Family

It is very important to distinguish at the outset, one of the distinct characteristics of Gulf migration from other important international migrations that witnessed by the world. In the ancient migrations, the entire family was moving with their movable properties. Even in other contemporary parallel international migrations from the state, especially to the countries of the West, to a greater extent the entire family is moving more or less in a permanent way. Here, in the Gulf migration an individual leaves and the rest of the family remains. “It is important to distinguish at the outset the situation when an individual migrant leaves and the rest of the family remains from that when an entire family moves as a unit. In situations where an individual moves and the rest of the family remains, there is a host of possible consequences for the remaining family or household unit which are often ignored.”

Further, in the Arab Gulf migration from the state, the out-migrant is a young adult and probably the household head. A study on the Gulf migration from the state reveals that the emigrants are overwhelmingly male (93 percent) with a high concentration of young workers. Almost eighty percent of the current emigrants are in the age group of 25-44 years. Another study revealed that more than two-third (67.16 percent) are aged less than 30 years at the time of migration.

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More than twenty lakhs people’s exposure to outer world and about one million women’s loss of a male umbrella and their lonely life for years with windfall remittances at their disposal have more social implications in the family as far as the region is concerned. The implications are manifested on four levels – migrants, wives, children and parents.
Most important impact observed on the migrants is the total alienation from the family and society. A migrant is compared to a milking cow or a burning candle living for others. “The Gulf bachelor living in the flats away from his family, relations, social life etc are like burning candles”. In a sense, Gulf Malayali kept his dreams in dead room for the comforts of his family. Throwing away his entity, he also sleeps in the dead room. His only asset is a bed of three feet wide and six feet long. In this short space, he doesn’t get enough time to fill himself. Seeing his executive dress, others think that he is happy. Keeping this outward grandeur, he guards the life which is an orphaned dead body. The families left behind including parents, wives, children and other relatives look at their migrants as mere financiers or providers of the family. Migrants on the other hand, try to compensate their physical absence with more remittances which further emphasise their role as a milking cow.

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5 The observation made by one of the renowned expatriate writers in one of the Gulf Souvenirs in the early eighties expresses the emotions of an average Gulf Malayalee, “Worries and sufferings disappeared. Changed the landscape of the state… but the problems of the Gulf Malayalee whose money effected all these are still unsolved. Whether it is in emigration office, passport office, customs office or air travel he is an alien. The Gulf Malayali is not deserved to enjoy the privileges of non-resident Indians. He is a second-class citizen in customs and aeroplanes. Even to fulfill reasonable things, he has to give bribery. In taxis and shops in Kerala, Gulf people have special rates. He has to give compulsory donations to various organizations… in short, Gulf Malayali is a strange creature both in his country and abroad” (Kaniyapuram Sainudheen, ‘Gulf Malayalikalum Chila Prasnanglum’ (Malayalam), Abudhabi Malayala Samajam Sovenir (Abudhabi, 1981), p.18.

6 Chandra Prakash, M. Plavilakal Swapnam Kanunna Pathumma (Malayalam), (Current Books, Thrissur, 2002), p. 27. To our questions whether they would prefer their fathers return home permanently, many of the children replied that they prefer their fathers to continue working in the Gulf.


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Long life in the hot desert awards him a number of diseases. After spending his youth in the Gulf, he returns back alienated from the society, contracting many diseases and in many cases leaving many liabilities partially fulfilled. The findings of an important study conducted by the Centre for Survey Research and Management Services (CSRMS), Kochi, reveals some of the shocking facts with regard to the Gulf migrants. The study conducted a comparative survey among the Gulf expatriates from Kerala, Gulf nationals and all other expatriates regarding the mortality due to heart disease and injuries. The study was based on the data on age, sex, nationality and causes collected from published reports relating to Bahrain, Kuwait and UAE. The data on expatriates from Kerala were collected from the death certificates of the deceased accompanying the bodies at the three international airports in Kerala – Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode. The period of study was 1989-1998. Some undesirable changes have developed among the migrants. Among males, heart disease and injuries other than traffic accidents were found to be considerably higher among the Gulf expatriates compared to the Gulf nationals. These differences became more prominent while comparing Kerala expatriates with Gulf nationals. The proportional mortality (PM) percent for heart disease among Kerala expatriates in age group 15-44, 45-59, and 60+ was found to be 34, 53 and 45 compared to 3, 14 and 18 for the UAE nationls and 18, 45 and 36 for the Kuwaitis respectively. Similarly, the PM for accidents other than traffic was much higher in age group 15-44 for the Kerala expatriates (25%) compared to UAE (4%) and Kuwait (18%) nationals. Similar findings were also observed among female expatriates in the Gulf. Disease of circulatory system was found to be the most frequent cause of death, responsible for more than two-fifth

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8 Among the return migrants interviewed by us, majority of them are suffering from sugar and pressure complaints. Many of them are bald headed. They also revealed that their head had got grey even before thirty five years.
of the deaths (42.6%), followed by accidents, injury and poisoning including burns and self-inflicted causes (34.2%). The disease relating to heart alone are responsible for a quarter of deaths. While 15% of the deaths are due to traffic accidents, nearly one-fifth of the deaths are caused by other accidents, injury and self-inflicted causes including hanging. The deaths due to the above two causes are found to be much in excess while comparing with permanent Gulf residents as well as the residents in Kerala.

A detailed study conducted by a famous writer who is also a counselor has brought to light many problems especially psychological, of the migrants.\(^9\) In the initial stages of the migration, majority of the migrants were married males. In those years of 1970s and 1980s, when communication was only through letters, the separation and the related questions that piled up in the mind had created mental tensions, which unfurled in the form of many symptoms.

From abroad, he acquires many skills other than related to his job. Long years’ stay in a multi-cultured and multi-faceted society has also given an average Gulf Malayali migrant many skills which otherwise he cannot gain. Language proficiency is the most significant one. An average Gulf Malayali, whose education is below Secondary Level become proficient in languages other than his mother-tongue. He speaks Arabic and Urdu fluently. A majority speaks English also. Cooking is another skill. There won’t be a single person among the migrants who doesn’t know cooking.\(^{10}\)

The changes noticed among the wives are arising out of three important factors - physical absence of their males, handling of windfall


\(^{10}\) Ammar Keezhuparamba, ‘Ee Adukkala Purushanu Swantham’ (Malayalam), Arabiayile Sulthan (Thiruvananthapuram, August 2000), p.36.
external remittances and management of household in the absence of the husband. The diverse changes effected by these, include emotional and mental problems, dealings with various social institutions, acquisition of various new skills and taking up additional roles.

In the traditional family system of Kerala, father, mother, husband, wife, and children had their own roles and statuses in the family structure. For every person in the family there were roles, which were assigned traditionally and followed without interruption. In majority of the Malabar family, mothers take care of the family; perform household works such as cooking, washing, cleaning etc. The traditional role of the males was working outside and earning money. Major decisions regarding the family were also taken by father. The migration of the males and the consequent new configuration of the family impose new duties and charges for the members left behind. More than two million Keralites work in West Asia means at least ten lakh households have female heads. It means that at least from seventies until the development of modern tele-communication facilities in the late nineties, major decisions in the Gulf migrant families were taken over by women without even consulting with males abroad. Further, in a traditional Kerala family, parents and children were expected to behave each other in certain ways, which were acknowledged by social norms. This also got changes since the children started to earn abroad and old parents stayed at home taking care of their off springs.

Gulf migration and the consequent remittances have redefined the statuses and roles of various members in the family. “The foreign experience and exposure to diverse cultures and civilizations has broadened the vision of the respondents in respect of the sharing of household duties and responsibilities and financial management with spouses and other members of
the household.” On the one hand, the women left behind had to make major adjustments and on the other hand they had to take upon themselves greater responsibilities in the absence of their males. A type of networking of interdependence is growing up in their absence. “The need for help and guidance is greatest in the period immediately after the migrant’s first departure for West Asia because she has to start handling matters and taking decisions that she probably never took before. The matters range from daily shopping to investment of funds, from day-to-day care of children and taking them to doctors in the event of a sickness to the extent and type of schooling for each of the children” As wives started to manage things alone, it was undoubtedly a revolutionary change in the male-headed society of Kerala especially among the Malabar Muslims where wives had no role except cooking and washing. The independent life made them more self-reliant and confident. Social gatherings like marriages, parties etc. are one of the venues of socialization. Since males are abroad, women have began to attend these functions which increased the opportunities for establishing new relationships and thereby the means more socialisation. So the Gulf migration, no doubt, did more than any other factor including the works of reformative organisations in the transformation of women, especially Muslim women in Malabar.

The need to communicate with their males convinced them the importance of education. The anxiety to know their husbands’ whereabouts contributed more to their general awareness. “Given the fact that a husband or son is working abroad, women of the migrant households take an interest in international news, particularly news of West Asia… As a result, the general awareness of developments around the world is considerably better in the

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11 P.R.Gopinathan Nair, Asian Migration to the Arab world: Migration from Kerala (India) (Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, March 1986), p.64.
migrant households as compared to non-migrant households.”

“With the passage of years, as wives learn to manage things on their own, they tend more and more to take independent decision on many matters and in the process want to be less and less dependent on relatives. They also gain in confidence so as to live independently.” The huge remittances sent by the migrants compelled the females to deal with financial institutions like banks, post offices etc. The social status of the women who are handling the remittances independently, automatically increased. “A healthy wind of social change is blowing across the entire rural areas of Kerala, thanks to a considerable extent, to the impact that the migration phenomenon has had on women’s status in society in this state”.

