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# Drivers of International Student Migration from Kerala: Intersectional Readings on Dual Identity

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*This paper attempts to obtain broad trends on youngsters migrating from Kerala for higher studies and analyse the current trends. It seeks to identify various physical/social/institutional challenges that contribute to the drivers of this migration. It also tries to study the association of institutional credit and current trends in international migration. Invisible labour/ shadow labour aspects of students are addressed to seek improvement of international norms that facilitate justice and rights to the migrant student communities. A baseline survey and its analysis have been carried out in order to understand the scenario from a migrated student's perspective.*

**Keywords:** Shadow work, Dual Identity, Exploitation, Reverse Remittance, Human rights, Citizenship Crisis, Evolution

## **Introduction**

The phenomenal rise in the number of youngsters migrating from India to various global north destinations for education informs a serious turn in the history of migration itself. This turn is informed by demographic impacts, reverse remittances, human resource depletion, and transformations in the socio-cultural situation of the country.

There is a twenty-fold increase in the number of student migrants from India since the year 2000. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the total number of student migrants from India across the globe was 66,713 in the year 2000. Twenty-two years later, the Ministry of External Affairs' estimate shows a steep increase of it to 7,50,365 by 2022. The latest report from the MEA shows that 7,65,411 student visas have been issued in 2023 till October 30. The MEA has not followed this exercise this year yet and has no official data on the number of students who went abroad in the current year. Whereas, on July 29<sup>th</sup> last year, an event held in Kochi by a single overseas education facilitator firm, witnessed the largest number of students migrating from a single country to a single destination in a single intake. A staggering total of 7,236

students are all set to fly out to Canada from Kerala in this September intake alone. This is from just one of the many study-abroad consultancies like them to just one of the countries the youngsters are flying to.

At the same time, on the 20th of September 2023, the Ministry of External Affairs issued an advisory for Indian nationals and Indian students in Canada -

*In view of growing anti-India activities and politically-condoned hate crimes and criminal violence in Canada, all Indian nationals there and those contemplating travel are urged to exercise utmost caution. Recently, threats have particularly targeted Indian diplomats and sections of the Indian community who oppose the anti-India agenda. Indian nationals are therefore advised to avoid travelling to regions and potential venues in Canada that have seen such incidents.*

This advisory was issued in reaction to the tension between Indian and Canadian governments after Canadian PM Trudeau accused the Indian government of having links with the killing of a Khalistan support leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada. This issue has raised anxieties among the two million Indian students in Canada and their families back home, but it is nevertheless not going to stop the thousands of aspiring youngsters still waiting to get their Canadian visas to fly in the coming months.

This paper seeks to address the complexities in the transformation of social, cultural and economic drivers attached to international migration for education. It argues that the transformation of identity from an international student to an international working student raises a set of political and associated social and economic questions. There are different layers of incongruities pertaining to the working and living status, civil and economic rights, and even issues of safe and dignified existence. This condition is illustrated and analysed in the specific purview of human rights guarantees of migrant labour envisaged in the instruments of rights protection in this area in the last five decades. Such incongruities are inherently connected to the complexities of the dual identity of the student migrants.

While the focus of discussion largely concerns the transnational political scenario, the paper also addresses in detail certain social and economic domestic factors contingent on the processes and outcome of student migration.

In fact, these trends on a global scale have already been represented in the academic world of the last few years in the Global North, but have somehow been absent from discussions on migration and migrant rights until very recently. The preliminary readings for this research were largely helped by these existing publications which provided a framework for comprehending an already existing situation.

A study on the rising number of student migrants to Australia in the early years of the previous decade found these students seemed to represent a new wave of migration that was radically different to the trend of permanent settler migration (Robertson, 2013). In this case, the student's studies here were only a means to the ultimate goal of obtaining a Permanent Residency. In order to be successful in their final applications for permanent residency after initially arriving on student visas and frequently remaining on temporary employment visas for varied lengths after graduating, individuals had to meet a variety of requirements. As government requirements for immigration could change during their studies, this lengthy migration path was frequently wrought with particular difficulties and barriers. Robertson writes 'It required

striking a balance between maintaining transnational relationships and duties to friends and family back home and achieving their linked educational, professional, and immigration ambitions in the migrated nation' (Robertson, 2013).

### **Methodology**

Primary data for this paper was generated with a baseline survey to assess the trends and patterns of social and economic dimensions of student migration particularly from Kerala, which was carried out using a Google form, and collected insights from some of the Malayalee youngsters who migrated abroad for studies in the recent years.

