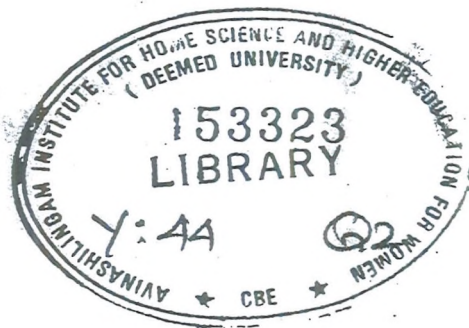


**Social Security  
for Unorganised Workers  
in India**  
—Issues and Concerns—

Kanak Kanti Bagchi  
Nirupam Gope



**MADHAV BOOKS**  
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**DEDICATIONS**

*Dedicated to the Memory of Our Beloved Student*

Late **NILANJAN BISWAS**

Who Had a Lot of Love for the Subject Who Left Us  
Untimely While This Book Was Being Edited

bonus are paid to the workers. Thus in unorganized sector, workers are not getting minimum wage and social security benefits. Moreover, in these units minimum basic facilities are not provided such as sanitation, canteen pure water and ventilation facilities.

Labour are not paid according employer ability to pay and in relation to labour productivity. Thus, there is inverse relationship between wage and employers ability to pay and labour productivity.

In organized sector we have been arguing for productivity-linked wage, where as in informal sector picture is just reverse. Irrespective of exploitation of worker in these units, they have preferred to remain in these units because worker real wage are improved between 2000 and 2005.

In developing countries social security and minimum wage are not provide to worker, while in developed countries. Social security is provided to the workers.

Thus, in the era of liberalization, privatization globalization at least some amount of social security should be provided to workers in unorganized sector. Lastly, there is the need for an analysis of whether urban informal sector also generate inequalities in income distribution?

# 7

## **Pattern of Migration and Employment Status Among Migrant Workers in Informal Sector— An Analysis in Select Areas of Thrissur District**

*Arulselvam K. & Liji K.T.*

### **Introduction**

Development is multi-dimensional and always strives for a positive growth in continuum. It has varied implications and multifarious dimensions. Development may not only mean tangible things but also intangible, like clean environment, civic life, literacy, social capital, etc. In a sense, development has no limits but it should also be remembered that development should only be in a positive direction and which is good for the society and humankind. In this context, Chatterjee (2000) writes: "Development implied a linear path, directed towards a goal, or a series of goals, separated by stages. It implied the fixing of priorities between long-run and short-run goals and conscious choice between alternative paths". Analyzing the inequitable concentration of wealth and the ethics of development in reducing such phenomenon, Sen in "Development as Freedom" (2000) is of the view that in the world today, we live both with 'unprecedented opulence' and remarkable deprivation, destitution and oppression'.

According to him, the central exercise of development is to overcome these problems and to achieve this, the 'various types of unfreedoms' have to be removed. It concentrates particularly on the roles and interconnections between certain crucial instrumental freedoms including economic opportunities, political freedoms, social facilities, transparency guarantees and protective security (Sen, 2000).

One of the basic aims of the economic reforms, leading to free-market economy, was removal of poverty along with emphasis on micro-economic policies in some important areas like agriculture, infrastructure and social development. It can be said with a certain degree of certainty that development or improvement in the above mentioned areas can to an extent lead to poverty alleviation. Implementation of poverty alleviation programmes alone cannot eliminate poverty and it has to be supplemented with other micro-economic policies and programmes and which can also ensure social justice. Economic reforms, if pursued in the right direction and with a humane approach, can ultimately result in removal of poverty and thereby can bring betterment in the living standards of the toiling mass (Prakash, 2007).

In 2001 census report, the total work participation rate in India was 39.42 per cent with male and female participation rates comprising 51.56 and 22.25 per cent respectively. The occupational structure in India shows shrinkage in the primary sector and definite shift in favour of secondary and service sector specifically labour participation in the service sector has increased from 32.51 per cent in 1981 to 44.48 per cent in 2000-01. Correspondingly, male participation rate has registered an improvement from 34.97 to 39.92 per cent, while the female participation rate has risen from 24.80 per cent to 30.68 per cent (Census, 2001) with in a job, workers always strive to move from lower ranks to the higher once. Attainment of high status occupation and well paid in a difficulty in today's highly competitive and complex employment markets. So, self employment opportunities are widely used by these who seek jobs (Shambhat and Nirmala, 2000).

