depending on me (Sebastian).*

If we try to find the field or area which accommodated the Malayalee who went to the Gulf with heart full of dreams, we will have to say, all fields – from coolie to cleaner to housekeeper to cook to salesman, to helper in the construction sites to driver to plumber to electrician and so on. When workers from other countries seemed to restrict themselves to certain fields of work, the Malayalees, especially from the low class were never seen to limit themselves like that, as it was an existential concern for them. At the same time, though they reached there through different ways (as pilgrim for Umra and continued to stay illegally, through an agent, relatives and so on), and though there were differences in the jobs they were engaged in, the fact was that Gulf never forsook efficient and hardworking people. The way they came was never significant. Though there were exceptions, it seems the confidence and trust that the Malayalee has instilled in the minds of the Arabs was key to their continuation, promotion and success. Other than that it was not that the Arabs nurtured any soft corner towards Malayalees. It is

perceived that factors such as religion, caste, creed or color did not bother them. The Arabs seemed to like any worker who did their work faithfully and efficiently and who manifests their capability for a given work, and no matter whether the person has the required qualification or certificate. Benyamin thus observes that Malayalee is still in the Gulf because of his efficiency and not because of the generosity of somebody else, including Arabs (Ibid.: 58). Stories of Sankaran and Sebastian witness to this interesting environment of the Gulf job market:

*Things didn't work out well the company I first went to. So I joined another company and in this company I had to write a test and I got through it. Thus, I was able to join this company. I came after 3 years and got married. The second company I joined was an English man's company, he was impressed with my work and so I was promoted. (Sankaran –worked for 28 years).*

*It was a private English company. At first I had difficulty with the language but still three of us were selected on a probation for a month. after a month, they selected two of us. I was selected in the end for 1900 Riyals. When this happened, I handed my certificates over to the manager and on seeing that I was qualified he conveyed this to the higher authority and they increased my salary to 2300 Riyals from there on my life just took off. Here I learned all kinds of new things about electronics. I was part of an electronic workshop and microwave workshop....This kind of work I had not learned when I was in ITI. I learned a whole lot after I started working in this company. While I was working in the microwave workshop, my grade engineer found out that I don't have the proper certificates for the work I am pursuing there but they didn't stop me. I went on to become electrician supervisor and a foreman after that, I worked in this company for about 7 years (Sebastian).*

The experience of Aravikutty, Hassan, Moses and Sankaran was also the same. They began their career in the Gulf in low end jobs and went up in the ladder step by step and finally reached a rather high position at the middle level. Aravikutty had begun with selling ice-cream and then moved to a house keeper to coolie in the army and finally became a soldier; and Hassan, from supplier to non-teaching staff to manager at a bakery to PRO of a construction company; and Moses from welder to welder cum supervisor (lead man) to welding foreman and Sankaran as mason to supervisor to foreman.

It is also interesting to note that the children of several migrants, after their education, seem to be working in the Gulf itself, but most of them not in the low end jobs as their fathers were, but in high end and high salary fetching jobs as computer engineers and business managers etc.,

which is an indication of the kind of upward transformation that the migrants could attain on account of their Gulf migration. The majority are seen to be working abroad and studying.

#### **4. Earnings, Expenses and Savings**

It is an undoubtful fact that it was the crude unemployability and/or inadequate job prospects in Kerala that prompted all the low class migrants in the study to embark upon the perilous journey to the Gulf. Hence, the sole purpose of undertaking the risky journey had been to get a prospective job that would ensure a moderate means of sustenance that a low class person can aspire at the most, which was an impossibility in the homeland, as far as they were concerned. Hence, more specifically, they wanted to earn some steady income so that they are empowered to be able to build a living by meeting the basic needs of their family. Therefore, in understanding the dynamics of the processes of their transformation, it is important to know first whether the migrants were able to make an income that was higher than what would have been possible if they were in Kerala, and second, what are the more concrete changes one can find in their income, expenditure and savings on account of going to the Gulf. Hence a comparative analysis of these triple aspects in terms of two successive generations, namely the generation of the parents of the migrants and the generation of the migrants themselves before and after going to the Gulf, is carried out.

**Table 5:1:4**  
**Monthly Income of the First Generation**

<b>Income per Month (Rupees)</b>	<b>Generation1</b>	
	Frequency	Percent
10-100	9	36.0
140-480	7	28.0
500-600	6	24.0
1000	3	12.0
Total	25	100.0

It is logical to assume that for those who engage in handy-man type of jobs which are at the low-end category of the job-graph, or homestead would naturally fetch only meagre income and that is what precisely what Table 5:1:4 shows. However, it reflects the magnitude of penury of the migrants' families,

**Table 5:1:5**  
**Monthly Income of the Second Generation, the Migrants –**  
**Before Migration**

Income per Month (in Rupees)	Generation2 (Before Migration)	
	Frequency	Percent
0	10	40.0
100-200	8	32.0
150-300	4	16.0
600	1	4.0
2000	1	4.0
10000	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0

as majority of them (64% percentage) did not earn even 500 rupees per month, which means that they had only an average of 15 rupees a month. Only three of them, that is 12%, had income to the tune of 1000 rupees, that was the highest amount of income that the first generation of the migrants could earn, which points to the very poor socio-economic background of the families of the migrants as they grew up. The situation of the migrants was not better, rather it appears to be worse as shown in Table 5:1:5. A high majority of them, that is 82 per cent could fetch only about 300 rupees of income per month which was quite low even given the standard of living in Kerala in the late seventies and eighties, and one each among them seemed to have got Rs. 600/-, 1000/- and 2000/- respectively. Thus, there is only inconsequential difference between the mean income of Generation 1 and Generation two before migration as shown in Table 5:1:6

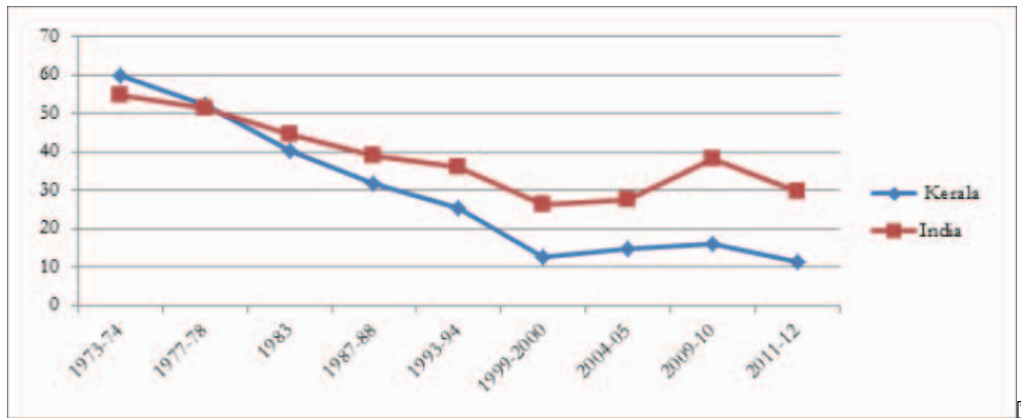
**Table 5:1:6**  
**Minimum and Maximum Monthly Income of Two Generations**

Income per Month			
	Generation1	Generation 2 Before Gulf	Generation 2 After Gulf
Number	25	25	25
Minimum	10	0	0
Maximum	1000	10000	200000
Mean	349.60	590.60	17080.00
Std. Deviation	309.159	2000.957	39796.273

This is no surprise when several of them in the second generation – the generation of the migrants - did not have a regular work that could bring them some steady income, and when most of them could only find low-end and odd jobs as shown in Table 5:1:2 that again did not carry good income. Again, it is no surprise that given the low social and educational capital, which most of them could attain, their employment prospects were also bleak that the then job market of Kerala would not provide them with high-income jobs. Ultimately, this points to the deeper level of a vicious cycle of poverty in which most of the migrants of the study were caught up on account of their too low socio-economic condition. This unfortunate predicament of the migrants in the study, in a way, reflects the backward nature of the socio-economic condition that prevailed in the State in the late seventies and eighties, in which a sizeable percentage of people belonging to all sections, irrespective of caste or religion, had to struggle through the oddities of the vicious cycle of poverty. Worse still would have been the situation of those belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Economic Review 2016 of State Planning Board, Govt. of Kerala, reported that the incidence of poverty in Kerala was 59.74 per cent in 1973-74 which reduced to 11.3 per cent in 2011-12. In India, the rate of poverty was 54.88 per cent in 1973-74 (which was lower compared to Kerala) and it reduced to 29.5 per cent in 2011-12. Kerala has also made an extensive improvement in reducing the incidence of both rural and urban poverty. In Kerala, from 1973-74 to 2011-12, rural and urban poverty ratio declined from 59.19 per cent to 7.3 per cent and from 62.74 per cent to 15.3 per cent respectively, whereas in India these figures declined from 56.44 per cent to 30.9 per cent for rural people and 49.01 per cent to 26.4 per cent for urban people. Gulf migration is one of the reasons for this amazing developmental performance. The other important contributing factors are land reforms, spread of education and health care, decentralisation, pension schemes, public distribution system, Kudumbashree and Plan schemes.

The absolute poverty rate (as per the Rangarajan report) in Kerala and India from 1973-74 to 2011-12 are given in the following Figure.

**Diagram 5:1****Proportion of Poor in India and in Kerala, 1973-74 to 2011-12, in per cent**

In the backdrop of the backward socio-economic situation of the State, the migration to the Gulf regions by the poor in the State, whom the migrants in the study represent, assume greater significance. It only reiterates the fact that the singular aim of these migrants for going to the Gulf was to somehow construct a decent living and thereby transform their destiny, which according to them had been a remote possibility in the then bleak socio-economic condition of the home state. Table 5:1:5 shows that the migrants in general did achieve their goal as their income increased substantially. Thus, we find that the mean difference of the maximum income of the migrants' income before migration and after migration, is also huge (Table 5:1:6).

The qualitative chart below in a comparative frame will provide us a more nuanced picture of the change in the income because of the migrants setting out to the Gulf in their strenuous efforts at confronting their penury in the State.

**Chart 5:1:1****Income of Generation 1 and Generation 2 Before and After Migration**

Name of the migrant	Income		
	Generation 1	Generation 2: Before Gulf	Generation 2 – After Gulf
Murali	• Rs. 100 to 150 in a month	• Rs. 8 for mason work	• Started with 700 Riyal salary and 200 Riyal for food; raised to 3000 Riyal salary later
Moses	• Somewhere around 500Rs a month	• No regular income	• First 1500 Dirhams; • Another company gradually

			increased and by the time I came back I was paid about 4000 Dirhams
Hamsa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100 rupees montly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No regular income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• starting 1500 Riyals; later 1800 Riyals</li> <li>• Some extra money by renting out rooms from the Arabs</li> </ul>
Peter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 300-400</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No regular income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting 1800 Dhirams – 1200 – 3000</li> </ul>
Koya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs 2 per day for rolling beedi</li> <li>• Rs. 500 selling blankets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 1500 per month as a bus driver</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting 700 Riyals per month – 2500 Riyals by the time left the Gulf</li> </ul>
Muhammed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Father deserted – hence no income – utter poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 6/- per day, for tapping</li> <li>• A little income from teaching in Madrasa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting 600 Riyals, then 800 and later 1500</li> </ul>
Nazer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominal – making beedis</li> <li>• Sheer poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cook – 1000-2000 – whenever there was work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Riyals equivalent to 12,000; later to 20,000</li> </ul>
Saju	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 750/- per mont</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 7000-10,000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75 Dinars in 2002 and later 335 Dinars</li> </ul>
Sihabudin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the farm: Rs. 1000-2000 per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No steady income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 600 Riyals first, later 700 and finally 900</li> </ul>
Sasi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 120 <i>Chakrams</i> per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brother who was in the Gulf used to send some money</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 500 Dinars – nothing much to send back home</li> </ul>
Shaji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Petty tea shop: 1500-2500 per month</li> <li>• Savings by mother in a chitty</li> <li>• She bought a buffallo and lived selling its milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 6000/- per month – work in Bangalore</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First company 600 Riyals initially periodic increase up to 2000</li> <li>• Second company 3000 Riyals to 6000 Riyals</li> </ul>
Madhavan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 40/- Mother's pension</li> <li>• Rs. 100/- from land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No steady income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12,00/- Dirhams in the beginning; by the time returned in 2011 it was 12,000/- Dirhams</li> </ul>
Sebastian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 400/- per month</li> <li>• Rs. 100/- as pension after Father retired</li> <li>• Produces from the farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 300 from Tuition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2300 Riyals</li> </ul>
Satyan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 500/-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No steady income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 800 Dirhams in the beginning; became 4500 Dirahms by the time I returned</li> </ul>
Sankaran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Father: Rs. 350/ per month</li> <li>• Mother: Rs. 180/- per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 350/- per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 35/- Riyals; 50/- Riyals in the 2nd company, and become 250/- Riyals</li> </ul>
Pillai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 300/- per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Painting work - Daily Rs. 12-15; in a month 10 days of work maximum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First 1500/- Dirhams per month; 1800/- by the time returned</li> </ul>
Khadar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominal income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 10 per day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1600 to 2000 Riyals</li> </ul>
Shaji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fishing boat - Varied from Rs 10 to 500 daily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1000/- per day – whenever there was work in the boat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1300/- Dirham per month</li> </ul>
Tomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 100/- per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2000 Dirhams in the beginning and later 5000 Dirhams</li> </ul>

An analysis of the qualitative chart that shows the income of the migrants in terms of the first generation and the migrants before and after going to the Gulf, further reveals the following:

- The income of the first generation, namely the Parents of the migrants, in general was low to the extent that several of the families had to live through penury and deficiencies as the income did not meet their basic necessities of life. On account of the low income of the parents, several of the migrants unfortunately had an awful childhood with poverty, deprivation and improper schooling and education. Some of them even had to find some odd jobs to supplement the income of the parents.
- Several migrants owing to the low income status of their families did not have a proper education and even if they did go to school till the high school/SSLC, neither the parents nor the migrants could give proper attention to their education.
- Several migrants during their childhood had no option but to help out the parents in their works such as tea shop, beedi rolling, farming etc., as Sebastian had put it: 'if you didn't work in the land, that was the end of it'
- Only a very few mothers of the migrants had some regular job that brought them steady income. At the same, it was their mothers who mostly managed the families of the migrants with great sacrifice, suffering and saving skills. We have some loud witnesses substantiating this:

*...we couldn't survive on my father's income alone. My mother used to sell rice and groceries. We used to get meagre income from this. In a month we got somewhere around a 100 to 150 rupees. And mother managed to meet the living expenses with this money...my mother used to save money from whatever she had earned. She started a bank account in 1975 in the Indian Bank...(Murali)*

*My father was in Bombay for a while. He would sell blankets and stuff to those going for Hajj and this only during the Hajj season and my father would send back home Rs. 500/- a month sometimes. Rs. 100/- out of that was spent for expenses and the rest, that is Rs. 400/- was saved so as to better the house like with new tiles, wood etc. My mother was the one who used to save this Rs. 400/- and participate in chitty's. she was a tough woman. My mother was the one who used to take care of everything and my father would go out and work(Koya) .*

*All of us used to give our income to our mother. So she used to manage everything. She gave specific tasks to each of the daughters-in-law. One was in charge of purchasing, another grinding and cooking, and mothers supervised all these tasks(Sasi).*



- A sizeable number of migrants, before going to the Gulf, although engaged in some odd works, did not have a steady and regular income
- Even those migrants who went for some regular works could fetch only low income that did not bring them adequate livelihood and thus paving way to embark the risky and uncertain sojourn to the Gulf in search of a job.

The following three Tables present the monthly expenditure in a comparative frame – the monthly expenditure of Generation 1, followed by the expenditure of Generation 2 before and after migration.

**Table 5:1:7**  
**Monthly Expenditure of Generation 1**

Expenditure per Month (In Rupees)	Generation1	
	Frequency	Percent
10-30	3	12.0
100	8	32.0
150-600	9	36.0
600.00	2	8.0
1000	3	12.0
Total	25	100.0

**Table 5:1:8**  
**Monthly Expenditure of Generation 2 – Before Migration**

Expenditure per Month (In Rupees)	Generation2 (Before migration)	
	Frequency	Percent
0	6	24.0
80 -200	9	36.0
1000	2	8.0
2000	1	4.0
6000	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0

**Table 5:1:9**  
**Monthly Expenditure of Generation 2 – After Migration**

Expenditure per Month in Rupees	Generation3	
	Frequency	Percent
5000	5	20.0
10000	11	44.0
14000 - 20000	8	32.0
30000	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0

The expenditure as shown in the Tables 5:1:7, 5:1:8 and 5:1:9 seem to be directly proportionate to the income they could obtain in the respective phases of the two generations. The minimum expenditure in Generation 1 was rupees 10/- and the maximum was 1000, whereas in Generation 2. The minimum became zero but that was in the case of the migrants who didn't work before going to the gulf, and the maximum expenditure was Rs. 6000/-.

**Table 5:1:10**  
**Minimum and Maximum Monthly Expenditure of the Two Generations**

Income per Month in Rupees			
	Generation1	Generation2 Before Migration	Generation2 After Migrations
Number	25	25	25
Minimum	10	0	0
Maximum	1000	10000	200000
Mean	349.60	590.60	17080.00
Std. Deviation	309.159	2000.957	39796.273

But, as we noticed in the case of income, there is a marked difference in the income of the migrants before and after migration. In a very few cases, the migrants are being supported by their children who are employed (Generation 3), although in most of the cases, the children would be either studying or unemployed.

This colossal increase in the cost of living of the migrants after going to the Gulf as against the cost incurred during the times of Generation 1 and migrants before going to the Gulf is clearly

reflected in the vast difference in the mean of the expenditures of the respective periods as it is evident in Table 5:1:10. However, the expenditure of the migrants after migration should also include the expenditure of the present day, wherein most of the migrants have returned from the Gulf and settled here with their families. The marked changes in the living expenditure that occurred over the years from the time of their going to the Gulf in the late 1970s to the present, will also be taken into consideration while examining the nature and magnitude of their expenditure. An indepth probing of the narratives seemed to unearth more nuanced aspects of the expenditure.