Autonomy and empowerment of women are two important concepts that widely discussed in Kerala. Taken all the parameters of women’s empowerment in Kerala, Gulf migration and the consequent changes contributed much in accelerating women’s progress towards a new society. Observatio made by a study regarding this, is worth mentioning. “More important than the visible economic benefits to the gulf wives, but partly as a result of them are the subtle changes in the women’s self confidence and in their ability to get things done in the man’s world. Loneliness yes, mental strain yes, hard work yes, minor problems with in-laws and children yes, but at the end of the day, they would have developed an inner capacity to get things done, not only within house holds but also in the community. The ISD booths and the internet cafés in every corner of the state have come handy to prevent the problems of loneliness from getting out of hand. The husband is physically away but his helping hand is close by just at the other end of

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13 Ibid.p.135.
communication line. The husband’s absence, increased economic resources at their disposal, and the ability to communicate with her men whenever needed all have become instrumental in transforming the shy dependent girls into self confident autonomous managers with status that is equal to those of any men in the neighbourhood. They get a larger vision of world around them. The subtle transformation that has taken place among the Gulf wives would have a more lasting imprint on the Kerala society than any material changes which migration has brought about.”¹⁶ “In the long run, the transformation of these one million women would have contributed more to the development of a kerala society than all the temporary euphoria created by foreign remittances and the acquisition of modern gadgetry”¹⁷

The external remittances reaching at the hands of the women and the possibility of disposing a higher income raises the prestige in the society. “A woman belonging to a nuclear family seems to stand a greater chance of becoming independent than a woman belonging to an extended family dominated by the parents-in-law.”¹⁸

Windfall remittances at the disposal and the absence of husbands have its impact on the work participation of women in Kerala. A study on migration shows not only that wives of emigrant husbands were on average better educated but a significantly higher proportion of them (84%) reported being housewives than the proportion of all women (60.9%).¹⁹ Female work participation rates (WPRs) in Kerala have been among the lowest in India and declining. In the 1991Census ranks Kerala 22nd among the states with respect to female participation. According to the NSSO data female work

¹⁸ A.S.Oberai, n.1.
participation rate hover between 20 percent (urban) and 23 percent (rural) according to 50th round of NSSO for 1993-94 compared to male WPRs of 56 percent (urban) and 54 percent (rural). While male work participation rates have remained steady (in rural areas) since 1977-78 (32nd round) or turned mildly upwards in urban areas, female WPRs have declined consistently, more so in rural areas and it is only between 1987-88 (43rd round) and 1993-94 that female urban WPR has increased; however the rural WPRs declined further. Interestingly, the latest Round of the NSSO relating to the year 1999-00 reveals a constancy in the female WPRs both in the urban and rural areas.20

The physical separation of the married couples results in personal and emotional problem. The physical separation of the couples for two or three years, affect the women both mentally and physically. Most of the husbands leave abroad immediately after the marriage. Wives who are not accustomed to the duties once discharged by their husbands are baffled when all these responsibilities reached their hands. Apart from this, the sheer separation depresses them a lot. This will be particularly true for those who are newly married and have nothing much to preoccupy them for the most of the time. In a joint family, this may be low compared to nuclear families, where they have a chance to share their feelings.

The absence of husband for a long period and huge remittances at the disposal has generated some other undesirable tendencies among Gulf wives. “One million women about whom we speak are the managers of millions of rupees flowing to the state every day. Most of them are uneducated. Tendencies to imitate the life styles of the affluent families in the neighbourhood, to use the ornaments and dresses introduced in advertisements, spending more on occasions like marriages and other social

functions, offering complements and gifts to friends and relatives as part of demonstration of wealth and prestige are noticed among the Gulf women. The women are the absorbers and distributors of a vulgar consumerism and the consequent culture in the state.\textsuperscript{21}

The migration study in 1998 estimated that a million married women (1 out of 8 in the state) is living away from their husbands.\textsuperscript{22} In the beginning, the communication was through letters. The emotional strains of separation, uncertainty of job, etc make them turn more to religion. Studies conducted in the Gulf areas have revealed the birth and growth of new jarams (the burial sites of the holy persons), siddhans (Holy persons) etc to migration and the consequent remittances.\textsuperscript{23}

The migration and the consequent material affluence resulted in both desirable and undesirable changes among children. Father is away from their children. Once in two or three years they make a short visit. Absence of father’s care creates two types of results in children. Firstly, anxiety of the Gulf migrants about their children. Their mental growth disturbs the parents. Their absence leads to extended love and affection towards the children. The fathers who are not getting a chance to spend their time with their children is compensated by giving them whatever they needed. Their wishes and aspirations are fulfilled immediately by their parents, The overall result is that the migrants’ children are in need of nothing. This creates in the children a

\textsuperscript{22} K.C.Zachariah et al, n.16, p.1
\textsuperscript{23} Malappuram, where majority of the migrants belonged is the centre of these fake holy persons. These persons exploit the problems and tensions of the migrants’ wives effectively. They are manipulating the tensions of the women which are termed as ‘Gulf Syndrome’ by the psychiatrists. Majority of the migrants’ wives are usual visitors of these fake persons ( See, Report, ‘Arabi Manthrikam Thottu Hithe Manthravadam Vare’(Malayalam), \textit{Madhyamam Daily} (Kozhikode, 25 September 2006). See also, Filippo Oseella and Caroline Osella, ‘Migration and the Commodisation of Ritual: Sacrifice, Spectacle and Contestations in Kerala, India’, \textit{Contributions to Indian Sociology}, 37, 1 &2 (New Delhi, 2003), pp.110-139.
concept that they would get whatever they wished. “They are not ready to adapt with ‘No’ and ‘Don’t’”.  

The absence of the migrants away from home and the sudden affluence experienced by the family may induce the children of a migrant family to develop attitudes and habits which are most damaging to their future. Under-protection and inadequate supervision due to father’s absence affect the children both emotionally and mentally. Lack of physical and emotional nurturing from father’s side creates stress and loss of self esteem and the children feel a sense of abandonment. The studies conducted in the Gulf pockets have revealed that children of the migrant families, especially among the males, become disinclined towards education and resort to various anti-social activities. Instead of going to schools, they indulge in various anti-social activities and create problems for respective families.

Kerala is a land, where unemployment problem is very acute, especially among the educated. The unemployment of the educated on the one hand and the migration of the less educated and the consequent material affluence they acquired on the other hand has created an antipathy towards education not only among the migrants’ children but also among the non-migrants’ children. The young generation in the Gulf Pockets especially the

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24 Anu Warrier, ‘Gulf Malayalee Ennal’ (Malayalam), Sasthragathi Monthly (Kozhikode, November 2006) p.23.

25 During the course of our discussions with the wives of Gulf migrants this aspect has been disclosed. Most of the women revealed that, of all the difficulties, that arise as a result of their husbands migration, the hardest one is the caring and supervision of their children, especially male children. They complained that their sons were not staying in their grip. From our analysis it is understood that misleading of children is more among the poorer and uneducated families and also where there are no immediate male relatives to look after and guide the children. In the case of relatively better off and educated families, the children are sent to standard educational institutions where they get proper guidance and advice.

26 This is a strange sight in Kerala, especially in the migrant centers. Those who are highly qualified in the state are on the margin of poverty due to lack of employment. On the other hand, lakhs of less educated who migrated to Gulf achieves material prosperity and leading a life equal to any affluent societies of the world. This is an eye-opener to the children living in Kerala. A wrong notion that the education is meaningless and unnecessary has developed in their mind. Instead of thinking of achieving higher degrees and qualifications they foster the thought of taking passports and going abroad.
dependents of the migrants give more importance to money and ignore education. Money and gifts from abroad leads the children to manifest a sense of materialistic value, ignoring moral aspects of life and even not thinking the sweat that shed behind the money. This is a usual sight in Malabar.\textsuperscript{27} This negative impact on the children of the migrants is common in all the migrant exporting countries.\textsuperscript{28}

The children of adolescent period in the migrants’ houses would normally spend the money on behalf of family in the absence of other elder males.\textsuperscript{29} Usual dealings with money develop in them a habit of eating outside, treating friends and many other ways of squandering money. This spending habit without knowing the real value of money and the hard labour behind it will lead to far reaching effects in the future. The symptoms of the coming danger have started to show their heads in the society. The growing trend in liquor consumption is a real indicator of the future danger. Another trend that has become part and parcel of the society that also disrupted the life style of children is the presence of Visual Medias.\textsuperscript{30} The spread of television have

\textsuperscript{27}C.V.M.Hneefa Faizi, ‘Desadanakkarude Desathudippukal’ (Malayalam), Pravasam 2007 (Kerala Pravasi Sangam Souvenir, Kozhikode, 2007), p.31.

\textsuperscript{28}A study on the impact of labour migration on Bangladesh says, “Unemployment among educated youth from land-owning, middle-class families appeared in the region that is now Bangladesh about 100 years ago, yet this group today continues to look for desk-bound, salaried public sector jobs, sometimes ignoring alternative opportunities available. As the preferred types of jobs have become scarce, they have focused their attention on Middle East jobs. Large numbers of such aspirants fail in securing these jobs after incurring financial losses, and tension arises in the family and the society as everyone blames everyone else. Attention is being diverted from normal activities like studies, office work, and farming to the pursuit of overseas employment, often through very dubious methods. Even in marriage negotiations, overseas employment is increasingly becoming a bargaining point” (A.M.A.H.Siddiqui, ‘The Economic and Non- Economic Impact of Labour Migration from Bangladesh’, Asian Labour Migration: Pipeline to the Middle East, ed, Fred Arnold and Nasrah M Shah (West View, London, 1986), p.249.

\textsuperscript{29}During our study, we met many adolescent children of migrants’ houses. Most of them are studying at high school classes. A casual attempt was made to check the amount they are having in their pockets. The finding was surprising. Most of them were having amounts not less than Rs. One hundred with them. Some of them were having even Rs. five hundred and one thousand

\textsuperscript{30}From the interviews made with the children we could make out the impact of visual medias on children. Most of the children watch TV an average of 3-4 hours daily. Apart from this, they have watched almost all the old Malayalam films in VCD.
created many ethical issues in the society especially among the migrants’ children. This has adversely affected their studies and changed their attitude of life. The reports come in the newspapers that the adolescent children are familiar with alcohol and blue cassettes point to a great threat that the state has to face in the near future.

A detailed study made by a scholar has revealed that there was a strong desire on the part of the migrants to send their children to English Medium Schools. The experience abroad and contact with and exposure to various people and their cultures have broadened the visions of the migrants. An important study made in Kerala reveals the attitudinal changes on the part of the migrants in the matter of their children’s future. More than 80 percent of them have at present higher aspirations than before about the education of their children. Nearly 88 percent now look forward to securing for their children high status in society. Not only have they high desires and hopes for educational social and employment status of their children the vast majority (94 percent) are now willing to grant to children more freedom to choose their career also. The same study states that three-fourths of the migrants were willing to grant the same level of freedom and opportunity to pursue education and choose career to daughters and children alike. Migrants had also expressed their concern about the health of their children.

