CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
Chapter 1

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Tamil workers can be seen engaged in hard, difficult, ugly and hazardous jobs in every nook and corner of Kerala. They are an important source of manual labour in the state, which faces severe shortage of manual labourers in the midst of mass unemployment and highest wage rates among the states of India. Severe shortage of manual labourers and high wage rate in the midst of mass unemployment is considered as a paradoxical feature of the labour market of Kerala as well as that of the state economy.

Emigration, educational improvement, land re-distribution, job preferences, social and economic development of the backward and downtrodden communities and consequent withdrawal from the manual labour etc. have led to short supply in the manual labour market segment of Kerala. Along with this, improvement in economic activities and the construction boom has led to steep rise in the demand for manual and construction labourers. This has widened the imbalance between the labour supply and demand in the labour market of Kerala, led to scarcity of labourers and increased general wage level of manual labourers.

Not only the wage level of Kerala is the highest among the Indian states but the working conditions are also the most favourable to workers. Even casual labourers and unorganised sector workers enjoy fixed working time, good wages and freedom of exploitation of employers and intermediaries. Strong trade union movements, better education and consequent awareness of various rights, shortage of manual labourers, various laws and regulations, social security measures, social and political set up of Kerala etc., have created better working and living environments in Kerala. All these have made Kerala
a hot destination for in-migrants, even from distant states like Assam, West Bengal etc.

In addition to the above attractiveness of the labour market of Kerala, unemployment, underemployment and low wage rates in Tamil Nadu as well as proximity led to the mass in-migration of Tamil manual workers to Kerala. Their inflow has started even before independence to the plantations and estates of Kerala. However, large-scale in-migration as “replacement migration” has started only after the 1970s, the period that witnessed mass emigration of Keralites to the gulf countries. In the initial days, they came to Kerala as workers of contractors in railways, telecom and other large construction firms owned by persons other than Keralites. Gradually, contractors of Kerala began to recruit and engage them and later on when the labourers themselves became aware of the higher wage rates and employment opportunities in Kerala, they started independent in-migration and through networking this led to chain and mass migration.

Tamil workers provide cheaper manual labour to various activities in Kerala. They work in fields and farms, construction sites, quarries, factories and industrial firms, hotels, business as well as commercial firms as skilled and unskilled workers. Child labour is also common. In certain areas they outperform native workers and have monopoly over certain tasks. On account of their hardworking nature, readiness to undertake even second jobs, flexibility, easiness in controlling and managing etc. employers prefer them in certain areas.

Tamil workers have influenced wage rates and availability of work to native workers in certain areas. However, trade union movements of Kerala, known for their strength and sometimes for militancy and activism, which give utmost importance to protect members from all possible interventions of ‘outsiders’, are not against these Tamil workers. But, unions, native workers
and the general public accommodate them and render possible helps also. This shows the importance of Tamil workers in the labour market of Kerala. It can be rightly said that, up to an extent the Tamil workers have made good of the deficit of manual labourers in Kerala, other wise the general level wage rates will be much more.

Migration exerts far-reaching consequences upon the socio-economic, demographic, political and cultural spheres of the origin and destination. It has its impact upon the migrant’s financial and economic conditions, his health and mental conditions as well as his social and cultural relationships also. It is a means to mutual ‘gives and takes’ and helps to integrate economies and societies with different cultural and social views and values. Labour migration undertaken with economic motives leads to changes in the employment patterns of pre-migration, acquisition of new skills and abilities and vertical mobility of labour as well as increase in the incomes, earnings and savings of migrants. Increase in incomes and earnings leads to improved standard of living of the migrant and at least of his dependants and also to human development. Thus, a study of income and employment pattern is a study of human development.