**Chart 5:1:2 Expenditure of the Migrants in terms of Generation 1 & Before and After the Migrant going to the Gulf**

Name of the migrant	Expenditure		
	Generation 1	Generation 2: Before Gulf	Generation 2 – After Gulf
Abdhu	• Rs. 450 per month	• Rs.3000 per month	• Rs. 20000/- per month
Murali	• Rs. 100 to 150 in a month • For 10 Paisa we could buy tapioca	• Managed by parents	• Limited the expenses within 200 Riyal, that was given for food.
Beeran	• Rs. 15 to 20 was good enough to cover the expenses we could buy fish for one rupee ,	• Managed by parents	• Monthly expense comes to about Rs. 15,000/- . there are four of us at home
Moses		• Managed by parents	• Now for a month we at least need Rs.25,000 a month • Most expensive is buying fish every day for which we spend some Rs.200 to 500 every day
Hamsa	• About 500 per month	• Rs. 3000/- per month	• About Rs. 15,000/- a month today
Hassan	• No steady income • Meagre, unable to pay even the school fees	• Managed by parents	• Minimum Rs.10,000/- a month
Peter	• Rs. 300-400 per month	• Managed by parents	• 150 Dirhams in the Gulf • Today expenses are met by children – both are well employed
Koya	• Rs. 100 while in Bombay	• Managed by parents	• 150 Riyals while in Gulf
Muhammed	• Limited expenses, only Rs. 2/- for rice and all		• Today Rs. 6000-10,000 per month
Mustafa	• 100 per month	300 per month	• Today Rs.15,000 per month
Nazer	• Utter poverty • No track of expenses	Managed by parents	• Lots of money on phone cards in the gulf • Today about Rs. 14,000/-
Saju	• 300 per month	Managed by parents	• sent to home everything (about Rs. 30,000/-) after what was

			spent for my expenses in the Gulf, which were kept minimum
Shihabudin	20,000 as loan for my Visa	Managed by parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initially I had to spend 600 Riyals, the entire salary I got, for my expenses in the Gulf</li> </ul>
Sasi	4 Chakrams	Managed by parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No extravagance</li> <li>Bought things more than Rs.1000/- rarely</li> </ul>
Shaji	Rs. 500/- per day	Managed by parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not much expenses, because food and accommodation was provided</li> <li>50 Riyals to charge the phone</li> <li>spend about 300 Riyals to buy chocolates etc when visit home</li> <li>Now school fees of the children alone comes to about 10,000 rupees</li> </ul>
David	In singapore – low salary – 1000 per month to home Some income from cultivatin too	In a workshop - Rs. 100-200 after the expenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Iraq 300 Dollars first and 600 Dollars when I became a Foreman</li> <li>In Saudi 1200 Riyals with accommodation</li> <li>Abudhabi 1600 Dirhams</li> </ul>
Madhavan	Rs. 40/- per day	No steady income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>500 Dirahms</li> <li>Rs. 30,000 per month</li> </ul>
Satyan	Just met the expenses with Rs. 400/- for 6 members School fee Rs. 6/-	Managed by parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First 800/- Dirhhms to 4500/- by the time returned</li> <li>100 Dirahms</li> <li>Today 15000/-</li> </ul>
Sankaran	Rs. 150/- only	Managed by parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Had to spend the full income for expenses initially</li> <li>Had to work extra to get some additional income to send home</li> </ul>
Pillai	Minimum Rs. 25/- per day; 7 members in the family	Managed by parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>600/- Dirhams in the Gulf</li> </ul>
Khadar	In poverty; had to spend all the money we could get	Managed by parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rs.5000/- expense back home per month when I was in the Gulf</li> <li>Now about 20,000 per month</li> </ul>
Shaji	Rs. 10,00/- per month Had loan	Managed by parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spend about 1.5 lakhs for Visa</li> <li>1000 Dirhams including food and accommodation</li> </ul>
Tomy	Rs. 100/- the full income had to be spent	Managed by parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Now about Rs.10,000 per month</li> </ul>

The Chart 5:1:2 paints a more elaborate picture of the the expenditure of the migrants in a three time-interval frame - Migrants during their childhood (Generation 1), Migrants before going to the Gulf and Migrants after going to the Gulf which in some cases includes the present, hence

covering a time frame of Generation 2 & 3. This picture, first of all unambiguously shows the more or less huge difference that has occurred in the expending. As mentioned before, this increase in the expenditure of the migrants brings to light two things: 1) At the general and broader level, the big change that has come about in a time span of 10-15 years in the nature and standard of consumption – in both material consumables such as food, clothes, cosmetics, constructions etc and symbolic consumables like education, communication, health care - in the Kerala society, is that the people in Kerala, including those from the lower class, tend to consume more and more and their standard of living has been progressively increasing to the extent of making the society a consumption centric one and thereby ushering in a mammoth change in the dominant culture of Kerala that may be termed as *consumer culture*. 2) At the specific and narrow level, there occurred marked difference in the income of the lower class migrants in general, that they seemed to exhibit a pattern of consumption and expenditure of a higher class (middle class), that is above them. In this sense, the migrants in general, including the kind of lower class migrants on whom this study focuses, are instrumental in transforming Kerala society into a consumer society.

However, in general, two elements are visible at the outset in the pattern of expenditure of these migrants: 1) Frugality in their spending and lifestyle, because most of them while they were in the Gulf their singular ulterior motive was sending the ‘maximum’ back home, and almost all of them used to send home ‘whatever that was left’ after their simple and meagre existence in the Gulf. In this endeavour some of them even ‘saved’ and/or ‘borrowed’ money in order to give ‘something’ to the kith and kin and friends back home whenever they undertook ‘much awaited and thus much celebrated’ home visits. Thus, people like Nazar, Sasi, Sihabudin, Sankaran and so on have the following to vouchsafe:

*With the salary that I received I would say that it wasn't even enough to buy phone card. Most of the time I didn't have enough to send back home but I would send back like Rs. 5000 for my children's need and other expenses. But that doesn't mean I was like wasting away the money most of it would be spend on phone cards with which I called my family, my parents (Nazar).*

*I really save my money I don't spend it unwantedly. Because when I started in the Gulf I had this dream of buying some land, and building a house of my own. Now also I save*

*the money I earn. After I started working in this company only did I start to buy things priced Rs.1000/- and more but still I don't want to... (Sasi).*

*We were hardly able to meet our needs. Being employed in the Gulf if you have an ordinary job like I did, there isn't much scope to earn and save. Otherwise we didn't have to have a government job there... employees like me get paid much less, which will suffice only to meet our expenses and send whatever is left, back home... (Shihabudin).*

*I was paid 35 Riyals, which is about 2000 rupees here. When I was working you would need 35 Riyals itself to send 1000 rupees home. But now we only need 6 Riyals. Every two months I would send about 1200 to 1300 rupees. I had to work 8 hrs ... But I would get paid extra 10 Riyals if I worked overtime; so mostly I would work overtime. The company didn't provide accommodation or food; all that I had to take care of myself. When I started in the other company I was paid 50 Riyals at first and by the time I returned I was paid about 250 Riyals (Sankaran).*

2) A perceptible concern for simplicity in life and thus taking special care in leading a simple and plain life with limited needs. Several of them seemed to consciously deter from showing the pomp and vanity that is said to be part of a "Gulf Man" by neither indulging in conspicuous consumption nor exhibiting a luxurious life style. Thus Shihabudin says:

*...the lifestyle of my family is rooted in simplicity we try to avoid all the pomp and luxury; If we display beyond our means then things will get out of hand. So now 500 rupees a day is more than enough so when it comes to the monthly expenditure also it isn't much because the electricity bill and all is small. Anyway whenever I come across any expenses, I think whether it is necessary or unnecessary... Now my expenses are very limited in the sense I just have to buy the monthly provisions but when you see my house it might throw you off a bit, but my life is very simple. I would put it as average that is I don't just want to survive today, but I want to survive in the coming days as well. My children are also getting accustomed to this kind of living (Shihabudin).*

*...My house wasn't complete when I came back but I wasn't interested in borrowing money to have it completed. So now I am trying to manage things as they are and I am experimenting on how to live a simple life.... All in all when I look back I can say my family is my life's greatest treasure, my parents, my fellow townsmen, the love I have from them all. Even though I don't have any savings of my own I don't have any difficulties in life (Hamsa).*

**Table 5:1:11****Incidence of Debt in 2 Generations – Before and After Migration**

<b>Debts</b>	<b>Generation1</b>		<b>Generation2 – Before Migration</b>		<b>Generation – After Migratoin</b>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	19	76.0	18	72.0	20	80.0
Yes	6	24.0	7	28.0	3	12.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

An examination of the debt-map of the migrants as presented in Table 5:1:1 can be taken as indication of simplicity and frugality of life style that the migrants speak about. People normally go for loans and borrowings not necessarily to meet the everyday basic expenses, rather to cater to more secondary and tertiary and sometimes extravagant wants and desires which can be set aside or delayed, until one be in a position to meet them with his/her earnings. Looking at the debt-map of the migrants from this general presumption regarding debts, we find that majority of them, before and more importantly, after going to Gulf did not fall in for debt-traps. Instead, most of them have tried hard to manage their cost of living and building their families with the income that they could generate. It must be noted that a few of those who have taken loan particularly in the first generation and second generation before migration, have done that to meet the sudden expenses required to go to the Gulf, which almost all of them as emphatically declared, repaid in full from the initial earnings after migration. And thus, we find a progressive decrease in the number of persons who have availed loans in the intergenerational phases. Accordingly, the number of debtors is found in the last category, that is, migrants after migration. This in a way, confirms again the orientation and disposition of the migrants to a life of simplicity and moderation.

Therefore, when we say that these lower class migrants too perhaps are instrumental in ushering consumer culture in Kerala, we need to further examine the true nature, style of and attitude to consumption of these migrants as they moved upward to the level of middle class in terms of the degree and magnitude of consumption. It is also important in understanding the dynamics of the processes of their transformation to a standard of consumption that is comparable to that of the middle class. An examination of this kind will also unearth the distinctive features of the

process of middleclassisation – transformation to middle class – of these migrants. This will be undertaken in the next part of this chapter.

**Chart 5:1:3 – The Remittances and Savings of Generation 1 and the Migrants Before and after the Migrant going to the Gulf**

Name of the migrant	Remittance & Savings, if any		
	Generation 1	Generation 2: Before Gulf	Generation 2 – After Gulf
Abdhu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No savings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No savings, no bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sister married off</li> <li>House</li> <li>Savings in the bank</li> </ul>
Murali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mother had a bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used to send about Rs. 10,000 home (Required 184 Riyal to send about 1000 then)</li> <li>Money was sent to my NRI account and wife used to take the money accordingly...</li> <li>I have an LIC policy</li> </ul>
Moses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bought about 3 acres of land</li> <li>Father had a bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No steady income, no saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I used to send about 50,000 to 60,000 and sometimes even one lakh after borrowing from others</li> <li>Owens 21 cents of land bought with the money from the Gulf</li> <li>Gave 35 cents of land to the daughter when she was married off</li> <li>Had 3 bank accounts while in Gulf and now 2 &amp; 30 lakhs in the bank</li> <li>Children in the Gulf and send money every month</li> </ul>
Hamsa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utter poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About 300 per day from driving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Built house in the 69 cents of land I bought</li> <li>Married off sister</li> <li>Bought another 18 cents in town</li> <li>2 acres of rubber up in the hills</li> </ul>
Hassan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No saving in my childhood</li> <li>Had a bank account when he was in the Gulf</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No steady income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used to send 5,000 to 10,000</li> <li>Bought 12 cents of land</li> <li>Built a house</li> </ul>
Peter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used to send 500/- dirams through draft while in the Gulf</li> <li>Bought land and built house</li> <li>Both sons well employed</li> </ul>
Koya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rs. 400/- while in Bombay</li> <li>Bought 80 cents for Rs. 450/- with the chitty for Rs. 350/-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bought 85 cents while in the Gulf</li> <li>Savings invested in land in Waynad</li> <li>Build a resort for rent in Waynad</li> </ul>



Muhammed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving whatsoever</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bought 20 cents and built house while in the Gulf</li> </ul>
Aravikutty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only Land, borrowed money for cultivation, hence had to repay all the time, Zero saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zero saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whatever left after my expenses was sent to home</li> </ul>
Mustafa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No savings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Money sent via draft 500 Riyals monthly</li> <li>• Paid off the first loan</li> <li>• Now another loan for a new house</li> </ul>
Nazer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5000 rupees monthly via wife's bank account</li> <li>• I used to save money</li> </ul>
Saju	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank loan 24 years ago</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used to send 30,000 per month to</li> <li>• Savings</li> <li>• Family debts are being paid off</li> </ul>
Shihabudin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used to send all I had after my expenses there</li> <li>• Bought land &amp; built house with the meagre saving</li> <li>• Had a bank account</li> </ul>
Sasi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nothing much to send back home from 500 Dinars, after my expenses in Baharin</li> <li>• Later in Dubai situation improved – opened a bank account</li> <li>• Married off the sisters</li> </ul>
Shaji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saving a priority</li> <li>• No extravagance, because of the dream to buy land and build a house</li> <li>• Built a house in 2000 sq.ft worth 55 lakhs in 2014</li> <li>• Have bank accounts and savings</li> <li>• Have 17 cents of land</li> </ul>
David	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 1000 Dirahms for expenses</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Madhavan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live on savings now</li> <li>• Had NRE account</li> </ul>
Sebastian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chitties for Rs. 50/- &amp; Rs. 25/-</li> <li>• No bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 10/- per month for tuition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NRE account</li> <li>• Bought land</li> </ul>
Satyan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 100/-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank account in Catholic Syrian Bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent home all the salary after taking Rs. 100/- for expenses</li> <li>• Opened Bank account on the first visit from Dubai</li> </ul>
Sankaran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• About 1000/- per month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No steady income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First time bank account after going to Maudcat</li> <li>• 35-40 Riyals in 2 months</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Got two sisters married off</li> <li>• Built a double storied house</li> <li>• Own 17 cents</li> <li>• Took brother to Muscat</li> <li>• Now son in the Gulf and sends Rs. 5000-8000 per month</li> </ul>
Pillai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sent home 800/- Dirhams</li> <li>• Opened Bank account after going to Dubai</li> <li>• Spent for Brothers' education</li> <li>• So not much balance</li> <li>• Married off sisters</li> </ul>
Khadar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving – utter poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving whatsoever</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Married off the sisters</li> <li>• Paid capitation fee for their jobs</li> </ul>
Shaji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid back 1.5 lakhs borrowed for visa</li> <li>• Could send home only 200 Dirhams</li> <li>• Had bank account</li> </ul>
Tomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Father had a bank account; but not much saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No saving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used to send home Rs. 15,000/-</li> </ul>

An examination of the earnings in terms of remittances and savings would easily reveal that 1) as far as the first generation was concerned, the savings during their times was next to zero, as they were struggling hard to make both ends meet. The income that most of the first generation who invariably engaged in either low-end jobs or farming/petty business was meagre which in several cases, did not suffice to adequately meet their daily needs or even if it sufficed, it was just minimal. In those circumstances, there was little scope for savings. Thus, we can notice that only a few of them had even a bank account or *chittys*. At the same time, the living expenses were not very costly in those days as these narrations would vividly portray:

*Whatever my father earned, it was very meagre. There was no stable income from the business... Back then if you had an income of 500 rupees per month that was more than enough to survive. What my mother would get for beedi rolling was 20 rupees. So that in a month, she would probably get Rs. 100-150... Later, expenses did increase. I was able to send home Rs 5/- to Rs.10,000/- when I was working. Now it has increased to like 15,000 (Hassan).*

*When I was a kid we could do a lot with 15 rupees a day and I remember that in those days you could buy loads of fish for 2 rupees and all ... now we would need about 20,000 and more a month. And back then we would need just about 100 rupees a day which would make it 3000 a month (Abdhu).*

*15 to 20 rupees were good enough to cover the expenses in those days, We could buy fish for 1 rupee(Muhammed).*

*In 1981 to 85 with Rs. 1000 we could survive well enough and in those days they used to sell rice by the litre so for 2 rupees you could get enough rice and from that, people have come a long way and there weren't any extra expense like milk and newspaper like there is now(Beeran).*

*In those days 3 rupees a day was enough. I remember that in those days if you hired a coolie, his wage for a day would be Rs. 3/- and a woman would be paid Rs. 2/- for the same work. So at that time 3 rupees was enough for a small family. At the same time today you would at least need 300 rupees (Sasi).*

2) More or less the same was situation of the migrants before they ventured to set out to the Gulf countries. First of all, most of them did not fetch a steady income to consider some savings, because they did not have regular work in the first place. Moreover, even the small wage/income they could get, had to be expended on the family as a supplement as people like Koya, Sasi and Muhammed recalled:

*Before going to Gulf I used to work as a handy man. While building foundations I would work in filling it up for which I would be paid enough to buy 1kg of atta and 1/2kg of sugar so somewhere around 5 rupees(Koya)*

*I used to give whatever I earned to my family. I used to spend a bit for food and the rest I gave to my mother (Sasi).*

*Or some of them used to spend on their extra little pleasures as Hamsa disclosed: the little money I got like this (Helper to a Mason), I used to get some good food from the hotel, which my mother did not know and even if she had known, she would not have said anything.*

3) The scenario of earnings and savings including remittances drastically changed to almost a turn around, after the Migrants' went to the Gulf. The savings/earnings may be seen in the form of 1) remittance of some money regularly to their families, 2) having a bank account, mostly NRE, 3) Marrying off sisters/daughters with decent dowry in the form of land in many cases and/or gold, 4) buying/investing in land; and 5) last but not the least, a house—invariably two storied.

**Table 5:1:12**  
**Incidence of Bank Accounts in a Comparative Frame**

Bank account	Generation1		Generation2 Before Going to Gulf		Generation2 After Going to Gulf	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No	20	80	16	64	3	12
Yes	5	20	9	36	22	88
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100

As Table 5:1:12 presents, we find a gradual increase in the number of bank account holders which is a clear indication of the continuous remittances from the Gulf and the drastic progress in the savings of the migrants after going to the Gulf. A majority of the migrant's parents did not have bank accounts, and more or less same was the case with the migrants' generation too, though we see a slight increase in the number of bank account holders. Conversely, the scenario undergoes a big shift once they went to the Gulf as the majority of them did possess bank accounts, and that too NRE accounts through which they used to send money to their families.

However, as portrayed earlier, whatever that they earned and saved were fraught with unimaginable hardships and hardlabour. Hamsa, further has something more to say on that:

*I earned about 1500 Riyals. Apart from this I had some side business, like a few of us would rent rooms from the Arab and we would sublet it, so I was able to make some extra cash and I had also tried my hand at business, but it didn't work out. I had started a hotel and all but it didn't work out. By the time I came back, I was paid about 1800 Riyals... When we shifted to a house of our own, I bought a separate property and built a house. By then my children had grown up. It's the same property as this I bought on my own and this is about 69 cents and I have some more land in the town like 18 cents then up in the mountain I have 2 acres of rubber (Hamsa).*

Therefore, in the final analysis, we can surmise that the sojourn to Gulf, howsoever hazardous and risky, did bring them some steady income and saving, though in varied degrees. Hence, the task now is to understand the more specific ways and means by which the income and earnings were expended that paved way for, if at all, to their transformation to the middle class. The next part of the chapter is an attempt at it.

## Chapter 5

### TRANSFORMATIVE SOJOURN

#### Part II

#### Transformative Trajectory from Penury to Prosperity

##### 5:2:1 Introduction

This part of the chapter takes off from such a lower class predicament of the migrants. The specific task of this part of the chapter lies in fathoming the perceivable changes and effects of the increased earnings and savings of the migrants gained in the Gulf. More specifically, it means 1) to dig out the dynamics of the processes of transformation it has brought about in the lives of the migrants, especially back home; 2) to decipher whether this transformation, if any, has made any change in the class position of the migrants as they embarked on their sojourn to the Gulf, especially as it was precisely that very class position that has been the key factor that pushed them out of their homeland to the humdrums of the Gulf life. In other words, it is to appraise the concrete ramifications back home on account of their sojourn to the Gulf. To this effect, a more close and elaborate scanning of their lives in respect of some specific aspects is undertaken in this part of the chapter. This amounts to excavating certain significant milestones of their lives such as education, housing, food, health, household consumables such as clothing, chappals, cosmetics, electrical gadgets and modes of transportation, and so on in the wake of their migration to the Gulf.

