



# Labour Emigration from Rajasthan to Gulf

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## INTRODUCTION

The technological progression in the last two centuries has changed the world in many ways. It has redefined the human interaction also in terms of movement of goods, services, people as well as exchange of thoughts. Today, the pace and magnitude of international migration is in its highest phase in the history of human civilization. The cross-border movements of people for long distances and considerably for a long duration have many dimensions attached to it. Such international migration has economic, socio-cultural, demographic, psychological and political consequences for both place of origin as well as for place of destination. These also vary with time and space as well as at the same time for different migrant groups. In case of labour migration from one selected part to another, there are some important issues which need to be addressed like the patterns and processes of the migration, causes for such movements, push and pull factors attached to this, migration and developmental interplay, role of service providers or facilitators, implication of such migration for place of origin and destination, future prospects and many more.

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S. I. Rajan, P. Saxena (eds.), *India's Low-Skilled Migration to the Middle East*, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-9224-5\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-9224-5_13)

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## INDIANS IN THE WEST ASIA

Prior to the year 1950, migration to west Asian countries, including the Persian Gulf, was negligible. In 1948, there were only 14,000 Indians spread over Aden, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Muscat, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria (Kondapi 1951). Since the beginning of the 1970s, as a result of oil boom, expansion of infrastructural facilities and shortage of labour, there has been a rapid rise in Indian labour emigration to the Gulf region. There were 1.4 million Indians in the West Asian countries, of whom 1.3 million were in the Gulf region in the early 1990s (Jain 1993). This figure has crossed the mark of 7 million in 2015. Seventy per cent of these workers are concentrated only in two Gulf countries namely the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia. Most of the Indian workers in the Gulf countries are engaged in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.

In this pattern of emigration, workers migrate on a contractual basis for two to five years without permission to settle permanently in these countries. Once they complete their contractual employment, it is mandatory to return to India before they are eligible for a new contract. These emigrants can be categorized as temporary or contract migrant workers. Here, a case study of labour emigration from Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu districts of Rajasthan (India) for the Gulf region is discussed in detail. They emigrated to the Gulf region in search of job and due to lure of better financial avenues.

### OBJECTIVE

The broad objectives of the present study are as follows:

- (a) To identify whether or not the emigration was able to provide economic, social and psychological security to the emigrants and their families.
- (b) To find migration and development relationship for semi-skilled and unskilled labour emigrants from the study region to the Gulf countries. This research may also identify the multifaceted problems faced by the semi-skilled and unskilled migrant workers and the role of mediators in this entire process.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is based on primary data collected in a field survey. Since this study requires specific households having some family member who migrated to West Asia, a purposive random sampling technique has been used for sample selection. The field survey has been conducted during October 2014–July 2015 in the Sikar, Churu and Jhunjhunu districts of Rajasthan. The areas for field survey were selected on the basis of information collected by secondary sources and from the migrants and their family members. From this sample group, information has been collected from the selected respondents through a structured questionnaire. For the comprehensive analysis of the data collected through questionnaires and interviews, SPSS 18.0 software has been used. The information, which has been collected through personal interview method and various other sources, is processed and descriptive statistical methods like tables and other statistical diagrams have been used for data analysis and interpretation.

### THE SAMPLING AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

As mentioned earlier, for the present study, primary information has been collected from the emigrant respondents selected from a household through purposive sampling from three districts of Rajasthan: Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu. Here, household has been taken as unit of study, from which at least one potential labour emigrated to the West Asian countries. The household is chosen as unit of study because in recent theoretical paradigm it is accepted that the decision of emigration is not an individual decision, rather it is a collective decision at the household level in majority of the cases. There were 600 household units selected for this study. From every district, 200 samples were chosen for data collection. To get access to the sample was a big challenge for this study because there is no reliable source of information available regarding the Gulf migrants and their places of origin.

Here, a balance areal representation has also been ensured in the sample selection along with rural-urban composition. The numbers of samples are taken proportionately from all the tehsil areas as per the secondary information. So along with the purposive random sampling, areal random sampling technique is also merged here for suitable sample selection.

