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## Indian women migration: An age of movement towards Gulf

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### Abstract

From past many years, the worldwide migration of Indian population was monitored which referred as Indian Diaspora. There were many reasons behind this migration and the most specific reason was work/job and money. This Indian Diaspora migration is divided into various categories and they are: unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers. Skilled category leads to sub category and i.e. highly skilled workers. From last three decades, migrations grab attention of all the researchers as the flows is very high with visual outputs and effects. No wonder, this affected many states of India in terms of economy, sociality and serenity. Its beginning was recorded in 1900s which is heading till date. Many literatures stated that migration took a dramatic change during oil boom in 1970s. This oil boom in Gulf transformed the Indian Diaspora status, slowly. The migration towards Gulf played major role in terms of remittances and independence. This inspired Indian government and host country government to criticise their migration and initiate new policies for their better immigration /emigration. In this paper, the author discussed women/nurses migration in between 1970s to 1990s, their inclination towards Gulf made several modifications that effected Indian diaspora. This revolutionary migration has affected Indian social and economic status so in depth. Additionally, this migration has changed the actual status of women's crawled from their ancient time.

**Keywords:** International migration, nurses' migration, remittances, socio-economic effects, government framework

### Introduction

Migration of population from their native place to another place is termed as Diaspora. This migration might be temporary or permanent, depend on the factors and consequences of migration. The migration is voluntary or involuntary for people leaving their homeland for work or whatsoever reason behind this. The perfect example is Indian Diaspora in Britain [IJMER, 2014] <sup>[1]</sup>.

Back in history, migration paved of special attention for its contribution in the development of countries likes Middle East countries and America. After 1970, there was a major shift in the migration trend in India. In 1970s, the increase in oil price (Gulf Oil boom) initiated new phase in Arab countries, resultant demand of labour Shekhar 1977 <sup>[2]</sup>. Further Gulf countries allowed the immigration of workers from other countries which made an enormous emigration from India in form of unskilled, semi-skilled workers. Unskilled comes under domestic workers such as housemaid, construction labours, slaves etc; whereas semi-skilled relates graduated/diploma holders like nurses.

The important feature of migration that has gone unnoticed many years, (due to the scarcity of data) is the invisibility of female labour migrants. According to official data, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra figure as the major sending regions of unskilled women workers from India to the Gulf countries [Rajan, Irudaya and Sukendran, 2010] <sup>[3]</sup>. The majority of female migrants leaned as domestic workers. According to the reports carried by media is the significant share of female migrants, especially from South Indian states, when most of the women enrolment in para-medical staff, especially nurses. A study in 2007 noted that around 90% of Indian nurses in the Gulf are from Kerala [Percot, 2007] <sup>[4]</sup>.

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### International Migration

Although Indians managed the clerical and technical positions of the oil companies in the Gulf after oil was discovered in the region during the 1930s, the overall numbers were still small. Between 1948 and the early 1970s, these numbers gradual increased from about 1,400 to 40,000. When large scale development activities started following the 1973 spurt in oil prices in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE, an upsurge in the flow of workers and labourers began from India to the Gulf. India and Pakistan supplied most of the unskilled labour, registering almost 200 percent growth between 1970 and 1975, which was taken up by India over Pakistan, thereafter.

In early 80s, Asian labour migration has undergone some major and dramatic changes, particularly in the South Asian situations. Asia was represented as the highest hub for migration in the world. As per Gulati, there are two migratory patterns in Asia as they have emerged in the recent years. One is the direction of movement of migrant workers and the other is the presence of women in these movements [Gulati, 2006]<sup>[5]</sup>. In international migration Kerala played significant role with respect to women migration. This is because of the education and literacy ratio which is 100% in Kerala in case of girls. And other factors might be the religion (Muslim and Christian) that found suitable with the base of Gulf culture and vicinities. This international migration of women in form of domestic workers or white collar semi-skilled workers made a spectacular influence towards women's upbringing and other factors related to their families and government of native places.

### Nurse Migration (Shaping a Migratory temperament)

Kerala's social environment facilitated the women migration as nurses. No doubt, Kerala had been reported as better nurse-people ratio in comparison to India even at the time of independence. In the days of independence, to expand nursing education, schools made efforts to recruit students under a bond system that gave them stipends/ salary but also compelled them to work for a specified period after training. Thus, families did little or no expense for training a nurse. In most of the cases, where women are married, migration for nurses meant separation from husband. For a single woman, too, this was not an easy choice [George, 2005]<sup>[6]</sup> as they have to leave family and save to her marriage (dowry).