The informal sector is the unorganized sector which plays a vital role in the employment production front. Around 92 per cent of the workforce including those employed in agriculture has been engaged in informal sector which contributes to about 65 per cent of the net value - added by industry in 2002-03. This sector also provides the livelihood to most of the unskilled labourers. Employment in organized sector has been declining since 20 years and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) has strengthened this trend.

Informal sector enterprises can be set up fairly easily. They are small in size in terms of employees and great in number. The production techniques used are labour intensive and use lower levels of technology. Starting one's own 'business' does not require a diploma of any kind. The same is true on the supply side of the labour market; skill requirements play a much smaller role compared to the formal sector. The informal sector is much less organized and has no significant access to the formal credit market and organized markets. It provides cheap goods and services, which are in some cases legal while in other illegal. In many cases these enterprises avoid all government regulations regarding registration, tax and labour regulation. The formal sector is to some degree protected and stimulated by the government in contrast to the informal sector, which is either ignored or regulated but certainly not supported.

Kerala migration studies speculated that the era of large-scale emigration from Kerala to the gulf countries was largely over, that in the coming years, emigration trend would accelerate, that a larger number of emigrants would return to Kerala and that the return emigrants could outnumber fresh emigrants in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The differentials in wage rates between Kerala and neighboring states received the attention of workers in other states. Migration of workers seeking employment in Kerala from other states like West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Chandigarh apart from the workers already present in this state from Tamil Nadu are increasing. These workers are not paid level of wages prevailing in Kerala. The contract system of

employment is also increasing in this state. And they began to move into Kerala and to take up work, especially in the construction sector.

In the light of above discussion, the current study on "Pattern of Migration, Employment Status among Migrant Workers in Informal Sector - An Analysis in Select Areas of Thrissur District", has been undertaken with the following objectives. The objectives of the study were to:

1. Assess the demographic profile of the migrant workers in select activities.
2. Examine the nature and working conditions of migrant workers.
3. Analyse the benefits of migration in terms of select indicators.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of the study Thrissur district of Kerala state has been selected because 1) Thrissur is the cultural capital of Kerala, 2) the people are more enterprising in the non-farm activities than farm activities, 3) many studies are not available on the socio-economic conditions of the migrant workers of Thrissur, 4) easy accessibility for the investigator to collect the data since it happens to be the native place to conduct study. Out of 17 blocks and six municipalities of Thrissur district, two panchayats and one municipality were selected, based on purpose sampling method.

Majority of the migrant population in the selected area are engaged in construction, domestic and agriculture works. This study was based on primary data, collected from a random sample of 135 respondents drawn from the selected area. Sixty construction, 40 domestic and 35 agricultural workers were selected for the study. Among the 60 construction workers, 38 were males and 22 were females, among domestic workers 21 and 19 were males and females respectively. From the agriculture sector, 26 males and nine females were selected.

## Results and Discussion

The profile of the present study which was carried out on these workers is given in the Table 1.

Table 1  
Profile of Workers

Category	Construction Workers	Domestic Workers	Agricultural Workers	All Workers
Male	38(63.33)	21(52.5)	26(74.28)	85(62.97)
Female	22(36.67)	19(47.5)	9(25.72)	50(37.30)
Total	60(44.44)	40(29.62)	35(25.94)	135(100)

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

Of the 135 sample workers 62.97 per cent were male workers and 37.03 per cent were female workers. About 62.97 per cent male workers were migrated to construction sector, domestic sector and agricultural sector. Among them 63.33 per cent, 52.5 per cent and 74.28 per cent workers belonged to construction, domestic and agricultural sectors respectively. The distribution of workers among females revealed that 36.67 per cent, 47.5 per cent and 25.72 per cent workers were engaged in construction sector, domestic sector and agricultural sectors. 44.4 per cent workers were dominated the construction sector. Of the 60 sample construction workers, over half of the workers were skilled with employment in trade such as masonry, carpentry, painting, plumbing, electrical work, bartending etc. the domestic sector had occupied second position by the migrated workers.

Table-2 shows the observed distribution of workers in different sectors by different age group.