The fourth section in the family that has been affected by migration is the grand parents or elderly. Their role and status in the changed socio-economic situation has altered and damaged. Though their economic and financial security has improved a lot, they are not mentally satisfied. The grandpas and grandmas had enjoyed a honourable position in olden days. In the migrant families children are earning and in major cases cash is sent in the

31 Nissar Said, ‘Nagnathayude Aagolavathkaranam’ (Malayalam), Arabayile Sulthan (Thiruvananthapuram, August 2000).
32 P.R.Gopinathan Nair, n.11, p.156.
name of migrants’ wives. She takes the decision and spends accordingly. The migration and the consequent remittances led to the power transfer from the hands of grandparents to the younger generations. Grand parents were reduced to the position of a caretaker of their son’s off springs.\textsuperscript{33} From the much honoured position of a family Karanavar whose words were the final ones in the family their status was degraded to the rank of a family servant whose main duties were to carry the school bags of the grand children to the vehicles, purchasing fish from the market etc.\textsuperscript{34}

Environment

Among other factors, the Gulf Malayalees, especially the rich among the Gulf migrants and the remittances they send back are knowingly or unknowingly becoming the forces or promoters of environmental degeneration in the state. Before analysing the impact of external remittances on the environment, a short glimpse into the geography of Kerala is to be made. The description made in the draft of the ‘Environment Policy 2007’ published by the government of Kerala about its geographical uniqueness is significant. “Due to the inherent nature of geography, climatic conditions and ecological characteristics, the environment systems are very fragile here. The biological system of the state could be considered among the richest in the whole world. It has all three maximally productive and bio-diversity wise richest eco systems in the world namely the tropical rain forest, the coastal fresh water and brackish water wet lands and the coastal marine coral reefs. All these three systems are compressed within a width of 50 kms”.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{33} It has now become a custom among the grand parents who are too old to travel long distances even to go abroad at the time of their daughter in-laws delivery to look after them (See N.P.Hafiz Mohammed, n.9, p.176.).

\textsuperscript{34} From our discussion with the elderly this point was clearly, unfurled. The words of one of the Karanavars goes like this, “Sir, we are well in the sense that we are getting posh food in time, monthly health check up in super hospitals, recognition in the society … but we have to depend her (daughter in law) for everything; she decides all”.

Geographically, Kerala has its own uniqueness, which exercises its influence on almost all factors in the state. The state is a narrow edge hemmed in between the Western Ghats on the East and the Arabian Sea on the West. Geographically, the region is divided into three natural divisions viz, the highland that lies 76 metres above the sea level, the midland, which is situated between 76 metres and 7.6 metres above the sea level and the coastal land the height of which is below 7.6 metres of the sea level. The north-west distance is 360 kilo metres and the average width is 70 kilo metres. That is, from the angle of environment, it is a marginal land. A region having 45 degree slope and comprising a highland, a midland and a narrow coast make it an edge.36

The state, which is situated in the hot Monsoon zone is significant in the volume of forests. In 1860, about 75 percent of the state’s total area was forest. The forests of Kerala are blessed with biological diversity. No other state in India can boast of such a variety of plants. The state that covers 1.27 percent of the country’s total area comprises about 22 percent of the total plants and animals. It was this variety of plants that inspired the Dutch Governor to write a big volume on the plants of India.37 These forests are the sources of about 44 rivers and their hundreds of tributaries which made the

The physical description of Malabar is not different. “The district (Malabar) consists of a narrow strip of lower land along the coast of the Arabian Sea, the slopes of the Western Ghats up to their crests… the coastal strip is some 20 miles wide in the north and increases to about 50 miles further south… the crests of the Ghats are from 6,000 to 7,000 feet above the sea, and over 8,000 feet when they rise into the Nilgiri Plateau… numerous rivers have hollowed out for themselves long valleys to the coast, where, backed up by the sand brought by the littoral currents, they discharge into a line of backwaters… further inland, the greater part of the coastal strip is dotted over with hills which form no well-marked ranges and vary in height from 8,00 to 2,000 feet.. Theses often have level summits and are usually separated by narrow and fertile valleys drained by numerous rivulets… the hills of the district are made up of mostly of quartzose gneiss. On the lower slopes towards the west laterite derived from the weathering of the Gneiss is met with amidst ridges and bosses of the parent Gneiss, whilst still lower down near the sea board, at an elevation of about 15 to 200 feet the laterite is more abundant and the Gneiss more rare. The laterite is of terraced variety… it is the commonest building material in Malabar” (See Statistical Atlas, Malabar).

This is Hortus Malabaricus, the great botanical work that was compiled under the patronage of Admiral Van Rheede. The book which was published from Amsterdam between 1678 and 1703 consists of 12 volumes and about 7200 pages. The book includes description of a number of plants in Kerala.
state evergreen. They provided water throughout the year and kept the country fresh and blooming all through the year. 77900 million cubic meter water flows through this rivers per year. Though the state occupies only 1.2% area of the country it possess 5% water resources of India.\textsuperscript{38} The rivers of Kerala are abundant with sands. Though the state is not as rich as other states in the deposits of minerals, rocks of various types are spread through out the region. Laterite rocks are widely spread in Kerala. The hills and uplands of the state are covered with these types of rocks.

Kerala is also blessed with marshy lands and paddy fields. These marshy lands and paddy fields, which are connected to rivers and streams have important environmental significance. These served the purpose of big natural water tanks that kept huge volumes of water in the monsoon season and stored the same for summer. They played great role in the climate of the region as it made the surrounding area mild and pleasant. The topography of Kerala is also conspicuous with numerous mountains and hills.

The consequence of a minor disturbance on this type of sensitive land will be high. The people of this type of land face greatly the environmental threat. The rise of sea water due to global warming may devastate the coastal plains, increased deforestation results in soil erosion and landslides in highland. Demolition of wet and moist areas makes the midland barren. Thus kerala faces a big environmental threat.

The pattern of distribution of residential houses in the state is basically different from other states of the country. The residential houses in the state is scattered everywhere in contrast to other states where they are concentrated in one place in a village. The agricultural lands in the other states are away from the people’s dwellings whereas in Kerala the peoples’ dwellings and the

\textsuperscript{38} Prof.M.KPrasad, \textit{Haritha Chinthakal} (Malayalam) (Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, Kochi, 2004), p.98.
agricultural lands are one and the same. It is in this perspective that we have to assess the impact of Gulf boom on the environment of the state.

An important development after 1970 in the state is the evident boom in the construction activities. Among all the surface level evidences of Non-resident Keralites (NRK) remittances, the most projected one is the construction boom. Big houses are the symbols of Gulf Villages. All micro and macro-level studies made on the use of Gulf remittances have disclosed the importance given to the assets in buildings. According to one study conducted in 1978, about three-quarters of the expenditure by the migrants was taken by land purchase and house construction. Another micro-level study conducted in the same period in Chavakkad village in Trichur district, tells about the construction boom in the village. Out of 95 houses 32 were brand new modern houses constructed within a period of five years. Another study conducted in 1982 reveals that migrants’ first concern was construction of dwelling houses and second was acquisition of land. The same study regretted that number of terraced houses had gone up considerably and of thatched houses declined. The study conducted by the Department of Economics, University of Calicut stated that a major share ie. 56.48 percent was utilized for the purchase of land, house construction and house repair.
latest study has also found the same trend being continued among the migrants.\textsuperscript{45} “Land prices have shot up due to intense land speculation by migrants eager to build their “Gulf houses”. Huge, upscale flat complexes now pepper the landscape, marketed as fashionable housing for Gulf returnees and for others who can afford them, leading to dire predictions about the consequences of a new “flat culture”.\textsuperscript{46}

In short, “House construction activities in Kerala economy took a sudden upturn in the recent past particularly since the mid-seventies. The upturn appears to have had its peak level in the late seventies and/or early eighties. ‘Housing booms’ have been found to be, in general economic booms. However high level of housing investment independent of general economic improvement in the economy as a whole either before or after seems to be the experience perhaps unique to Kerala”.\textsuperscript{47} The Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram conducted a survey in 1987 covering 1,467 migrant households, 690 non-migrant house-holds and 411 households with Gulf returned persons. According to this survey, the migrants utilized 21 percent of the remittances for improving or purchasing land and 36 percent for constructing or improving buildings excluding current consumption.\textsuperscript{48} A person who travels from one end of the state to the other end can see a chain of beautiful and elegant mansions especially in the Gulf migrants concentrated areas. This is a rare sight of Kerala, which is conspicuous by its absence in other Indian states. It is doubtful whether any village even in the advanced countries of the

\textsuperscript{45} According to this study, construction of own house has been reported as the most preferred choice of investment among the migrant households. Around 58 percent of the households invested the remittances in the construction of their own house and the proportion has further increased to 72 percent in case of long duration migration (Sushant K Banerjee et al, n.2, p.1760.


world can boast of this affluence in the residential facilities. “Not only the outward grandeur of the houses but the migrants decorated the inner portion by providing a life style which compete the life styles of any modern societies of the world”.49

This Gulf related construction boom is more concentrated in Northern region of the state.50 The findings of a study regarding the Muslim migrants, majority of whom belong to Malabar area is important. “A major sector in which emigration seems to have had a very significant effect is housing. About 22 percent of the houses in the sample were categorized as “luxurious” or “very good” in 2004…. There were large differences in the quality of houses occupied by the three religious groups. The proportion of luxurious or very good houses was 18.3 percent among the Hindus, 25.8 percent among the Christians, and as much as 28.7 percent among Muslims. This is one area in which Muslims stand much ahead of other religious groups… about 58.3 percent of the houses of the NRKs in 2004 were either luxurious or very good. Among the non-NRKs the corresponding proportion was only 17.1. The difference is as high as 41.2 percentage points.”51 A number of studies have pointed out that a boom in construction sector has appeared in Kerala after 1970s.52

The tendency observed in the various sections and steps of construction is the consumerist style, which employs serious repercussions on

the very life of the Keralite. A latest study conducted in Malappuram reveals that the number of members in the house and the requirements of the family were normally neglected in the decisions as regards the number of rooms and total plinth area of houses. The study observes that the very concept of ‘house’ has thoroughly changed in the region from that of dwelling places to pleasure resorts. In many areas of the state, housing - its size and style – has become an object of competition and a ‘mark’ of distinction.\(^{53}\) The study reveals that this tendency is extensively found among the low income earning and unskilled emigrants.\(^{54}\) As one of the writers observe, “NRIs which include NRKs are heavily investing their savings in real estate. They are not just buying and selling, they are constructing palatial houses, as it is a very status symbol in Kerala. That is why they stay in terrible conditions in the Gulf for decades to keep that dream alive”.\(^{55}\)

The relationship between construction and Gulf boom is evident from the change in the district wise proportion of houses since 1970. In 1971 Ernakulam district had the highest proportion (70 percent) of durable houses and Trivandrum the lowest (22 percent). But in 1980 Trichur turned out to be the district with the highest proportion (79 percent) and Alleppey with the lowest (59 percent). Apart from Trichur, the other districts which improved their relative positions were Cannanore, Malappuram, Palghat and Trivandrum”.\(^{56}\) This relative improvements in the case of Northern districts are very much conforming to the Gulf boom.