The present study deals with the income and employment pattern of Tamil workers in Kerala; their socio-economic conditions and inter-relationship with other players in the labour market as well as the economic impact of migration. It is based on the experiences of Tamil workers in Malappuram, the district that possesses almost all characteristics of the labour market conditions of Kerala. A study on Tamil workers in the district can provide a comprehensive idea about the various aspects of employment and working conditions of Tamil workers and their socio-cultural relationship with natives of the state as a whole.
Importance of the Study

Shortage of manual labourers is a major problem faced by the state. Farmers, contractors, businessmen, industrialists and other categories of employers find it difficult to carry on activities and complete their operations in time due to scarcity of manual workers. In addition to the scarcity of manual workers, the wage rate of Kerala is also the highest among the Indian states. Further the manual labourers and casual workers are also organised and have become formal in their working conditions with fixed working time, uniform wage rates, and other benefits. Many employers find it difficult to employ native workers; several farmers, industrialists and other businessmen have suspended their activities due to scarcity of labourers and high labour cost. Emergence of Tamil labourers into the labour market of Kerala was a solace to the manual labour deficit market and they supply cheaper labour force in the labour market.

Tamil workers engage in almost all activities as engaged by native workers. They perform various agricultural operations. They are a source of semi-skilled and unskilled labourers in construction sector and to some extent skilled labour also. They undertake various activities at lower wage rates irrespective of nature or status of the work. They are ready to undertake dangerous, hazardous, hard, difficult and filthy occupations, which are rejected by natives. In this way they help and contribute to the economic development of the state by providing the required labour force and thus have an important position in the economy of the state. A study about the Tamil workers of the state is, thus, a study of the labour market and the economic conditions of the state.

Further, in a developing economy the role of migration cannot be underestimated. It is a mechanism through which the short-term supply and demand for labour in a labour market is counterbalanced and helps in
manpower planning. Moreover, migrants are agents of changes. They can make changes in the wage rates, employment patterns, employer-employee relationships, living and working conditions, trade union attitudes and policies, government policies, population and demographic factors and so on both in the area of origin as well as that of the destination. They contribute much to the economic and social development of the destination even if they may be looked down by the natives.

A lot of studies have been made in connection with different kinds of migrations in Kerala, including peasant migration, gulf emigration and return emigration. But, a migration stream started even before independence, having much importance in the economy and society of Kerala, remained neglected for long. No serious studies have been made so far and the Tamils remained sidelined in the society. Many of them live in exceptionally deprived and unhygienic conditions in Kerala. The study, thus, gives importance to a section of workers who actually strive for the betterment of Kerala and its economy; tries to highlight various facts about the Tamil workers in the state as well as their impact on the labour market of Kerala. The study is also useful in understanding the specific features of the labour market of the state of Kerala at macro level and that of Malappuram district at micro level.

The Problem

Tamil workers have an important place in the labour market and contribute much (though primary motive is to earn more wages and increase their earnings) to the economic development of the state by providing labour force to various economic activities, which otherwise will be impossible due to scarcity of workers. Even though Tamil workers are an important source of labour, have started their mission long ago and have played an important role in making up the present face of the state and economy by providing labour force, they have got little recognition and consideration in the state and also they are
neglected by the academic community in studying their conditions and contributions. Thus several facts like their socio-economic profile, reasons for their mission, employment and income patterns, working and living conditions in the state, relationship with employer, native employees and general public, consequences of their migration upon themselves and upon different segments of the labour markets of the states as well as its economy, perceptions of employers and trade union leaders etc. remain undisclosed.

Considering their importance in the economy and labour market of the state, it is essential to have a detailed idea about them and impact of their mission upon themselves and upon the state and its economy. Thus there exists a wide gap in the world of literature; and the present study is an attempt to fill the gap and to provide a comprehensive idea about their socio-economic profiles, working and living conditions, income and employment patterns, economic impact of migration and impact of their presence upon the labour market of Kerala.