The research is also going back to the informing sources at the societal level, including various people like the facilitating bank managers who approve loans for studying abroad, and the parents who stand as the guarantors for the amount. The general perceptions about people who are moving as well as those who are not moving are coming into the discussions of everyday life. Global indicators based on available statistics from India and abroad like that of UNESCO, and the government data from the Ministry of External Affairs which very recently started coming out, were used to see how the phenomenon is exponentially rising in numbers.

The living conditions of the person, while the migrant is studying and while working, are controlled by factors which probably are negotiated by different people in different ways. There is definitely a larger discussion about the cheap labour availability and prosperity indicators, along with criticisms of such educational practices where the employment necessity of the Western world and the survival anxiety of the global south are coming together to create complex problems in the issues of migration and dignified life.

The decision-making process of a prospective migrant student and his or her family has been significantly influenced by various materialistic and mentality expectations. Additionally, there is a thematic shadow of various conflicts emerging in the life of a young migrant as well as in the larger society, which is also a key discussion of this paper.

Overall, this summarises the social space in which the discussions already happening in a submerged as well as unorganised manner in personal and social conversations are expressed in an advanced academic language of research. Such conversations regarding the surge of migrating students manifested and reflected on the basis of societal anxieties are seen in a differential manner. The differentials are the advocacy that it is for progress and an alternate anxiety about familial and social impacts of the youngsters leaving their homes and leaving the elderly people abandoned.

### **The Transformation of Identities of a Migrant**

In depth preliminary consultations with various stakeholders in the systemic, social, familial and economic sectors suggest that; youngsters opt for international migration to attain a world-class education, experience the diverse cultures of the world, and develop social and cultural capitals. Another contingent factor is their perception of the domestic situation and their anxieties regarding future prospects. As per the responses from our survey, a feeling of constantly decreasing quality of our educational system, systemic and economic barriers in securing admissions for courses, uncertainty relating to job opportunities, and

underpayment in jobs have all contributed to widespread frustration compelling youngsters to look for better options and a better-quality life abroad.

All these challenges in the physical/social/institutional environments in Indian situations can be disaggregated into various types of 'drivers of migration' for the youngsters in the country. It is also imperative to look at various international documents like the Global Compact of Migration - an inter-governmentally negotiated agreement, prepared under the United Nations that aims to mitigate the adverse drivers and structural factors that hinder people from building and maintaining sustainable livelihoods in their countries of origin, and compel them to seek a future elsewhere.

In the 'Palgrave Handbook of Youth Mobility and Educational Migration', (Cairns, 2021) the author notes in the introduction that the aspiration to find a better quality of life for oneself via mobility is transversal. It is shared by young people in the centre-ground and at the margins of society. Those that are wealthy in social and economic capital, would wish to consolidate or multiply their wealth with this migration, and for the others who are moving without resources or support, this is an attempt to escape hardship. The youth movement is one of a type as it is crucial in terms of both individually and socially. In 'Youth Migration and Transition to Adulthood in Developing Countries', (Juarez, F LeGrand, T Lloyd, C. B., Singh, S., & Hertrich, V, 2013), the authors draw out a neglected area in youth migration; 'the transition to adulthood'. They state that the nature and welfare consequences of youth migration are distinct from those of other groups, as the migration event overlaps with many other transitions, including transitions to work, sexual maturation, marriage, childbearing and citizenship. The migrating youth thus, can be categorised under the vulnerable sect, irrespective of their gender in a sense, as they put along their various factors which add to the transition to adulthood in a 'risky' atmosphere.

Migration was invariably related to active athletic male mobility in a community like Kerala, where mobilities of men especially were taking place for a long time which got further intensified and horizontally expanded by the 1960s to 90s when the gulf migration was at its peak. The argument offered by the protestant ethic concept was popularly borrowed to describe and read internal migration from Southern and Central Kerala to Northern Kerala. One may also choose to describe the person who migrates as the harbinger of development, facing several hardships, thus creating a developmental person narrative around the person

This 'developmental frontliner' is generally an aspirant male person who has the audacity to go to unfamiliar places and face challenging situations in search of fortunes, and is rooted in the patriarchally moderated mentality of being a sacrificial agent for the family. It becomes his duty and responsibility to take care of the entire extended family when he lands in the city, or the gulf, and starts earning. There was also definitely a gender implication that women students were not always promoted for individual migration generally. However, this dominant narrative looked incomplete to accommodate the realities of the fast-increasing migration of nurses, mostly women, and the surge in the number of female domestic workers needed in foreign countries.

So, migration was broadly understood in the capacity of an oriented migration that promoted job opportunities among young people, for a higher income and providing a better living for their families. Whereas student migration generally used to be more of a scheme of the influential people with social capital formations already happened.