The huge mansions built by the migrants across the rural landscape of Kerala have created many environmental problems. Before the Gulf boom, majority of the houses in the state were traditional type – either thatched ones


\(^{54}\) Ibid.p.160.

\(^{55}\) Ramesh Menon, ‘Kerala’s Development Paradox’, India Together (23 March 2008).

\(^{56}\) For details See, Gopikkuttan, n.47, Pp 2083-2084.
Concrete houses are new to Kerala, which made its presence felt after 1970. The predominant materials used in traditional houses like tiles, mud-mortar, dried grass, coconut palms, timber, stone, rubble etc were congenial to the environment of Kerala and their use was only on a limited scale. Within a decade since 1970, the construction sector in the state underwent radical changes both in the quality and items of materials and design of houses in the state.\textsuperscript{57} “The spending extravaganza is also found in the case of the materials used for the construction of the houses. The materials that are under use have undergone rapid changes from traditional materials to modern materials”.\textsuperscript{58} According to official statistics traditional materials used for roof declined from 74.1\% in 1961 to 25.2\% in 1991 and again to 11.2\% in 2001. Likewise the use of non-durable material for wall was 63.7\% in 1961 and 35.4\% in 1991 and 30.4\% in 2001. The houses built in 2001 used mud, brick and stone by 26.1\% and cement, mosaic and tiles by 72.8\%.\textsuperscript{59}

This transition in the building sector resulted in great impact on the environment of Kerala.\textsuperscript{60} The area covered by house and premises are comparatively larger in Kerala. The large courtyard together with the excessive plinth area consumes a major portion of cultivable land in the state.

The required factory made materials - cement, iron rods, tiles, electrical goods, sanitary ware etc are imported from other states. But the traditional materials such as bricks, sands, laterites, gravels, woods etc are

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} M.P. Abdullh, n.53.
\textsuperscript{59} For details see, Government of Kerala, Economic Review (Department of Economics and Statistics, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004).
\textsuperscript{60} The statement made by one of the scholar incorporates the whole situation. “The onslaught on the natural resources is increasing day by day. The ever-weakening productive systems and the consumerist tendencies throwing Kerala to the ditch of utter destruction. The natural resources of Kerala cannot satisfy the militant needs of 10 or 20 percent of the people. Filling the watersheds and paddy fields huge mansions were built. Mining the sands, we made the rivers dead like. Shaving the eastern hills we made the rivers and rains reaching the sea within hours”. (See Prof. K. Sreedharan, ‘Anpathu Varshathe Kerala Vikasanubhavangal Tharum.mathenthu’ (Malayalam), Mathrubhumi Weekly, (Kozhikode, 17-23 December 2006), p.74.
procured locally. Large-scale procurement of these items has started to pose great threats to the environment. One of the first requirements of the new housing boom that started by the Gulf migrants was the acquisition of a new plot of land in a proper place. The studies made on the land markets in Kerala have pointed to the trading of small house plots on a massive scale in the period after 1970s.\textsuperscript{61} Kerala, where the land-man ratio is very low and since the supply of land being inelastic availability of proper house plots become rare. In such circumstances, paddy fields and marshy lands adjoining to urban areas are filled, hillocks are levelled and turned to housing plots. A micro-level study conducted in selected villages in Kerala has attested this aspect.\textsuperscript{62}

The paddy fields, marshy lands and hillocks of Kerala are under the process of great transformation. The booming construction industry that triggered after the Gulf boom in the state and also the consequent urbanisation have made these lands especially those adjoining the roads and towns objects of great commercial value. The hillocks are excavated and levelled and the nearby paddy fields and water bodies are filled up with soil excavated from these hillocks. The JCBs, the ubiquitous excavators are the usual sights in the Gulf pockets of Malabar. The Conversion of agricultural lands and forests, as well as reclaiming of wetlands, for construction purposes and infrastructure is usual sight of Kerala in 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. This has led to many environmental problems in the state. Recent studies that highlight the threat posed by intensive excavation activities in various parts of Kerala in the last two decades note that a substantial proportion of the state’s hills landscape has been destroyed and carted away to fill low-lying lands for construction. Recent micro-level studies conducted by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad


\textsuperscript{62} The study conducted in selected villages in Chavakkad Taluk in Trichur district bears references to this. The original text reads like this, “In one of the selected villages, some amount of diversion of paddy lands to coconut plantation was observed owing to increase in agricultural labour. Similarly, in another selected village conversion of agricultural land into house sites was observed.” (Agro-Economic Research Centre, n.42, p.453).
reveal that since 1987 over 50% hillocks in panchayats and municipal towns included in a survey have been subjected to excavation and earth removal activities; among them 10-15% suffered extreme extreme loss, if not complete destruction.\(^{63}\)

The *Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad* conducted a survey in eight of the fourteen districts in Kerala. The district wise data shows that compared to the southern parts of Kerala, the north has witnessed a heavier assault on its land despite the rate of commercialisation and industrialisation being much faster in the south. Compared to the north where the survey found 58% of hillocks destroyed, the loss in the south was less at around 32%. In fact, the two districts that witnessed the most destruction are Kannur and Malappuram both in Malabar. In Kannur, the survey examined 33 *Garama Panchayats* and two municipal areas that had as many as 196 paddy fields and 163 hillocks. Of these paddy fields, 146- a whopping 81.6% had already been filled up either to plant cash crops, for commercial activities and to build houses etc. The study included areas with a minimum height of ten metres and a base of 1390 hectares under the category of hillocks. Of 163 such hillocks identified in the study, as many as 94 (57.67%) had been affected by various levels of excavation. According to this study, 68 hillocks had lost as much as 25% of their total area, while another 12 suffered a 25-50% loss; 14 had lost over 50%.\(^{64}\)

Filling the low lands including paddy fields poses great threat to the storing of ground water The study conducted in the Pattambi Rice Research Institute reveals that if all the three types (seasons) of farming such as *Virippu*, *Mundakan* and *Puncha* are utilized in one hectre of land, two crores

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\(^{64}\) Ibid.
of litres of water are percolated into the underground.65 This study shows the fearful effect that the aggradation of paddy fields that make to the underground water. A study conducted by the Department of Underground Water has also brought out this point. The study says that water table in the state is fearfully lowering. Up to five years back, tube wells in the state could get water at a depth of 200 feet. Now the average depth is 300 – 350 feet. The study fears that in a near future this depth will be 700 – 1000 as in Tamil Nadu. 66 The aggradation of marshy lands including paddy fields and the degradation of hills are the major causes for this phenomena.67 When the paddy fields are filled, the ponds and wells situated in fields are also filled. Big concrete mansions are built on these places. The surroundings of the buildings are also cemented obstructing the very little chance for water sinking into the ground. When the number of houses increases usage of water also increases. A joint survey conducted by the Central Ground Water Board and the State Ground Water Department estimates the number of open wells in the state as four million, roughly one well for every eight to ten persons.68 According to the then Union Minister for Water Resources, in fifty blocks the water has come down in the state.69 When the water table lowers people can’t not get water from the ordinary wells. The result is the increase of tube wells in the state.70

The rivers of Kerala face serious threat from excessive, indiscriminate and uncontrolled mining of sands. According to a statistics published in 2001, the volume of sands collected from the rivers of central and south Kerala are 7

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65 Dr.C.George Varghese, ‘Keralathile Nelkrishi: Chila Athiieevana Prasnangal’ (Malayalam), Satragathi Monthly (Kozhikode, December 2007), p.33.
66 According to this study, 70% of the paddy fields in the state disappeared within ten years (Report, ‘Bhoogarbha Jala Nirakkku Bhayanakamayi Thazhunnathayi Padhanam’, Madhyamam Daily (Kozhikode, 26 March 2007). 
67 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
to 69 times more than the sands naturally deposited per year (See the Table 9.1).

Table 9.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rivers</th>
<th>Annual sustainable collection of sands (Cubic meter)</th>
<th>Sands collected per year (Annually)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chalakkudy</td>
<td>7810</td>
<td>1,50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periyar</td>
<td>50708</td>
<td>31,10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muvattupuzha</td>
<td>41827</td>
<td>3,30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manimala</td>
<td>4200</td>
<td>4,70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamba</td>
<td>17883</td>
<td>4,60,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The situation in the rivers of Malabar are also not different. According to a study conducted by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad in Kannur district, the average daily sand mining in the important sites of Valapattanam river is alarming (See Table 9.2). The study shows that daily sand mining in the Valapattanam river is 3025 cubic metre and annual extraction is seven lakh fifty thousand cubic metre.\(^{71}\) Bharatappuzha, or Nila as it is fondly called, the longest river in Kerala, is in the way of rapid and steady destruction due to unregulated sand mining for the last few decades. A river that provides drinking water for about 175 villages for a population of over 5.9 lakh rural area and 1.73 lakh in urban area spreading over three districts of Palakkad, Trissur and Malappuram for about 209 kilo metres is barely a trickle in the summer months and filled with shrubs and needs creating the feeling of

\(^{71}\) Sreejith Paithalen, ‘Malabarile Manaloottu Kendrangal’ (Malayalam), Malayalam monthly (Kozhikode, April 2005), pp.29-30.
garden than that of river. Another important river in Malabar, Chaliyar suffers from excessive sand mining. According to the reports, there are 125 sand mining sites in Chaliyar, the fourth largest river of Kerala.

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72 The documentary produced by Shahid Kuttippuram sheds light on the pathetic condition of the river Nila.

Table 9.2
Sand Mining (Valapattanam River)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>No. of katavu</th>
<th>No.of Load</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pappinisseri</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolasseri</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthoor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayyil</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chengalayi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuttiiattor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koodali</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sreekandapuram</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irikkur</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattanoor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kizhur-Chavassrei</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payam</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achan Kunnu</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aralam</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sreejith Paithalen, n71.

Sands play significant role in retaining the resourcefulness of rivers. The sand that has been accumulated above the cracks of the earth’s crest has a dominant role in recharging the underground water.74 “For the last 20 years our rivers suffer from this (Sand mining). When Gulf money transformed into concrete jungles the demand for sand increased very much in 1980s and 1990s. Each Grama Panchayat in Kerala started to auction their river beds to sand contractors”.75 Studies conducted by agencies such as Centre for Earth

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74 In the beginning, the mining of sands was limited to the rivers only. When this became inadequate sand mafia has turned to the banks of rivers. This has serious implications as far as the environment is concerned.