In the context of the current study area, 41.48 per cent were in the category of 26 - 35 and 23.70 per cent in the age group of 36 - 45. Twenty per cent workers belonged to the age group of 15 - 25. The remaining 14.8 per cent were in the age group of 46 - 55 and above. They have migrated in the most productive age in order to take advantage of employment opportunities and also made good earnings. The above table revealed that the percentage of people migrated

Table 2  
Age Wise Classification of Workers

Age Group	Construction Workers		Domestic Workers		Agricultural Workers		All Workers
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
15 - 25	8 (21.06)	3 (13.63)	4 (19.04)	4 (21.05)	7 (26.92)	1 (11.11)	27 (20.00)
26 - 35	18 (47.37)	10 (45.45)	9 (42.86)	6 (31.57)	9 (34.61)	4 (44.44)	56 (41.49)
36 - 45	6 (15.76)	7 (31.81)	5 (23.81)	5 (26.31)	7 (26.92)	2 (22.22)	32 (23.60)
46 - 55	4 (10.52)	2 (9.09)	2 (9.52)	2 (10.52)	1 (3.84)	1 (11.11)	12 (8.99)
55 and above	2 (5.26)	0 (0)	1 (4.76)	2 (10.52)	2 (7.69)	1 (11.11)	8 (5.92)
<b>Total</b>	<b>38 (28.14)</b>	<b>22 (16.29)</b>	<b>21 (15.56)</b>	<b>19 (14.07)</b>	<b>26 (19.25)</b>	<b>9 (6.66)</b>	<b>135 (100.00)</b>

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

to work were high in the age group of 15 - 45. Because in the later age they were not fit for heavy jobs due to health conditions and hazardous nature of work. The study conducted by Nair (2005) on "Migrant labourers from Kerala and the impact on Household Economy" pointed out that the gulf migration in Kerala was predominantly at their prime age of work. Majority of the migrants were relatively young and they belonged to the age group of less than 30 - 44 years. The migrants from rural areas were younger than those from urban areas.

Table-3 shows educational status of the respondents.

Out of 135 respondents 87.40 per cent have education below high school. In the present study literacy was more prevalent among construction workers (44.43) than agricultural workers (25.91) and domestic workers (29.63).

The distribution of workers among different communities is given in Table-4.

As it is well known, India is a country with many castes, creeds, religions, languages etc. from time immemorial that multiplicity had been the backbone of Indian society. In the current study 39.25 per cent workers were scheduled caste and 25.92 per cent were in the category of scheduled tribes. In construction and agricultural sectors majority of the labourers were scheduled castes and tribes. But in the domestic workers category, the percentage of male (47.61) and female (57.89) belonged to backward castes. Similar observations were exhibited by Jetley (1987) in "Impact of male migration on rural females" that male migrants in the sample area were mainly from two castes-peasant castes (58.7 per cent) and low castes (38.1 per cent) traditionally held untouchables (but referred to as "harijans" and listed in the Indian constitution as scheduled caste for special protection). The remaining few were from other castes.

The details of all the respondents covered in the study by their marital status are given in the Table-5.

Of the total labour force 75.56 were married and 21.48 per cent were unmarried. 2.96 per cent were widows / separated. Domestic female workers were mainly unmarried

**Table 3**  
**Educational Status of the Respondents**

<i>Educational Level</i>	<i>Construction Workers</i>		<i>Domestic Workers</i>		<i>Agricultural Workers</i>		<i>All Workers</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
Below High School	33 (86.84)	18 (81.81)	17 (80.95)	16 (84.21)	25 (96.15)	9 (100)	118 (87.40)
High School	4 (10.52)	4 (18.18)	2 (9.52)	2 (10.52)	1 (3.85)	0 (0)	13 (9.62)
Higher Secondary	1 (2.63)	0 (0)	2 (9.52)	1 (5.26)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (2.98)
Others	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>38 (28.14)</b>	<b>22 (16.29)</b>	<b>21 (15.56)</b>	<b>19 (14.07)</b>	<b>26 (19.25)</b>	<b>9 (6.66)</b>	<b>135 (100.00)</b>

*Note:* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

**Table 4**  
**Classification of Workers by Community**

Community	Construction Workers		Domestic Workers		Agricultural Workers		All Workers
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Scheduled Caste	15 (39.47)	11 (50.00)	4 (19.04)	5 (26.31)	12 (46.15)	6 (66.67)	53 (39.27)
Scheduled Tribe	13 (34.20)	9 (40.90)	3 (14.28)	2 (10.52)	7 (26.92)	1 (11.11)	35 (25.92)
Backward Community	6 (15.78)	1 (4.54)	10 (47.61)	11 (57.89)	5 (19.23)	1 (11.11)	34 (25.19)
Others	4 (10.52)	1 (4.54)	4 (19.04)	1 (5.26)	2 (7.69)	1 (11.11)	13 (9.62)
<b>Total</b>	<b>38 (28.14)</b>	<b>22 (16.29)</b>	<b>21 (15.56)</b>	<b>19 (14.07)</b>	<b>26 (19.25)</b>	<b>9 (6.66)</b>	<b>135 (100.00)</b>