As said above, in the earlier stages of migration in India, it was conventionally the more economically well-off people who could afford a program in the top-ranking universities of the world. However, the current surge in the number of student migrants indicates the participation from lower-income classes. In another sense, procuring education loans can be seen as a means of social mobility, where people belonging to economically weaker sections also use the strategy of international education to move up their social status. As we understand from the microdata that was collected from various sources, this has led to unaffordable financial liabilities also.

It is notable that from the highest number of foreign students being from the wealthier parts of Punjab, Chhattisgarh and UP in the past, the trend has quickly taken up huge momentum in the southern states as well in the past decade. And Kerala, having a long history of mobility of people has taken a new turn now. The RBI's Survey on Remittances of 2020 - 2021 FYI showed that Kerala is no longer number one in terms of remittances from abroad. It only holds 10.2 % of the total remittances now while Maharashtra secured first position with 35.2 %. The decline in the remittance share is a clear indicator of the transformation of migrant communities from Kerala. A community like Kerala, where the basic economic structure is built upon migrant remittances, should be clearly concerned about the upcoming scenario.

The concept of 'drifters' which denotes folks who are ready to do 'any' jobs is drawn out in 'Why do highly educated migrants go for low-skilled jobs? A case study of Polish graduates working in London' (Trevena 2013). The author states that the overwhelming majority of the graduates at the start of their stay could be classified as 'drifters'. They did not migrate in order to embark on a career or to save for investment. Their aims were more 'post-materialist': to learn English, to travel and to experience life in a global city. Reading this along with the soaring student migration from Kerala, such 'drifters' are being replaced by the students. They are ready to accept any job to receive payment in order to meet their expenses in the host nation. Unlike the previous Gulf migration where Malayalees worked in the Gulf to save up enough money to get back and invest in the state, the present trends of migration to Canada, UK, and New Zealand etc are primarily looking for securing a Permanent Residency (PR) in the host countries and settling down there. The only money that is returned is to pay back the huge sums of loans to the banks which funded their period of education abroad.

The banks in India seem to have found their new venture of fortune in the rapidly growing education markets in the west. The bank policies have made it more accessible, simplified, and attractive more than ever for an aspirant for student loans. According to the latest statistics by State Level Bankers Conference (SLBC), the educational loans in banks of Kerala have risen from Rs.9,841 crore in 2019 March to Rs. 11,061 crores in 2022 March. Banks are happy to provide such loans as they are assured of its repayment. The data shows that 98 percent of such loans are well repaid.

## Baseline Survey

A baseline survey of transnational student migration from Kerala was carried out using Google Forms to collect data directly from such migrated Malayali students. Several questions about their drivers in decision to migrate were asked and in order to understand the real motive and trends behind the migration. A total of 128 responses were recorded and the data collected from them were analysed in order to draw some original insights on the phenomenon.

The respondents were all in the age group of 18 to 28, and were both male and female. The migrated countries of these students were very diverse including nations like the UK, Canada, US, Germany, Latvia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Bulgaria, and UAE. The severeness and varieties in terms of host countries of choice is evident from the result. The 128 respondents were hosted by 15 different nations.

The real motive behind choosing to migrate for study as explained by the students showed that it was mainly the more job-oriented character and easiness in getting employed faster that attracted them, even more than the pure interest in the subject. Unemployment and low salaries were mentioned as the main reason for them not wishing to continue their life in Kerala. They also remarked on the disregard of quality education in the universities in Kerala, and 72 percent of the respondents agreed that Kerala is far behind the Western universities in preparing them for quality research and employment.

Among the respondents, only 16 percent were backed by any form of scholarship and 63 percent of them had taken up loans for financial support. Less than half of the respondents are earning enough to repay the loans currently, but 90% of them were very confident that the debt will be paid in time.

Respondents currently working part time after class hours are amounting to eighty two percent and it is the main source of income to sustain their daily life, and are even able to save up some money towards repaying their loans. The work they do includes waiting in restaurants, working in supermarkets, gas stations etc. Many of them work extra hours also. They acknowledge it is hard work, but have to cope with the lifestyle all the same as they have but no choice. But they are hopeful about the rewards of such hardships and expect them to get a proper job and permanent residency in some years.