All the emigrants from this region for the West Asian countries were males. The average age of the emigrant was 35.8 years in the sample of 600 emigration cases. The maximum (73.2 per cent) of these migrants are up to 40 years of age. From the study area, both Muslims and Hindus have migrated to the West Asian countries, especially to the Gulf countries. The proportion of Muslims is slightly more than the Hindus. The proportion of Muslim emigrants is 53.5 per cent in this case study. Most of the migrants are married in this sample. Only 5.8 per cent sample reported unmarried status.

The semi-skilled and unskilled labours have very poor educational attainment status. More than 65 per cent of the sample is educated only up to eighth standard and about 90 per cent up to tenth standard. Only 2.8 per cent (17 out of 600 samples) are educated above senior secondary level. Among the emigrants very few (2.3 per cent) had professional qualification of any sort. Due to poor educational background these emigrants hardly had an opportunity to get vocational or professional training. They have some sort of specialization in which they were informally trained; they also practise the same. This is a very common practice in the unorganized sector. For example, a mason in the construction sector gives informal training to the youngsters and later they start practising the same profession.

As is evident from Table 13.1, the maximum proportion of sample has specialization in construction sector as mason (29.8 per cent) and followed by labour (22.5 per cent). Drivers and carpenters were 12 per cent and 5.3 per cent in the sample, respectively. The next seven categories, namely salesman, electrician, painter, plumber, steel feeder, mechanic and tailor comprised of about 20.4 per cent of the total sample. In rest of the categories of specialists the percentages varied from steel feeder to store keeper between 1.8 to 0.8 per cent.

**Table 13.1** Areas of specialization of the selected emigrants

<i>Specialization</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Specialization</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Mason	179	29.8	Mechanic	16	2.7
Labour	135	22.5	Tailor	13	2.2
Driver	72	12	Computer operator	11	1.8
Carpenter	32	5.3	Foreman	8	1.3
Salesman	21	3.5	Welder	7	1.2
Electrician	20	3.3	Store keeper	5	0.8
Painter	19	3.2	Others	29	4.8
Plumber	17	2.8			
Steel feeder	16	2.7	Total	600	100

## MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The tendency to move from one place to another in search of new avenues and betterment of life is an integral part of human civilization since time immemorial. The human migration is an important part of human development at various scales. The movements of people and their interaction have influenced the development of human civilization, enrichment of cultures and technological change (Bilsborrow et al. 1984). Many studies and reports on international migration have underlined the close interplay of international migration and development and optimistically pointed out that such cross-border moves comprise a huge potential for development. Further it has been observed that such developments depend upon the composition of migrants, direction of migration flow and use of remittances, sharing of knowledge and skills, growth and role of intermediaries, quality of linkages, level of economic development of place of origin and destination, role of governing agencies and many more (GCIM 2005; World Bank-Working paper 2006 and UN High level dialogue on Migration and Development 2013). According to Naerssen et al. (2008), the approaches to understand migration-development interplay have been broadened in the past decade. Though this is still dominated with more economic aspects of migration and development nexus and human resources, new themes have also been added to these classical perspectives. The migration and development relationship is highly complex in nature. The theoretical aspects of this relationship are discussed in different developmental paradigms.

### DOMINANT THEORETICAL PARADIGM

The neo-classical migration theorists played a pivotal role in establishing the dominant paradigm also referred to as optimistic paradigm. The theorists like Lewis (1954), Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) discussed two-sector model of rural to urban migration. According to their perspective the rural-urban (two sectors) as well as developmental-developed are inevitable part of the whole development process. In the second half of the 1950s two eminent development economists, Gunnar Myrdal and Albert O. Hirschman, from the school of unbalanced regional development, outlined the problem of economic development in underdeveloped countries and provided due attention on the non-economic parameters in the process of underdevelopment of regions legged behind in the development.

### ALTERNATIVE THEORETICAL PARADIGM

This paradigm is based on the structural approach which defines migration in terms of exploitative political and economic relationship between sending and receiving countries. The focus of this approach is on the inequalities and constraints of life produced by macro-economic processes. Here, in the neo-Marxist view, migration is not only a result of these imbalance situations, but an option to overcome this barrier. They have recognized migration as a natural outcome of inequality and spatial differentiation caused by capitalist development. Here, it is important to discuss the work of Amin (1973).