##### 5:2:2 House – Translation of an Evergreen Dream

It appears that as far as Malayalees are concerned, migration and building a house is inextricably linked; more so, for poor migrants. Most of the migrants from Kerala seem to cherish owning a new house as part of their Pravasilife. All the subjects in this study invariably have constructed a house in the wake of their going to the Gulf. A new house, either built or purchased is considered

as the most important asset of the poor Gulf migrant earned during his migratory life. Strictly speaking, migration, though undertaken voluntarily, is a painful and hard reality, especially for the poor as the case of the migrants of this study. They were in a way pushed to an alien region because they were not able to make both ends meet in the State. Hence their migratory condition in particular, is viewed as a means for fulfilling the long dream about their house according to Victor Hugo; or a “dream of glorious return” for Salman Rushdie (Quoted by Naficy, p. 19 in Hamid 199). In this sense ‘dream of one’s own house *to be returned to sometime in the future* like the Garden of Eden is a constant presence in the minds of all lower class migrants. Thus, Banyaman, a renowned Malayalee writer, who was himself a Gulf pravasi, says: “when a Tamilian in a foreign land dreams of a piece of land to do agriculture and when a Punjabi dreams of a workshop of his own, that is how the Malayalee dreams of a house of his own and gets it. The fact that the political climate of Kerala is not suitable for any other investment and that Malayalees are luxury loving are not the only reason for this. A safe haven to return to is also an objective behind this (Banyaman 2016: 26). He then recalls the story of a lower class migrant Paramu from Thalassery who found employment washing cars, after ten years of reaching the Gulf saying: ‘Now if I finish the compound wall to my house, all my responsibilities are over. (Ibid. 28). Hence, for a lower class migrant Malayalee, house is not a dream but a reality.

Therefore, it appears that from the time migrants started the journey to the Gulf in search of money and work, the only capital they had was the confidence that they could do any work and overcome any challenge, so that they can build a house of their own back home. ‘I need to make some money and come back to build a new house of my own’, becomes the priority motive and challenge that gave them the strength to face all kinds of adverse conditions in the Gulf. Thus, building a house tends to be an unavoidable necessity for every migrant. Naser represents this typical case of the low end migrant whose life ambition is to build a house of one’s own.

*It’s (house) a concrete one storeyed house ;before building that,for about 8 years I was living in a rented house and then I bought a property of my own which is about 3 and a half cents and built this house there (Naser).*

Further, the feelings and memories linked to one’s house are highly charged with meaning. In fact, the memories of one’s house begins in childhood, even before the mastery of language

which is an evocation that is of this sensory world. As Margaret Morse says: “Houses are ‘origin stories’ constructed as retrospective signposts within visual space, acoustic space and even tactile space. *They are made for coming from*”, (emphasis added) (Morse 1999). Unfortunately, as the following deliberations reveal forthright, for the lower class migrants their memories linked to their houses are not so memorable as most of them did not have a decent house to live in given the backward socio-economic conditions of their family.

*When I was a child my house was that of an old kind, made of mud with a thatched roof; after I went to the Gulf we built a new house with a tile roof (Beeran).*

*My house was made up of hay and mud. It wasn't a big house, we just had a room a kitchen and a verandha (Hamsa).*

*My house was made of hay and bamboo frame and the structure was made of mud. We used to get hay from our own paddy fields. I was the first to build a concrete house like this. I was not here at the time it was my brother who oversaw the work (Mustafa)*

However, Koyavouched:

*Now there aren't any thatched roof houses that I can show you; Back in the day it had been thatched roof upon four legs of wood and that's where we all stayed. There wouldn't be any rooms or place to sit and it would just be the roof and the muddy floor. We would all be lying there together on the floor; women on one side and men on the other side.... I remember my mother saying that when it rained the water flowed into the house; so if a baby was on the floor she would keep him or her on the other side where there is no water and keep doing that to avoid the baby from getting wet. (Koya).*

Table 5:2:1 provides the above painted changing scenario of the type of house from the three generational perspective. As Koya stated, majority of the type of house of the Generation 2 – that is the migrants' generation, becomes concrete, that too most of them two storied. In 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation, the scenario remained more or less the same, because as the children, several of them must be residing in the same house that the migrants have built in and there could be only a couple of members from the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation who would have got employment and married to have built their own house. It becomes very clear that construction of a new house or in a very few cases, purchase of a new house, is part and parcel of the Gulf migration of the lower class migrants who were engaged in low-end jobs in the Gulf.

**Table 5:2:1**  
**Type of House of Three Generations**

Type of House	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Mud & Thatched Roof	20	80.0	-	-	-	-
Tile roof	4	16.0	3	12.0	1	4.0
Mud and sheet	1	4.0	-	-	-	-
Concrete-single storeyed	-	-	8	32.0	8	32.0
Concrete Multi- storeyed	-	-	14	56.0	16	64.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

However, the house they had managed to build for themselves were fraught with great difficulty and struggle. Here are some open and honest pronouncements on that:

*Its my ancestral property; I built this house step by step. I couldn't manage to get lump sum amount to start the work of the house....It took me six years to make this house habitable; but even when we started to live here, the work wasn't completed (Sihabudin)*

*Whatever that was left after my expenses, I used to send back home. I used to send about Rs. 50,000 to 60,000 and sometimes I had even sent 1 lakh by borrowing from others. When I built my house, financially I was in a difficult position because I had some debt as part of that and I had three children who were studying also. So all these were done with one man's wage (Gomez).*

The following narratives emphatically reveal the vital link with Gulf connection as the singular determining factor, in majority of cases, in building a house of one's own in the native land:

*Most of the Gulf returnees save up and build a house and may buy a car and then, when they come back what they will have is this house or car only. This man would be returning after a few years of hard work in the Gulf and when he comes back, he will be having the house and the wealth generated while he was there; this was enjoyed by his wife and children... Before going to Saudi, I didn't have anything of my own. It was after going there and started working that I was able to make something for myself. When I started receiving my pay check every month, I spent whatever was necessary for me there and saved the rest; by doing that for a while, I was able to buy a piece of land and build a house for myself. Now I have made some arrangements, through which our expenses will be taken care of (Muhammed).*



*Because I went and worked there for eight years, I was able to make a house (Beeran).*

*I was able to make a better living because I went there and I was able to build a house and buy some more land for my family only because I went and worked in Saudi (Murali)*

*If I were here I wouldn't have been able to build a house spending 55 lakhs;t was my life in Abu Dhabi that made me capable of building a house with my money alone and buy up some land and take care of my wife well(David)*

In the final analysis, it was the Gulf migration that enabled the migrants to build a house of their own, thus translating their long cherished dream into a reality. To this effect, some of them invested whatever that they could earn and save in the Gulf. Further, for several of the migrants, house is regarded as the major asset they have obtained as a result of their working in the Gulf which in a way, elevated them to higher status from their earlier position of belonging to the lower class. In otherwords, house remained as the symbol par excellence of the shift in the class position of the lower class migrants and exemplified their upward mobility in the economic hierarchy of the Kerala society.

### **5:2:3 Education – A Priority Investment**

A three generational analysis of the educational profile of the migrants, as provided in the Tables 5:2:2, 5:2:3 and 5:2:4 reveal the fact that there has been a conspicuous and progressive difference in the level of education obtained from the first to the third generation of migrants.

**Table 5:2:2  
Education of the Parents of the Migrants: Generation 1**

<b>Generation1- Parents of Migrant</b>		
<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No Schooling	4	16.0
3 <sup>rd</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup>	8	32.0
8 <sup>th</sup>	3	12.0
SSLC	7	28.0
TTC	1	4.0
MBBS	1	4.0
Don't know	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0

**Table 5:2:3**  
**Education of the Migrant: Generation 2**

<b>Generation 2 - Parents of Migrant</b>		
<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No Schooling	2	8.0
1 <sup>st</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup>	6	24.0
8 <sup>th</sup> - 9 <sup>th</sup>	4	16.0
10th	9	36.0
Plus Two (Pre-degree)	3	12.0
ITI	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0

**Table 5:2:4**  
**Education of the Children of the Migrants: Generation 3**

<b>Generation 3</b>		
<b>Education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Plus Two(Pre-degree)	10	40.0
Degree	3	12.0
Bed	5	20.0
PG	5	20.0
MBA	2	8.0
Total	25	100.0

From the Tables it is clear that with the exception of one MBBS and a TTC, the educational profile of the migrants' parents' generation in general, projects a weak picture (Table 5:2:1), and the migrants' own generation, paints, though a slightly better picture than that of their parents' generation with 52% of the having either high school or SSLC, is still bleak; Whereas, the third generation, namely the children of the migrants, in sharp contrast to the first and second generations, make a marked difference in their educational profile with 60% having higher educational qualifications such as degree and post-graduation and the rest are still pursuing their education. It is important to note that in the previous generations neither the migrant nor his parents were able to study due to the hardships of that time, but as the migrants became financially more sound, they made it a point to educate their children.

The following tables manifest the progressive nature of the change that have come about from the first generation to third generation in respect of the various components that are considered as essential part of modern education.

**Table 5:2:5**  
**Nature of the Schools the Three Generations Studied**

Nature of School	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Private Aided	5	20.0	9	36.0	9	36.0
Government	14	56.0	13	52.0	1	4.0
Private Unaided	1	4.0	1	4.0	14	56.0
NA	5	20.0	2	8.0	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

As Table 5:2:5 shows, the first two generations most of them studied in government schools but when it came to the third generation, there is marked change in the trend with just one opting for government school. When it comes to the third generation majority of them studied in the private unaided schools. This is a direct and positive effect of migration that the migrants did realize the need and importance of education in the lives of their children and they could afford to provide them better education. Even though the gulf migrants had money, they may have faced problems due to lack of education, thus giving priority to educate their children; this in a way has a catalytic effect in the process of transformation of their class position.

**Table 5:2:6**  
**Nature of Transportation to School**

Nature of Transportation	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Walking	21	84.0	20	80.0	0	0
Public Transport	0	0	2	8.0	4	16.0
Own Vehicle	0	0	1	4.0	2	8.0
Private Transport	0	0	0	0	7	28.0
School Bus	0	0	0	0	8	32.0
School bus & Public transport	0	0	0	0	2	8.0
NA	4	16.0	2	8.0	2	8.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

Table No. 5:2:6 presents, in a comparative frame, the type of transportation availed by the three generations. The first generation had no choice than walking to go to school, and for generation two, that is, the migrants' generation, majority of them also had to walk to school, though a few of them enjoyed the luxury of public transport. However, with generation 3, the picture turns upside down: Firstly, no one went to school walking; secondly, they have various options available to them including school bus and private transport facility to which quite a few had recourse to, only because their parents – the migrants – could afford it with the income they fetched from the Gulf.

**Table 5:2:7**  
**Use of School Uniform by three generations**

<b>School Uniform</b>	<b>Generation 1</b>		<b>Generation 2</b>		<b>Generation 3</b>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	22	88.0	16	64.0	0	0.0
Yes	1	4.0	8	32.0	24	96.0
NA	2	8.0	1	4.0	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

The same progressive trend can be clearly noticed in the case of school uniforms too as shown in the Table 5:2:7. In the first generation, school uniform was a rare thing, and with the second generation it slightly varies with 8 of them (32%) could enjoy the luxury of studying in schools having uniform; whereas for the third generation uniform had become a common thing. This points to the fact that 1) almost all of them, studied in schools having uniform. Interestingly, and 2) migrants could easily afford to send their children to those schools – typically unaided English medium or aided private. It is revealing that in the first generation only one could afford uniform, whereas in the third generation, in sharp contrast, only one did not have the uniform. Again this is a clear marker of the upward mobility in terms of the class position that the migrants could achieve on account of their migration to the Gulf countries.

The narratives speak more loudly and vividly, unfolding the more nuanced picture of these pronounced changes that occurred in the educational profile of the three generations. They provide us a better understanding of the causative factors that determined the kind of education that each generation could avail and the changes in the perception, attitude and approach towards

education from an intergenerational perspective. Following are some extracts of migrantstalking about the education of the first generation:

*He (father) went only to something like a nursery. But he knew how to read and write (Aravikutty)*

*They (parents) went to a government school as that was the only school here at that time. And you can understand how things were back then. In my mother's family they were seven children and my father's family they were six children. They all lived in poverty and it was very difficult to give education at such a time. My grandfather that is my father's father used to run a tea shop. It's absolutely different now; we satisfy the needs our children, but at that time if you wanted something you had to get it on your own. Even during my school time, I used to work at my father's tea shop (David)*

Some of them also talked about the kind of education that they could afford given their adverse socio-economic conditions:

*I have studied till 5<sup>th</sup> standard. I stopped going to school because I didn't have an umbrella (Beeran).*

*I have gone to school for 3 days. I heard they were giving food in the school that's why went. I can read a bit of English, Urdu and Arabic. All this is because of my 'pravasam' (Khadar).*

*Back then (in the younger days of the migrant) education wasn't given priority, agriculture or managing a livelihood was given priority. When we return from school we would be asked to head straight to the field. April and May when the monsoon was fast approaching we would have to rush to bury manure (Sebastian).*

*I think there was uniform once a day every week because not every kid can afford to buy uniform in those days. In those days, when you lost a button in your shirt, we used to pin it up with thepen (Abdu).*

It is very clear that it was because of the bleak socio-economic situation that they were unable to receive a good education. Beeran and Koya, very interestingly in entirely separate conversations, have referred to a notion of the kind of education they received that had stood in good stead in their later occupation and life in the Gulf. Though casted in a stint of humour, it is highly illuminating as it throws light on the kind of education that the lower class in Kerala could aspire to get in the seventies and eighties of the last century.

*Everyone here isn't that much educated; That is, we don't have formal school education. What we have is **LP which stands for Loka Parichayam**, because in those days we didn't have food and I went till 4<sup>th</sup>std because they used to give 'upumav' and I went to the school primarily to eat that (Beeran).*

*What I have is **LP** which means **Loka Parichayam** and not **Lower Primary**, since I worked in multiple places I learned a few languages too before going to the Gulf. My father and I sign our names. I do mine in English, Arabic, Hindi and Malayalam; It's a mixture of languages (Koya).*

Abdhu came up more forthrightly about the drastic change that had occurred in the perception and attitude to education from the generation of the parents of the migrants to the migrants' generation after going to the Gulf.

*One thing is that they don't compel us to go to school **like we compel our children nowadays**; because there isn't much to be gained from going to school in those days . Nowadays educating your child is expensive and the tuition fee comes up to 1500 rupees and more a month (Abdu).*

The following utterances reveal the vast change in the attitude of the migrants, after they made their sojourn to the Gulf that elevated them to a higher economic position.

*All my sisters have completed SSLC and they are living a very comfortable and secure life. Back then if a girl has studied till SSLC she will be married off soon after completing 10<sup>th</sup>std board exam (Abdu).*

*I myself am not very educated, so I made sure that I was able to educate my children (Sihabudin).*

*My younger son has a British MBA. I was able to educate him quite well because during that time I was paid well so I spend about 22 lakhs for his education. He got the British MBA from Malaysia. First he did a course at Bangalore then another 8 months in Malaysia and now he works in a Bank in UAE as a Business Development Officer (Koya)*

*I have studied till 5<sup>th</sup>std...it was difficult. I couldn't study properly. I somehow managed to go till 5<sup>th</sup>std. In those days here at Malapuram people didn't think about development through education. But that's how it was in these hilly areas. People just wake up and think about that particular day and how they make a buck or two (Muhammed)*

The change in the attitude to education and the realization of the imparting of quality education for life and growth was also reflected as migrants spoke about the change in the kind of

transportation, the medium of education, nature of institutions studied etc. It is important to note that the migrants were able to provide better and higher education to their children or their younger siblings because of the economic capital they could build through their hard labour in the Gulf. The migrants invariably attribute to their going to the Gulf as the singular factor that empowered them to provide good education to their dear ones. In other words, it was the economic affordability that the migrants could achieve because of their risky sojourn in the Gulf that was the key factor in bringing drastic change in the educational profile of the third generation.

*In my school days, I used to walk and now children go by private vehicles...I only have one child who is still studying and she just completed plus two. I have four daughters and a son. Three of my daughters have been married off, two of them have completed their degrees and the other has done her masters and my son has completed B.Ed.... and let me tell you that I was able to educate my children to this extent because I went Gulf. if I were here I would still be a labourer (Muhammed).*

*I was able to give them a good quality education because of the fact that I was working in Abu Dhabi. They were enrolled in English medium schools and the school bus used to pick them up from home (Beeran).*

*I haven't gone to school at all. I have never been to school or had any education I used to stay back at home and take care of the cattle. ...My daughter studied till 12<sup>th</sup> Std and my son completed his B.com degree and is now doing MBA... I would say that not just mine but butmost of the children of those working abroad are better educated these days because you worked in the Gulf (Mustafa).*

*... My daughterafter her B.Sc Nursing studied a two year course of personal nursing in KIMS after that she did her M.Sc in psychology from the Madras university. My both children went to private schools (Sebastian).*

The following chart summarises the narratives on the nature of education, the progressive and conspicuous change in the educational profile of the three generations and the perceivable changes in the education that each generation could afford and obtain.

**Chart 5:2:1**  
**Educational Profile of the Three Generations**

Milestones	EDUCATION		
	Generation 1	Generation 2	Generation 3
<b>Nature of education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of them only had basic literacy</li> <li>• Some went up to primary</li> <li>• A very few had upper primary</li> <li>• Higher studies only rare cases</li> <li>• Not treated as important in life, hence least attended</li> <li>• Combating poverty was the primary concern; hence taking up some work for livelihood was regarded the most important</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several had only till lower primary (LP)</li> <li>• For many LP meant <i>Lokhaparichayam</i>(informal learning of the world &amp; from the world) and they took pride at that</li> <li>• Many of them had to drop out after primary</li> <li>• A very few had upper primary and higher</li> <li>• Some obtained technical/diploma certificates which stood them in good stead in the Gulf</li> <li>• Not considere education important in life, hence least attended</li> <li>• Combating poverty was still the chief concern</li> <li>• Forced to take up some work to suppliment the income of the parents/help them out in the their works in order that both ends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All of them have good educaiton,</li> <li>• Girls from Muslim Commuity minimum SSLC, since some of them get married off after 18; but many go for BEd and then get married off.</li> <li>• Several of them go fro Higher education – UG/PG/MBA/BEd.;</li> <li>• Good jobs – many in Gulf itself</li> </ul>
<b>Type of Institution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly government schools/poor aided schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of them in English Medium Private schools</li> </ul>
<b>Uniform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Uniform</li> <li>• Not become part of the educational system, hence not a concern</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniform in a day or two in a week for some who studied in aided schools; because they couldn't afford more</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invariably have Uniform</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily Walking</li> <li>• A very few had school bus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly in Private vehicle</li> </ul>
Paraphernalia (books, chapel, umbrella etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acute lack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acute lack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoyed all paraphernalia rather abundantly</li> </ul>

In short, it may be asserted that the migration to the Gulf has its direct effect on education. The utterance by Muhammed that “I was able to educate my children to this extent because I went



toGulf. If I were here I would still be a labourer”, loudly echoes this assertion. It is an undeniable fact that the educational profile of the children of the migrants has drastically increased because of Gulf migration. The lower class migrants, because of their Gulf migration, tend to cherish the dream, like any other parent belonging to middle or upper class, to provide good education to their children and thus equip them to face the new world. In other words, the migration to foreign lands and the resultant income has allowed them to make leaps and bounds in the education field. Therefore after house, perhaps the area where the poor Gulf Malayalee spend most money was education.