But until then, these youngsters are compelled to live a life invisible to both the host nation and also to their own families back home. These persons will have to go through such hard conditions of rest-free life at such an early age, and they may not even be able to share about their stress back to their families or friends. They live their lives day and night working at whatever part time jobs they can find. Most often, they will even have to skip their colleges and classes so they can work enough to pay for those colleges. Students who can't handle this stress environment and constantly need to be working in order to sustain and not being able to concentrate in their studies, are nevertheless compelled to continue their daily routines as they have to somehow manage to survive there and find means to pay back the debts they have back at home. This leaves them in a compulsive situation denied by the position they are placed within the economy of the hosting nation also. The service sector is employing them and giving them the ability to survive, which itself is arising from an educational system that is very much demanding and compelling them to mend their ways of life.



## The Economic Drivers

The current surge of student movement has in recent years raised very significant questions about the future of Kerala. Increasing number of households are turning into those homes with only the elderly parents or those passed middle age, with all the youngsters being abroad. Serious discussions about the sociological transitions in the population are happening in the households as well as the public and political arenas of the state. And it is high time that the academic community also take this matter into urgent consideration, and develop a strategy to analyse the current trends in student mobilisation and expand the scope of understanding this phenomenon of increased student migration.

The twenty-year-olds are packing their entire life in a couple of suitcases and taking a one-way ticket to a land at the other end of the globe, leaving behind their family, friends and everyone they know. On that very long flight, thoughts about the huge debt on their shoulders to be paid back in a few years' time, and the uncertainty of their life from the next day, keep them awake until they land in that place where they know nothing about.

All of these can be encapsulated as the story of every youngster who is migrating from Kerala to Canada/UK/New Zealand in recent decades. Almost all of them make it into a successful story of lifting themselves up in the social ladder. But these stories often fail to include the turmoil of these youngsters in having to do the kinds of menial and often forced jobs they will have to do in the foreign labour markets in order to sustain themselves and pay back the huge sums of loans they have back in their homes.

Shince K S, a twenty-five-year-old student migrant in New Zealand has completed three years since he left India for a Graduate Diploma course, after his graduation from Kerala. To those friends who reply to his stories on social media and comments on the wonderful life he is leading there, he replies "What you are seeing in my social media stories are only about 5 or 6 hours of my week, you have no idea what I am doing in the other 40 or 0 hours in the same week".

A social science researcher may find resemblance of these social media stories to the familiar shadows Plato had shown us many centuries ago in his Cave. In fact, a shadow life is being integrated into the lives of an international migrant student in one sense or the other. There is a shadow that is projected onto the relatives and friends back home. Also, there is another shadow of a dual life that the migrant is compelled to take on in order to survive – that is between his workplace and the classroom.

Joice S, another 25-year-old Malayalee who used to work in a private firm in Bangalore for the last two years has quit his job and is preparing for his IELTS exam now. He is planning to follow his sister to Canada like she had migrated a few years ago on a student visa. After his MBA and two years of corporate work, Joice has no savings as such at all. He barely managed to meet his expenses in the city. Whereas, Joice says, Sister has started to send about forty thousand a month back home to the family for some time now. He is positive that his sister will finish off all her bank loans within a year. Then as he compared her income with his own, he did not have much more to think about before he quit his job and started looking for an opportunity abroad.

Taking India as a whole, the average education cost is around INR 15 lakhs within India and INR 45 lakhs abroad. The education loan interest rates in Kerala ranges from 8.5% - 13%, depending on loan and lender. The education loans in India typically cover tuition, exam fees, college-related costs, living expenses and more.

Yielding the data from our baseline survey, 96 out of 128 students had opted for loans for their studies abroad, from which 68 students received it primarily from the banking sector. The top banks which provide education loans in Kerala are: State Bank of India (SBI), Bank of Baroda (BOB), Karur Vysya, Union Bank, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, IDFC First Bank etc. The collateral loans given to the foreign students are up to 1.5 Crores with unsecured loans up to 75 Lakhs and varying processing fees (1-2%). Banks like SBI offer interest rates starting from 8.35% with varying concessions for female students and insurance. Other banks like Union Bank, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, etc., offer rates starting around 10.5% to 11.15% with similar concessions.

The moratorium period is of 6 to 12 months after studies, where repayment is not required. The loan margin is the borrower's portion of the loan, typically around 5%, with the lender covering the rest. Banks offer varying rates and concessions. Expenses covered include tuition and living costs. A moratorium period delays repayment after studies. Loan and collateral margins have specific percentages. Some of the acceptable collaterals for education loans in Kerala include houses, apartments, land, and sometimes commercial properties with proper documentation, valuation, and ownership proof. Agricultural lands can be collateral for education loans in specific public banks, subject to an affidavit confirming income from agriculture, with a maximum loan limit of 30 lacs. Fixed deposits, insurance policies, and government bonds might be considered as collateral for loans, depending on the institution's policy. Requirements for collateral properties for education loans in Kerala include road access and property types. However private lenders and non-banking financial companies have restrictions on loan applications from Kerala students.