### EMERGING THEORETICAL PARADIGM

In the 1980s and 1990s a new approach was adopted to understand the dynamics of the migration process. In this emerging paradigm, interdisciplinary approach was adopted in which causes and consequences of migration are presented more explicitly, highlighting both positive and negative responses in reference to migration and development relationship. In this phase, two new approaches emerged to explain the dynamics of migration and development. These were New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) and Transnational Perspective on Migration and Development (TPMD). Here, in this piece of research these theoretical paradigms are taken into consideration for examining the dynamics of the labour migration between India and Gulf countries with special reference to a case study of Rajasthani emigrants to this region.

### GULF MIGRATION FROM RAJASTHAN

Since the largest concentration of labour emigration to the Gulf region from Rajasthan is observed in Sikar, Churu and Jhunjhunu districts, they have been selected for the present study. Thousands of labours emigrate from this region to the Gulf countries every year, largely in search of job, to increase their earning and for ensuring continuous availability of work. The unemployment conditions, poor prospects of agricultural and industrial activities, poor status of human resource and so on are creating a push force for the youth of this region to leave this place. Other than this region, there are some other pockets as well from where a considerably good number of labour is emigrating to the West Asian countries. The adjacent region of the study area in the south, Nagaur district, is also an important

centre in terms of emigration of labour to the Gulf region. In the southern part of Rajasthan, Banswara and Dungarpur are also prominent districts in terms of migration to the West Asian countries. Eastern Rajasthan too is crucial to mention here because a good number of labour is emigrating from this region to the Gulf countries. Among other districts of Rajasthan, Tonk, Bharatpur, SawaiMadhopur, Karauli and Bundi are places from which significant number of youths emigrate to Gulf countries. In central part of Rajasthan, the districts of Ajmer, Nasirabad and Sarwar are important centres from where people migrate to Gulf countries. Some other pockets of Rajasthan from which a significant number of labourers are also emigrating for Gulf countries include Hadauti region which is comprised of Sunel and Patan areas of Jhalawar district. Emigration of labourers from the south, west, south-west and north-west of Rajasthan have been very low.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this section details have been provided regarding the data processing and analysis of the data collected from field survey in Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu districts of Rajasthan. The maximum emigrants from the study area migrate to Saudi Arabia (about 42 per cent). About 31 per cent migrated to the United Arab Emirates. More than 73 per cent labours emigrated for these two Gulf countries only. Oman is the next preferred destination in the Gulf region for the emigrants of districts of Rajasthan followed by Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain. In 1970s mainly semi-skilled and unskilled labour emigrated from India to the Gulf region for taking jobs in construction and other infrastructure development sector. But in the last two decades demand increased for skilled and professional manpower for operation and maintenance services, transport and communication, IT and other such sectors. Particularly, in case of study area, the conditions are very much similar as it was in 1970s. There is a meagre shift from 1970s condition as even today most of labours from study area are semi-skilled or unskilled. Here, slightly more than 50 per cent workers are engaged in the construction activities as mason and labours at the destination. After the above two categories of emigrants, drivers are the third largest group comprising of 12 per cent of the entire sample.

The emigration of workers, semi-skilled and unskilled, is mainly induced by economic factors. The study districts of Rajasthan fall in the semi-arid region. Due to the scarcity of water, poor availability of natural resources and poor educational status, there are very low possibilities of impressive agricultural and industrial growth. Other avenues of employment and

development are also not explored and developed properly in this region like tourism, handicraft, cottage industry and so on. Under these conditions, coupled with increasing population pressure, study region had been trapped in problems like unemployment, low wages, job uncertainties and so on. These economic conditions created a push for young workforce of this region to search jobs outside their region. On the other side, the pull force was generated in the West Asian countries, mainly in Gulf countries due to oil and gas reserves, to attract the workers from districts of Rajasthan. The wage difference between place of origin and destination is also another important factor along with continuous availability of employment which has been the pull factor in attracting the semi-skilled and skilled labour from Rajasthan.