Science Studies have found that riverbanks are cut deeply for generating new sand mining sites. Indiscriminate sand mining has brought the riverbed below sea level, adding to the ecological problems affecting the water level in wells on the embankments has fallen considerably, more so after the monsoon. When the sands removed from the banks of rivers hydraulic gradient increases drastically. The chances for recharging of wells around the river disappear. This is the situation of almost all rivers in Kerala.  

Research done on the lifeline of the rivers points out that removal of sediments and creation of deep pits by way of mining sand would lower the water table.

Indiscriminate sand mining has led to the drying and collapsing of adjoining wells; lowering water table; salination of water; lowering productivity of soil; collapsing of river banks and changing the course of river. Medias of Kerala are full of reports on sand mining and related issues. The sand mining has gone to the extension that without satisfying with the sands in the rivers the greediness make the people deepen the ponds and breaking small and big rocks and mixing them in water to extract sands. Features are being published, discussions are being held and reports are being recurred in various medias on the various aspect of this issue. The popular poetess points to the danger that the environment of the state faces, “The rivers that await the death are the ignominy of Kerala. Reasons are many. Deforestation, lose of soil, sand mining, fettering of rivers, over exploitation of ground water, filling of fields, degradation of hills filling of ponds,

References:


78 Nissar Nandan Kizhaya, ‘Keralathinte Manal Vishappu Theerunnilla’ (Malayalam), Varthamanam Daily (Kozhikode, 04 August 2007).

79 See R.Samban, ‘Puzhakalum Poozhikalum Mafia Kaikalil’ (Malayalam), Desabhimani Daily, (Kozhikode, 18 February 2008);
breaking of rocks, widespread concrete, wastage of water, in addition throwing of waste including plastics to the rivers”. When the construction boom made sand a costly material, maphia started to develop surrounding it. This environmental degeneration occurs not only in Malabar but in the Gulf pockets of central and north Kerala also. In addition to the environment problem, the new ‘concrete culture’ has resulted in various other changes also. The traditional thatched or tiled houses of Kerala had kept the balance of temperature inside the house. The newly built concrete houses have only momentary comfort. The main agenda behind it is arrogance and outward beauty.

Another problem related to construction is the cutting of rocks and degradation of hills. To make up the paucity of sand, rock powder is being used. According to one estimate 50,000 ton rock powder is produced daily in 2500 crushers in the state. Also rocks are cut for construction of buildings. Thousands of quarries, where laterites and granites are cut are the usual sights in the state. The result is the manual aggradation and degradation of the land and the serious harm made to the topography of Kerala. A study conducted by the Department of Atmospheric Science, Cochin University of Science and Technology, has found that the aggradation of paddy fields and the degradation of hills in the state are responsible for the low rain in Kerala. In the highlands and midlands of Kerala, fearful sights of this assault on land can be seen. A famous scientist and environment activist of Kerala has pointed out to the adverse impact of the aggradation and degradation of low lands and

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80 Sugatha Kumari, ‘Enikku Pedi Thonnunnu’ (Malayalam), Kerala Kaumudi Daily (Kozhikode, 05 June 2007).
81 R.Samban, n.79.
hills. The col lands that spread from Nedumbasseri to Ponnani and situated in the three districts of Ernakulam, Trissur and Malappuram face serious threat. These col lands that play great roles in agriculture, fishing and also water conservation are also the acquifers of Bharatappuzha and Chalakkudi river.

The knocking down of hills by earthmovers and excavators are usual sights in the Gulf pockets today. The laterite midland hills, which are the sources of many rivers and streams are now in the way of destruction. “An estimated 1,000 truck loads of earth from demolished hills are being transported every day in Kannur district, each load weighing five tones of soil”. Trucks and tipper lorries carrying soil and pieces of granites and laterite rocks shuttling up and down the urban as well as rural roads of Malabar is a usual sight. According to environmentalists in the region, the midland hills have become the source of big business involving builders, land developers and contractors who purchase privately owned mid land laterite hills and coastal wet land plots at cheaper rates. The hills are reclaimed by demolishing them and wet lands and paddy fields by filling them with the soils from these hills. Thus this results double damage to the nature.

C.R.Neela Kandan says that in conserving water, in retaining the biological diversity of the earth’s surface, in controlling the direction of the wind and maintaining the micro climate of a region, hills and mountains have big roles. Though Kerala is only 10 degree away from equator, the prevailing South west Monsoon winds, nearness to the sea, the existence of hundreds of water bodies and marshy lands raises the humidity of the atmosphere and make the climate mild and pleasant. When we construct concrete buildings by filling the fields and marshy lands, the outer cover of the soil is lost. The plants and trees become extinct. The result is that insolation comes directly to the surface of the earth and soil loses its moisture content. The result is land becomes barren, atmosphere becomes hot and again plants become low. This is a vicious cycle.(CR.Neela Kandan, ‘Manninte Maranam’ (Malayalam), Malayalam Monthly (April 2005), p.25.

See Dr.P.S.Panicker, ‘Kol Nilangal Sarva Nasathilekkku’ (Malayalam), Varthamanam Daily (Kozhikode, 18 August 2007).

The statement is by Bhaskaran Velur, General Secretary of Society for Environmental Education , Kerala (SEEK) (See, Mohammed Nazeer, ‘Demolition Changes Midland Landscape’, The Hindu (5 May 2005).

According to one report, nearly half a dozen laterite hillocks near Thalasseri are in the process of being razed to the ground. A portion of a big hill facing the Iritty town has been brought down. The work of demolishing the laterite hills at Chuzhali and Chiravakku near Talipparambu is in progress. A hillock at Sreekantapuram has also been exposed to the threat.\textsuperscript{89}

In short, “NRI has clear role in destroying the confused ecological system of Kerala”.\textsuperscript{90} Exploitation of natural resources to support the new construction boom such as quarrying and excavation of sand, gravel and building materials at large scales, and over extraction of water have contributed to degradation of the natural support systems and irreversible loss of non-renewable natural resources and the disappearance of natural diversity, in addition to severe environmental problems, the full effect of which will be visible only in the distant future. The view expressed by a scholar is significant. “Environment culture is that of cooperation and tolerance. It is the totality of actions and counter actions between different animals and animals and their environment. The actions and counter actions of various elements of the environment – biological, material, social, and cultural – maintains the balance of environment. But unfortunately, man interferes here violently and leads to its imbalance. Each element in the nature has their role. But for man, widens his place and narrows the sites meant for others. This is invasion and not cooperation”.\textsuperscript{91}

To put it in brief, Kerala, the God’s own country is recklessly being transformed to a concrete jungle replacing the hillocks, paddy fields and other low lands. This is verily a slip from the tradition. In the early ages, human activities in nature were centred around a few things. Primitive man collected

\textsuperscript{89} Mohammed Nazeer, n.87. For a detailed account of hill demolition in one of the areas of Kannoor district, see, M.Jayarajan, ‘A Socio-Cultural and Ecological Study of the Midland Laterite Hillocks along Kavvai River Basin’ (Centre for Development Studies, March 2004).

\textsuperscript{90} Dr.K.M.Abdul Khader, ‘Keralathinte Parishthithi Thakarchayil Pravasikkum Panko?’ (Malayalam), Sasthra Gathi Masika (Kozhikode, November 2006), p.32.

\textsuperscript{91} Dr.A.Achuthan, ‘Parishthithi Samskaram’, Varthamanam Daily, (Kozhikode, 21 July 2007).
food articles from nature. After the invention of agriculture, cultivation was practiced on a limited scale; materials for houses were also procured from nature. Even in the modern period and until a few years back, his activities in nature were limited. Traditionally, Keralites have not considered their life distinct from their environment. They had realized that their life and environment are inter related and inter dependent.\textsuperscript{92} The present generation being tempted by consumerist culture and capitalist mentality see their environment through commercial eyes and make it a marketing commodity. This tendency is not a matter to be ignored. This is actually a change in philosophy of their life, a change in culture, a change in attitude towards the environment. The satirical statement made by a popular scientist and environmentalist is significant here, “The only society on the earth that thinks that they can live without soil may be Malayalis. For malayali, who stands with the peoples of the developed nations in terms of physical indicators of life, soil is dirt or stain… Malayalis who doesn’t use what he produces and doesn’t produce what he uses thinks that market is enough to sustain the life; and sufficient money to purchase… High lands and midlands of Kerala are vivid with the frightening scenes of leveling hillocks and high lands. Soil is the commodity having highest market value in the state. A society that live by selling soil won’t survive long”.\textsuperscript{93}

Like construction boom, the state also faced a vehicle boom since 1970s. “The major investment channel for the migrants has been ‘motor

\textsuperscript{92} The following Adivasi song prevalent among the Irulars in Attappadi testifies this.

\begin{verbatim}
Manne Nambilelayya Maramirukku
Marathe Nambilelayya Kombirukku
Kombe Nambilelayya Ilayirukku
Ilaye Nambilelayya Poovirukku
Poove Nambilelayya Kayirukku
Kaye Nambilelayya Pazhamirukku
Pazhathe Nambilelayya Namirukku
Namme Nambilelayya Nadirukku.(Tree depends on soil; trunk depends on tree; leaf depends on trunk; flower depends on leaf; seed depends on flower; fruit depends on seed; we depend on fruit and country depends on us).
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{93} C.R.Neelakandan, n.85, pp.136-139.
vehicles’ is well known in Kerala. The increase in the number of motor vehicles has been phenomenal during the past decade and the bulk of this increase is attributed to investments made by the migrants and their households”. As early as the period “between March 1977 and October 1978, the number of motor cars registered in the state increased by about 5,000- nine cars a day. Marikar Motors, Trivandrum the sole distributors for Ambassador cars in Kerala sold about 690 cars through their seven outlets in 1976-77 and this number jumped to almost 1,600 and then to more than 1,800 in the next two years. According to Sales Manager of the firm, the demand was more than this and they could not meet it because of lack of supply.” According to the State of Environment Report 2005 (SoER, 2005) automobiles increased 20 times during the last three decades in the state. In 1957-58 there were only 16174 vehicles in Kerala. As on 31/03/1999 it rose to 17.06 lakhs. In other words in 1958 there were a total of 150 vehicles for a population of one lakh. In 1999, it rose to 5530. In 1960, the distance between two vehicles in the roads in Kerala was 1 km. In 2000, it is only 30metres. Total number of vehicles in the state was 19345 in 1958-59. It rose to 1328619 in 1996-97.