Scope and Coverage

A study of income and employment pattern is a study about human development. Income, the major determining factor of standard of living and human development, depends upon the employment patterns and economic activities undertaken by different persons. It deals with labour market and labour market conditions, which depend up on several socio-economical, political, demographic, and psychological factors. These factors are inter-related and deal with a wide range of disciplines and areas of studies like general economics, labour economics, demography, sociology, anthropology, personal management, psychology, politics etc., and thus the scope of the study is wide and covers a wider range of disciplines.
The present study is about Tamil workers working in Kerala. Thus, spatially it covers the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In this study wages, income, employment pattern, working and living conditions of Tamil workers are analysed by comparing with that of their nativity and with that of local workers. It also evaluates the impacts of their migration upon themselves and on different sectors and sections of the labour market of Kerala. The study, thereby, focuses on the labour markets of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

The study concentrates on Tamil workers working in Malappuram district. It is the most populous and backward district in Kerala and has sent the largest number of emigrants to gulf from the state. Majority of these emigrants were unskilled or semi-skilled manual labourers. The district has almost all characteristics of an emigrant economy, such as low work force participation rates, large and conspicuous houses, large scale consumption etc. This educationally backward district, characterised by agricultural and rural manual workers, is recently in the path of development due to emigration and remittances. It faces severe shortage of manual labourers, has the highest general wage rates in Kerala and possesses almost all other characteristics of the manual labour market of the state. Therefore, the district can represent the entire state and its labour market. Thus the scope and coverage of the study is very wide.

Objectives of the Study

On the basis of the problems stated above, the following objectives have been set for the study.

1. To examine the socio-economic and demographic profile of Tamil workers in Kerala.
2. To study the reasons behind their migration to Kerala, especially to Malappuram district.
3. To study their income and employment pattern in Kerala.
4. To study their saving and remittance patterns and utilisation of remittances.
5. To ascertain the extent of discrimination, if any, against Tamil workers.
6. To analyse the changes in assets and liabilities before and after migration, to ascertain whether migration has led to economic betterment of migrants.
7. To analyse and evaluate impacts of their presence upon local workers, employers and trade unions.
8. To suggest possible measures for improvement of the standard of living as well as working conditions of Tamil workers in the district.

Hypotheses

1. In-migration helps Tamil workers to get employment for more days than in their place of origin.
2. The Tamil worker’s monthly average net wages income from the district is more than their expected monthly average earnings in their nativity, if they perform the same or similar kind of work in their nativity without migrating to the district.
3. In-migration has led to considerable economic and financial improvement of Tamil workers

METHODOLOGY

This study is designed as a descriptive one and makes use of relevant information collected from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Data

The core group of the study is the Tamil workers working in the district of Malappuram. In addition to the Tamil workers it also deals with the local workers, employers and trade union leaders of the district. Primary data
required for the study is collected from the sample respondents selected as per the sample frame mentioned below.

Sample Frame

(a) Tamil Workers

Even though it is difficult to see a village without Tamil workers in Malappuram district, there is no authentic record showing their exact number or other details such as employment patterns, areas of residence etc. Thus accurate data in connection with the interstate migration or migrants is not available except the one collected during the decadal census conducted throughout India. During the census, information is collected from households about their place of birth and place of last residence of each individual. On the basis of this information the Census Department publishes “Migration Tables” which is a treasure of valuable information in migration studies. However, data in connection with migration is at present available only up to the district level. Thus, such a study, which deals with interstate migration, has to depend on Census data, which are collected and published, sometimes earlier.

Data collection for this study was carried out in the years 2004 and 2005. Since Migration Tables (D Series) of the Census 2001, were not published either during planning period of the study or during its inception, it became essential to depend Migrations Tables of 1991. Thus sample frame is constructed on the basis of the census data of 1991. As per the Census 1991, there were 7080 interstate migrant workers in Malappuram district (7080 persons, 6140 males and 920 females). These include Tamil workers as well as workers from other states also. Since the study is an in-depth one, which makes it difficult to collect data from each and every Tamil worker, and keeping in view the time and cost constraints, it was decided to collect data from a representative sample of the migrants. Accordingly, 17 per cent of migrants
was taken as the number of samples, and rounded off to the nearest hundred. Thus a sample of 1200 Tamil workers was considered for the study. Of these 156 are females, the number determined on the basis of sex ratio of in-migrants as per the census and the rest are males.