In most of the cases these sample emigrants got information about the employment opportunity in Gulf region by the agents or through their network (these are the people who work for an agent or subagent and catch the prospective emigrants from the origin). About two-thirds of the sample got this information by various mediators/agents. There are many agents and subagents in the study area who have a team of workers who roam around in the field to catch the prospective emigrants. They introduce themselves as agents or subagents. Then, these agents and subagents largely convince these would-be emigrants and facilitate the process of immigration at a very high financial cost. Second most important source of information about the job opportunity in the Gulf is relatives or family members who have previously emigrated and employed in Gulf country. About one-fourth of the sample got information for job opportunity from this source. Irrespective of the source of information, almost all the emigrants ultimately approach an agent at destination to complete the formalities like arranging meeting with the employer, signing of contract and help in settling in host country.

### OPINION ABOUT SATISFACTION FROM EMIGRATION

The reason behind asking the question whether the emigrants were satisfied after leaving their home state was to get input on the issue if emigration solved the purpose for which they had emigrated to Gulf region. About three-fourths of the sample was satisfied with their decision to emigrate for the Gulf region; whereas 3 per cent of sample units were partially satisfied. However, nearly 22 per cent respondents were not satisfied with their decision to move.



## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WORKING CONDITIONS IN INDIA AND GULF COUNTRIES

Other than the wage difference between India and Gulf countries, there are some other factors also which played an important role in making decision by the emigrants to move to the Gulf countries. Comparing the differences in the working conditions at the origin and host country, it is found that the largest proportion of the sample (41.2 per cent) had reported that due to higher technological inputs, labourer had to do less physical work in the Gulf region. About one-fourth respondents opined that along with the salary more perks were given for overtime in Gulf countries as compared to what the emigrants received at the origin. Other emigrants had also reported that the job security and the continuity of job was also a reason of attraction towards Gulf countries. Nearly 20 per cent of the respondents have mentioned that the working conditions are almost similar in India and the Gulf region. About 6 per cent of the sample had reported that in the Gulf region job timings are lengthier and security and freedom are comparatively less in Gulf countries as compared to India.

## EMIGRANT'S SUPPORT TO THE FAMILY BACK HOME THROUGH REMITTANCES

Remittance is person-to-person payment, rather than payment to purchase goods or services or payment towards business (World Bank 2006). Remittance is largely a fund transfer by an individual/emigrant to his/her family, society or community at country of their origin. In the present sample all the respondents have reported that families were receiving remittances from the emigrants regularly. It has been found that most (39.3 per cent) of the remittances are sent by informal channels, especially with friends and relatives. In the study area, there are many clusters of villages and towns which send a large number of emigrants for Gulf countries. Emigrants from these clusters keep themselves well connected among them and use informal channel (with friends and relatives) for sending remittances back home. Other than these there are considerable proportions (28.8 per cent) of emigrants who are using money transfer through formal agency like banking services for this purpose. Only 5.5 per cent emigrants reported using international money order as primary source for remittance transfer. About 11 per cent of the respondents hesitated to disclose the medium of remittance transfer and they simply ignored this query.

It has been found in the survey that every emigrant remits money to their family back home. However, in addition to sending cash, the emigrants support their families by other means too. About 30 per cent emigrants give only monetary support to their family. But there are some emigrants who along with cash help their families by sending articles through friends/relatives or carrying with them household appliances, useful articles and gifts and other expensive items like LCDs, CD player, camera, mobile, radio, watch, clothes, blankets and so on. A majority of migrants belonged to this category. However, a small proportion of the sample (1.8 per cent) supports their family by inviting another family member and helping him in getting employment in the company he works for or else in another company in the same city or in other parts of Gulf countries in addition to sending money to his family every month. This helped their families in using their savings, to initiate new economic ventures, support other family members to acquire training for skill development in order to become a source of earning at home or in a Gulf country.

Table 13.2 shows that the majority of emigrants in low-income category (10,000–15,000) prefer to support maximum by sending cash as means of support to their families back home. This might be because they are mostly taking high interest loans for completing the emigration formalities and now want to repay soon and their survival is tough with low income so their priority is to feed their family first rather than taking consumer articles. With increase in income, there is tendency to support their families both in cash and kind.