The physician Rachel Naomi Remen termed nursing as a 'Service' for seekers. Remen has discriminated the helping and serving others. According to her words, "serving is different from helping in that helping is based on inequality; it is not a relationship between equals. Serving is a relationship between equals. One of the common names associated with this honorable job is 'Florence Nightingale'. Nightingale was a nurse and made every effort transform associated with the term nursing as an occupation for the respectable, polite women of the middle classes. She was popularly known as "Lady with a Lamp". Due to her efforts nursing emerged as an employment alternative for middle class women. The other reputed, respected and honorable name is Mother Teresa. She was a beautiful human being known for her serving nature. Mother's basic message was "*We serve life not because it is broken but because it is holy*" [Ferrell and Nessa, 2008]<sup>[7]</sup>. Her life's main target was to serve and bring to relief as many people as she could. Due to its suitability the women were inclined to admire this job. The one of the other basic reasons for selecting the nursing profession for women is that with the

help of this respectable job they could manage the expenses of their marriage and especially when they migrate to other countries. All that factors led to the movement of nurses during 1970s-1990s to the Gulf countries when these countries were experiencing oil boom. Except for the nursing profession, the migration of highly skilled women is relatively invisible, whereas other service occupations such as domestic workers, nurses or caregivers, work in the service sectors was visible [WAGI, 2008]<sup>[8]</sup>

### Remittance

The literature studied reported that remittances played major role in migration, globally. From host countries to native country the flow of remittance has been increased with years. This affected the economy of many states of India including Kerala followed by poor individuals, families and communities. This remittance inflow also increases government interested in migrants towards Gulf. No doubt, Gulf countries are the largest source of remittances to India, followed by North America. According to RBI, Kochi and Mumbai receive 50 per cent of remittances to India from the Gulf region, whereas Europe and North America are mainly channelled to Ahmadabad, Bangalore, Chandigarh, Delhi, Hyderabad and Kolkata, conventionally [Reserve Bank of India (RBI), 2010]<sup>[9]</sup>. International migration has had a remarkable impact on the economy of Kerala in reducing the population growth rate, reducing the working age population and, very importantly, in reducing poverty. It is estimated that during the 1990s inflow of remittances reduced the proportion of poor in the state by 3 per cent [Rajan, Irudaya and Kumar, 2010]<sup>[10]</sup>. Further, remittances from the Gulf Remittances strengthened women's economic status in both countries of origin and destination, and in some cases help them to renegotiate the gender roles at home. Women send money home, and in many cases it is other women in the family who receive and use the remittances for the family [Chammartin 2002]<sup>[11]</sup>.

Since early 1980's, there was a remarkable growth in migration of women was reported in both married as well as single women. As per reports from United Nations Population Division, in between 1965 and 1990 the female migrants' ratio got increased then men migrants. The main migration was held in industrialised and developing countries [Instraw, 2007]<sup>[12]</sup>. This reports also indicated that more than half of the international migration is from women's end. Thus, women back home have also strengthened their role as financial managers, in creative investments, in microcredit enterprises, in bank or in land investments. [UNDP, 2009]<sup>[13]</sup>. This migration was named as "feminisation of migration" after reason for many debates where it has been declared that about 47% women migration reached their higher percentage in nineties [International migration and human rights, 2011]<sup>[14]</sup>.

The other reason behind this huge and increased migration was their jobs and families. This made remarkable changes in malayalees women to let their selves in their own feet and support their family with better life and uplifting of liver hood. In addition to financial remittance, the social remittances of migrant women (ideas, skills, attitudes, knowledge etc.) also improved socio-economic development as well as human rights and gender equality. Migrant women who send money define the meaning of being female. This has affected families and communities to view women in different way [UNFPA, 2006]<sup>[15]</sup>

### Migration and its socio-economic affects

This migration has changed the role of feminism in their families and communities. These women are playing two different roles in terms of remittances as recipients and managers of remittances. The analysed data disclosed that this remittance is in prior use for education and other necessary things. Not even this, the remittance sent by women is quite in volume then in case of men. It doesn't point that women are getting higher package than men, but women send a larger part of their salary than men do. Women's tight management and well planned living life let them things in control over expenses and often requirements in their jobs, in order to save as much of their salaries as possible. Beyond financial remittances, the social remittances of migrant women (ideas, skills, attitudes, knowledge etc.) also promoted socio-economic development, human rights and gender equality. Migrant women who send money conveyed a definition of what it means to be female. This can affect how families and communities view women [UN-INSTRAW, 2008] <sup>[16]</sup>

As a evident, in many cases migration take place in forceful conditions to earn money for survival of family members because the women migrant work as sole bread earner of the family and there are not enough savings to pay their dowry, medical expenses, nurture of children and above all maintenance of family to fulfil their basic needs.