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

**Table 5**  
**Classification of Workers by Marital Status**

<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Construction Workers</i>		<i>Domestic Workers</i>		<i>Agricultural Workers</i>		<i>All Workers</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
Married	34 (89.47)	18 (81.81)	17 (80.95)	7 (36.84)	21 (80.76)	5 (55.56)	102 (75.56)
Single	4 (10.53)	3 (13.63)	2 (9.52)	12 (63.15)	4 (15.38)	4 (44.44)	29 (21.48)
Widow/Separated	0 (0)	1 (4.56)	2 (9.52)	0 (0)	1 (3.84)	0 (0)	4 (2.96)
Total	38 (28.14)	22 (16.29)	21 (15.56)	19 (14.07)	26 (19.25)	9 (6.66)	135 (100.00)

*Note:* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

females (63.15 per cent). Most of the workers seemed to have migrated to the few places due to marriage.

Access to occupation not only determines the available employment and income potential of an individual but also indicates his social status as well. The main mechanism through which structural transformation gets manifested is the changes in the occupational structure and the associated employment and income patterns of rural groups.

The details of the nature of work carried out by workers is given in Table-6.

Indian agriculture is seasonal in nature. 54.28 per cent of workers in agriculture were seasonal workers. They had demand only in agricultural seasons. But, the majority of the domestic workers were permanent workers (72.5 per cent). They were treated as their family members. In the construction sector, 60 per cent workers were working on temporary basis. In construction sector their employees were contractors.

The investigator in her attempt to get information on the various factors for their movement, many factors were listed. Surprisingly no one respondent to the factors like to get rid of the impact of draught, lack of adequate agricultural land, lack of job which they liked, discrimination on the ground of caste, industrial development of the destination, urban amenities, agricultural development, to enjoy freedom of nuclear family.

The major factors according to them for their migration are shown in Table-7.

Factors which forced the migrant workers to leave their native places for destination state and the factor which attracts the migrant workers to the migrant state are closely correlative with motivational aspect. The factors migrant place could be easily identifiable as per the responses of the workers. The chief factors which were instrumental to attracting the migrant workers to the destination state have been identified by the workers as follows:

- (a) Comparatively higher wages in Kerala (37.03 per cent attracted).

**Table 6**  
**Nature of Work**

<i>Nature of Work</i>	<i>Construction Workers</i>		<i>Domestic Workers</i>		<i>Agricultural Workers</i>		<i>All Workers</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
Permanent	10 (26.31)	5 (22.72)	13 (61.90)	16 (84.21)	6 (23.07)	3 (33.33)	53 (39.27)
Temporary	21 (55.26)	15 (68.18)	7 (33.33)	2 (10.52)	6 (23.07)	1 (11.11)	52 (38.51)
Seasonal	7 (18.42)	2 (9.09)	1 (4.76)	1 (5.26)	14 (53.84)	5 (55.56)	30 (22.22)
<b>Total</b>	<b>38 (28.14)</b>	<b>22 (16.29)</b>	<b>21 (15.56)</b>	<b>19 (14.07)</b>	<b>26 (19.25)</b>	<b>9 (6.66)</b>	<b>135 (100.00)</b>

*Note:* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

**Table 7**  
**Motivational Factors of Migration**

Factors	Construction Workers		Domestic Workers		Agricultural Workers		All Workers
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Move out of place of origin to get rid of the debt	21 (55.26)	7 (31.8)	6 (28.57)	5 (26.31)	7 (26.92)	2 (22.22)	48 (35.57)
Lack of job opportunities compelled to migrate	0 (0)	2 (9.09)	5 (23.80)	4 (21.05)	5 (19.23)	2 (22.22)	18 (13.33)
Poor economic condition of family forced to migrate	7 (18.42)	3 (13.63)	2 (9.52)	3 (15.78)	2 (7.69)	0 (0)	17 (12.59)
Comparatively higher wages in Kerala attracted	10 (26.3)	10 (45.00)	7 (33.33)	6 (31.57)	12 (46.15)	5 (55.56)	50 (37.03)
Invited by friends in Kerala	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (4.76)	1 (5.26)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1.48)
<b>Total</b>	<b>38 (28.14)</b>	<b>22 (16.29)</b>	<b>21 (15.56)</b>	<b>19 (14.07)</b>	<b>26 (19.25)</b>	<b>9 (6.66)</b>	<b>135 (100.00)</b>

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

- (b) Get rid of debt (35.56 per cent).
- (c) Lack of job opportunities compelled to migrate (13.33 per cent).
- (d) Poor economic condition of family forced to migrate (12.59 per cent).
- (e) Invited by friends in Kerala (1.48 per cent).