Subsidy Schemes in the educational sector in India is not surprising. There are significant subsidies given to foreign graduate programs too. Some of the prime schemes are:

Dr. Ambedkar Interest Subsidy Scheme for OBC and EBC Students (Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment) program to lower interest rate on education loans for OBC and EBC students. - Eligibility: Admission to foreign graduate program, income < 8 lakh rupees/year, valid caste cert (OBC), loan from approved bank. Benefit: Interest payments waived during loan moratorium.

Padho Pardesh Scheme (Ministry of Minority Affairs) program to aid EWS students studying abroad. Eligibility: Admission to foreign graduate program, income < 6 lakh rupees/year, approved bank loan, terminated on March 31, 2022 (existing registrations continue).

Central Scheme for Interest Subsidy [CSIS] (Ministry of Education) program to waive interest on EWS student loans. Eligibility: EWS students pursuing education. CSIS provides interest waiver on loans for economically weaker students pursuing authorized study programs in India with family income not exceeding 4.5 lakh rupees during moratorium period.



Another interesting fact about the economic outcomes of the migration from Kerala is that of the film industry of Kerala (Mollywood). The face of Mollywood changed when big production houses came out with films of high budget. Majority of such production houses which spent huge money were 'Gulf' backed. Migrants from Gulf countries who in turn became financially stable, formed such production companies, which without no hesitations, provided the 'funding' required to make gigantic movies which assured, to an extent, a huge income in return from the Malayalee audience.

Today, there is also another significant turn that happened in recent years regarding the Cinema, which is interesting to Migration studies. If we take many of the recent big-budget malayalam films (or even many smaller movies) which had a theatre release, most of them had a world-wide-release which brought the movies at the same time to theatres abroad as well. To be more particular, theatres in the UK and Canada were selected widely for the release of such movies. The major part of the audience of such big commercial movies falls in the youth segment. It is clear that, if the producers want their money back as they expect to, they cannot leave behind the very strong population of the young migrants living abroad. The story of the migration - influenced film industry of Kerala can be seen to take this new turn of being produced as migrant-funded films to migrant-seeking films.

### **Time – Space Contraction**

Antony Giddens, an English Sociologist, in the 1980s came to a theorisation of Time – Space Contraction in the advanced technological state. He drew his theorisation from the transition of human societies from non-literate communities to technologically advanced modern communities. In the pre – writing societies, face-to-face interaction was the only means of communication and proximity in time and space was an important and a necessary requirement for information exchange. But with the advancement in technology, the first being the invention of writing, the limits of time and space began to expand in the realm of communication. One no longer needed to be in the same time or space to exchange information. Communication, and knowledge, travelled to places far across in distance and time frames. One could send messages to faraway places, store one's words to the posterity, without himself/herself physically being there.

And hence, 'individual presence overcame the stretching of social relations across space and time'. (Giddens, 1986)

In modern societies, with the advent of the telecommunication systems in the later twentieth century, he found it even more astonishing that there is little to no delay at all in the means of communication even from distances far away. The capitalist society has reached that point of instant - communication. `

And at this age, it would only be natural that the youngsters here don't feel any distance between universities and colleges so far away. One must not be surprised about this large exodus, because it is not only the hopelessness here but also the ambition and desire for places far away that makes them choose their life across continents. The youngsters are seeing it every day, instantly communicating with people far away, and are increasingly familiar with all these places. In 'Intercultural Competences And Identity: Analysis Using The Example Of Migrating Students From Silesia'(Sobieraj 2012) the author emphasizes the

importance of intercultural competence and the individual's identity in the process. Understanding of people from other cultures is not only the matter of individual choice, but a kind of necessity arising, for example, from the ethnic or national diversity of one country, In the context of the students from the global south finding their way to the western cities, doing anything and everything to survive, all the more, raises the question of choices to intercultural accommodation. The rising number of students migrating to these countries is becoming more important in such discussions of cultural multiplicity.

The Marxian social theory called those people who take advantage of the changing nature of technology for their own benefit and increasing productivity, as bourgeoisie. The present society of India, and more particularly Kerala, have found this ladder for not just economic mobility but also class mobility. If it was only the more privileged and socially upper class who had the access to such means of studying abroad in the past, now it has reached everyone. The agencies that have their means of direct communications with the system abroad, have more or less found a way to exploit the situation and boost their own capabilities to facilitate more youngsters to get through the process effortlessly and easily. These multitude of agencies have grown to a remarkable industry in the state over the last two decades.