The number of Tamil workers varies from village to village depending upon the infrastructure development, availability of accommodation facilities as well as employment opportunities, approach of locals towards them etc. Since the number of Tamil workers is not evenly distributed in the villages, it is not feasible to conduct a sample survey at the village level, without knowing the exact number of the respondents and to take village as the basis for collection of data. It was observed that, as far as the district is concerned development blocks are the smallest administrative denominations, which are more or less equal in respect of infrastructure development and other facilities, and also seemed good for comparative studies in interstate in-migration. Thus it was decided to take a development block as a sample unit. As on 2004, there were such 14 development blocks in this district. Since these blocks are more or less homogenous in all respects, and thus are representative of each other, for the purpose of convenience it was further decided to select 7 blocks randomly out of these 14 blocks through the lottery method (a block wise map of the district is given in Appendix I and names of the blocks selected for the study are given in Appendix II). From each block 172 Tamil workers were interviewed from 10 different locations through pre-tested structured interview schedules, giving importance to the concentration of Tamil workers on the basis of observation, and their willingness to co-operate with the study. But for the purpose of easiness in further mathematical treatments the sample was limited to 1200. Accidental sampling was employed for collecting data from Tamil workers.
(b) Native Workers

In order to study the perceptions of local workers towards Tamil workers and their inter-relationship, a sample of 60 local workers from each of the 7 blocks (420 native workers) mentioned above. The sample of native workers included 25 construction workers, 20 agricultural labourers, five workers engaged in different kinds of manufacturing activities, and 10 workers from different service sectors, thus totalling 60 from each block. The proportion of the number of local workers is based on observation that higher proportion of Tamil workers is engaged in construction, then in agriculture and so on.

(c) Employers

In order to evaluate the perceptions of employers, a sample of 30 employers of different categories, form each of the seven blocks (totalling 210) were taken on the basis of discussion with the natives. However, five large contractors are taken from different part of the district, without considering the area or blocks.

(d) Trade Union Leaders

It was decided to evaluate the perceptions of trade union leaders at the bottom level. In the early stages itself, it was felt that majority of the trade unions, even strong at the district level, had no properly working units at the bottom level. They are for the namesake, remain in papers and the leaders were local politicians who were mainly interested in positions rather than in workers problems. Thus, the decision to collect data from leaders at the bottom level was changed and it was decided to collect data from leaders in the district, who take active parts in trade union activities rather than politics. Trade union leaders of construction wings, agricultural wings, and general unions were only considered for the study. 50 leaders of important trade unions whose presence is strongly felt in the district and who are interested in these matters were
selected on the basis of asking members and leaders of unions, to mention names of other leaders who can provide more information in this respect. In short, 'Snowball Sampling' was employed for collecting data from trade union leaders.

Secondary Data

Secondary data used in this study have been collected from different sources. Both published and unpublished data of government as well as non-government organisations have been widely used in this study. Following are the important sources of secondary data.

1. Census Reports
2. Economic Reviews, Government of Kerala
5. Human Development Report Kerala 2005
6. Tamil Nadu Development Report 2005
7. Statistics for Planning, Government of Kerala
8. Ministries of Labour, Government of India, Government of Kerala and Government of Tamil Nadu
9. Man Power Profile, India Year Book 2004
10. Indian Labour Journal 2005
12. Directorate of Labour, Thiruvananthapuram
13. District Labour Office, Malappuram

In addition to the above sources, many books, magazines, newspapers, reports etc. are sources of valuable secondary information for the study.
Data Collection Tools