**Table 13.2** Income category and kind of support

<i>Income category</i>	<i>Emigrant help to family in cash/kind or both</i>			<i>Total</i>
	<i>Remittances cash</i>	<i>Remittances (cash) &amp; kind</i>	<i>Remittances (cash), kind &amp; occupational assistance<sup>a</sup></i>	
<10,000	28	8	1	37
10,000–15,000	94	177	3	274
15,000–20,000	32	140	3	175
20,000–30,000	17	66	4	87
>30,000	4	23	0	27
Total	175	414	11	600

<sup>a</sup>Note: Occupational assistance: Assistance given to family member in training for his skill development for better employment at home or in a Gulf country

## USE OF REMITTANCES

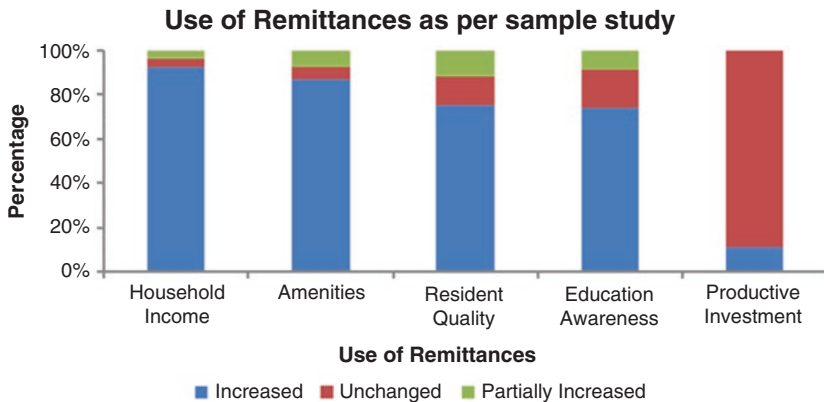
According to Haas (2007), remittances function as income insurance and protect people from income fluctuations caused by economic downturns, political conflicts or climatic vagaries. While reviewing various empirical studies Haas found that along with income insurance international remittances also contribute positively to overall household welfare through improved nutrition, food, health and living conditions at place of origin. The National Sample Survey Organization conducted a survey on employment and unemployment in 2007–2008 and discusses about 12 purposes for which a household uses the remittance. Here, it is found that the prime use of remittance in both rural and urban areas is household expenditure (NSSO 2014). According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) survey (2010), about 61 per cent of the remittances received by Indian households are used for meeting the requirements of food, education, health, and so on. Nearly, 20 per cent of these remittances received are deposited in bank accounts for saving. Only about 7 per cent of these funds are invested in land, property or securities.

In the present study the respondents were asked to give information about the use of remittances by the family in order of their priority. About three-fourths (73.6 per cent) of the respondents put debt repayment as their first primary usage of remittances. This may be due to the fact that majority of emigrants (78.3 per cent) had borrowed money from money lenders, friends or relatives before leaving their country and probably the families of those emigrants who had to pay high interest rates preferred to repay the loan first. The second most preferred use of remittances was for improving the standard of living of the family. This use of remittance was purely for consumption purpose. However, once the loan was totally repaid, use of remittances to raise the standard of living of the family became its primary use. Other primary utilization of remittance was “savings”, which almost all the left-behind families of the emigrants do. However, for savings families used different options available in banks and post offices. Very few families of the emigrants used remittances for investment purpose like purchase of agricultural land, investment in small business and so on. However, utilization of remittances on renovation of houses by left-behind families of the emigrants was also found in good number.