### **The Social Drivers**

The data from the 2011 National Census showed that there were about 11 lakh vacant houses in Kerala. The prime reason for this was the migration culture of Kerala and the attraction and accessibility to the booming Gulf Job Markets in the past three decades by then. Even now the number of vacant houses would still be the same if not more. But also, there would be a significant number of households with only the elderly living alone in Kerala today.

There have been a great number of discussions about the problems of student migration from Kerala in the last few years. And the aging parents left behind alone in empty houses has been a significant point of concern for the Malayalee today. Even the elders of religious communities and political leaders have started acknowledging the growing crisis of young migration from the state. The conditions of unemployment, low wages, systemic backwardness, and job scarcity within the state is stressed very importantly as the reasons for such exodus. This is very true and definitely the prime determinant for many to choose to leave the country. But also, the social conditions in our society and families are a determining factor to many while comparing their lives here to what they can have abroad.

For at least some, migrating to another country is an escape from the orthodox religious and toxic norms of patriarchal family systems in the country. There is a common saying that Indian families are so great to their children that as soon as they finish school, their desire would be to join a college in a city as far as possible from their homes. Education abroad is a ticket for these youngsters to escape the constraints on them in their families and to try to build an individual life of their own.

When taking into account the Gulf migration from Kerala, the youth migrated in order to put an end to the hunger and poverty in their households. Their motives were clear which framed their conscience to return to their homeland after all the hardships they have gone through in the desert nations. In a sense, they were homesick and half-minded to migrate in the first place. But the poverty in their families or their

responsibilities acted as the driving forces which forced them to do so. Compared to that situation of the earlier Gulf Migration, the current trends of youth migration for studies from Kerala can be seen as a result of the determination of the students to leave this place. Majority of them decide to choose their route by themselves; not ignoring the peer influence and related factors. Parents of many such migrated students have no role in deciding the host country or designated course etc. They only have to play a role in expediting their childrens' journey. A twelve year old girl in Kerala would have already decided on the European or North American city that she is going to study in a couple of years.

There has never been any counter arguments which critiqued the migration tendencies of Kerala population. But recently, there are some apprehensions for the Kerala society in general and even for the state government regarding the surge of Kerala's youth flying abroad for studies. But there was no proper studies or proper care given to this rising migration, and no clear initiative was taken by the Kerala government to understand the reasons for such an exodus or to manage it. The Union Grants Commission (UGC) in January 2023 drafted a new policy granting permission for reputed foreign universities to open campuses in India. If they have necessary standard qualifications, the draft allows the universities abroad to start programs and conduct offline classes in the country, given that the degree obtained will have equal value as the degrees from their original campuses.

Apart from a perspective of diplomatic and academic aspirations of the country, and the capitalist business models carefully drafted to exploit the ambitions and yearnings of a young adult graduate from a premium labelled institute, we cannot see this as a visionary policy that inhibits migration to an extent. Thinking from a ready- to- migrate youngster's perspective, how can the introduction of foreign universities in India itself help him/her to rethink their aspirations of leaving India (Kerala as well)? From our survey, it shows that it is primarily the employment crisis and low paid jobs which constitute as the factors leading to deciding to migrate. Do the foreign universities opening their space in India actually help the aspiring students to find adequate jobs or help them lead a life of their wish? Leaving a country/state, enrolling in a foreign university etc. all shows the other side, where one can find immense exposure and availability of high paid jobs along with eloping the social situation of their home country/state.

So, the whole point revolves around the fact that these universities could keep up with the notions of UGC to provide an international standard education. Also, if this plan makes a mark, it is important whether the graduated students choose an overseas nation to have their jobs, leaving India. It would be a paradoxical situation, at least for the anti migration proponents, as the newer education policies of the country itself is promoting and equipping its students to go away by providing the basic systems to do so. So, certain other factors concerning the social, cultural, political conditions should be altered in order to manage the flow of students. Also, the success of such newly opening campuses of foreign universities in India and its active participation in the global and Indian educational system, however, should be monitored and analysed in course of time. One also has to be critical about its effects on the standard of other public universities in the country. Such institutions must also be carefully looked at as privatisation of education can adversely affect the communities in the margins of the society. In our context, this could even be an additional driving point

for the undermined communities to further move away from the state as publicly funded universities could be less demanding in the future with the advent of such initiatives.