Number of vehicles in Malappuram in 1969-70 was only 2101. In 1996-97 it rose to 81584. In 2005-2006, the number increased to 276347. In the district-wise growth of vehicles in Kerala, the highest index is that of Malappuram (901). The state index is only 550. In Kozhikode, the number was 2724 in 1958-59. It rose to 115604 in 1996-97. The increase in number

94 P.R.Gopinathan Nair, n.52, p.28.
97 P.S.Gopinathan Nair, n.75, p.162.
99 Government of Kerala, Economic Review (State Planning Board, Thiruvananthapuram, March 2007),
100 Ibid.
of vehicles reveals its relation with the Gulf boom. When we take the number of vehicles in 1981 and 1997, first position goes to Pathanamthitta (increase was 34 times) and second place goes to Malappuram (12 times), two Gulf migrants districts.\textsuperscript{101} A survey conducted in 232 houses in Malappuram district disclosed that 97 percent of them have at least one vehicle of their own, 112 house holds (49.56\%) have at least two vehicles and the house holds with more than two vehicles are 33 (14.6\%).\textsuperscript{102}

Vehicles play an important role in the air pollution. It also plays its own role in the sound pollution. The increase in the number of vehicles has caused in degrading the quality of air in Kerala. It has led to the increase in temperature.\textsuperscript{103}

Another development which is visible in the state is the growth of urban centers. The growth of urbanization, which was below the all-India level during the period 1901-1981, showed a high growth in the immediate decade after this. The urban growth rate during 1981-91 was 60.89 as against the national rate of 36.19. According to the 1981 estimates, the state fell under the most urbanized areas along with Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Punjab. The composite index of urbanization of these states was +2.0 while that of Kerala was +3.24.\textsuperscript{104} Unlike other states, Kerala lacks rural urban distinction and it is very difficult to mark where town ends and villages start in the state. Some social scientists have even defined Kerala as a mega city. Urbanisation has its own impact on the consumption habits of the people. The urbanization makes the concentration of consumer goods and accessibility and proximity to anything will create artificial needs and a psychological

\textsuperscript{102} M.P.Abdullah, n.53.
\textsuperscript{103} In the state, temperature has been consistently increasing since 1961 (The New Indian Express, n.96).
motivation towards its possession. It has also to be noted that urbanization in Kerala which overtook the national average has never been part of industrialization contrary to what happened in many Indian states where urban areas formed and developed around industrial centers.\(^{105}\) The way of life followed by the rural people are different from the urban residents in many ways. The attitude of the people in rural areas towards consumption, entertainment, work, family, education etc may be different from the residents of cities and towns. The dynamic urbanization in the state has led to the depletion of wet lands. A recent study by the State Council for Science, Technology and Environment has found that rapid urbanization and consequent development of infrastructure have taken a heavy toll on the wet lands.\(^{106}\) The rapid urbanization has serious implications on environment.\(^{107}\)

Kerala is well suited for the cultivation of various crops including paddy since the region is having fertile soil and enough water. During the time of the formation of the state and before, the production of rice in the state was not so bad. Unfortunately, agriculture, the backbone of Kerala economy, has been showing the symptoms of decline since 1970. “In agriculture, there has been an all-pervasive stagnation, especially from the mid-seventies when there was a decline in output in the case of paddy, tapioca, banana, coconut, cashew and arecanut”.\(^{108}\) “The per capita food grain production in Kerala (average of the triennium of 1989-92) was just 38 Kg compared with the all India average of 203 Kg. During this period, Kerala, which has 3.4 percent of the country’s population according to the 1991 census produced only 0.6


percent of the country’s food grains. It must be noted that Kerala is unique in this respect. It is the only state in the country where during the past two decades 1970-73 to 1989-92 food grains production declined at an annual rate of 1.09 percent. What is even more significant is that much of this happened in the decade of the 1980s when the annual rate of decline was 2.06 compared to the previous decade when it was only 0.2 percent. This has been a rather sudden development.”

The total area under paddy in 1975-76 was 884969 hectares. In 1998-99 it reduced to 352631 hectares. It means the area reduced to 39.8 percent “The average per capita food grains production in the state in the triennium 1969-70 to 1972-73 was only 62 kg compared with the all India figure of 186 kg. However, in the two decades preceding it, 1951-71, food grain production in the state had grown at 3.0 percent per annum above the rate of growth of population at that time of 2.3 percent per annum and these figures were very similar to the all India figures of 3.0 percent and 2.1 percent respectively.”

But Kerala was producing only 40% rice required by the state.

The state, which was producing 40% of the fish products before 1960 is now producing only 19%. “The crisis of the state, especially of the goods producing sectors, could be seen as an outcome of the process of structural adaptation of the regional economy to the migration-remittances boom.”

The area under food grain has come down from 960,000 hectares in 1970-71 to 593,000 hectares in 1990-91. The fall of paddy alone was from 875,000 hectares to 560000 hectares. The share of cultivators in the total workforce has also come down from 17.8 percent in 1971 to 13.06 in 1981. The share of

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110 Ibid, p.18

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agricultural workers (cultivators and agricultural labourers) in the work force of the state, 37.8 percent in 1991 is the lowest among the major states and much lower than all India figure of 66.5 percent.\(^{113}\) The major transformation that Kerala’s economy has been experiencing during the past few decades is due to the change over of a predominantly agrarian society where production of food grains was for long mainly for consumption into one where most people now purchase food grains and many other items of food. It is really a socio–economic transformation of enormous significance.\(^{114}\) By implementing the land reforms the government had expected great spurt in agricultural sector. However, production of all almost all major crops with the exception of rubber suffered an absolute decline between 1975-76 and 1986-87. Similarly, industrial performance from the mid-70s has also been dismal.\(^{115}\) In Malappuram, where majority of the migrants belonged, this was surprising. In 1975-76 the area under paddy was 92953 hectares. In 1998-99 it was reduced to 23818 hectares. It means the production was reduced to a percent of 25.6. In Kozhikode, another northern district, the reduction was from 63965 to 15642 (24.4%) In Kannur, the reduction was from 98289 to 13878 (14.1%).

Gulf migration and the consequent material boom have played a major role in this transformation effecting it in more than one way. Firstly, migration caused for the withdrawal of thousands of persons from various labour sectors of the state including agriculture. There has been a movement of people away from agriculture. This led to a decline in the availability of agricultural workers. Since the Gulf migrants are young, and the hard-working, their loss might have resulted in the low productivity of the crops. This has undoubtedly affected agricultural output and incomes. Though, in

\(^{113}\) Ibid, p20.
\(^{114}\) Ibid, p.21.
Kerala, where chronic unemployment exists for several decades it had little outward impact on the overall labour market. Secondly, the feeling that rice cultivation is a profitless business is connected with the rising demand for land especially near the motorable roads. The land brokers were waiting the Gulf people who were ready to buy suitable sites for high price. Almost all the studies have shown that one of the important items that the migrants purchased with their remittances is the land. “The offices of Sub Registrars became the centres of corruption during this season”. An interesting point to note here is that the migrants’ demand is not the land for cultivation but for the construction of houses. The area of land per capita in Kerala is one of the lowest in India (0.4 hectres). When suitable house plots are not available, agricultural lands are continuously reclaimed for construction of houses. To purchase paddy lands for low price and filling them to build houses is a fashion in the Gulf pockets. “The increasing flow of Gulf money made the land an object of Speculative business. The result was that land reached in the hands of a group who had no interest in agriculture.” Thirdly, the construction bonanza that triggered as a result of the remittance boom diverted the available workers to the construction sector where the wage became higher. The observation made by a study is significant. “Attracted by huge wage differentials and better working conditions, rural labourers collectively migrated from the farming sector causing a dearth of agricultural labourers. The wage of agricultural labourers had to be raised for retaining sufficient number”. This in turn resulted in the wage hike for agricultural labourers. Kerala is the number one state in India where the wage of the agricultural labourers are the highest. But the number of agricultural labourers


119 M.P.Abdullh, n.53, p.106.
are still decreasing.\textsuperscript{120} Fourthly, the external remittances made the relatives of the migrants here more hedonistic resulting in laziness and non-involvement in works that needs physical labour. Fifthly, due to the wind fall remittances at their disposal the farmers and their relatives deliberately choose to keep out of the farm work.

A study has argued that the crisis of the commodity producing sectors witnessed during the period since mid seventies could be attributed to the ‘resource movement’ and ‘spending effect’ associated with remittance boom.\textsuperscript{121} The study says that the remittance boom from the Middle East that followed the quadrupling of oil prices in 1973 appears to have induced almost the same kind of structural changes as envisaged by the core Dutch disease model in Kerala.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{120} See K.V.Joseph, ‘\textit{Gulf Panavum Karshika Vethanavum}’ (Malayalam), \textit{Mathrubhumi weekly} (Kozhikode, 5 February 1984).

\textsuperscript{121} K.N.Harilal and K.J.Joseph, n.111.

However, the international Congress on Kerala Studies has acclaimed the contribution of Gulf remittances in alleviating the crisis that the Kerala Model faces since 1970s. “The economic crisis has been camouflaged by the inflow of remittances from the Gulf region. Fortunately, for Kerala, the migration to the Gulf began to pick up from mid-70s precisely the period when the downward trend in the regional economy became visible. At the peak the remittance inflows constituted as much as a quarter of the state domestic product. With the inclusion of the remittances per capita income in Kerala would be higher than the national average. \textsuperscript{123} “Since it is often the young, the better educated and the ambitious who are motivated to leave the rural areas, their loss may result in the average quality of the origin areas’ labour force.” \textsuperscript{124}

**Art, Literature and Architecture**

The architectural monuments of a country or a society is the best exposure of its cultural legacy. The architectural design, the materials used, inner and outer decorations are also the aspirations and visions of the society that build these monuments. Mosque or Masjid in Islam is not a prayer hall alone. It is a symbol of Islamic culture and Muslim presence in a place. There are mosques in almost every vicinity of the world where there is a sizeable collection of Muslim population. An important feature of Mosque architecture all over the world is that more or less it follows a uniform structural style, though a slight variation can be seen here and there. This architectural style is known as Saracenic Style. But the mosques built by the Muslims of Kerala till the beginning of the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, was not of the Saracenic Style of architecture or of Indo – Saracenic style that developed by the imperial or provincial school in Northern India. It was influenced by the local

\textsuperscript{124} A.S.Oberoi, n.1, p.55.
temple architecture rather than the Saracenic Style. The reason for this uniqueness is not far to seek. The construction of both temples and mosques were done by local artisans before whom the models of places of worship were only temples or theatre hall (koothambalam) and these models were adopted for all new situations. According to a scholar the Cranganore Mosque, believed to be the earliest in Malabar, is an austere lofty two storeyed building with tiled roof on wooden planks. Its outer wall or prakara is built on adhistana of pratibandha type similar to any Hindu temple of the region probably due to the employment indigenous carpenters and Masons who knew only the Hindu style of architectural construction.”