For the purpose of collecting primary data, structured interview schedules are used. Separate schedules were prepared for Tamil workers, native workers, employers and trade union leaders. On the basis of pilot studies, required modifications were made before finally executing the schedule among the sample respondents. Interview schedules executed among the Tamil workers contained questions which can chalk out information related to their socio-economic and democratic profiles, wages, income and employment patterns before and after migration, changes in the asset and liability structures, trade union attachment etc. Schedules executed among the local workers contained questions regarding availability of employment, unemployment situations, wage rates etc. Questions related to availability of workers, wage rates of different categories of workers, capacity and skill level of local and Tamil workers, reasons for discriminations, if any, and the possible impact of absence of Tamil workers etc., were contained in the schedule executed among the employers. Schedule executed among the trade union leaders mainly contained questions related to the membership of Tamil workers, trade union activities among the Tamil workers and approaches of trade unions towards Tamil workers and their in-migration. All these schedules contained certain questions to evaluate the social relationships of Tamil workers and other groups.

Analysis of Data

For analytical purposes, the study has made use of various mathematical and statistical tools as well as techniques. Being a descriptive one, and since the simple statistical tools like percentages, ratios, averages, standard deviation etc., are proved to be sufficient to attain the objectives of the study, such tools have been extensively used for analysis. Further, for studying interdependence of different variables the study has also used chi-square tests and ANOVA as and where needed. Similarly, charts, graphs, diagrams etc are also used to make the presentation more clear. For analytical purpose "Microsoft Excel, Statistica" software programme has been made use of.
Limitations of the Study

- Collection of primary data from Tamil workers was a difficult task. Many of them were suspicious and fearful about the objectives and the outcomes of the results of providing accurate information.

- Language was another barrier. Even though there were persons to interpret the schedules in their own language, the differences in understanding may have affected their disclosure of facts and ultimately the findings of the study.

- It has taken more than one year for collecting data from Tamil workers. The time lag in the data collection from the first person and the last person may affect certain figures and lead to wrong comparison.

- For the best evaluation of the impact of in-migration, a comparative study of the in-migrants with that of non-migrants in their own nativity should be made.

- In India no offices keep data or records in connection with interstate movements. Thus detailed information about interstate migration or interstate migrants is not available, which compels to depend on the migration tables of the census for secondary data. But it would take a lot of time for publishing the Census data, especially those concerned with migration. Thus sample frame for the study is designed on the basis of Migration Tables of 1991 Census.

- In addition to these specific limitations, the study suffers from most of the limitations inherent in the social survey type of research.

Presentation of the Study

For the purpose of presentation, the study is divided into nine chapters, such as:

Chapter 1. Introduction: This chapter introduces the subject of the study, explains objectives, hypothesis, scope, coverage and importance, methodology and limitations of the study.
Chapter 2. Review of Literature: In order to have a theoretical and conceptual base to the work, this chapter provides a review of relevant available literature on the subject.

Chapter 3. Labour Markets of Kerala and Tamil Nadu - A Comparison: Since it is from Tamil Nadu the workers come to Kerala for employment purposes, the chapter compares and provides in a nutshell the different labour market features of these two states, including wage rates.

Chapter 4. Malappuram: The District of Destination: This chapter presents the basic information about the area of study and deals with various socio-economic, demographic as well as labour market features of the district.

Chapter 5. Tamil Workers in Malappuram District – A Socio-Demographic Profile: In this chapter various socio-demographic aspects; reasons for migration, living conditions of Tamil workers are discussed.

Chapter 6. Impact of In-migration upon Employment Income and Other Economic Aspects: Information in connection with their present employment, wages, income, savings, remittances, impact on assets and liabilities and other information related with employment, income etc are presented in this chapter.

Chapter 7. Tamil workers and Their Trade Union Involvement: This chapter deals with the workers’ attachment with trade unions, their nativity, and their future plans.

Chapter 8. Tamil workers and Other Co-players in the Labour Market: Evaluation of the perceptions of various groups in the labour market was one of the objectives of the study and this chapter highlights evaluation of local workers, employers and trade union leaders about Tamil workers and their impact upon the labour market.

Chapter 9. Summary, Findings and Suggestions: This chapter is the abridged form of the work contains findings, suggestions and areas for further study as well as provides a glimpse into the study.