Therefore, education is a major area wherein the poor Gulf migrants have consciously invested their income from the Gulf which in turn had its twin dividends: 1) the children of the migrants, both boys and girls alike – the third generation, could gain better and higher education and thus better job prospects which ultimately would enable hthe ; 2) the girls could be married off, to boys who are well educated and thus having good employment prospectus. This was more applicable to girls in Muslim community, where girls tend to get married off as they attain marriagable age, as Abdhu, one migrant, had stated earlier. Ultimately, Gulf migration has a positive and direct impact on enhancing the standard of education at all levels , especially that of the poor class in the State. In sum, spending on education of the children of lower class migrants, was a kind of one of the few investments of the lower classGulf migrants which provided them with the major symbolic capital that they could reap the dividends in terms of a tangible shift in their class position to the next higher level of the socio-economic hierarchy of Keralasociety.

### **5:2:4 From Meagre Food to Plenty**

Here are two representative utterances on food by the migrants about the times they grew up before they went to the Gulf:

*I can not ever forget those days of my life when we even went to school without food ... But now they have fish and meat every day and sometimes I mean once in a while I tell my wife to give them rice and chutney alone so that they know both kinds of life. What it is like to eat meagrely as well (Moses).*

*Once in a day we used to have kanji. And for the breakfast, if at all, we had ‘pazhaamkanji’, that is left over from the previous night. There wasn’t any provision to make breakfast and all. Those were tough times ( Ayyappan ).*

Three square meal a day is considered to be a basic requirement as far as human beings are concerned. However, for the migrants of the low end category, this was not an easily satisfiable requirement for the first generation in the study, that is, during the migrants' childhood and for the second generation as well, that is, the migrants' own generation, before they went to the Gulf. As described earlier, those were the days of penury, poverty and thus starvation for almost all of them. Majority of them in the first and second generation had to be satisfied with food items like *pazham kanji* in the morning (rice of the previous night), *kanji*, kappa, jackfruit, rice soup and so on... But, the Gulf migration, seems to have altered this scenario totally and migrants' children, that is, the third generation of the migrants, could enjoy enough and more food, thus poverty and starvation became stories of the past. Koya draws a vivid picture of this intergenerational changing scenario:

#### Generation 1

*To have food three times a day was very difficult those days. The main food that we had in those days was the tapioca we collected from the tapioca vendors by either helping them to sell or picking up the discarded broken pieces. We brought that home and cooked and ate. Also we would go to places where workers cleaned wheat and we would collect leftovers and make a meal out of that also. We didn't have enough land to cultivate and also in those days if you were occupied in cultivating your land when evening comes there will be nothing to feed on... I basically went to school because they used to give us Upuma and there was milk powder that used to be brought from America and in my whole life I have never come across anything tastier than that because I was so hungry in those days and I still think of Cheeru the lady who used to cook these things for us.*

#### Generation 2

*Later when I grew up I used to work as a helper in house construction sites, where I used to fill up the foundations for the house for which I would be paid around five rupees in the evening which is more than sufficient to buy 1 kilogram of atta flour and ½ kilogram of sugar. On such days breakfast would be a sure thing at home because we would have bought atta on the previous day evening and that was the motivation for us to seek and find work again on that day...*

#### Generation 3

*All that changed as soon as I went abroad. Even if I ate kuboos there, I prayed that my children would have adequate meals at home and that they don't go through the same situation that I had gone through. The kind of suffering we went through during our*

*childhood were too much, and my children wouldn't be able to go through the same especially because from the time they were born they have had good food, clothing and shelter. Now also they have a good lifestyle without any difficulty (Koya).*

**Table 5:2:8**  
**Type of Food of the Three Generations**

Type of Food	Generation1		Generation2		Generation3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Kanji& Kappa	17	68.0	9	36.0	0	0
Rice	1	4.0	3	12.0	0	0
Other food(Puttu, Appam, Rice, Fish)	7	28.0	13	52.0	4	16.0
Normal food(Puttu, Appam, Rice, Fish)+protein rich items	0	0	0	0	21	84.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

Table 5:2:8 presents this intergenerational transformation in the pattern of the food. In generation1, kanji was the major food of the Malayalee, until late 1980s, especially for the farming families. However, when it came to the lower class people, as in the case of the migrants in the study, *kanji* was the easily available and affordable food for them. Hence, it was not an option for them instead, they had no choice other than *kanji* in those days of starvation. Nazer clearly paints those typical hard times of penury of the lower class migrants to which he belonged to and the way in which his mother had managed those difficult times:

*At that time rice would be distributed via ration shops once in every week and that was the day when we had rice. In the rest of the days, it was just kanji. And when I say we will have rice once a week its not how you think. There would be very little and my mother would be there by the side of the pot scraping at the bottom to give small portions of rice to each one of us and that wouldn't even be sufficient at all to satisfy our hunger. We used to sleep off after crying for a while... It was very difficult in those days because my mother would cook 1/4<sup>th</sup> cup of rice with plenty of water so as to be able to feed us all. So I used to tell her that I don't want any water, just give me rice. To that extent things were difficult in those days. We were living in utter poverty... When we used to get jackfruit nothing was wasted; except the skin, everything was cooked. There was a time when we used to beg for food during my childhood (Naser).*

The above analysis of the data on food, mainly the narratives, supplemented by the quantitative data clearly shows the marked transformation that happened in the lives of the migrants in the food pattern and its frequency before and after their sojourn in the Gulf. It was their going to the Gulf that made all the difference in the food, as it can clearly be seen in the mammoth change in the nature of the food of the third Generation .

### **5:2:5 Better Health-care**

In respect of the health care and medical treatment, in terms of 1) the attitude and approach to health care and medical treatment, 2) the type of the health care centres visited in the wake of illness, and 3) the health care policies occupied, one finds a substantial transformation from generation one to three. The following extracts of the narratives provides an idea of this intergenerational transformation:

*I remember that in general we ignored those slight sickness such as fever, cold, stomach pain etc and treat ourselves by drinking some herbal coffee or ginger juice etc and if it was of some what serious case, we used to go to a near by vaidyan. But we went to a private hospital for my wife's delivery, as I was in the Gulf at that time and so I could afford it (Abdu).*

*We used to go to a vaidyar or government hospital, but after I started working in the gulf my family goes to private hospital, now also we go to private hospitals and rarely we do go to government hospital (David).*

*We used to go to a government hospital nearby. In my generation we started going to private hospitals too. Now we only go to private hospitals (Tomy).*

*In the olden days we either used to go to the vaidyar or to a government hospital; now we go to private hospital because going elsewhere is shunned upon more or less because going to a particular private hospital displays your wealth and status. But people like that are less here (Muhammed).*

*We now go to private hospital. I trust the government hospital but I prefer to go to private hospitals because it saves a lot of time (Aravikutty).*

Given the socio-economic background of the migrants, it becomes quite clear that the reason for either ignoring the sickness or going to the *vaidyar* (the local/indigenous/traditional medical practitioners) was nothing but financial affordability. The first generation migrants, in the midst of their penury and poverty, could not afford to have access to other expensive health care and

medical treatment. However, the situation changes greatly with the other two generations, especially with the third generation, as their economic and social capital increased because of the Gulf Migration. However, as some migrants have said, going to private hospitals in itself do not guarantee better health care, especially when health care and medical treatment seems to have become an industry and commercial concern in this liberalized world. Some of them are also aware of the fact that going to private hospitals has assumed 'status value'.

**Table 5:2:9**  
**Type of Hospitals Visited by Three Generations**

Type of Hospital Visited	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Private	2	8.0	10	40.0	12	48.0
Government & Private	2	8.0	7	28.0	9	36.0
Government	7	28.0	8	32.0	4	16.0
Vydan	6	24.0	0	0	0	0
Vydan & Government	6	24.0	0	0	0	0
Vydan & Private	2	8.0	0	0	0	0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

Table 5:2:9 provides the type of health care centres visited by the migrants. There has been a progressive increase in the preference of private hospitals to government hospitals. In generation one many sought treatment from the *vaidyar* – traditional/indigenous medical practitioners which has completely changed in generations two and three.

Two things clearly emerge: 1) The low end migrants, after their migration to the Gulf, began to pay more attention to their health and treatment, an area that was hitherto either ignored or given less importance; 2) the low end migrants gained the necessary economic and social capital to spend more money on health care and treatment, because of their Gulf migration.

### **5:2:6 Household Consumables - Not Distant Anymore**

The narratives unambiguously point to the fact that the migrants purchasing power has been substantially increased from the earlier state of almost zero level. As a result, the aspirations of the migrants enhanced dramatically that in turn propelled their consumer propensities, whetting

out their desire to buy and possess things, which were not accessible to them before their Gulf migration, because of their low purchasing capability. Consequently, they seemed to buy and possess the usual consumables such as clothes, chappals, cosmetics, vehicles, household gadgets, media and communication equipments and so on that the market throws before every consumer.

Therefore, the increase in the purchasing power has enabled the migrants' entry into the consumer market and provided them with the required entitlements, although in varied degree, to become dynamic players in the market. In other words, on account of Gulf migration, lower class migrants could occupy a specific space of their own, hitherto unavailable to them, that enhanced their social status and prestige and thereby redefining their identity as lower class. Thus, the whetting of the aspirations instilled by their going to the Gulf, acted as an asset that elevated their position in the class universe of the State and thereby, reconstructing their identity from that of the earlier one. In other words, possession of goods and commodities served as markers of renewed social status, position and identity for the migrants in the society. Given below present some of those significant markers from an intergenerational perspective that the Gulf migration provided to the migrants.

### 1) *Dress:*

The following are some of the pronouncements of the migrants about the consumption of dress, before and after the Gulf migration.

*I had just one pair to wear at school and 2 pairs to wear outside for other occasions, whereas now I don't have a count... I should say that I have plenty like, I have enough dresses for 10 more people like me. Now I have more than enough shirts that I can change in about 3 to 4 every hour (Gomez).*

*My brother used to borrow shirts from his friends and one time he had this new borrowed shirt and I couldn't resist from wearing it so I wore it and went out and my brother saw me and he was enraged...(Moses).*

*There used to be a time when I would dream of a turlin shirt. I used to go to tailor shops and place one of the discarded pieces of turlin against my skin just to get a feel of how it would feel like to have a shirt made of this. Now I do have enough shirts but I don't like to splurge... I still use my shirt until it tears(Muhammed).*

*In those days I had only one pair and that one pair would be stitched up, like I said that's how life was. It was utter poverty at home...I remember that when I used to go to school I used to wear a valli shorts and go with a broken slate and a book. I used to tear up papers from that and get the 'upmav' that was given at school. So I used to wear that one valli shorts for a long time because my parents didn't have the means to get me another pair (Nazer).*

*When I was in school all I had was one pair of shorts and a shirt with it. In the evening I would wash it if I wanted to have something neat to wear the next day. Now everyone has plenty (David).*

*My children have plenty of dresses; I buy them according to their need. They would have more than 20 pairs of dresses, I also have; we just buy whenever we feel like it (Abdu).*

**Table 5:2:10**

**Specific Number of Pairs of Dresses Consumed by Three Generations**

Number of Pairs of Dress	Generation1		Generation2		Generation3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	11	44.0	0	0	0	0
2 – 5	13	52.0	10	40.0	5	20
6 - 10	1	4.0	10	40.0	3	12
10 <	0	0.0	5	20.0	17	68.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

**Table 5:2:11**

**Pairs of Dress used by Three Generations**

Number of Pairs of Dress			
	Generation1	Generation2	Generation3
N	25	25	25
Minimum	1	2	4
Maximum	10	20	40
Mean	2.56	6.24	15.56
Std. Deviation	2.103	4.558	8.011

Table No. 5.2.10 and 5.2.11 display the progressive nature in the number of dresses a person possessed in the three generations. In generation one, the minimum number of dresses owned by a person was one and the maximum was not more than 10. In generation two, the minimum of one increased to two and the maximum doubled to 20. In sharp contrast to the first and second generations, which also include the scenario of migrants themselves after their Gulf migration, there is marked difference in the number of pairs of dresses possessed, solely because of the increase in the purchasing power that the Gulf migration had provided them with.

## **2) Chappals, Cosmetics, Electronic Gadgets**

We can find the same pattern of increase in the consumption of some of the more common consumables like chappals, cosmetics, gadgets before and after the Gulf migration. For instance, in generation 1, the items like chappals, cosmetics and household gadgets which are considered as essential household commodities, especially in the post colonial India, were regarded as luxuries and thus unaffordable for the poor. Hence, neither the parents nor the migrants in general have had the luxury of the ordinary items like slippers, chappals, or umbrella etc as they grew up. Majority of them had to go about barefoot, and if at all, a few of them had slippers. Cuticura powder was the most luxurious cosmetic item that one could aspire for during that time. Several of them used toothpaste only after they went to the Gulf, otherwise they had to settle with the traditional and cheaply available tooth cleansers like *umikari* (burned bran powder) or mango leaves, whether they liked it or not. Similarly, the most luxurious electronic gadget was radio, and several of them even did not have the fortune to enjoy such a small luxury. However, in the wake of the Gulf migration, the plight of the migrants underwent a mammoth change, taking a huge turn around with a vast increase in the consumption of household consumables. The following narratives draw this change clearly in the level and magnitude of consumption in the lives of the migrants before and after going to the Gulf.

*We didn't have chappal in those days and we used to walk 3 kms. to reach the school... Now we have almost everything at home TV, fridge, mixi... We started using cosmetic items as a result of working abroad. I had sent them the money to buy a computer and my wife was the one who went and bought it (Beeran).*

*Back in those days when I used to come here for leave, I would be coming with big suitcases which would cause envy with the neighbours. For them to see things that they can't afford or to see our children wearing better clothes when they can't afford to buy good things for their children, that is something painful. Though I was able to*



*understand that, it was not possible for me to buy things for the families in my neighbourhood. So I used to bring some little items for everyone (Muhammed).*

*In the old days many wouldn't even wear chappal and let alone afford them if they were available people would wear footwear made of tree bark or leaves; also there was no umbrella then...We started using toothpaste after we went to the gulf and before that we used to use 'umikari' and mango leaves. Life got much better now because I now have money and everything is aplenty. It was not just me, the entire State itself changed; there were more shops and we could buy whatever. Now most would have 15 pairs of dresses even chappals everyone has 3 to 4 pairs (Hassan).*

*There are more than enough footwears now. It's like how Nehru used to come back from school. No matter which gate he approached there was a car waiting for him. Like that no matter through which door we exit there will be a pair of chappal ... Now my kids use cream, powder and all sorts of things (Khadar).*

*We used to walk to school and if it rained we used to cut off the leaves of yam and use it like an umbrella and we didn't have chappals or anything. We went around barefoot (Moses).*

*I have not worn any chappal till I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I started wearing it after my 10<sup>th</sup> (Sathyan).*

*Our only luxury was soap and cuticura powder. Buying soap has a story too. If we wanted soap we would collect cashew nuts and give them to the shop keeper and in return he would give us one soap (Sebastian).*

*I bought a TV from there ( UAE), now we have everything fridge, TV, AC, solar etc. (Madhavan).*

**Table 5:2:12**

**Number of Footwear Owned by Three Generations**

No.of Pairs of Chappals	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
0	14	56.0	0	0	0	0
1	10	40.0	6	24.0	1	4.0
2	1	4.0	14	56.0	8	32.0
3	0	0	5	20.0	8	32.0
4	0	0.0	0	0	6	24.0
5	0	0	0	0	2	8.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

**Table 5:2:13**  
**Type of Footwear Used by Three Generations**

Type of Chappals Used	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No Chappals	14	56.0	0	0	0	0
Leather	1	4.0	10	40.0	9	36.0
Synthetic	3	12.0	4	16.0	0	0
Rubber	7	28.0	0	0	0	0
Leather	0	0.0	11	44.0	16	64.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

Tables 5:2:12 and 5:2:13 display the case of chappals in terms of number and type used in three generations. The maximum number of footwear in generation one was two and that too only one had two pairs, in generation two, the number increases progressively with some of them in the third generation owning up to 6 pairs. In respect of the type of footwear used by the migrant and his family, in generation one, most of them did not use any footwear and those who used mostly used rubber or synthetic kind. In generation two, every one started wearing footwear and good many of them started using leather footwears. What is to be noted here is that generation two in this case also includes the situation of some of them after going to the Gulf. This trend of increase in the number and type of footwears went up in the case of generation 3, when migrants had gained higher purchasing power as a result of their Gulf migration.

The elevation of the migrants from their originally lower class status to the higher level, because they have accumulated stronger purchasing power, is more conspicuously evident in the increase in the use of cosmetic items from generation 1 to generation 3. Increase in the use of cosmetic items is a sign that the migrants, as those who have acquired the status of middle class and therefore shares the values of the middle class, seem to have taken the 'business of beauty' seriously. One can only attend to the question of beauty, look and appearance etc as important values only when one can afford them, after meeting their more essential needs. Thus, the substantial increase in the use of cosmetics in generation 3, it is a clear sign that the migrants, have attained such an entitlement that enabled them to give attention to the more secondary and luxury consumables. The use of cosmetics in generation 1, as shown in Table No. 5:2:13, was nearly absent and even if some used, it was limited to the use of powder alone, with a very few

exceptions of using perfume. In generation two, the majority started using powder and perfume and in the case of generation three every one used one or another kind of cosmetic item. Apart from powder and perfume the use of cream can also be seen.