Table 13.3 and Fig. 13.1 show that for 92.5 per cent samples this emigration is fruitful in terms of increase in household income. About 3.7 per cent households reported partial increase in their household income. This is obvious also because most of the emigrants were either unemployed or

**Table 13.3** Utilization of remittances on household income, amenities, quality of residence and education of children in the family

Status	Household income		Household amenities		Resident quality		Education / productive investment	
	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent
Increased	555	92.5	520	86.7	451	75.2	445	74.2
Unchanged	23	3.8	34	5.7	79	13.2	101	16.8
Partially increased	22	3.7	46	7.7	70	11.7	54	9
Total	600	100	600	100	600	100	600	100

**Fig. 13.1** Utilization of remittances by families of emigrants at origin. (Source: Table 13.3)

partially employed before they left for Gulf countries. Nearly three-fifths (60 per cent) of the study migrants to Gulf countries emigrated for better prospects and increased income. Only 23 emigrants (i.e., 3.8 per cent) reported no change in their household income. This group is comprised of those emigrants who did not get promised salary or job on their arrival at the destination. By and large, the emigration to Gulf countries brought significant changes in the lives of emigrants' families. The biggest change was in their household income at the origin which raised their standards of living. A large section of the migrants' families renovated their depleted

houses and purchased electronic goods and other household amenities from the remittances received. Another change reported was the significant increase in expenditure on food for better nutrition of family members in general and of children in particular.

More than 94 per cent of the sample group reported that either they have purchased household appliances or these goods were brought by the family members when they visited home during vacation in a year. Generally, these emigrants bring with them many household appliances, useful articles and gifts. Other than that, most of them brought refrigerators, televisions, two-wheelers, kitchen gadgets including gas connection, coolers, cell phones, furniture and so on. About 5.7 per cent of the sample reported that there was no improvement in the household amenities in their cases. These were the households where either emigrants did not get expected salaries at destination or they were still repaying their debts (may be old one or which they have borrowed for emigration of other family member) or spent money in social responsibilities such as marriage or illness or death of their family members.

About three-fourths of the sample reported considerable improvement in the quality of their houses. Most of them modified their old houses by addition of new room/s, modification in kitchen, toilets and bathrooms, improving rooftops and flooring quality, construction of permanent boundary wall, painting and addition of some other facilities. Few of them also constructed new houses on their existing lands. Nearly 11.7 per cent of the sample only went for minor changes and modifications. In case of 13.2 per cent of the sample group there was no change in the quality of their house. Half of them had no extra money for this and the rest of them either provided desired facilities in their home or preferred to save money for children's education and their marriage. Some also saved money for their old age security.

It is a matter of concern that a major part of the remittances is used for consumption purpose whereas only a small part of it was invested on education of children and on savings. Though about 85 per cent of sample emigrants reported increase or partial increase in their expenses on children's education, in reality most of them are not very much aware about the children's educational needs according to the current changing scenario. The only parameter of increased educational standard and recurring expenses is that the children are studying in English-medium schools with little concern of the quality of education and educational progress of the children. In case of college students, parents preferred to enrol their

children in any vocational training courses so that with their skills developed, they can get them employed in Gulf countries in either the same company where the father was working or elsewhere in the Gulf region. However, a strong gender bias was observed among the emigrants. They encouraged sons to attend skill development programmes, but for daughters they preferred admission in a government school and then getting them married at an early age.

### PROBLEMS FACED BY EMIGRANTS DURING EMIGRATION PROCESS IN INDIA

Most of the unskilled or semi-skilled emigrants who migrated from the districts of Rajasthan to Gulf countries had little knowledge and awareness about the process of emigration. Due to this shortcoming they had to depend upon others for completing the formalities. Generally, these persons find easily an agent in their area who may have effective network in both the sending and receiving countries. Gaur (2002) in her study of Indian migrant labours in Lebanon observed that the network of agents is widely spread in sending and receiving countries, particularly in rural areas, due to heavy unemployment at the origin and more job opportunities being available at the host country with higher wages. In such situation, network of agents flourishes. The agents charge heavy amount to help in securing a high-paying job at the destination country. His services to his client include: (a) to find suitable job in a Gulf country; (b) help the client to obtain his passport from Passport Office in Rajasthan; and (c) to secure client's visa of destination country. The greatest problem faced by the potential emigrant is to manage finances which include the hefty fee of the agent, cost of air ticket, visa fee, accommodation in the host country and daily expenses for at least a month, that is, till he gets his first salary from his employer.