The migration of students also hence becomes a celebration of independence for the youth. You are uprooted from a home that used to provide everything in hand for you, and now you are deserted in an alien city where you have to earn your living. But this also breaks the wheel of intergenerational dependence on one's family, and leaves the youngster also a sense of freedom. The worldview of the Malayalee society had not changed so much in the previous decades. The self-perception of the Malayalee to see himself/herself as superior in righteousness and morality has resulted in a number of terrible cases of abomination. But the ambitions of the new generation make them desire for a more socially developed society to live. Youngsters who had been living in the institutional cages of the family and community in Kerala are even more attracted to the sense of freedom and individuality that the global north offers. And Kerala turns into their vacation destinations once in a few years just to come and celebrate their nostalgia, but never to come back and live in.

Also, there is a transformation in the total mentality of the society in general that makes it more compelling for a young person to consider these options abroad. Even for voluntary displacements in migration, there is a hidden economic as well as cultural compulsion from the society that hegemonically affects the choices of a person. There is a transformation of the material gains that might be achievable with migration, towards a jump in the pride and social ladder of the individual within his family and the community. There is an intersection of the desire to leave and a fetish for a global personality. Such development and dignity-based discourses will also have an unbridled affinity towards this phenomenon.

### **Transparency in the Process and International Frameworks for Migration**

Most of the recent discussions about student migration in Kerala would be seeing it as a great crisis and problem today. But the view of this paper is not limited to highlighting the effects of human drain from the state, but also to understand that this is a natural progression in the capitalist world. This is a process, and one cannot stop it depending on how much everyone likes it or not. A shade of hopelessness has already covered the entire political system of the country.

The reasons for push and pull factors of traditional migration research are so obvious here. What matters more here is only to see that the process is happening in a transparent and legitimate way. The governmentality of international migration should be closely watched. How a student migrant turns into a daily wage labourer over the course of his studies and his identities as a student as well as an employee in the unorganised sectors should be carefully studied, in order to draft new frameworks for respectable and rights induced policies for student migrants in their host countries.

Like mentioned before, the Kerala state government doesn't take any active part in looking after the processes involved in migration. However, there have been reactions to it in a vigorous and agitated manner. Higher education minister, R Bindhu, during her speech in the legislative assembly stated that the government will take measures to check the increasing migration of students from the state. This however can only be understood as an immature way of looking at a social phenomenon by someone in a position of

authority.. The human instinct of moving away from home looking for better livelihood cannot be eradicated by means of imposing state policies. Another claim raised by the minister is that all such migrations are out of ‘false pride’ of the students, which fuels them to leave their own hometown (Kerala) to go abroad. Such authorities who literally fear the movement of students believe that the migration would result counter productively in many aspects of nation building.

We can broadly categorise the various stakeholders of the phenomenon of migration into two - the one which critically looks at the rising student migration from Kerala, and the other which considers this phenomena as a part of an evolution. The former even includes the government and the religious orthodoxies, the Ministers and political/religious leaders who are anxious and nervous of the movement of youth, the parents of both students migrated and non migrated, and those that are anxious of the future of their communities and that of the nation.

By analyzing the trends occurring, the same category mentioned above, after a point, might consider an abroad nation for their close ones in order to enrich and increase their standard of living. This articulation takes a sharp clarity when considering the point of view of a migrated student. From the data we collected for the purpose of this paper, we came across several factors like unemployment, low-paid jobs, inappropriate social and political atmosphere of Kerala etc. Also one such migrated student had to look upon other factors like fierce competition among the peers. Also, the majority of such students’ parents have already settled in their twenties with different jobs and a settled marriage. The consumerist mindset of Keralite students and their families have also influenced in one way or another. Summing up all such factors and reasons, the family of the desperate youth has high ambitions and expectations for their children. These parents, as mentioned before, might have been under the group which opposed the migration once before. They had their own reasons and attachments to wish to keep the youngsters back in their own hometowns, for their imaginations and commitments to the state and their own families. But eventually, most of them themselves end up choosing to decide by the realities of life to choose the materiality of increased income in a foreign nation and the mentality to uphold their aspirations to scale up their social status and prosperity.

Most of these students survive through this phase of hardship with their will and hardwork, even though a few do quit, or made to quit because they can't find enough work or earn enough to pay their fee and sustain to live, and come back home with a hope of paying back their debts through some other means. In due course of time, the migrated students who successfully make it through will apply for P.R and then to citizenship. Some of these students then try bringing their parents from Kerala to the new country. But most times the elderly would find it so hard to adapt to a new climate and the culture at that later stage in life and would prefer to come back home. So most often what happens is that these elderly are left behind alone back in their homes. But in any case, the migrated youth will forever be just visitors in this country for a few weeks that happens only once in several years. This situation has given more popularity to the term ‘Ghost houses’. These ghost houses eventually lead to ghost towns, which in one way or another alters the social, political and cultural spheres. This implies somewhat to an evolution in the phenomenon of migration in Kerala; an evolution which influences on every aspect of the social history of Kerala.