**Table 5:2:14**  
**Use of Cosmetics by Three Generations**

Cosmetics Used	Generation1		Generation2		Generation3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Powder & Perfume	0	0.0	12	48.0	14	64.0
Powder	10	40.0	6	24.0	2	8.0
Perfume	0	0	2	8.0	1	4.0
Powder, Perfume & Cream	0	0	1	4.0	6	24.0
None	15	60.0	4	16.0	0	0.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

Electronic gadgets are yet another perceptible indicator of one's purchasing power and also exhibits of one's wealth to some extent. As Beeran asserted, '*now we have almost everything at home TV, fridge, mixi... We started using cosemetic items as a result of working abroad*'. All of them owned a number of electronic gadgets for the household, which were completely absent in the earlier two generations, before the Gulf migration. In Generation 1 and to a great extent for the generation 2, even radio was a rare commodity that many of them could not afford to possess. Here are two interesting testimonies from Muhammed & Koya in those days when radio and tape recorder were commodities of 'awe and wonder':

*We didn't have radio at that time. Radio was a big deal back then. I remember there used to be a little tea shop in the junction and there was a man who was in the Gulf. He had brought one from the Gulf and every evening when he came to the junction for a stroll he used to bring it with him, he would place it at the shop and played music and everyone would be in awe. We bought such gadgets after I started working in the Gulf (Muhammed).*

*Before we all went to the Gulf there was a man here. He was the first to bring a tape recorder and we used to go to his house to listen to songs and in the evenings he would bring it to the junction and to hear our voices back from that little machine was something amazing we would follow that tape recorder we would hit record and sing and later listen to the recorded version (Koya)*

Table 5:2:15 presents an elaborate picture of some of the common electronic gadgets a middle class household usually contains. The one and only gadget used by the generation one was the radio other than that they did not have any other gadget. In generation two the number of gadgets used by the family increased, as a consequence of their going to the Gulf. They started to use TV, Mixi, grinder, Landline, washing machine, mobile phone, computer etc. and in two cases in generation two, they owned microwave and pager. Several migrants, in fact, brought many of these gadgets from the Gulf itself. In generation three the use of gadgets became more prevalent and advanced and in addition to the ones mentioned above, other gadgets such as fridge, Air conditioner, solar water heater and induction cooker came to be used.

**Table 5:2:15**  
**Type of Gadgets Used by Three Generation**

Gadgets Used		Generation1		Generation2		Generation3	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
TV	No	25	100.0	5	20.0	3	12.0
	Yes	0	0	20	80.0	22	88.0
	Yes	0	0	4	16.0	15	60.0
Mixi	No	0	0	10	40.0	0	0
	Yes	0	0	15	60.0	25	100.0
Grinder	No	0	0	22	88.0	18	72.0
	Yes	0	0	3	12.0	7	28.0
Washing Machine	No	25	100.0	22	88.0	17	68.0
	Yes	0	0	3	12.0	8	32.0
Induction Cooker	No	25	100.0	25	100.0	24	96.0
	Yes	0	0	0	0	1	4.0
Microwave	No	0	0	24	96.0	0	0
	Yes	0	0	1	4.0	0	0
Radio	No	9	36.0	12	48.0	1	4.0
	Yes	16	64.0	13	52.0	24	96.0
AC	No	0	0	0	0	23	92.0
	Yes	0	0	0	0	2	8.0
Fridge	No	25	100.0	0	0	0	0
	Yes	0	0	0	0	0	0
Solar Water Heater	No	0	0	0	0	24	96.0
	Yes	0	0	0	0	1	4.0

### 3. Vehicles

Possession of vehicles is yet another marker of one's purchasing capability and honour and thus regarded as a significant item of middle class status. Several of the Generation 1 of the migrants

did not own any vehicle, and those who owned, with the exception of one having a fishing boat, had at the most a cycle which is considered as something that even a poor person can afford. In Generation 2 also majority had no vehicle, but a few of them had bought a car or cycle, which was possible because they had by then gone to the Gulf. But with Generation 3, the situation changed considerably with the majority owning either a two wheeler or four wheeler, and some of them having both, which is a typical characteristic of middle class universe. This is clearly displayed in Table given below (5:2:16). The nature of ownership is shown in Table No. 5:2:17

**Table 5:2:16**  
**Type of Vehicle Used by Three Generations**

Vehicle Used	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No vehicle	18	72.0	10	40.0	2	8.0
Cycle	6	24.0	5	20.0	0	0
Two-wheeler	0	0	2	8.0	8	32.0
Car	0	0	7	28.0	2	8.0
Two-wheeler and Car	0	0	0	0	12	48.0
Car and pickup	0	0	0	0	1	4.0
Boat	1	4.0	1	4.0	0	0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

**Table 5:2:17**  
**Ownership of Vehicle Used by Three Generation**

Vehicle Ownership	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No vehicle	17	68.0	10	40.0	2	8.0
Own	8	32.0	15	60.0	23	92.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

#### **4. Mass Media & Communication**

Coming to the nature of transformation of the use of communication and mass media from an intergenerational perspective, the the subscription to Newspaper, to begin with, clearly made a progressive leap from generation one to generation three (cf. Table No. 5:2:18). In generation three all of them subscribed to a newspaper. This is also an indication of the nature and level of attention and importance that each generation could assign to News papers, a mass medium that is available in common to all and sundry. Migrants, during the times of Generation 1, could not

afford even the daily News paper, even when they wanted to subscribe one, which again confirms the poverty-stricken state of the migrants before they went to the Gulf.

**Table 5:2:18**  
**Use of News Paper by Three Generations**

Subscription to News Paper	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	19	64.0	12	48.0	0	0.0
Yes	8	36.0	13	52.0	25	100.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

Table 5:2:19 portrays the mode of communication that were used by three generations. It is interesting to note that letter constituted the the most common and widely used medium for Generation 2, namely the migrants themselves, especially before the advent of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The table shows that a total of 84% of them resorted to letter as a major meansof communication while they were in the Gulf. The life of the Malayalee in Gulf would have been very minutely depicted in the letters he sent home.

Here is Muhammed’s testimony to these phases of tranformation:

*... In my case I am not seeing them(children) grow up. The only contact we have is through letter and if someone was coming to Kerala from Saudi we used to send a bundle of letters and they do the same. Now that has changed;Now people tell everything that very minute through the phone (Muhammed)*

However, as the Table No. 5:2:19 clearly shows, the situation changes drastically with the advent of the new media technologies. Thus, we find that in the third generation a complete shift to mobile phonesoccured (cf. 5:2:19).A fact to be noted here is that the use of landline diminished completely in generation 3 because of the poor connections by the service provider and the increasing availability of affordable cell phones. In fact, it was Gulf migrants who popularized the use of mobile phones in Kerala in the initial days of its introduction. Further, in generation 1, computer was not available and so it was not even an option. However, in generation 2, there was a slight increase with 6 of them owning a computer and in generation 3 it has gone up by 13.

**Table 5:2:19**  
**Medium of Communication in Generations**

Medium of Communication with Relatives/friends	Generation 1		Generation 2		Generation 3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
None	18	72	0	0	0	0
Letter	5	20	7	28	0	0
Letter&Land Phone	1	4	7	28	0	0
Letter & Telegram	1	4	6	24	0	0
Letter, Pager & Telegram	0	0	1	4	0	0
Land Phone & Mobile	0	0	2	8	3	12
Land Phone	0	0	1	4	0	0
Letter, Landphone, Telegram	0	0	1	4	0	0
Mobile	0	0	0	0	21	84
Mobile&Internet	0	0	0	0	1	4
Total	25	100	25	100	25	100

**Table 5:2:20**  
**Possession of Mobile Phone by Three Generations**

Owns Mobile phone	Generation1		Generation2		Generation3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	25	100.0	5	20.0	0	0
Yes	0	0	20	80.0	25	100.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

**Table 5:2:21**  
**Having a Computer at Home for Three Generations**

Computer at Home	Generation1		Generation2		Generation3	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	25	100.0	19	76.0	8	32.0
Yes	0	0	6	24.0	13	68.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

### 5:2:7 From Penury to Prosperity

In the final analysis, it becomes unambiguously clear that the life and life style of the migrants underwent tremendous transformation as a result of their sojourn in the Gulf. Nearly all of them

could construct/purchase a house, educate their children and/or siblings well, two of the most important investments and thus the predominant capitals they could attain, along with the everyday household consumables.

Here are some unassuming assertions on this great transformation brought about in the lives of the lower-class Gulf migrants in the wake of their being engaged in low-end jobs in the Gulf regions.

*We don't face the kind of poverty and hunger that I faced during my childhood and later years; Now life has become more expensive. There are many who have been able to make a better living and standing for themselves in society because they went to work in the gulf (Murali).*

*My lifestyle changed completely as soon as I went abroad. Even if I ate kuboos there I prayed that my children would have hearty meals at home and that they don't go through the same things that I have had to go through; Because the things we went through during our childhood was really difficult and they wouldn't be able to go through the same especially because from the time they were born they had food, clothing and shelter. So now also they have a good lifestyle without any difficulty. Even for dress now we buy for every single occasion. Even chappals they have more than 5 pairs (Koya).*

Thus, in sum, we can undoubtedly state that the tumultuous sojourn of the lower-class migrants to the Gulf and their engagement in low-end jobs, in fact, resulted in a transformative trajectory in their lives from penury to prosperity.



## Chapter 5

### TRANSFORMATIVE SOJOURN

#### PART III

#### The Triumphs, Trials and Tribulations

##### 5:3:1 The Triumphs – Personal and Societal

*Najeeb*, the hero in *Goat Days*, the award winning Novel by Benyamin, shares his long cherished dream on the previous night of his sojourn to the Gulf with his wife:

*I dreamt a host of dreams. Perhaps the same stock dreams that that the 1.4 million Malaylis had when they were in Kerala-gold watch, fridge, TV, car, AC, tape recorder, VCP, heavy chain. I shared them with Sainu as we slept together at night (2012:38).*

Najeeb's dream epitomizes the aspirations and the ultimate of all the low-end job migrants to the Gulf. The migrants in the study seems to have more or less fulfilled their bridled aspirations, namely, to acquire the entitlements for a decent existence in the homeland, wherein all their basic needs such as good food, housing, education, health care, with reasonable household utensils and gadgets and other goods, are met. The whole of Part 2 of this chapter is testimony to this fact. Notwithstanding, the following narratives underline this fact that majority of the low-end job migrants to the Gulf, could translate their passionate dreams of going to the Gulf and thereby fulfill their aspirations.

*Now we have everything - we have microwave, fridge, washing machine, TV, laptop etc. this development in Kerala is not because of the government, but the hard work of people like us. Some of the money we send back home is wasted, but even though it is wasted it becomes part of our economy. For example, mobile phones are very popular now. That is because of the gulf. 25 years back you would have to book a call and wait but with the arrival of mobile phone that changed. Since the demand for it rose, many started bringing it. We had to wait at least for two years after booking to get the telephone connection, the waiting was increased to 5 years in the case of a scooter (Sebastian).*

*Definitely my life is better now because I went and worked abroad. If I had worked here I probably wouldn't have been able to build a house. Whatever I earned would be spent to meet the expenses. I was also able to educate my children better (Gomez).*

*The overall condition got better. I bought some property and built shops (the shops you see here at the Karivarakund bus stand are all mine). So now I get rent from all these buildings and that is enough for me to survive. Nowadays even though my children are working, I can manage on my own (Hamsa).*

*We don't face the kind of poverty and hunger that I faced during my childhood and later years. Now life has become more expensive. There are many who have been able to make a better living and standing for themselves in society because they went to work in the gulf (Beeran).*

*Because I went and worked there I was able to make a house after working there for 8 years, marry off two of my daughters and buy 35 cents of land. I helped many in my family. In those days everyone was poor and struggling so I helped them all out to the best of my abilities and I didn't confine my success to my family alone. So I wasn't able to save much. Now I have to work in order to survive. I have a hardware store of my own. I started the store with the little savings I had. I didn't take any loans for it (Beeran).*

*I was able to buy this land and build a home for myself. I gave up my share of the family property for free and built a house for my younger brother and his family who was struggling. I was able to send my children to good schools. I could marry off daughters with 'good' in-laws... lots of new friends, friendship and exposure...All this I was able to do because I went and worked in Muscat (Sankaran).*

*Not just mine, but most of the children of those who worked in the Gulf are better educated because we went to the Gulf (Mustafa).*

*You see, because I went to work in Dubai a lot of good things have been possible for me and my family. Even though I don't have a bank balance, everything that I was supposed to do, like educate my younger brother, marry off my sisters, enrolling my children to good schools and taking care of their education was all made possible because of this (Pillai).*

These narrations express the general sentiments of the Gulf migrant of the lower class. It is absolutely clear that the lower class migrants earn higher purchasing power and thereby get elevated to the middle class. These triumphs at the subjective front, in turn had their objective consequences, that is on the community and societal fronts too. The hard earned Gulf triumphs of the migrants, did not end with the personal and familial transformations alone. As an unintended

positive consequence, it also had its transformative impact on the wider society as well. Thus, we have three emphatic stand-alone claims:

*Today we are able to lead a better life financially and otherwise because we went to the Gulf. It is like that for most of us in this area because about 40 years back most of the people here were living in utter poverty and hunger. They are the ones who were able to make a lot for themselves... Now you won't see any old thatched roof houses here (Koya).*

*Every inch of development in Malapuram is due to the hard work of the Pravasi. Not just Malapuram, I would say all the development seen in Kerala is due to the pravasi. But dominating would be those from the Malabar region for sure (Abdhu).*

*I worked for about 25 and more years there and everything you see in Malapuram is because of the hard work of people like me. We now have big mosques, educational institutions, houses everything (Hamsa).*

Thus, it appears that the Gulf migration of the lower class population in Kerala has contributed not only to the making of a distinctive genre of middle class, mostly of the lower and middle levels and but also of the Kerala with its distinctive character of development. Their risky sojourn in the Gulf has definitely contributed to the growth and sustainability of various sectors such as market economy, business, commerce and banking, the construction, health care, education and service and philanthropic and so on, in short, to the socio-economic development of the State. Therefore, the lower class migrants who attained middle class status because of their Gulf migration, seem to positively contribute to the development of Kerala society. Undoubtedly, therefore, one can say that they have written a unique chapter in the history of development of modern Kerala- a distinctively separate one at that, from the rest of the chapters that the mainstream authors and various socio-political agencies claim to have written.

### **5:3:2 Kerala Model – To Be Revisited**

However, the transformation to a higher aspirational universe, namely the middle class, as a direct consequence of the sojourn in the Gulf and the consequent contribution to the developmental trajectory of the State needs to be qualified further. This qualification is necessitated in the context of the heated debate on diaspora remittance vis-à-vis the developmental pathway in Kerala, that was internationally acclaimed as 'Kerala Model'. As mentioned at the outset of the Introductory chapter of the study (cf. Chapter 1), the debate is

basically centred around the perceived effects of diaspora remittance: whether the diaspora remittance contributed positively to the 'Kerala model' of development that paved way for improved social conditions; or whether it gave birth to some countervailing tendencies such as conspicuous and wasteful patterns of consumption and inflated land prices with more intense polarization of land ownership, thus creating a consumer-centric economy with increased contradictions and inequalities that sharpened the socio-economic divisions in society. The critique, in a way, is typically targeted on the growing middle class population who tends to exhibit the consumeristic values in their lives. For instance, Koya portrays a caricature of a Gulf returnee of the 70s that the Malayalam movies often type cast:

*In the 70's, people would gather around to see the man who has returned from the Gulf (that in itself was something). The man who returns to his homeland would have a tape recorder in one hand, and a suitcase in the other and leather chappals/shoes on his feet (Koya).*

Hence, the question is which side of the developmental debate does the lower class migrants, who gained a one step upward mobility on account of their migration to the Gulf that opened up their entry to the Middle class universe, remain? Whether their remittances and improved purchasing capability have positive or negative impact on the developmental pathway of Kerala Society. The following testimonies will clearly clarify their disposition towards this question.

*I haven't come across any Gulf returnee who wants to show off their wealth, though I have heard of them. I have never been like that. I have always lived within my limits and mine is a simple life. I had an LIC policy and I took a premium to the tune of 480 rupees. So while I was taking out this policy, he was telling me that the premium paid by most of the Gulf returnees was about Rs. 5000 and more. Then I told him that I can't do that because I don't know when I would have to come back. I wanted to be able to pay the premium when I am back to India also (Beeran).*

*Though things are all very pricey nowadays, the lifestyle of my family is rooted in simplicity. We try to avoid all the pomp and luxury. If we display beyond our means, then things will get out of hand. So now rupees 500 a day is more than enough. So when it comes to the monthly expenditure also it isn't much because the electricity bill and all is small. Anyway whenever I come across any expenses, I think whether it is necessary or unnecessary (Hamsa).*

*While I was working, it wasn't so difficult to build a house as it is today. Now my expenses are very limited, in the sense that I just have to buy the monthly provisions, but*

*when you see my house it might throw you off a bit. But my life is very simple. I would put it as average, that is, I don't just want to survive only for today, but I want to survive in the coming days as well. My children are also accustomed to this kind of living*(Shihabudin).

*This house I built after I became PRO. While I was working as PRO, I was able to buy a few cents of land... I had imagined a small house. My brothers and brother-in-laws had taken it up and they were the ones who built this house to this particular design. My house wasn't complete when I came back, but I wasn't interested in borrowing money to have it completed. So now I am trying to manage things as they are and I am experimenting on how to live a simple life* (Hassan).

*Now I make about one and a half lakh a month in Indian rupees, that is, my basic pay is 6000 Riyal and I get more for the over time. In the beginning I was paid 3000Riyals. I really save my money. I don't spend it unwantedly. Because when I started, I had this dream where I wanted to buy some land, build a house of our own. Now also I save the money I earn* (Shaji).

These voices represent a cross section of the migrants in the study and their attitude to the consumer world is more than clear. Though they have 1)gained higher purchasing power, 2) own a decent house 2) educate their children well and 3) are in a position to buy and possess the necessary household consumables, all of which are considered to be part of the middle class identity, they do not seem to either cherish or exhibit alleged consumerist tendencies of the middle class value. Instead, several of them are aware of the dangers involved in a life of affluence and consumerism with pomp and vanity, thus want to lead and experiment with a life of simplicity and modesty. For instance, during the long conversations with the subjects, several of them had mentioned that they had not introduced to their children the nomenclatures such as *Daddy, Mummy, Pappa, Mumma* and so on which represent the westernized elite modernity who exhibit propensities of *westoxication*, about which Gupta (2000) speaks. In majority of cases, their children still address them in the same old traditional terms like *Appa, Acha, Amma, Uppa, Umma, Vappachi, Ummachi etc*, which is a sign of them NOT exhibiting the values of the elite and the higher middle class, who are by and large indulging in the preposterous currents of consumer culture that began to engulf Kerala society in late 1980s. Similarly, many of them wear the traditional outfits like *mundu* and shirt, once they return from the Gulf, and even during their visit to Kerala and use such items such as trouser, shoe and so on that are regarded as part of being western, only when they travel back to the Gulf. This again indicates their attitude and

approach to a simple and modest way of life as against a fancy for lifestyle enticements driven by consumer culture.

Further, while in the Gulf and upon their return to Kerala, they also seem to engage in lots of philanthropic activities. Here are three strong testimonies:

*We used to help out people who were in difficulty. We help girls to get married and we help with hospital cases. For example there was a family in which the sole bread winner died and he had 11 children 10 of which were girls and one boy who is still going to school. So out of the 10, we have helped to get 4 of them married off and 2 are about to get engaged and they have about 13 lakh rupees in the bank which we all contributed for them and we bought a double storeyed house for them... So while we were working there we used to help people out without being associated with any party (Koya).*

*I do give preference to service... Now I am secretary at both of the mosques nearby and I am financially helping out in some of the construction that is going on in one of these mosques. I was able to get more involved in all this after I came back and settled. But in the Gulf also we had some committee and every month we used to collect a monthly fee and send that back here or we would help out in getting some girl from a poor family married off; also we used to help with hospital cases. If we can even get 10 riyals from one person that would come up to about 102 rupees or so. People did give money like that (Hamsa).*

*... There were instances where I have had to bury bodies there itself, and in such circumstances I used to arrange for the kind of burial according to the religion of the dead person; I have also accompanied dead bodies of people belonging to other religions in the flight, since that was mandatory by law. In my experience I haven't come across people with religious inclination. Everybody was like one. I have had help from many regardless of their religion (Hassan).*

The philanthropic activities and social works carried out by these lower class migrants in a way gave rise to a new culture of philanthropy and service in the State, as the 'offering of the two small copper coins by the poor widow' that the Bible speaks about (Mark 12: 41-44).