Another scholar says “The typical Muslim Mosque of Kerala remained through the centuries as a small symbol of the total identity of the Muslims with Kerala life and culture as well as their immunity from the Islamic influences elsewhere in the country.” At Thanur, Malappuram, the Jama Masjid has a gate built in the manner of temple gopuram covered with copper sheeting. The Arabic tradition of simplicity of plan had perhaps combined itself with the indigenous construction techniques giving rise to the unique style of mosque architecture not found anywhere else in the world.

The Gulf boom gave a serious blow to this cultural diffusion that Kerala kept for centuries since the construction of the first mosque in Kodungalloor. “This unique architectural style that kept the Kerala mosques

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128 K.T.Manu Musliar, General Secretary, *Samastha Kerala Islam Matha Vidyabhyas Board*, the organization that runs more than 9000 madrasas all over Kerala, links this transition with the Gulf boom. During our interview with him he revealed that this was effected by two means. First, the contact of the Keralites with the Arab world opened the architectural styles of the mosque through out the Arab World before them and they copied them to their native land. Secondly, many of the mosques now built in Kerala are sponsored by the Arab citizens. The sketch and plan of the mosque to be built are to show them before sanctioning the fund. Prof. T. Abdul Azeez (Late), Former President of Kerala Nadwathul Mujahideen revealed that it was the increasing number of Muslim organizations behind the proliferation of mosques. According to him there the role of gulf money behind the proliferation of Muslim
distinct are however in the process of replacement since the Gulf boom. The use of arcuated forms, domes, minar-minarets of the imperial school of indo-islamic architecture are being projected as the visible symbols of Islamic culture. Similar mosques are coming up all over Kerala in the modification of old mosques in the last decade. Now, the mosques with indigenous style are few in the state. Mosques are being built with minarets and domes. Another serious aspect with regard to mosque is the abundance of mosques. For each section of Muslims separate Mosques are built.

The impact of migration on literature is also significant. Gulf migrants and their life abroad, the conditions of the families left behind, the impact of the remittances they sent etc. have enriched the Malayalam language and its literature fro various dimensions. Migrants from Kerala engage in various literary and social activities abroad. Almost all leading Malayalam daily newspapers are being published from the Gulf countries; Malayalam News from Saudi Arabia; Varthamanam from Qatar; Gulf Madhyamam from five Gulf nations and Middle East Chandrika, Deepika International, Siraj and Malayala Manorama from the United Arab Emirates. Malayalam may be having the sole credit of the only regional language in the whole world that crossed national boundaries and put its imprint in other countries and among other people. The credit for this growth of the language goes to Gulf migrants. The presence of a strong media that are being published in the name and for the Gulf Malayali both from Kerala and abroad are strong evidences for the

organizations in the state.

A study conducted among the Gulf migrants in Mahi has pointed towards the role of Gulf migrants in transforming the architectural style of mosques in Kerala (See K.K.N.Kurup and E.Isamil, Pravasikalude Oru Vamozhi Chithram (Malabar Institute for Research and Development, Kozhikode, 2005), p.59).

Balgopal, T.S. Prabhu, n.127.

For detailed reports regarding the literary and artistic activities of the earlier migrants in the Gulf, See various issues of the journal, Gulf Malayali published from Bombay in 1970s 1980s. Another development to be noted is that some expatriate organizations run and manage book publications wings in the stage. E.K. Moideen Haji, General Secretary, Al Ain Sunni Youth Centre told us during the interview that they are running Al Majlis Publishers in Tirurangadi which has published a number of books in Malayalam including Quran translations.
role of Gulf money in this sector and also the interest that the non-resident Keralites’ show in reading. A number of Journals are being published exclusively for the Gulf expatriates.\textsuperscript{132} The current journals of Malayalam are vivid with articles on various aspects of migration and the problems of migrants. With a few exceptions like \textit{Malayala Manorama} and \textit{Mathrubhumi} which were started before the Gulf boom, almost all other leading newspapers, periodicals and TV channels are bound to the Gulf money for their birth and survival.\textsuperscript{133} A number of novels, short stories and articles have been published on migrant and their life. The life in the Gulf made the \textit{Malyali} multi-linguistic. The illiterate and the less educated among the migrants speak Arabic, English, and Urdu fluently.\textsuperscript{134} Many popular writers in Malayalam live and write from Gulf countries.\textsuperscript{135}

From the very beginning, the Gulf migration has become the theme of Malayalam Cinema. It was M.T.Vasudevan Nair, the ‘\textit{Jnnan Peedham Laurette}’ of Malayalam literature, first told the story of Gulf migrants. His film \textit{Vilkanundu Swapnangal} tells the story of a Malayali Valluvanadu youth Gulf migrant. ‘Visa’, one of the Malayalam films released in early eighties and directed by Balu Kiriyath tells the story of visa racketing. ‘\textit{Varavelppu}’, another Malayalam movie directed by Sathyans Anthikkadu, tells the story of a return migrant. The film is a real illustration of how an average Malayali sees a Gulf migrant. It depicts the vicious cycle of politics, labour unionism that

\textsuperscript{132} Prominent among them are \textit{Pravasi Doothan}, \textit{Arabiyile Sulthan}, \textit{International Malayali and Gulf News}. \textit{Manasi} and \textit{Mayoori} are two journals exclusively for women. \textit{Take one} is a Malayalam Film Journal published from Dubai.

\textsuperscript{133} According to one report, sixty five percent income of the Malayalam channels except Amrita, India Vision and Surya are from the Middle East. And the survival of the dailies like Siraj, Thejas and Madyamam are bound to Gulf money. For a detailed description on this aspect, see, Ahmed Shareef, ‘\textit{Madhyamangal Maranna Malayali}’, \textit{Pravasi Doothan}, (Alappuzha, January 2007), pp. 8-10. See also Report, ‘\textit{Madhyamangalam Chooshakarakunnuvo.?}, \textit{Pravasi Doothan} (Alappuzha, January 2007), pp.12-14.

\textsuperscript{134} During our discussion it was revealed that most of the Gulf Malayalis speak Arabic and Urdu fluently. A few speak English also.

\textsuperscript{135} TV.Kochu Bava (late) (UAE), Sarugnan, N.T.Balachandran (Oman), Methil Radhakrishnan, Karunakaran (Kuwait), Babu Baradwaj (Saudi Arabia), M.A.Rahman (Qatar), P.K.Parakkadavu, Surab (UAE) and many popular and unpopular writers of Malayalam contributed a lot in developing the \textit{Pravasi} literature.
any man may faces when starting a business in Kerala. It also passively
reveals why the Gulf migrants do not invest money in Kerala.
P.T.Kunhimohammed, who is also an ex migrant has directed the film
Garshom. The word itself means ‘migration’ in Hebrew language. Other
popular films that deals Gulf migration as the theme are Akkare directed by
K.N.Sasidharan, Arabikkatha directed by Lal Jose and Perumazhakkalam
directed by Kamal. A number of Malayalam films have taken the story of
migration and the related issues as their theme. Tele films that deal Gulf
migration and connected matters are also large in number.\footnote{During our study, we could come across sixty five video films that tells the story of migrants and their families produced after 2000.}

Gulf migrants and the money they sent have also played negatively on
the artistic and cultural arena of the region. The Kerala villages of 1960s and
70s were bright with colourful cultural entertainments like annuals of village
clubs, annuals of public libraries, football tournaments etc. If a drama is
staged it was written, directed and acted by the villagers themselves. It was a
creation of their entire unity and work. The football players were also the
village people. Today these programmes have lost their entire meaning. The
cultural programmes now held in Malabar are staged by professional teams
and sponsored by migrants or their relatives.\footnote{M.N.Karasseri, ‘Athmavu Poypokumbol’ (Malayalam), Arabiayile Sulthan (Thiruvananthapuram, 25 February 2001).}

**Muslim Community**

The social transformation and cultural change is well manifested in the
life of Malabar Muslims, the largest migrant community since 1970s. As any
other society, the Malabar Muslims believed and boasted of a distinct and
high cultural base that they directly bequeathed from the prophet and his
immediate disciples. Cultural security is important for any society when alien
moves and life styles threaten the very social base. But culture is conditioned
by the socio–economic and environmental factors specific to each period. With the acquisition of new concepts disseminated through education, journey, mass media, contacts with others etc the culture may get change and transform.

Anyone who studies the social history of Malabar Muslims may find some central aspects that underline the very social life of the people. First, the influence of the *Ulemahs* (the Islamic scholars). Unlike the sister communities like Hindus or Christians, the Muslim community of Malabar adhered to the guidelines and injunctions issued by the *Ulemahs*. This influence is evident in any political or social movement of the past. Second, the prominence given to Islamic education or the so called theology. There were systematic arrangements attached to mosques in every ‘Mahals’ (a village affiliated to a congregational mosque) for the study of Islamic theology. Third, the Muslims were very vigilant in retaining their cultural identity and any slight of assimilation was taken seriously.