In the study area, the most crucial problem faced by a potential emigrant from low economic strata is to make arrangements of finances for foreign travel. It has been found that generally the potential emigrants mortgage their property/land to a bank or with a local money lender. Alternatively, in some cases the loan is taken from relatives and/or friends. More than three-fourths of the emigrants faced problem before emigration in managing finance for entire emigration process. They took loans from money lenders and in some cases agents themselves provided financial assistance on heavy interest rates. Some of the persons from the sampled area who had earlier migrated to Gulf country also provided

financial assistance to the new emigrants. About 22 per cent of the emigrants had arranged the expenses either from their savings or by selling their fixed assets and ornaments.

The data collected from the selected 600 emigrants revealed that 23 out of 600 (3.8 per cent) potential emigrants reported that their passports were delivered quite late; whereas, 31 (5.2 per cent) emigrants claimed that they had to wait very long to get their visa. Besides these problems, the emigrants did not face any other problem. This may be due to the help received by emigrants from the agent in securing a job in Gulf country and in completing all paperwork, including applying for a passport in Rajasthan and helping the client in securing visa of the host country. However, for all this help the agent charges on an average Rs 1.25 lakhs (nearly US\$1950) from each person. About 83 per cent of the emigrants took help of the agents and each person paid the above amount to the agent.

All may not be well with some emigrants. After arriving at the destination, some of the migrants to Gulf countries face serious problems. These problems include cancellation of the contract signed earlier and pressure from the employer to sign a new contract on lower wages, longer working hours and poor living conditions with no health insurance benefits. However, when some employers do provide health insurance cover to their employees, the insured amount is so small that it is not sufficient to meet hospital bills in many cases. Gaur and Saxena (2004) reported in their study of an Indian migrant worker in Lebanon a pathetic condition of the emigrant who met with a serious accident while working on a machine. The employer got him admitted to a hospital for treatment. The employee's insurance cover was not enough to meet the hospital expenses beyond a certain amount. When the hospital bill exceeded the insured amount, the hospital demanded more money. The employer disowned the employer and did not pay the balance amount. Due to expensive treatment in a foreign land, his friends decided to send the patient to India. But the hospital authorities refused to discharge the patient until the full payment was made. The Indian community in Lebanon collected funds and sent the patient back to India.

In some of the cases emigrants are cheated at the origin by the agents who sent them on tourist visa instead of working/business visa as promised earlier. After the completion of their visa period the emigrants are no longer allowed to stay at the destination and if they still continue to stay, then they are treated as illegal migrants and are subjected to exploitation by their employers. In many cases, their passports are taken by their employers and they are not allowed to go out of their work premises.

**Table 13.4** Responses of emigrants about job-related issues after emigration

<i>Emigrant's response</i>	<i>Got promised job</i>		<i>Got promised salary</i>		<i>Got promised working conditions</i>		<i>Got assured security conditions</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Yes	569	94.8	527	87.8	536	89.3	523	87.2
No	31	5.2	73	12.2	64	10.7	77	12.8
Total	600	100.0	600	100.0	600	100.0	600	100.0

Table 13.4 below shows that majority (about 95 per cent) of the study emigrants got jobs which were promised by their employers before they arrived to the Gulf countries. Rest of the emigrants faced problems as their agents in Rajasthan did not disclose the correct job status to them. There are more cases (12.2 per cent) in which the emigrants were not paid the promised salary after arriving at their respective destinations. Among them there are a few cases where as per earlier agreement pay was not given; their earlier contracts were cancelled and they were compelled to sign a new contract at lower wages failing which they faced deportation. Since almost all the emigrants had taken loan to migrate to Gulf countries and they had to support their left-behind families, they had no other choice but to yield to the terms and conditions of their employer as mentioned in their new contract. The data reveal that the majority of emigrants got the job which was promised (94.8 per cent); 87.8 per cent received the promised salary; 89.3 per cent found working conditions as promised; and 87.2 per cent of the emigrants felt that they were given assured security conditions. On the whole, the responses of the majority of the emigrants to the Gulf country did not show discrepancy between working conditions promised prior to migrating and those found/experienced on arrival in the Gulf countries. However, some emigrants did find difference in the working conditions, but the percentage was quite less. Only 5.2 per cent felt that they did not get the job promised earlier and the percentages of those who did not receive promised salary and those who felt that their working conditions were not as promised before migrating are 12.2 per cent and 10.7 per cent respectively. Likewise, only 12.8 per cent emigrants in this case study found discrepancy between what was promised and what they experienced with regard to “security”.