Conversely, the triumphs at the subjective and objective realms that the lower class migrants achieved were hard earned and solely on their merit. They are aware of the hard ways in which they improved their purchasing power and gained their upward mobility, as Sebastian and Khader assert:

*Going there was not a big deal, but how I used that opportunity is what matters. I could have spent all the money I got from working there. In the beginning I was paid about 1300 Riyal in Qatar. I used to keep aside a fund for every time that I come back here. I would have to bring things and money for everyone. That was the ritual. I used to give to everyone(Sebastian).*

*There life would have slipped away from them by then. When we think about pravasi, we think of them as these rich people, but what we fail to see is that not every pravasi is rich. A person would go to the gulf when he is 25 years old or less and they come back by the age of 60. By then more than half of their life is spent away (Khader).*

Though there are exceptions, it is a fact that Malayalees in general have succeeded in instilling an profound sense of confidence and trust in the minds of the Arabs. Benyamin views that other than this trust that the migrant has built , Arabs do not nurture any soft corner towards Malayalees. Caste, religion, creed or color are not factors that affect them. The Arab likes any person who does a job that the Arab has to do because of his laziness, absence or ignorance, in a much efficient manner than him (Benyamin 2016: 59). In this sense, if a lower class Gulf Malayalee rises to the heights of a manager's post from the post of a peon or sweeper in an Arab's firm, it is solely on account of his own merit that elicited efficiency, smartness in the work and the trust and confidence he has imprinted in the minds of the Arab. In fact, according to Benyamin, 'it won't be wrong to say that 90% of the managers in the Gulf are Malayalees who have not passed tenth standard' (Ibid.: 58). At the same time, Benyamin writes:"they are sitting on their chairs, not because of any gimmick, but because their employers feel that they are capable of that. Every minute they keep showing better efficiency and pragmatism than an MTech person who is working under him" (Ibid.). Sasi has the following assertion on this:

*Eventhough it is a Muslim country, the women there seek the help from Malayalee men a lot because they have this belief that they are trustworthy and they would help you out any way they could in such matters. They don't consider religion. The only time they do so is that when something happens, the Arab will always favour the Muslim fellow more, first preference would be for them. But if it's an Arab woman in the place of an Arab, she would prefer a Malayali foremost than any Indian (Sasi).*

At the same time, Benyamin rightly points out, once they reach the Gulf, everything wouldn't be rosy, as the common belief goes. By the time they reach the Gulf, several of them would have fallen into debt traps that sometimes last for decades. A lower class who land up in the Gulf at his prime age, say 30, with luggages full of dreams and aspirations, would be doomed until the

age of 65 and thus forgetting to live his life trying to finish his loan. (2016:71). Thus, Aravikutty confides,

*The life of a pravasi is unique because, once you become a pravasi, there is no going back. That's your life. From then on, all the responsibility of your family is upon you and this pravasi himself won't have a family life of his own. He will be working there and coming to his native place for a few days and going back (Aravikutty).*

### **5:3:3 Women Empowerment - An Invisible Path**

An important dimension of this Gulf triumph is the experience of the womenfolk back home and the kind of positive effects that experience had on their lives and personalities. The Migration studies by and large portray them as 'grass widows' focussing on the darker side of their experience and highlight most of their 'sorrows', 'agonies', 'deprivations', 'frustrations' and so on (Gulati 1993, Saradamony 1994). It is a fact that women had to undergo lots of sufferings and sacrifices because their husbands were away in the Gulf.

A very touching scene in Benyamin's *Goat days*, in fact, gives us an idea of the incomprehensible magnitude of this pain and agony of the wife of a Gulf migrant, especially from the lower class. Najeeb, the hero of the novel, alone in the middle of the desert and amidst the goats, recollects his wife's heartbreaking words when he shared his limited dreams for which he planned to undertake the perilous sojourn, on the eve of the day he set out his journey to the Gulf:

*I don't need anything ikka. Do return when we have enough to secure the life of our child. We don't need to accumulate wealth like my brothers. No mansion. A life together. That's all (2000: 39).*

And then Najeeb has the following soliloquy:

*Maybe the wife of every man who is about to leave for the gulf tells him the same thing. Even so they end up spending twenty or thirty years of their lives there. And for what reason? (2000: 39)*

Hassan reminisced the agonizing experience of his mother in the wake of the separated lives they were pushed into, because of his father's job in the Gulf:

*So while my father worked in the Gulf, my mind was preoccupied with the thoughts of working there, and the separation and distance it created between my parents. Whenever my father would return to the Gulf after his leave, it would most affect my*



*mother. That left a very lasting impression on me. From then on my thoughts were that I should go there and have my father retire... (Hassan).*

Thus, Benyamin rightly observes: “the loneliness, boredom and alienation and desperation that the man experienced in the foreign land was experienced by the woman in the concrete buildings at home (2016: 38).

Notwithstanding, there is another side to this sad story which this study could unearth. And that is very significant and any migration study will be complete only when that side of the experience of the women also is unfolded. The following anecdotes of the narratives from the migrants provide a clear picture of that significant dimension of the triumph of the Gulf migration.

*It was my wife who used to take the decisions while I was away. I used to send her the money...My wife was the one who dealt with all the educational matters of my children like paying of fees, buying the essential stuff for the house, admission of my children; they were admitted in private English medium schools...She has always been very capable like. She is a bit bold so no problems there. She managed well. But, it wouldn't have happened if I were here, **because women don't go out so much in our community** (emphasis added); but now it's a different story all together. Now women of the Muslim community are educated and go out and all. Like one of my daughters. She was pursuing her degree and got married while studying. Since I went abroad, they have become more responsible (Hamsa).*

*Many of the men working abroad has led to women becoming more independent and taking up on more responsibilities and becoming decision makers of the family in the absence of the male members. They take up decisions regarding education, wanting the children to be more educated and they tend to take it upon themselves to take such roles in the absence of male members. **In those days women would rarely go out** (emphasis added) they would wear whatever the husbands used to buy them. Many men working abroad has led to women going out themselves to get whatever they need. Also they get more independence as they start getting money in their own hands (Muhammed).*

***My wife has studied till pre-degree** (emphasis added). But she was in charge of the finances and she only took care of the children and their needs. I have an NRE account. I sent the money and I aiven her signed checks in advance. She used to attend the social functions. Both my daughters were married off while I was working in Abu Dhabi. My wife and her family found suitable groomsman for my daughters. Both my daughters*

*have a Masters in Science, one of the son-in-laws works in SBI and the other one is in Dubai (Beeran).*

*Mostly she took the decisions. My wife used to attend all the family functions and bought provisions... she drives both the car and two wheeler. I used to send the money to my account and my wife takes it out as per her needs(Moses).*

It is fascinating to note that in the absence of husbands, most of their wives, especially when the fathers of the migrants too are not nearby, were indeed in action assuming the responsibility of the household and taking decisions on various issues that come up in the family. They thus, took care of all the cardinal tasks of the house such as taking care of the education of the children, financial transactions and banking, supervising the construction of the house, purchasing of daily items for the house, attending social functions, arranging the marriages of daughters and so on. Table No. 5:3:1 informs from an intergenerational perspective whether the housewife of the Gulf migrants enjoyed autonomy in matters concerning the education of their children. The maximum percentage to the tune of ninety two per cent (23 persons) did enjoy autonomy in Generation 2, shows the situation after the Gulf migration. And more or less the trend is carried on in the third generation, because, in every likelihood, the family would have continued the changed situation of the family when the migrant was in the Gulf, even after his return from the Gulf.

**Table 5:3:1**

**Housewife's Autonomy in Children's Education in Three Generations**

<b>Housewife's Autonomy in Children's Education</b>	<b>Generation 1</b>		<b>Generation 2</b>		<b>Generation 3</b>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	20	80.0	2	8.0	8	32.0
Yes	5	20.0	23	92.0	17	68.0
Limited	0	0	1	4.0	0	0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

Here we need to take special note of two aspects regarding the nature of the wives of the migrants: 1) restrictions on mobility in general and Muslim community in particular as underlined by Hamsa and Muhammed and 2) their low educational status, as mentioned by Beeran. The testimonies ascertain the fact that the women were able to circumvent the prevailing social and educational constraints, including the social stigma that is attached to the wives of the

Gulf migrants as ‘grass widows’ and look after the family and all its everyday requirements. Benyamin, therefore, opines thus:

*If there are 25 lakh Malayalees in gulf, it means that there are as many numbers of women back home who are single handedly managing the family. Rather than praising the capabilities of the people who sent the money and politicians, today’s Kerala owes much to these women... Only when we include them will the story of migrant Kerala be complete (2016: 43)*

In this sense, the migration of the lower class to the Gulf had the enabling and empowering effects on women in Kerala, which otherwise would not have been a possibility, given the patrifocal culture of Kerala. This is to be regarded as an enhancement of symbolic capital of the women in particular, and Kerala society in general, because of the Gulf migration of the lower class population. This needs to be mapped as an important contribution to the social development of Kerala because of the Gulf migration of the workers from the lower class, which has not been hitherto recognized adequately in the vast migration literature of Kerala.

### **5:3:4 Trials and Tribulations – The Unseen Tears**

It is important to note that the lower class Gulf migrants achieved their great triumphs not at all through easy ways. They were fraught with unimaginable trials and tribulations. In fact, the lives of every lower class Gulf migrant is filled with trials and tribulations, especially on the personal and familial fronts that are agonizing and heartbreaking. The experience of Najeeb, the hero of the *Goat Days*, indeed, symbolizes this everyday predicament of a Gulf migrant. Alone and lost in the desert, amidst his goats, one day Najeeb recalls the eve of the day he was to commence his sojourn to the Gulf:

*Nobody would have embraced Sainu the way I held her that night. But one sorrow remained. My son? My Daughter? I would not be there for the birth. I wouldn’t be able to massage Sainu during her big pain. As if to make up for that, I kissed Sainu’s growing belly. My Nabeel, my Safia-names I had chosen to call my child; my kunji, my chakki-pet names I had for them. Oh , my son, my daughter...your uppah will not be there to see you come into this earth with wide eyes. But whenever I return I will bring enough presents for you, okay? (2012:39).*

Every lower class migrant had to struggle with such moments of agonizing pangs during their lives of Gulf migration. Of course, there were Malayalee migrants who would not have to go through such painful moments as part of their Gulf migration. From his own experience Benjamin makes a pertinent observation on this:

*At the last work site I was overseeing, the man who comes every afternoon with tea and snacks and the architect are Malayalees. Both of them came to the Gulf and are living their lives in different manners. They show that the lives of these Malayalees are poles apart. It is the people who live different lives in between these poles that we describe as 'Gulf Migrants'...The migration of the Gulf Malayalee to the Gulf always had two facets. There are people who jumped many kilometers far from the shores from a dhow then facing hardships and miseries and those who reached the land through authorized channels and made a wonderful life because they were experts in technology and medical field... When one group huddled in a small unelectrified room with six or seven persons, the other group was lucky enough to enjoy the sights of their gardens with family in government quarters... These two worlds still exist as a reality in the Gulf. Even today Malayalees still reach the gulf in parallel paths never destined to meet (2016: 54).*

Trials and tribulations that we are talking about are concerning the category of 'the man who comes every afternoon with tea and snacks' that Benjamin is talking about – the typical lower class Gulf migrant for whom life in the Gulf had been a sail through the ocean of trials and tribulations. During our conversation, some of them shared such moments of intense trials and tribulations:

*I was there for 29 years and all those 29 years I can tell you, were happy years for me. I didn't have any difficulty there... The only painful thing was that I was missing out a lot that was happening here and the fact that my wife is alone here with the children. Also when I get a letter or may be a phone call from home it would be difficult to hear some things happening over there...(Beeran).*

*My son was born while I was in Bombay ready to go to Saudi. But even when I heard that my son was born I didn't feel the urge to rush back and see him. Rather I was thinking about going to Saudi and helping out my dear ones...I saw my first born after one year and nine months... (Koya).*

*I wasn't able to come here when my grandmother and brother died. I wasn't able to come. So that was difficult for me. Other than that I was able to make a better life for myself even though the best days of my life were spent there, away from my family. One*

*thing was that I went to the Gulf in 1976 and I came back in 2005. So I don't know many of my own people are here(Pillai).*

*After 3 months of my first visit to home, I went back and I was going back to another life where I would have to work for 16 hours a day. When I say I have to work for 16 hours, it is not like how people laze around with breaks. There we would have to strictly work for those hours and we can't say 'I don't want to continue in this line of work anymore' because for me my father had to face a lot of difficulties to get this visa for me and I was now the breadwinner of my family. So a lot was depended on me and if we complain to the Arab he would simply say if you are not happy here, you can leave. So we would adjust beyond our capacity. When I went back after my marriage, I returned only after 3 years. My wife still complains about that (Hassan).*

*While I was there we had the bad effects of the Kuwait war and a group of people, may be Turks or Irani's came and took over and they kept everyone captive for about 15 days. And being away from the family was not a very happy or easy thing for anyone. But we still did it for the good of everyone else and because the circumstance back home wasn't so good (Hamsa).*

Yes, as Hamsa said, it was indeed a 'sacrifice' from the part of every lower class migrant for the "good of everyone else' and to bring some improvement in the not so good circumstance back home, that they gave themselves a ransom at the altar of the everyday trials and turbulence of the Gulf life. Najeeb, the hero in the *Goat Days*, who symbolizes a typical lower class Gulf migrant, underwent such a shattering moment of emotional turbulence on the thoughts of his homeland, in a way truly depicts the depth of the kind of trials and tribulations that the lower class Gulf migrants have been drowned in.

*I don't know why, memories of homeland awakened in me. All my suppressed thoughts stirred and erupted like a volcano. I must escape from here. I must go home. I must see my ummah. I must see my Sainu. I must see my Nabeel. I must see my land. I must see my dusty roads. I must see my river. I must see my canoe. I must see my earth. At such moments, I could try to comprehend the meaning of nostalgia. It's a craving. An acute craving that makes us hate our present condition. Thus, that craving takes the form of a crazy urge to rush home, like a wild boar rushing wildly through sugarcane fields when it's been shot. It happens only once in a while. But when it does, it is not easy to shut down the surge of emotions (2012:146).*

Thus, we hear the distress pangs from Najeeb in *Goat Days*, towards the end of writing a long letter to his wife Sainu, that he knew could not be posted at all, as he was stranded in the company of goats in the wildness of the desert,

*I folded the paper. Closed my eyes. Wept for sometime. **The truth was not in that letter, but in my tears.** Nobody read the truth (2012: 130)*

### **5:3:5 Making of an Imaginary Homeland**

Salman Rushdie, while talking about migrant life, has a collection of essays under the title *Imaginary Homeland* (1992). In the face of the stormy trials and tribulations, lower class Gulf migrants seem to create, in one way or the other, an imaginary homeland around him. Benjamin is of the opinion that this is the reason why the names of many shops in the Gulf streets are in Malayalam and most restaurants have the name of villages back home... Since they spent their childhood and adolescence in their homeland, their memories, dreams, aspirations and way of living will have bearing on their homeland (2016: 82). Given this context, we notice that the Gulf migrants exhibit an unusual interest in the things that happen in their homeland, perhaps with more passion and vibrancy. They tend to indulge in private conversations and discussions, on the socio-political happenings in the homeland. These must be seen as part of their efforts at making of an imaginary homeland in that alien land and to indulge in the experience of nostalgia. On this, some of them spoke thus:

*We used to know of everything that was happening here and we used to discuss... It was while I was there that Indira Gandhi was shot dead, so during such circumstances we gathered together and discussed them. There we would be keen to listen to the news and talk about it (Murali).*

*We used to know everything as soon as it happened here and we used to get the newspapers as well. We can see more of it during India-Pakistan cricket matches that's when it comes out in the open (Peter).*

Hassan comes up more strongly on this, adding the dimensions of love and patriotism to the native land:

*I want to say strongly that the people who love their country more ardently and sincerely is a Malayalee. They are more patriotic, because a Malayalee is very aware about the democratic and secular nature of the country. We often have seminars there; we discuss things, we invite officials to give talks on such matters. Among Malayalees, we can see that even those who are uneducated are very much aware of our country's democratic nature and they uphold those values dearly; Whereas, a person from other State doesn't share the same sentiments. There are lots of labourers in the Gulf from other States in India and they don't seem to hold that much affection for their homeland as a Malayalee cherishes. When I was working in the bakery, I used to have*

*many employees under me, who were from other States in India and I often used to discuss with them about our country and what I have noticed was that they often discuss matters from a religious point of view rather than from a patriotic stand. They are not so much concerned about nationalism. So a Malayalee does uphold these feelings very dearly, which is why many Malayalees are so willing to help a person out who might be struggling back home, the country has benefited a lot from the Malayalee community working abroad and I also feel that more specially from the Malabar region (Hassan).*

The following testimonies reveal that Politics and religion also used to find their way into these nostalgic construction of the imaginary homeland:

*While back in the room and all of us are together we do talk about politics and other social happenings back home. We used to listen to the news whenever we got the chance to listen to it. Since I was very interested in reading the newspaper, I had send a draft to the agent so that he could send me the paper through post. I would get the paper 8 to 10 days later, apart from this the only source was letter (Mustafa).*

*When I was here I was with KSU and I used to work for congress. In the Gulf, we used to talk about it and occasionally meet up in UAE. We had the freedom to do so... Now I have no interest in any party because they didn't react one bit when Babari Masjid was vandalised and demolished (Aravikutty).*

*We used to hold political talks and discussions only in our room because such things were not allowed outside there. In the room with others we used to discuss. We had some fellows from Kannur. They used to bring political speeches taped in cassettes and all of us would listen and at the end, there would be some difference of opinion and that was it (sankaran).*

At this juncture, Benyamin again makes certain pertinent observations reflexively, which are to be taken note of seriously:

*Just like religions go after their believers, we can see that political parties and ideologies have crossed the seas with the migrants... Most migrant Malayalees have some political past. Along with some things that he took with him, he took these ideologies also along. You can call it football game without a ball.*

At the same time,

*Though these migrants encouraged these political parties and institutions with money and otherwise, these parties did not give them the needed support or representation. When these people return home they do not get any place in the organizations. The very few who got considered were the ones who spent money for the recognition... Some*

*people remain cyber soldiers for the political parties back home, some of them collect funds for these parties. However, when these migrants raise any issue or problems to be solved, none of these parties seem to take any interest. For instance, they were not even able to reduce the flight rates to Kerala (2016: 100-102).*

The points raised by Benyamin in this regard is very important, that requires urgent attention by policy and decision making forums as they precisely represent the sentiments of the migrants themselves which will be further discussed shortly.