The migrant workers were asked to give merits of migratory work. The Table 8 indicates the level of the individual job satisfaction of the respondents.

A critical analysis of table shows that the migration workers were satisfied with the present job, because such a job gives them enough income. This is clear from the responses of the migratory workers. It helped to improve the standard of living of construction workers (40 per cent), domestic workers (27.5 per cent) and agriculture workers (25.71 per cent). While some workers felt that they could repay their old debt and reduce the burden of present debt. The percentage of construction workers (50), domestic workers (52.5) and agricultural workers (54.28) respectively. Moreover that they gain knowledge and became expertise in their field (2.96 per cent), better status in family and society (5.92 per cent) and buy asset (6.68 per cent) through their migratory work.

Informal sector has a remarkable capacity to provide jobs and supply primarily the poorest part of the population with basic goods and services. Informal sector has out-stripped the formal sector in terms of numbers employed and shows a good prospect for further growth. Earning is an important factor for analysis of economic background of an individual.

The earnings of the respondents from their employment are given in Table-9.

22.96 per cent of workers earned an income between Rs.25,100 - 30,000 per year from above three sectors. Nine male workers among construction activity and seven male workers among the category of agricultural workers seemed to have earned annual income in the rage of Rs.30,100 - Rs.35,000 per year. It was very surprising to note that only three

**Table 8**  
**Benefits of Migration**

<i>Benefits of Migratory Work</i>	<i>Construction Workers</i>	<i>Domestic Workers</i>	<i>Agricultural Workers</i>	<i>All Workers</i>
Improved standard of living	24 (40.00)	11 (27.50)	9 (25.71)	44 (32.59)
Gained knowledge and expertise	0 (0)	4 (10.00)	0 (0)	4 (2.96)
Gained confidence	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Helped in repaying debt	30 (50.00)	21 (52.50)	19 (54.28)	70 (51.85)
To meet emergencies	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
To buy asset	4 (6.66)	2 (5.00)	3 (8.57)	9 (6.68)
Better status in family and society	2 (3.33)	2 (5.00)	4 (11.42)	8 (5.92)
<b>Total</b>	<b>60 (44.44)</b>	<b>40 (29.62)</b>	<b>35 (25.93)</b>	<b>135 (100)</b>

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

Table 9  
Classification of Workers According to Annual Income from Employment

Annual Income (Rs.)	Construction Workers		Domestic Workers		Agricultural Workers		All Workers
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
10,000 - 15,000	0 (0)	2 (9.09)	1 (4.76)	4 (21.05)	2 (7.69)	2 (22.22)	11 (8.14)
15,100 - 20,000	3 (7.89)	5 (22.72)	6 (28.57)	5 (26.31)	2 (7.69)	4 (44.44)	25 (18.61)
20,100 - 25,000	7 (18.42)	3 (13.63)	5 (23.80)	3 (15.78)	8 (30.76)	2 (22.22)	28 (20.85)
25,100 - 30,000	11 (28.94)	7 (31.81)	4 (19.04)	4 (21.05)	5 (19.23)	0 (0)	31 (22.97)
30,100 - 35,000	9 (23.68)	4 (18.18)	5 (23.80)	3 (15.78)	7 (26.92)	1 (11.11)	29 (21.59)
35,100 - 40,000	5 (13.15)	1 (4.54)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (7.69)	0 (0)	8 (5.92)
40,000 and above	3 (7.89)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2.22)
Total	38 (28.14)	22 (16.29)	21 (15.56)	19 (14.07)	26 (19.25)	9 (6.66)	135 (100.00)

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage to total.

male workers among the construction workers group were found earning above Rs.40, 000 per year. These male workers are equipped with suitable skills required in the construction industry.

### **Conclusion**

The issue of migrants has become a serious concern even in an improving diplomatic environment migration and movements of human populations have always been an integral element in the history of mankind. They were mainly seen employed in informal sector, which offers employment opportunity only for part of a year due to the nature of the activities. So, the study concluded that vocational training requirements could be arranged in the migrated areas to get trained in various types of activities, in which these workers could be employed. Besides, banking sector could extend its network operation to divert their savings into fruitful productive channels which would improve their asset and resource base in future.

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