But as we indicated in the previous lines, the contact with others through various channels may shake this cultural base. This is what has been happening in Malabar since 1970s. Malabar, especially the migrant community has been passing through a phase of dynamic social and cultural transformation, thanks to the onslaught of petro – dollar. This cultural diffusion, which is known as ‘Gulf Culture’ has been spreading like a virus net work into every elements of people’s life. The doors of Arabian Gulf which were opened before the Keralites in 1970s were a divine blessing especially for the middle class sections of the people of Malabar who had been suffering from serious socio–economic evils that we discussed in the third and fourth chapters of the present study. “Gulf culture is sufficient enough to raise challenges to the economy and culture of the area. It is high time for those who thought that the Gulf money is an asset to the country to
correct their views. Truth is often stranger than myths.\textsuperscript{138} To a certain extent, the members of any community may defend the entry of new ideas and try as much as possible to keep away from forsaking the established customs and lifestyles. But once the resistance breaks, the alienation will be fast. Malabar has been experiencing this stage of cultural evolution in the past three decades. Apparent changes are visible in every walks of people’s life. The life – styles once pioneered by the Gulf migrants are soon copied by the non – migrants and becomes the accepted pattern of the whole society. Thus when 20\textsuperscript{th} century bids farewell and the new century starts, Malabar, which was unrivalled in many respects is adding new features to its uniqueness. Present day Malappuram is a proto – type of old Baghdad city where on the one side existed Islamic educational centres and on the other side all immoral activities.\textsuperscript{139}

Gulf migrants have been playing the role of catalysts of social reformation among the Muslim community for the last thirty years in Kerala. The observation made by a popular Malayalam writer is significant. “Gulf money played the same role among Muslims as Sri Narayana Guru among Ezhavas. No Muslim scholar or organization could modernize the Muslim community so deeply as Gulf money”.\textsuperscript{140} Gulf money, undoubtedly, has been the single most dynamic factor that contributed more, to lead the tradition bounded community to modernity and thereby helping to withstand the new challenges of the time. To quote Dr.M.G.S.Narayanan, “However the advent of petro-dollar boom in the Gulf area gave these people (Muslims) an unexpected chance to become junior partners in modernization. They were employed in large numbers in the Gulf and earned money which could be

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\textsuperscript{138} R.Ramachandran Pillai, ‘Gulf Jeevitham Sambathika Samskarika Prasnangal’ (Malayalam), Mathrubhumi Daily (Kozhikode, 11 September, 1985).


\textsuperscript{140} Shihabudheen Poithumkadavu, ‘Driverum Cheriyou Pilotalle Sir’ (Malayalam), Mathrubhumi Weekly (Kozhikode, 8 – 14 June 2004), p.23.
\end{flushleft}
used as capital and they also began to appreciate modern education, medicine, travel and many other modern amenities of life … This is another historical channel through which modernisation came to Kerala… the tiny, overpopulated, underdeveloped southern state on the west coast of Indian peninsula is geographically and politically part of India, but economically and culturally very much part of affluent society of West and West Asia.”

In the early decades of the twentieth century, almost all the communities of Kerala witnessed the impact of social reforms. In every social reform movements that Kerala witnessed in the past, the role of the educated middle class has been acknowledged by everyone. But the role of the reformers and the impact they made in the Muslim community were significantly different from the sister communities. Firstly, the reform movements among the Muslims were confined to southern districts where the number of Muslims were insignificant. Secondly, the reformers like Vakkom Abdul Khader Moulavi were branded as radicals and they could not make any significant move among the majority orthodox sections. “But the reform movements led by progressive Ulemahs best exemplified by Vakkom Moulavi never became the main stream of the Muslim community, particularly in Northern Kerala, where the sullen Muslim Peasantry weighed down by the successive defeats of their numerous revolts against the British, adopted more and more self-defensive in-ward orientation. The conservative Ulemas throttled any attempt at reform and even shunned modern education”. Thirdly, “Muslim reformism had to deal with the aftermath of the 1921 Mappila rebellion, which confirmed to many the anti-Islamic nature


142 For example, Vakkom Abdul Khadir Moulavi, the most renowned Muslim reformer of the time belonged to Vakkam, a place in Travancore. The activities of the communal organizations he founded on the pattern of Ezhavas and Nairs like Travancore Muslim Mahajana Sabha and Chirayinkil Taluk Muslim Samjam were also confined to Travancore area.

of British rule. In reaction, rural Muslims distanced themselves from modern education, privileging Arabi-Malayalam over English, and even over written Malayalam. For the traditionalist ulmah-in whose practices and orientations the majority of Kerala Muslims recognize themselves—generalized opposition to Islamic reformism was extended to a rejection of all forms of education promoted by the latter”.

In other words, outside the limited sphere of the educated urban middle classes and reformist ulmah—for whom modern education increasingly stood for the whole project of modernization and reform—attempts to introduce “English” education were viewed with suspicion, or rejected outright.

The community that lagged behind others in human development indexes especially education is now striving to access what it has lost in the past, thanks to the material affluence contributed by the Gulf migration. “In this rush towards intellectual development, the role of the migrants is most important. The relationship between private interests and public good, the advancement of business while apparently working for the “upliftment” of the whole community, unfolds in these entrepreneurs’ efforts to link the need for education to reform and future progress of Kerala Muslims. And they do not just talk about education: they promote and build schools, colleges, and universities in both Kerala and the Gulf through various private trusts or charitable organizations. If necessary, funds are raised by appealing to the sensitivities of specific Muslim audiences in both Gulf and Kerala. Potential Arab donors are presented with the chance of bestowing benevolent generosity to support “backward” Muslims’ development and participating in the renaissance of Islamic culture and values. Kerala Muslims, especially Gulf migrants, are offered the chance of doing good for the community”.

145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
A community and its most influential *ulema* that once opposed to the modern education, especially of girls, now becoming the catalysts of sweeping changes.\textsuperscript{147} It may seem paradoxical that the Malappuram district Committee of *Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulema* who once renounced female education as *Makrooh* (not allowed by religion) is running a college exclusively for imparting modern education to its females.\textsuperscript{148}

A new trend is visible in the education sector among the Muslims especially after 1970s. Muslim educationists in cooperation with their *ulema*, took on the banner of modern education and social reform, building schools and colleges where science was taught alongside religious subjects.\textsuperscript{149} Related trend is the proliferation of educational complexes in various parts of Malabar.\textsuperscript{150} Throughout Malabar, number private educational institutions run and managed by Muslims increased especially after 1970s. For example, there were only 10 orphanages in Malappuram district in 1960. In 1970, the number of orphanages rose to 17. In 1985, the number again rose to 35. In 1995 the number became 60. Similar increase is observed in the case of other

\textsuperscript{147} *Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulema*, the most influential organization of Muslim religious scholars passed a resolution to the effect that teaching the art of writing to the females is ‘*sarail makrooh*’ and hence was not permitted by Islam (See, *AL Bayan Arabi Malayalm Masika* (1930), 1, pp.4 -5.

\textsuperscript{148} In the course of our interviews, Ramla Ambalakkadavu, Principal, ‘Wafi College for Girls’ said that in the ‘Wafi College for Girls’ which is functioning under the auspices of *Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulema* in Valancheri, 300 girls are doing their college studies. She also added that food, accommodation, tuition and everything is free in the college and the main sponsors are Gulf migrants.

\textsuperscript{149} This is a new trend in the community. A number of educational institutions that imparts higher learning to the children are being started all over Malabar with systematic syllabus and coordinated leadership. The first of it was started in Chemmad, Malapuram in 1984 as *Darul Huda Islamic Academy*. Now under this institutions, 35 colleges are working all over Malabar. All these institutions are affiliated to the College in Chemmad and following the same curriculum and method of study. After twelve years of study, the institutions award the title ‘Hudawi’ in Islamic theology and MA Degree in English literature. Two thousand and four hundred students are coming out every year from these institutions. Another scheme is ‘Wafi’ colleges. Started in Valanchery in 1990, it has a chain of 33 colleges all over Malabar. In the course of our discussion, Abdul Hakeem Faizi, Rector, Wafi Colleges said that after a term of seven years Wafi institutions will award ‘Wafi’ Degree in Islamic theology and B.A. Degree in English literature. Apart from these a number of institutions are working with their own syllabus. An important point to note is that the cost of education including food and accommodation in all these institutions are free. The Rector added that the institutions are run with the benevolent contributions from the Gulf expatriates.

\textsuperscript{150} By educational complexes, we mean many institutions in a single campus viz. schools, orphanages, vocational institutes, Arts Colleges, Arabic Colleges, Boarding Madarasas etc.
institutions. For example the number of Arabic Colleges in 1960 was 15. In 1995, it became 58. Similar growth is visible in other districts of Malabar also.¹⁵¹

Though Gulf boom has pushed the community a little bit forward, a close analysis of the reports published by various agencies and findings put forward by important studies reveal that the community still remains behind other communities in various levels of education.¹⁵² According to the figures collected in 1990s, the presence of Muslim pupils at Lower Primary levels has been found to be 27.6 per cent and that at the Upper Primary level 27.78 per cent.¹⁵³ Both these figures are above their population level (24.7 per cent) in the state. Their presence at High School level was 17.79 per cent, which is much below their population level.¹⁵⁴ The details with regard to the Muslim number in various professional courses in recent years say that the community is represented poorly. This again tells that the total number of Muslim enrolment is not in proportion to total Muslim population. Out of total 5848 engineering seats in 2000 their number was 345 (5.89 per cent) only. In 1999, it was 201 out of 4284 (4.69 per cent) and 220 (5.56 per cent) out of 3952 in 1997. Another interesting finding is that while 70 percent of the Muslim proportion belongs to Malabar districts, the Muslim engineering students are only 158 out of 345 in 2000, only 88 out of 201 in 1999 and only a small 27 students out of 220 in 1997 from Malabar. In the year 2000, total seats available for MBBS courses are 623 out of which Muslims constitute 50. The grand total seats for courses including BDS, BSc Nursing and MLT were 857 and the Muslim representation was only 69 (8.05 per cent).¹⁵⁵ The picture

¹⁵¹ For Details See Aboobacker Baqavi Malayamma, Mahallu Directory (SAHEEA, Kannur, 2005); Qasimul Qasimi, Kerala Muslim Vidyabhyasa Directory (Najmul Huda Publications, Velliparamba, 2002); C.K.Kareem, ed, Kerala Muslim Directory, Statistics and Directory, Vol. III (Malayalam) (Kochi, 1991)
¹⁵⁵ University of Calicut, Socio-Economic Upliftment of Backward Classes in Malabar Since the Inception of the Calicut University (Chair for Islamic Studies and Research, University of
regarding the community in other professional courses like BHMS, BAMS, B Sc (Agriculture), B V Sc & AH, BFSc, BSc (Forestry) and Btech (Agricultural Engineering) is exactly the same as that of the engineering and medical admissions.\textsuperscript{156} In short, though external remittances have led to the material affluences of the Malabar region and the largest migrant community to a greater extent, relative changes have not taken place in the higher levels of education. A recent report published by the central government also shows that their share in the government services is not in proportion to their population.\textsuperscript{157}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{156} For details see Ibid. pp.28-33.
\item \textsuperscript{157} The Commission appointed by the Central Government under Justice Rajindar Sachar published its report in November, 2006. According to this report, the share of Muslim population in Kerala is 24.7%. But their share in the state employment is only 10.4%. In the high posts of Judiciary their share is nil (For details regarding the conditions of Muslims in Kerala, see Government of India, \textit{Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community: A Report} (Prime Minister’s High Level Committee, New Delhi, November 2006), pp.369 – 374).
\end{itemize}