However, the informal socio-political discourses reveal a beautiful element that is to be placed on record in the literature on Gulf migrants. The following deliberations speak loud on that element of beauty:

*People with varied political interests and thoughts would be everywhere; but it didn't matter there. The person I used to share my room with was a Hindu. We used to sleep in the same room and during fasting he would fast with us that's how people are like that. I did involve myself in some social activities, not political. There are many social organisations for the pravasi. So I was in one such organisation...(Abdhu).*

*I haven't noticed that people in the Gulf to be more into religion and religious organisations and parties because they are far from home. What I have seen is that all the organisations there work not only for its members or its own community but rather it is inclusive of all. For instance when there is onam celebration, every group will celebrate it and most of the times these celebrations will go on till the next onam... The demolition of the Babari Masjid happened while I was in the Gulf. It was deeply saddening. We did discuss it with our people. But that didn't cause us to have any problem with people of other communities (Hassan).*

As the deliberations beautifully paint, whether it be the happenings like the demolition of the Babari Masjid or the assassination of Indira Gandhi or their conversations and discussions on politics and religions, none of them *created any problem with people of other communities*'. Everything happened, with malice and grudge towards their own brethren of the homeland. This in itself is a clear indication that, for the Gulf migrants of the lower class, the primary interest was to construct an imaginary homeland and to indulge in nostalgic experience on it.

### **5:3:6 Pravasi Organizations - In Need of Firmer and Wider Roots**

In respect of the organizations for the cause and welfare of the migrants, especially that of the lower class migrants, the narratives in general portray a rather bleak picture. Majority of the



migrants have not received any benefit or welfare from any of the organizations, particularly from the NORKA Roots of Government of Kerala, that is instituted with the primary objective of rendering welfare services to the migrants both within and outside India. Worse still, several of them have not even heard about NORKA. The following assertions provide a clear idea as to their sentiments on Pravasi Organizations in general, NORKA in particular:

*I have heard of NORKA but I haven't felt it is of any use. My friends who have joined in their schemes haven't benefited a penny from it. Our community and government are irresponsible...For instance, for the nurses' recruitment the government should have some rules and regulations. More than that, they should abide by those rules and regulations set to help the Pravasis. Because of their delay many lose their chance to get proper employment(Sebastian).*

*I was part of a "Pravasi" association. It was near Kazhakuttom, I have a card of that association, but I never got any of the benefits. When I turned 60, they told me my pension is ready, but we can't give it now, it will take more time, because of that I left Pravasi association (Sasi).*

*I have heard about NORKA, but we have never had any benefit from that agency. Because nobody has told us that being a member in this NORKA will help us or would be beneficial for us... (Koya).*

*I have heard about NORKA. When I enquired about it recently for the pravasi welfare, they said that I am old and I can't be a member of it anymore. I am a member with a local organisation for pravasis, but I am not very active in it. The government treats us like milking cows. There was no care for those of us working abroad at my time... (Mustafa)*

Hassan, who is the State President of a Pravasi Association, spoke about the activities of the Association for the cause of the migrants:

*I am the President of a Pravasi Association. This Association began around 5 years ago. What this association does is, we spread awareness about the government policies for Pravasis, linking them with NORKA, encouraging them to take up membership with NORKA, highlighting and taking up difficulties of the pravasi to the government ... (Hassan).*

Born out of his experience of working with the Gulf migrants, Hassan was highly critical in his observations and comments on the departments and organisations responsible for the grievance redressal and welfare of the Gulf migrants. He also offered certain relevant and specific suggestions for the attention of the departments concerned.

- ***In respect of the Indian Embassy***
  - *There was about 20,000 pravasis working in the place I was working, and no matter what the circumstance were for these people, there was no intervention by the Embassy and unlike here, we couldn't voice our issues out in the open, so there was no freedom. For example, the Philippines embassy would do the necessary, when one of their citizens - like a child or a person working as a servant- met with an accident, and help them claim the insurance money and all. Similar was the kind of intervention by the Malaysian Embassy, Sri Lankan Embassy and so on...but not the Indian Embassy. So while I was working there, I used to come across the struggles of many Indians.*
  
- ***In respect of the Government and/or Indian Embassy***
  - *If I have to send a dead body back home there are a lot of expense - when the body is put into the coffin and taken to cargo; when they weigh it, we have to pay according to the weight. we have been continuously asking the Government to stop charging the NRI's for sending someone's body home.*
  - *There is no ticket charge for the body. They simply see it as a luggage and it is handled just like the luggage is handled. It goes through the conveyor belt and falls just like a luggage. Either the Government should lower the charge for this or the Embassy should take it up because they do financially benefit a lot from the people who work in the Gulf.*
  - *Someone has to accompany the dead body and only then a dead body will be sent to its native place. Unfortunately, the person who accompanies the dead body will have to buy his own ticket. On the top of it, he may not have even gotten sanctioned his leave from workplace. So in such circumstances the Embassy should intervene and they should employ someone to do this. The Embassy will reimburse the ticket fare and expenses only after the return of the accompanying person and submission of the accounts. For that too we have to go to the Embassy again. It is too much of a hassle for someone who is employed in a private firm in the Arab land. So, mostly people avoid this because people can't leave their workplace just like that. Most of the times I have not received the money that I have spent from my own pocket. So this is something that the government should take up. It is kind of an injustice to not take it up as the government has earned a lot from the NRIs.*
  
- ***In respect of NORKA Roots***
  - *Speaking from my own experience, I appreciate the services of NORKA. But many of the pravasis don't know about NORKA and so their service to the pravasi is limited. I believe it was in 2016 that NORKA held some membership drive or campaign in Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and so on. So through that*

many people registered with NORKA. What happened after that? All their documents got piled up in the NORKA office in Kerala. They were supposed to complete the process of those memberships within a certain period of time. But till now they haven't been able to deliver. So a few lakhs of membership is piled up there without any kind of processing. In all the three offices of NORKA there are only two or three employees. So they are extremely understaffed. Now after many associations took up this issue, the government has employed some temporary staff from the Kudumbashree.

- *It is the responsibility of the Government to help the Pravasi who has contributed to the country because many of the pravasis who might have worked there for 10 years and more might have to return on one fine morning and they would not receive any of the benefits from the government, as they don't have any proof and that is not the Pravasi's fault. Same goes for the pravasi welfare fund even though the Pravasis have been paying an amount, the government hasn't increased the amount they pay to these pravasis. I would suggest that NORKA may increase that amount to a minimum of 2000 rupees, so that it will be useful to the Pravasi. Also the Pravasi shouldn't be fined for not being able to pay the amount monthly.*
- *The life of a Pravasi is different. His line of work is different. A Government employee in our country has a stable job. He will get pension after he retires, whereas a Pravasi could lose his job at any given day and his life could fall apart. In this Malabar region you will come across many incompleted houses. When you see one, you should know that it is the house of a Pravasi. There might be a Pravasi who has worked there for 20-30 years in the Gulf, but still he might have not been able to complete the construction of his house. But many may have benefitted from him. I know many such people and we have helped them build houses. It was done not because of any help from the Government. What the Government does is that they will help only after we start the work and we will have to go behind these politicians to get something done. NORKA may do something to address this unfortunate situation.*
- *Another important thing is the child of a Pravasi does not get an income certificate from the village office because his or her parent is a Pravasi. Recently a girl scored nine A+ in her final exam and that the girl couldn't get an income certificate because her father was working in the Gulf. What these officials don't know is that, that migrant is working there as a labourer. Just because a person works in the Gulf, he is denied of the basic benefits he is entitled to in his homeland. In fact, he has to be included in the BPL list. What they don't realise is that these people went abroad because there weren't enough employment opportunities here. So they are exploited.*

- *The pravasis should be given a special consideration. For instance, when a pravasi comes for 3 months leave he doesn't have the time to walk behind these officials to get a simple permission to build his house. So in such cases a special consideration should be given.*

Finally, Hamsa falls into an intensively reflexive posture and comes up with a very critical observation about the life of a lower class migrant that is nothing but plain, hard reality and thus depicts the true predicament of the subjects of this study.

*You can't think of every pravasi as Yousef Ali. When these ministers go for foreign tours, the people you see on TV there are not the real pravasis. He can't be present before the TV, because he will be working hard 16 hours and after that they will be taking overtime too. They won't even buy a Pepsi to quench their thirst. Instead they will just have water that some Arab might have put up for the passers-by. There are many who collect these Pepsi bottles and sell them for a few bucks that's how a pravasi lives there. The Government has not understood the real life of a pravasi...*

### **5:3:7 Discussion**

#### **5:3:7:1 Making of the Middle Class**

In Social Science literature, 'middle class' appears to be a somewhat elusive social section, a significant social category for cultural and political processes across the world (Mills 1951; Vogel 1963; Nair 1974, Singh 1985; Wessel 2001). In India, discourses on nationalism have been closely linked to the category of class, besides nation. Both anti-colonial nationalism as well as postcolonial nationalism have been embedded primarily in the discourses on the middle class (Misra 1961/1978, Nair 1974; Baradhan 1984, Singh 1985, Bhatia 1994). Therefore, middle class phenomenon in India has been a subject of domestic debate and international attention, especially since the mid 1980s, followed by the sudden recognition at the international circle that the rising Indian middle class would be a major market in the 1990s. However, several scholars have pointed out the difficulties of delineating the sociological boundaries of middle class (Tanter and Young 1990, Varma 1998; Wessel 2001).

The term 'middle class' has generally been employed to refer to that section of the capitalist society, which lies between the capitalist and the working classes. According to Raj (1973) middle class refers to the social classes (or strata) which stand between the proletariat and the

bourgeoisie as in Marx's own time. It has come to mean the professional or service class (Raj 1973, Nair 1974, Singh 1985, Bhatia 1994). This class may be demarcated from the other two classes, capitalist at the top and the manual, unskilled and semi-skilled labor at the bottom, by negative features that characterize the group of individuals who form this class: their income which is relatively large compared to that of the members of the working class, is not derived from the ownership of capital assets, but obtained from physical or mental human labor (Raj 1973, Bhatia 1994). In short, the middle class is delineated as a heterogeneous historical bloc, with differential access to relations of production, status and political power, who represent so great a diversity in terms of income, status, vocations, skills and educational qualifications among groups and individual constituents.

What constituted them as middle class was their aspirations to upward mobility and modernity through consumerism. It has been rightly noted that the new economic policies enabled the middle classes to consume goods that had till recently been luxury items, but were now perceived as crucial indices of upward mobility: housing, electronic gadgets and household appliances, vehicles, packaged foods, and other consumer goods (Varma 1998; Mankekar 1999, Wessel 2001, Palackal 2011). In this way, the demographic expansion of the middle class was reinforced by its cultural constitution (Palackal 2011). Since the early nineties, when liberalization policies became more pronounced, the middle class has been the focus of considerable media attention. This middle class, an elastic group ranging from 100 to 350 million, depending on the criteria employed, suddenly became an entity worthy of observation and debate, that focussed on their ability to consume (C/f. *Far Eastern Economic Review* January 14, 1993, February 2, 1995, March 17, 1994; *India Today*, April 15, 1995; *Business Today*, issue. 4, 1996; *Fortune*, issue. 5, 1997).

It is important to note that it was the heightened purchasing power, and the renewed consumption behaviour whetting out the long cherished aspirations in the wake of their migration to the Gulf that has elevated the lower class migrants and bestowed them with the identity of the middle class. In other words, it was their conglomeration as an aspirational contingent as against their conditions of poverty and starvation that the lower class migrants climbed up the middle class ladder in the State. Hence, Gulf migration of the lower class has contributed in a special way to the making of the middle class in Kerala.

### **5:3:7:2 *Gulf Returnee- A New Identity Outfit***

A key figure in the debates exploring the cultural process linked to consumption and consumer culture is the French Semiologist Jean Baudrillard (1988). He views that consumption is seen to play a critical role in defining people's identities and consciousness, so that styles of consumption are held to have superseded the old class-consciousness. Conversely, he celebrates symbolic exchange, which includes activities like gratuity gift-giving, philanthropy and social service and festivities, besides routine consumption. These activities, whether it be conspicuous consumption or giving away of gifts or engaging in philanthropic and social service activities, simultaneously bring with it benefits that are symbolic in nature. He contrasts his ideal of symbolic exchange, wherein images and signs replace the logic of production, utility and instrumental rationality, which otherwise governs capitalist societies. He argues that in a post liberalized world, Baudrillard sees the entire society as organized around consumption and display of commodities, with its accompanied forms of gift giving, philanthropic and social service activities, through which individuals gain identity and prestige. Consumer culture in this sense, points to the ways in which consumption ceases to be a simple appropriation of utilities, or use values, to become a consumption of signs and images in which the emphasis upon the capacity to endlessly reshape the cultural or symbolic aspect of the commodity makes it more appropriate to speak of commodity-signs.

Baudrillard's work is valuable in that he draws attention to the increasingly fundamental role of signs and images in a consumer society, which helps us to foreground and explain the dynamics of the processes in the making of the middle class of the lower class Gulf migrants. The new forms of consumption and the resultant renewed market relation that they were able to establish, enabled them to realise their compelling aspirations to a great extent, in the wake of their sojourn in the Gulf. This process, in fact, gives birth to a new section of middle class in Kerala, who are christened as *Gulf Returnees*, that confers them with a unique identity. This new identity outfit which they have obtained through their struggle-filled sojourn in the Gulf, in fact, bestowed them a distinctive locus in Kerala society with a middle class status, prestige and honour, which neither any other category can claim, nor any agency can take credit for its origin and growth.

Following Baudrillard, Friedman (2002) further explored how consumption becomes an aspect of broader cultural strategies of self-definition and self-maintenance and reiterated that the formation of identity encompasses the practice of consumption. According to Friedman, consumption is one of the important dynamic aspects of the formation of personhood or selfhood (Friedman 2002:234). He writes: 'Consumption within the bounds of the world systems is always a consumption of identity, canalised by a negotiation between self-definition and the array of possibilities offered by the capitalist market' (2002:235). When goods are regarded as the building blocks of life-worlds, they can be further understood as constituents of selfhood and social identity. In this sense, the identity of the middle class *Gulf Returnees*, as a socially constructed category bestows them with a sense of self and self-esteem, that is a new personhood and selfhood, which they did not possess prior to their sojourn in the Gulf.

Notwithstanding, socio-political developments in India in the recent years have often been articulated in terms of crisis (Kothari 1989; Kohli 1991; Baxi and Parekh 1995; Saberwal 1996). It is pointed out that the middle class in general, having been engulfed by consumer culture, is in the grip of a moral crisis; and this moral crisis is closely tied with abandoning the Gandhian ideal of self-reliance and a commitment to a form of development that includes the poor and the disadvantaged. Solidarity with the poor, the authors state, is incompatible with the present middle class' orientation towards personal economic success and consumption.

It is in the context of this perceived moral crisis of the middle class that the lower class Gulf migrants, upon their elevation to the middle class, remain a separate genre altogether. Not only that they seem to not indulge in conspicuous and unscrupulous consumption, typical of an Indian middle class, as the analysis lucidly illuminated, they have initiated a new culture of philanthropy and social service in the State. In this sense, the emergence of the lower class Gulf migrants as a middle class, by and large stand out as a distinctive cultural category, who do not fit neatly into the generic universe of the middle class who are prone to display consumption patterns that resemble the cosmopolitan cultural forms in other parts of the world (Kemper, 1993; Appadurai, 1996).

### **Kerala Model of Development under Scrutiny**

The Website of NORKA Roots (<http://www.norkaroots.net/Norka.htm>, accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2017) says that there are 22 lakh migrant workers from Kerala, 90% are in Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Of these, the category of the low end jobs, constitute the highest group of Gulf migrants. This is the category, irrespective of their religion, caste or political affiliations, which lived in the fringes of the society in every way prior to their going to the Gulf, especially both in the occupational ladder, as well as social structure, who send sizeable share of remittances to the State and are interacting and engaging actively in the socio-cultural and economic spheres of both the host country as well as the home state (Zachariah, Nair & Rajan 2006, Kannan 2005, Pushpangadan 2003). Therefore, as a critical economic factor that sustained Kerala Economy from mid seventies (Jeffrey 1992:218) as well as the socio-cultural developmental sectors, it is imperative that their growth as middle class and their role and contribution have to be located in the developmental map of the state and examined against the its much debated development model.

The state of Kerala is widely acclaimed for its unique pattern of development. The State, with its distinctive socio-economic and demographic characteristics, has been compared with developed nations (Ramachandran 1996; Oommen 1992, 1999 Vol. 1 & 2). The explanatory discourses while looking at the causative factors have focused on the role of 'agency', in paving the way for the 'Kerala model' (Tharamangalam 1999, Kannan and Pillai 2004, Desai 2005). According to the scholars, some of those agencies included the princely states of Travancore and Cochin, the British rulers, the Christian missionaries, socio-political reformers of the renaissance period, local chieftains and of course, the left political activism and the responsive Governments after the formation of the State, especially the Marxist led Governments and their policies (Sen 1997, Desai 2005).

Notwithstanding, when one stops to think in the light of the 1) intense journey through the live-narrative fields of the lower class Gulf migrants (Chapter 4 & 5), 2) taking cognizance of the tumultuous road to the burning labour market of the Gulf from the poverty stricken families in Kerala (Chapter 5:1), 3) their rather triumphant emergence as a middle class on their own merit (Chapter 5:2), 4) through untold trials and tribulations (Chapter 5:3) that the 'Kerala Model'



needs to be revisited. It is important to note that this emergent segment of middle class –*Gulf Returnees*– shaped their destiny from that of their earlier miserable predicament, basically on their own. They seem to have received little support and assistance of any kind from any Government or other agencies in the State, irrespective of ideological or religious affiliations. At the same time, this segment seem to contribute heavily to the economic, social, political, religious and cultural sustenance and growth of the State. It points to the urgent need to underline the ‘agency’ of this hitherto invisible players in the making of ‘Kerala Model’ and the developmental trajectory of the State. It is in this context that the observations, comments and appeals of the Pravasi writers like Benyamin and the Pravasis themselves which are mentioned earlier in this chapter gain paramount importance.

## Chapter 6

### CONCLUSION

**The problematic** of the study sought to embark upon a journey through the lives of the lower class Gulf migrants, with a view to decipher the subjective and objective transformations that occurred on account of their Gulf migration. The **context** of the study was set in the backdrop of serious dearth of qualitative studies that take cognizance of the predicaments of the low end job migrants and the transformations that have occurred on account of their migration to the Gulf. Hence, in accordance with the **general objective** of the study, it traversed through the lives of low end job migrants, with a view to unfold the dynamics of the processes of transformation at the subjective (personal and familial) and objective (communitarian and societal) realms. **More specifically**, the study consisted in navigating through the milestones of the tangible changes in the life of a low-end job migrant and thereby unravelling the dynamics of the processes of transformation at the community and societal levels. A minimum period of ten years of migration to the Gulf was regarded as the **inclusion criterion** for the selection of the subjects of the study, as the minimum number of years required to excavate some perceptible changes at the personal, familial and societal levels.