## The 'Foreign' Life

The modern immigration policies for the international students in many western countries have become more attractive for youngsters with the opportunity to do more work part-time and earn along with completing their courses. And once they do complete the course, the stay back option to get more work experience and eventually a permanent residency all the more compels them to take their chances. For example, Indians recently overtook China as the largest international student community in Canada, which is a preferred destination for Indian nationals, due to strong diasporic presence of the community and the benefits offered by the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP). Whereas, such education and migration policies of these countries also indicate a tendency of subsidizing their own domestic students by way of securing huge amounts of money from the international students. Mobility, dignity and employability are key factors in contemporary international student migration.

Pseudo labourer/ shadow worker identity is mostly inalienable to the identity of international student migrants from India. This has a resonance in the economy of both the origin and destination countries. The migrant population was a huge support to the Indian economy in the previous decades as foreign remittance back to their families in the country. But in this mode of migration, all the money they could earn doing hard labour in the foreign land becomes only the paybacks to huge sums of loans to the banks in India. What tiring and even hazardous jobs the students do in their host countries make a dual identity of a student as a student labourer. But what might seem as becoming more self-reliant and independent at the first look, has a larger dimension of compelled, underpaid and exploitative labour.

A relatively well off person according to domestic standards is consciously avoiding a pertinent fact that occupations which had social stigma at the home place will be an inevitable part dwelling at the host country for an establishing period. So the so-called shame factor is also negotiated. The concept of shame/attitude towards work is also neglected, and interpretations are many regarding the choice and compulsion in negotiating such working hours in between studies.

But in a global political economical perceptive, are these people getting instrumentally accommodated to do the dangerous and hazardous, which are previously called to be the 3D jobs (Dirty, Dangerous and Demeaning) which is a contested usage based on its political correctness. The lower paid jobs in such host countries need to be filled and the domestic economic and social changes are reflected in the policies for immigration. Also hence, it becomes important to do proper studies on the projection of such policies in the future when such domestic conditions could be altered with changing political and cultural landscapes.

The immigration policies of the global west countries have to have better provisions to accommodate student migrants based on the huge surge in their numbers in recent years. The 2023-2025 immigration plan of Canada is somewhat important taking into account the importance of large-scale students' migration to Canada. They expect to receive about 50 million migrants in the next 2 years, and are switching to a fully online system for the procedure and application of citizenship and PR, by the end of 2023. But these regulations are more exploitative than helping youngsters who pursue education expecting a permanent



residency. One of the eligibility requirements of applying a student visa to Canada is to prove to an officer that you will leave Canada when your study permit expires. But it is a fact that most of them make it into finding a job within the expiry of the student visa to apply for the work permits.

The twelfth point in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration - states that 'it intends to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities migrants face at different stages of migration by respecting, protecting and fulfilling their human rights and providing them with care and assistance.' But this document created by the United Nations as an important contribution to enhanced cooperation on international migration in all its dimensions mentions the word 'student' just two times and only regarding academic exchanges between nations, but is not understanding the shadow character of the modern student migrant in the lower wage work places in the global west nations. This lack could be interpreted as a primary exclusion of actualities that majority of migrant students are undergoing. In another sense this could be also interpreted as an act of conscious omission, maybe since the GCM is giving emphasis only to the migrant students who follow rule bound procedures of student exchanges. In this case the GCM based actions in the future must encode the concerns of large numbers of students left out in the framework of the compact.

Arguably there's an element of instrumental rationality in the increasing numbers of youngsters choosing international education, which leads towards a permanent residency in a foreign country. Working part time in various 'menial jobs' across their period as a student becomes their only means to sustain shows the precarious dual identity of the migrant where both their student life and his work life casts shadows of each identity. This clearly indicates the need for developing intersectional approaches in the social investigations on student migrants. More accommodation of student rights in the policy frameworks of states parties and the UN in order to make sure the student migrants are having the conditions to live a work in a dignified and respectable manner. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is committed to work with all relevant stakeholders – including the youth themselves – in broad-based partnerships in order to facilitate social dialogue, exchange of good practices, and training to ensure better employment and labour migration policy coherence that promotes decent work for young migrants. But it has to be better studied if these commitments are truly practiced in the case of student migrants working at various daily wage jobs in between their study hours in foreign lands.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author(s) declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author(s) confirm that the research was conducted independently, without any financial or personal relationships that could have influenced the outcomes or interpretations presented.

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