

Inflow of Migrant Labourers to Kerala and Its Impact on Socio Economic Conditions

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Abstract

Kerala, the God's own country is a place of attraction to people from different parts of the world. Similar to tourism sector, regarding the labour sector there is a great dearth for employees in different categories of casual unskilled labour. This is filled in by the huge inflow of migrant labourers. The present paper is probing on the social and economic change that has brought about in Kerala due to the incoming of the workers from various other states.

Keywords: Migrant, social changes, economic changes, labour

Introduction

In a very short span of time migrant labourers have made their presence felt in every nook and corner of Kerala. Most of them are in the construction area while rest of them work in the hotel industry and other daily labour to sustain themselves and their families. The State with its larger educated and unemployed youth keeps a hawk's eye view on these tremendous inflows of migrant workers. These labourers are often preferred as they are available cheaper than native labourers. Nothing can wither away their spirit as there is a regular inflow of young labourers in search of better employment opportunities and a steady income. It is also interesting to see that when most of the Keralites are going abroad in search of a windfall for them, while it is an oasis in the desert for the migrant workers. Higher wages, large employment opportunities and shortages of local labourers make Kerala a lucrative job market for workers from outside the State. Inflow of workers is mainly from the States of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Higher wages for unskilled labour in the state, large opportunities for employment and shortage of local labour are the major reasons for the massive influx of migrant labour to the state.

Migration is the process of movement of an individual or group of people from one region to another region. High literacy rates and better education has promoted Keralites to look for higher wages and skilled labour abroad which are sometime considered more respectable. This has led to decline the availability of workforce in Kerala especially in unskilled jobs. Workers migration is a significant factor affecting the causes of socioeconomic development of India. The number of migrant workers in Kerala is much larger compared to only 16 lakhs Keralites working abroad. Migration in India is mostly defined by communal structures and pattern of development.

Objectives

1. To know about the inflow of migrant labourers in Kerala and their presence in the labour sector
2. To Know about the working and living conditions of migrant workers
3. To understand the social changes that result in due to the inhabitation of migrant workers
4. To know the problems faced by migrant workers.

Significance

The violation of the rights of migrant worker start at home by agent and agencies of recruitment in the sending of these workers and also it continues by the receiving states in India. As many migrant labourers come from rural region, they have very little access about the knowledge of pre departure information. The migrant workers are facing some common problems like poor accommodation, work without holidays, lack of healthcare, food problems, and seizure of personal document, contract substitution and irregular of job placement. At this backdrop, it becomes relevant to study the problems faced by migrant workers. The problems faced by migrant labourers have been a major cause of concern for the Government

as well as the people in Kerala. The present study made use of primary and secondary data collected from migrant workers in Kerala, by means of questionnaire. Various related information from secondary sources are also used for the study.

Social impact of migrant labourers

The involvement of migrant labourers in criminal activities is also witnessing an unprecedented rise. A good number of cases have been registered against migrant labourers involved in heinous crimes ranging from dacoit to drunken brawl. A brutal murder happened in one of the toddy shops of rural Kerala where the licensee was found dead in the refrigerator. Later on it was revealed that the migrant labourer was frequently scolded by the licensee for being obsessed with mobile phone games even during the working hours. This infuriated the labourer strangled him to death and kept the body in the refrigerator. Despite all this, the role of migrant labourers in developing the economy of our state cannot be disregarded.

These workers migrate from other States due to low wage in their village for unskilled work, lack of job opportunities in the village, water scarcity in the villages, migration of spouse, family problems, lack of education, lack of support from relatives etc.

Majority of the male workers drink alcohol and smoke. Use of Pan Parag is not widespread. But about half of the female workers are in the habit of chewing Pan. The Pan chewing habit is more among women than among men. Most of the migrant workers live in shanty houses and congested rooms mostly on sharing basis leading to the formation of slumps. Only very few live in independent houses. Others live in single room or share a house with others. This pattern is different from the usual pattern of living of people of Kerala and it disturbs the life of neighbours particularly Keralites. Some of the migrant workers live in small houses or rooms where there are no adequate toilet facilities. Sharing of one toilet by two or more families sometimes force the migrant workers to use the public places instead of toilets. There are also workers who are not accompanied by their family members who live in verandas of shops during night.

Economic Changes

There are also financial progress in trade sector especially in the hotel industry and domestic sector. Majority of migrant labours dine from hotels in Kerala assisting in growth of economy. Others who consume food from home also boost up the economy by the purchase of commodities. Majority of the male workers eat breakfast and lunch from hotels. However, many of them have their dinner at home.

The most prominent positive impacts of labour migration on Kerala economy are due to the contribution to State income by increasing consumption, savings and investment, enhancing the quality of life, contribution to high human development, reducing poverty and relative deprivation, etc. The major impact on the labour market is the reduction of unemployment through migration of unemployed youths and non-agricultural labourer.

Factors affecting migration

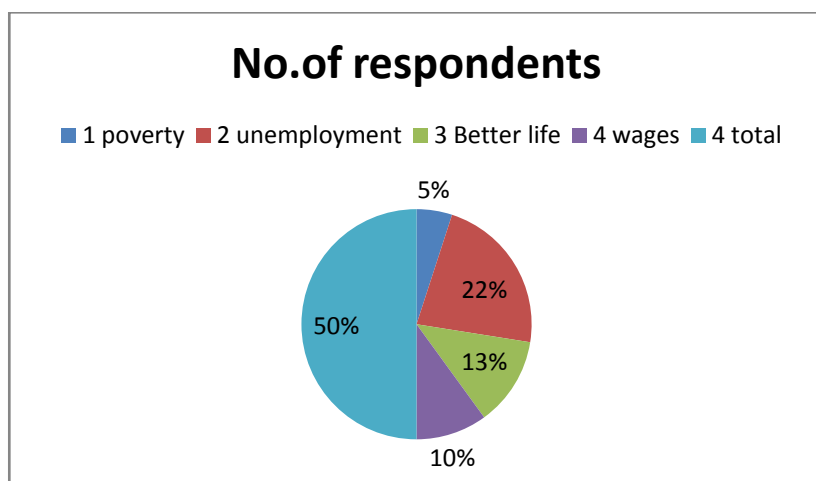
1. Differences between wages for equivalent jobs
2. Access to the benefits system of host countries plus state education, housing and health care
3. Employment opportunities vary between nations, particularly for younger workers
4. A desire to travel, learn a new language, build new skills and qualifications and develop networks
5. A desire to escape repression and corruption in the country of origin
6. The impact of satellite television and the internet in changing people's expectations

7. The unwillingness of people within the domestic economy to take certain drudge-filled jobs such as porters, cleaners and in petrol pumps.

A study by primary data on twenty respondents has revealed the following information.

Reason	No.of respondents	Percentage
Poverty	2	10
Unemployment	9	45
Better life	5	25
Wages	4	20
Total	20	100

It is seen that majority of migration occurs due to the unemployment. Other reasons are in search of better life and better wages. The diagrammatic representation is presented as given below.



Conclusion

A great deal can be done to mitigate the misery, suffering and unhappiness of migrant labourers, if they are provided with a congenial working atmosphere. The labour ministry is working on a project to facilitate accommodation for migrant labourers in all the districts as health concerns of these people living in unhygienic, cramped, make shift tents without proper sanitation facilities are on an all-time high. The total enrolment of these people is also on the anvil as the government is unable to keep a true record of them. Kerala, a safe haven to trade unions all the time as they will pave the way for the mission to make its voice heard for the legitimate demand for equal wages and rights of migrants who include people of almost all other states irrespective of gender, caste and religion.

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