**The specific task** of this sociological gaze was to fathom the **causative factors** (driving variables) of the transformation from their lower class status to the middle class. In this sense, the study analysed the process of *middle-classaisation*– transformation of the lower class Gulf migrant to the middle class. Hence, the notion of “class” constituted the primary **analytical category** in the study. In examining the causative factors of the process of middle-classaisation, the variables such as income status, class position, education and health care, purchasing power, consumption pattern and possession of household utensils, electronic gadgets, and the use of mass media and communication channels were put to close empirical scrutiny. In this endeavour,

**a three generational longitudinal analysis** were undertaken, namely, 1) Generation of the parents of the migrant, 2) Migrant's generation and 3) Generation of the migrant's children.

In the light of the deficiency identified in the literature review in terms of its inherent weakness of its objectivist epistemology with a bias towards quantitative approach, the study was **designed as primarily qualitative**. To this effect, the Weberian method of empathetic understanding-*verstehen*, from a multi-disciplinary point of view, was employed. **Methodologically**, an **embedded strategy** of mixed method is used, wherein qualitative data formed the primary data and quantitative data played the supportive role, though both data were collected simultaneously. With the help of an Interview Guide, elaborate qualitative discussions were held with twenty five lower class Gulf migrants from four districts of the State. A higher proportion of the subjects were selected from Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram, since a high percentage of migrants hail from these two districts in Kerala. The analysis of the qualitative data was done within the framework of a **narrative paradigm**, and SPSS was used in the tabulation of the quantitative data.

The study unearthed the fact that the developmental trajectory of the modern Kerala and thereby the history of post independent modernity of the State, since its formation is intertwined with the pangs and perils of the lower class Gulf migrants and the subjective and objective forms of transformation they have brought about in the State. Hence, the struggle filled sojourn of the lower class Gulf migrants and the resultant transformations at the personal and societal terrains have to be mapped as a distinctive locus in the development map of the modern Kerala.

More specifically, the study brought to light the fact that the migrants belonged to the lower class (poor) in terms of their class position as they grew up in an environment of penury and hardships. Most of the parents of the migrants could engage only in menial and low-end jobs, hence had to struggle to make both ends meet. Several of the migrants had to help out their parents in their struggle to find some means of livelihood. Migrants in their turn also could find only low status jobs, although for several of them even those jobs were not regular and stable. Worse still, many of them could not find any job and hence unemployment was rampant in those days. The socio-economic condition of the State was not conducive for people from the lower class communities particularly, irrespective of their caste or religion, to build a decent life in the

State. It was these adverse familial and societal conditions that forced the migrants to embark upon their sojourn to the Gulf amidst risks and uncertainties. In the Gulf too the migrants could find only low-end jobs, given their backward educational and social capitals and so their life was intensely struggle-ridden. However, the life in the Gulf brought the migrants financial gains through increased earnings, and thus enabling them to meet the cardinal aim for which they had undertaken the hazardous sojourn with unimaginable difficulties.

The analysis of the processes of the dynamics of their sojourn in the Gulf revealed that it highly increased their purchasing power so as to translate their aspirations to a great extent. Resultantly, they achieved an upward mobility in terms of their class status to the middle class, though at varied levels, according to the consumption pattern and standard of living. Hence majority of them have gained their entry into the middle middle class universe and a comparatively smaller percentage into either the camp of lower middle class or higher middle class. Their aspirational accomplishment as a consequence of the Gulf migration was most conspicuously manifested in owning a concrete house, in majority of the cases, double storied. Education was another important area in which, they have invested their earning from the Gulf. Realizing the importance of education in human life, especially in a market driven present day society, all of them invested a good portion of their hard earned Gulf income in providing quality education to their children.

Thus, one notices a mammoth change in the educational profile of the children of the migrants and the siblings in some cases, from that of their parents and grand parents,. Majority of the children of the migrants, both boys and girls alike, therefore have acquired higher educational degrees that fetched them high value in the job market. Given the conventional practice of the Muslim community, even if the girls were married off at younger age, the basic education that they gained brought them in-laws with good educational qualifications and thus good jobs. Thus, it appears that housing and education seemed to be the key areas in which the lower class Gulf emigrants, upon their elevation to the middle class, have invested their earning from the Gulf. Correspondingly, while housing vested them with social capital with high prestige and honour, education bestowed symbolic capital that could accrue them rich dividends in the future.

Similarly, in the wake of acquiring heightened purchasing power, unprecedented transformations occurred in the attitude and practice of health care, and in the buying habit of various consumables such as clothes, footwear, cosmetics, electronic gadgets, vehicles, and in the use of communication and mass media equipment including the New Media. In short, there occurred transformation from a state of penury to a state of prosperity that ultimately led to their entry into the middle class universe in Kerala.

While foregrounding the transformations, the study unfolded the personal, familial and the societal triumphs of the Gulf migration of the lower class migrants, by unravelling the subjective as well as the objective aspects of these transformations. In brief, by and large, the migrants with their enhanced entitlements, were able to translate their aspirations for a decent living with a good house, quality education to the children and the siblings, good food, health care, adequacy of household and personal consumables, electronic gadgets, mass media and communication facilities. Further, their elevation to the middle class has initiated a new culture of philanthropy and social service that improve the lot of the vulnerable members of the community, especially among the Muslim community. Moreover, their earnings from the Gulf contributed its mighty share in the socio-economic and cultural spheres of the society at large. At the same time, the middle class standard of living that was made possible on account of their Gulf migration, did not lead to a life of *westoxication* that exhibited unbridled propensities for consumption at any cost with display of extravagance and wasteful affluence. Instead, several of them consciously experimented with a life of simplicity and modesty.

Another important unintended consequence of the migration to the Gulf was the 'quiet transformation' that was enacted in the lives of the womenfolk in the wake of their husbands being away in the Gulf, labouring and toiling in order to fetch means to make both ends meet. That several of them became enabled and empowered to shoulder the everyday household responsibilities such as the education of their children, banking and financing, supervision of house construction, attending social functions, purchase of stationaries, utensils and other consumables, in some cases, even arranging the marriages of their children and so on... All these would not have been a possibility in an androcentric culture like ours, where citadels of restrictions on the rights, opportunities and mobility of women in general are built up, if not for the Gulf sojourn of the migrants. It was a quiet transformation because it was seldom visible in

the sight of the academic discourses on migration, but was very significant transformation, especially in Muslim community that imposed more rigid forms of social restrictions on women, as the migrants themselves have shared.

The narratives also illuminated the fact that all these transformative triumphs were fraught with constant trials and tribulations. As part of circumventing those myriads of trials and tribulations, the migrants tend to construct an imaginary homeland by showing great interest in the socio-political happenings in the homeland and engaging in private conversations and discussions on them, but in an atmosphere of cordiality and mutual respect.

The study came across certain critical elements that require considered attention and redressal from the part of the departments and agencies concerned. In a general plane, it has been pointed out that though low end job migrants contribute heavily to the day to day affairs of many a socio-political organization in the State, their issues such as reducing the flight rates, are not taken up by any of those organizations, and worse still, they are not given due recognition and representation in their official organs and forums. On a more specific term, the following **suggestions and recommendations** are put forward:

1. Several lower class migrants, especially those who have migrated to the Gulf in the 1970s and 1980s by and large, do not know about the NORKA Roots, the Governmental organization for the cause of the migrants. So, quite many of them do not get any support or assistance from NORKA. Thus, urgent measures are to be taken in making NORKA known to the migrants more widely and extensively, especially among those who are occupied in the low-end jobs in the Gulf, so that they are well informed about this department and the services it offers.
2. It seems that the membership drive initiated in 2016 by NORKA in some of the Gulf regions and the heavy pile of membership documents to the tune of a few lakhs, accrued then has been piled up in the NORKA Office. It is also noticed that the NORKA Office suffers from acute shortage of staff and of late, Government has employed some members from the Kudumbasree, upon demand from some Associations. It is suggested that NORKA takes necessary measures to expedite the process and complete the registration of these potential members.

3. Most of the migrants expressed pain at the not so helpful attitude of the Government in providing certain basic benefits to them, particularly the lower class population. For instance, denying an Income Certificate to a child, just because his/her father is a migrant labourer in the Gulf. This is to be treated as a genuine concern of the migrants of the lower strata and Government needs to invoke the necessary policy notifications so as to facilitate a more sympathetic redressal of the same from the part of the Departments concerned.
4. It is a fact that many of those migrants who returned from the Gulf do not have much saving as they had expended their earnings in owning a house and the education of their children, besides the daily expenditure of the family back home. Hence, it is strongly recommended that the Pravasi welfare fund may be raised to a minimum of Rs. 2000/-.
5. Some migrants due to certain unfortunate or unexpected eventualities, or being enchained in a debt trap, were not able to complete the construction of their long cherished house. Though Government has certain schemes to help complete such unfinished houses, it does not really reach the hands of the needy on time, since the migrants are made to run from pillar to post by the unscrupulous bureaucrats and/or politicians. It is high time that the Government takes necessary steps to curb such undesirable elements and ensure that the benefits of the scheme reach the incumbents on time.
6. It is pointed out that the Indian Embassy does not render timely and effective service to the migrants, for instance, in claiming insurance in the eventuality of an accident, or death, or reimbursing the travel expenses incurred in accompanying dead bodies to India etc.
7. Gulf migrants apparently have to spend lot of money to send a dead body back home. Migrants are of the view that the Government takes steps to stop such payments. They have allegedly brought this to the attention of the Government departments concerned a number of times, but in vain.
8. It is suggested that the Government intervene and reduce the flight charge of transporting a dead body, treating it as a luggage, when taken to the native place, or Indian Embassy may pay for it.

In the final analysis, the Gulf migration has definitely contributed to the making of a distinctive middle class section in Kerala, who have obtained on their own merit, increased purchasing power and higher consumption entitlements that enabled them to translate their middle class aspirations for a better living standard and life style into a reality. Their entry into the middle class universe bestowed them with a socio-cultural identity as *Gulf Returnee* and that provided them a distinct locale that is unique and separate from the other middle class populations in the State who have mostly been engulfed by the currents of consumer culture giving way to conspicuous and luxurious consumption in a post liberalized world. Conversely, this middle class contingent of the *Gulf Returnee* have initiated a life style that contained counter cultural values emphasising simplicity and modesty in life and the value of reaching out to the poor and needy in the community and neighbourhood that gave rise to new culture of gift giving, philanthropy and social service. This distinctive genre of the emergent middle class who contributed enormously to the socio, economic, political and cultural development of the State and thereby contributing their share to the shaping up of the 'Kerala model of development' independently, in a way call for a revisiting of the existing academic discourses and debates on Kerala Model.



## APPENDIX 1

### Interview Guide

*(Important: The idea is to engage in a conversation and gather thick narrative/description of it and not collect some objective/one word answers. At the outset the interviewer may spend a couple of minutes establishing rapport with the respondent, and then begin the conversation to collect qualitative information. The standardized quantitative data are expected to be gathered in the course of the probing and intriguing conversation with the migrant. (Focus on the perceptible changes in the socio-economic and life style indicators in the three generations, especially the transformation after going to the Gulf)*

#### 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION (10 minutes)

- Details on the job in the Gulf – how long, when, where, what job, still Continuing/returned, if returned, would like to go again. Alone or with family in the Gulf
- Upper most sentiment/experience of being in the Gulf – happy, sad, satisfaction, frustration, contended, comfortable, uncomfortable etc – the reason/s why?
- Most happy/beautiful element/sor aspect/s of being in the Gulf – more income, prosperity, higher status etc. – could you achieve these, how far?
- Most unhappy/frustrating/painful, aspect of being in the Gulf...? Leaving home and family; friends... hard work/not good place to stay/ no good food...
- How frequent was the home visit... good/bad memories/experience of home visits
- What is the current job/occupation – in the Gulf or homeland

#### 2. BACKGROUND OF GOING TO THE GULF (10 minutes)

- The background/situation that forced you to go to the Gulf - socio-economic/political environment in detail
- The major purpose/factor that prompted
- The response/sentiments/reaction of the parents/friends/neighbours/colleagues ...

- The process of going to the Gulf – Passport/visa/agency/agent/ interview/work permit/support from the Govt. agencies/information providers – the issues and difficulties and the ways in which they were overcome
- Details of the money matters – how did the required money/finance was met? Struggles and the ways in which it was solved
- Memories/experience of flying to the Gulf for the first time...
- Role, assistance and support of the Govt. agencies like NORKA in going to the Gulf

### 3. THREE GENERATIONAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE MIGRANT IN A LONGITUDINAL FRAME( 20 minutes)

- The socio-economic condition and life style in details of the parents of the migrant – education, occupation, life style – food, expenditure, consumption details - dress pattern, transportation used, elements of poverty/prosperity, any major set back...medical facilities and health care resorted to, access to mass media and communication, savings/borrowings/loan etc, terms used to address parents, the material used to clean the teeth, number of slippers/chapels, the way signature is put – thumb impression or any symbol etc,
- Daily routine of the parents
- The socio-economic condition and life style in details of the migrant BEFORE going to the Gulf – education, occupation, life style – food, expenditure, consumption details - dress pattern, transportation used, elements of poverty/prosperity, set back, if any, medical facilities and health care resorted to, access to mass media and communication, savings/borrowings/loan etc, terms used to address parents, the material used to clean the teeth, number of slippers/chapels etc
- Daily routine of the migrant
- The socio-economic condition and life style in details of the migrant AFTER going to the Gulf – education, occupation, life style – food, expenditure, consumption details - dress pattern, transportation used, elements of poverty/prosperity, medical facilities and health care resorted to, access to mass media and communication, savings/borrowings/loan etc, terms used to address parents, the material used to clean the teeth, number of slippers/chapels etc

4. TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE LIFE STYLE OF THE MIGRANT (10 minutes)
  - Details of the education of the children, health care, consumption pattern, dressing, fast food, brand items, pairs of clothes/chapels, use of cosmetics, luxury goods, gadgets, construction/innovation of the house, transportation facilities, communication, media etc. of the migrant after going to the Gulf country
  
5. CHANGES IN THE SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF THE MIGRANT LABOURER REGARDING MONEY, RELATIONSHIPS, THE SELF AND IDENTITY (10 minutes)
  - Migrant's changes in the perceptions about money, relationships, kith and kin before and after going to the Gulf
  - Experience or memories of relatives seeking financial support, experience of relatives/friends *who* are poorer
  - Any change do they experience in their status and position/self after going to the Gulf
  - Do they give donation/sponsorship for the festivals and celebrations or communal or political organizations/parties after becoming a Gulf migrant
  - Change, if any, in the interest and inclination towards communal group/ideology/organization and its affairs/news etc
  - Interest, if any, in the national matters and developments
  
6. CHANGES IN THE NATURE OF RELATIONSHIPS OF THE MIGRANT (10 minutes)
  - Nature of relationship of the migrant before and after going to the Gulf – the bond between the wife & children, kith and kin, friends, co-workers, neighbours etc
  - Nature of the changes in the involvement in the affairs/decisions of the family before and after going to the Gulf –
  - Nature of the changes of the migrant's relation and interaction with the socio-religious and political organizations of the locality
  - Nature of the changes of the women at home, in terms taking decisions on matters concerning household, hand and spend money, undertaking household responsibilities, mobility, going for errands, contacts and connections, taking care of the education/institutional affairs of the children, participation in social activities/functions and so on.

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Interview Schedule**

Schedule No.

Name: (optional):

No. 1	Demographic profile		Response
1.2	Place	Residence in Kerala	
		Country of migration	
1.3	Age		
1.4	Sex		Male(1)Female(2)
1.5	Religion		Hindu(1)Muslim(2)Christian(3)
1.6	Category		General(1)OBC(2) SC/ST(3)
1.7	In which year did you first migrate to Gulf?		
1.8	At what age did you start working in Gulf?		
1.10	The nature of the area where you live in Kerala		Rural(1)/ Urban(2)
1.11	Marital status		Single(1)married(2) widower(3)divorced(4)
1.12	Nature of family		Nuclear(1) Joint(2)Extended(3)
1.13	No. of family members		
1.13.1	No. of dependents in the family?		
1.15	Are you the sole bread winner of your family?		Yes(2)No(1)
1.16	Educational qualification		No schooling(1) below 10 <sup>th</sup> (2) 10 <sup>th</sup> failed(3)10 <sup>th</sup> (4)Plus two failed(5)Plus two(6) degree failed(7)degree(8)PG(9) any other(10)
1.18	Frequency of visit to homeland		Once in a year(1)/ once in two years(2)/ once in three years (3) once in four years (4) once in a while(5)
1.19	Type of work you were engaged in the Gulf		Mason(1)helper(2)mixer-operator(3)JCB operator(4)electrician(5)plumber(6)painter(7)metal worker(8)Maid(9) sales man(10)driver(11) any other(specify) (12)

No. 2	Socio-Economic and Life style profile of the 3 generations in a longitudinal frame			
Indicators		Generation 1 (Family of the Parents of the Gulf migrant)	Generation 2 (Family of the Gulf Migrant)	Generation 3 (Children of the Gulf Migrant)
2.1	Educational qualification			
2.1.2	Nature of the School studied			
2.1.3	Nature of the Transportation to the School			
2.1.4	Uniform in the school, if any			
2.1.5	Education			
2.2	Type of Food used on a daily basis			
2.2.1	Number of times, had food			
2.3	Number of pairs of dress			
2.3.1	Nature of the dress wore			
2.4	Occupation/job			
2.4.1	Nature of the income received (daily, weekly, monthly)			
2.4.2	Income per month			
2.4.3.	Expenditure per month			
2.4.4	Bank account/s, if any			
2.4.5	Nature of saving, if any			
2.4.6	Borrowings/loan, if any			
2.5	Type of house			

2.5.1	Nature of the ownership of the residence (owned/rented)			
2.6	Amount of land owned			
2.6.	Type of vehicle used, if any			
2.6.1	Ownership of the vehicle, if any			
2.7.	Gadgets used in the house			
2.8	Type of hospital visited for treatment like fever			
2.8.1	Health Insurance, if any			
2.10	Terms used to address your parents			
2.11	Type of chapels wore outside			
2.11.1	Number of pairs of chapels at a time			
2.12	Type of cosmetic items			
2.13	Use of brand items			
2.14	Main mass medium in use			
2.14.1	Subscribed News papers, if any			
2.14.2	Main medium of communication with those at a distance			
2.14.3	Owned telephone at home			
2.14.4	Owned computer at home, if any			
2.14.5	Owned mobile phone			
2.15.	Whether the housewife has taken decisions on matters of the family on a daily basis			

2.15.1	Whether the housewife has gone for errands in the market etc daily			
2.15.2	Whether the housewife has enjoyed freedom of movement and mobility as she desires			
2.15.3	Whether housewife has been used to attending social functions and activities			
2.15.4	Whether the housewife has driven 2 wheelers/4 wheelers			
2.15.5	Whether the housewife has handled money and spent it by herself			
2.15.6	Whether the housewife is involved in affairs of the education of their children and visit their institution/s			
2.16	Membership in any political party			
2.16.1	Sympathy/inclination to any political party			
2.17.	Membership in any communal organization			
2.17.1	Interest/sympathy towards any communal organization/group			
2.18	Interest/Patriotic spirit/discussion in the affairs of the nation			

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