Most of the times, in many cases migration take place in forceful conditions to earn money for their survival. As per Nair, the pull and push factors forced the socially and economically backward Keralites to migrate to the Gulf regions in form of labour and domestic workers. Nevertheless, this migration provided money, recognition in homeland and improvement also. Moreover, their migration leads to a social status to their family. On the other hand, this also affected the government in form of remittances. Historically, the economic condition of Kerala was very poor in 1960s. The Gulf boom in 1970s and their remittance inflow towards Kerala, transformed it completely. It was also noticed that emigration of domestic workers was mainly in 1970s as the construction work was in peak which was decreased once the work led to an end. This end started a new migration of semi-skilled and skilled workers towards Gulf for hospitals, companies and other IT constructive site. Thus, it was observed that both domestic and semi-skilled migration facilitated its social and economical mobility. [Nair, 1983] <sup>[17]</sup>

### National and international migration

National: Historically, the local migration was not good as the safety and money issues were there. Not even this, the working time was not in written conditions. The researcher had word with the nursing principal of reputed medical institutes' in Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) where she stated that, still the conditions are similar with years back. In last few years, many cases were reported that pressurised government, to work for nurses (Aruna Shanbaug, 2015) <sup>[18]</sup>. Thus, government made implementation of hike in salary, restriction in working hours and security/safety in night shifts. Though, many nursing institutes are following this, whereas many are in queue for legal actions.

International: The researcher had a word with nurse who migrated to Saudi Arabia in 1983 and returned back in 1990s. As per her words the salary was good and consumable. Safety and security were in written conditions and followed up. But many factors were also there, that set her back to India and that was; renewal of contract every next year, surrounding that was similar to jail, no convince (vehicle for data

collection/patient evaluation) and no visa for family members. Right now she is in Bangalore and living happily with their grandchildren.

This made an impact towards government of both countries as both are involved in women migration. One is the Indian government agency that emigrate women from India and other is host country government that immigrate her on the other core. Thus, we can say the migration towards other countries is now in records and also in progress for better and smooth migration.

### Other governmental framework

The strategy of the Indian government was to evolve a logical, moderate and progressive migration policy. Historically, it focused only on the outflow of unskilled or semi-skilled labour, while, in case of skilled professionals, the policy has been largely laid-back, encouraging free movement of skilled manpower for overseas employment. Undoubtedly, India is considered as one of the countries that have intentionally invested in training of health workers for export. Medical education infrastructure has grown rapidly in the country over the years, indicating the growing popularity of medicine, nursing and healthcare as a rewarding career option, possibly guaranteeing employment opportunities abroad. It is worth to state that three (now two) ministries are dealing with different aspects of the migration process in India.

- a) The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) houses for the Passport Issuing Authority and its Indian Missions abroad help inform the government and address issues regarding expatriate Indians in various countries. Recently, External affairs minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj has merged The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) with Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to avoid duplication of data and records. The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) looks all aspects of overseas Indians including non-resident Indians and people of Indian origin, including emigration, financial and social aspects through three divisions: Diaspora Services, Financial Services and Emigration Services. It is responsible for formulation and implementation of emigration policies and processes.
- b) The Ministry of Home Affairs oversees the Airport Immigration Authorities of the Bureau of Immigration to check the emigration clearance granted by the Protector of Emigrants [Bhattacharjee, 2016] <sup>[19]</sup>.

Migration has beneficiary results and this has motivated the Indian government to expand migratory market and is reforming the nursing schools and colleges so that, the remittances also increase. This migration has provided good economic and social conditions to India and especially Kerala, that is why Kerala became as the first state in the world to elect a communist government, the trade unions are still very active and politics continues to mobilize a large part of the Keralese people to other countries especially Gulf. It becomes important on the part of the Indian and Kerala government to redress the grievances of these migrants and ensure their honour and dignity.

### Conclusion

Undoubtedly migration is well famous name in the history of Kerala, India. The credit goes to many aspects as a healthy and successful migration is all about supports (back forces) such as family, education, governmental agencies, money etc. The Indian government has initiated The Nursing act 1947 to

smoothen nursing migration and recruiting agencies which are linked with government for security of women. In this category Nurses need not to go through emigration clearance [Kodoth and Varghese, 2012] <sup>[20]</sup>. Migration can contribute to gender equality and empowerment of women by providing women migrants with income and status, autonomy, freedom, and the self-esteem that comes with employment. Women become more assertive as they see more opportunities opening up before them [The Hindu, 2013] <sup>[21]</sup>.

### Present studies

In the case of Nursing Education, apart from the Nursing council of India, the State Nurses Councils do play active roles in regulating the nursing education under their authority. In Kerala the Nurses and Midwives Council through an August 1, 2013 directive citing deficiencies in infrastructure and lack of permanent faculty members in few self-financing nursing colleges of Mahatma Gandhi University (a public University) and barred them from taking admissions to B.Sc. and M.Sc. Nursing courses. The problem was late solved with the direct involvement of state government and chief minister in solving the deficiencies [KNMC (Kerala Nursing Medical Council), 2013] <sup>[22]</sup>

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