The emigrants face security-related problems in foreign land. Nearly 13 per cent respondents felt that they had not got assured security conditions. In many cases the passports of these emigrants were confiscated by the employers after reaching the destination. The employers generally keep the passports of the employees in their custody, and without their passports the movements of emigrants were restricted and they felt that their living condition was similar to a prisoner. In most of the cases the emigrants had little freedom to lead their life in a way they pleased even after completion of their working hours. Since prior to leaving their home state in India, the majority of the emigrants knew from their friends and/or relatives who had emigrated earlier about the tough living conditions at their destinations, they had accepted the situation. However, only for a few who did not know about the living conditions at the destination prior to emigration, it was difficult to accept the restricted living style but with the passage of time, they adjusted to the new environment and showed little dissatisfaction.

### EMIGRATION PROCESS

The process of labour emigration from any part of India to the West Asian countries cannot be understood without getting an insight into the (i) channels of migration; (ii) nexus of agents; and (iii) financing of emigration. Below we give a brief description of these three components of the emigration process.

### CHANNELS OF MIGRATION

To understand the process of emigration, it is important to know about the channels available in the market through which a person desirous to migrate to another country in search of employment gets the required information and help to process his papers for travel abroad. As per Gaur (2002), the channels of migration include (i) recruitment agents, (ii) friends/relatives and (iii) direct hire (making private arrangements with some employers in the host country). Another channel of recruitment is the Government Recruitment Agency which is hardly used in case of unskilled and semi-skilled labourers.

## RECRUITMENT AGENTS

In labour-exporting counties one may find a good nexus of agents in every district. These agents are very well connected to the rural areas which is the main catchment area of clients who are generally young persons (unskilled and semi-skilled) and are unemployed. These are potential emigrants ready to migrate to a country where they can find employment not for their livelihood alone but also save money to send to their left-behind families at the origin. These agents have a strong nexus with the recruitment agents in labour-importing countries. The agents of labour-exporting and labour-importing countries are well connected with good communication with them. The employers in host countries place their requirements before the agent who passes on the requirement to his counterpart in the labour-exporting country. In such countries the nexus of recruitment agents for labour (unskilled and semi-skilled) recruitment is strong. A recruitment agent arranges to send the required labour even it is not available locally. The networks of agents in different districts facilitate migration from the districts by way of information, arranging passport, visa and job in the host country. It has been found that the majority of migrants come from a few selected districts only. The role played by networks makes migration a chain process and self-perpetuating as evidenced in other studies (Shah 1998; Gaur 2002).

It may be mentioned here that in the three selected study districts, namely Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Charu of the State of Rajasthan in India from which 600 samples had emigrated to the Gulf countries, a large number of recruitment agents and their nominees (as subagents) are spread over with their larger concentration in the remote areas. The potential emigrants contact these agents and subagents of their areas and become their clients. As mentioned in previous section these agents help their client in arranging a job in the Gulf country and help them in securing passports and visas to take up the job. As has been mentioned earlier, these agents charge heavily from their clients. In the present study an emigrant paid on average nearly US\$1950 for the services provided during the entire emigration process. This is many times higher than the actual charges of the emigration process. However, in a few cases, a major part of the cost of emigration was provided by the employer. Of course, a few emigrants were cheated by some unscrupulous agents as they did not get the job by the employer as promised prior to emigrating. Also, these emigrants had to accept lower wages than what they were told by the agent prior to emigration.

In spite of knowing that some agents exploit their clients, almost all the prospective unskilled and semi-skilled emigrants go to the agents since they are quite ignorant about the procedure of getting a passport and securing the visa of the country. Also, in most of the cases only the agent can help in getting a job in the country they intend to travel to. He has to undergo the entire complicated process of emigration of his client. Thus for unskilled and semi-skilled emigrants who are not very educated, taking help of an agent is inevitable. Once the emigration process is completed, the client feels highly obliged for the services provided by the agent. This is also reflected in their responses in relation to the role of the agent in the process of emigration. About 86 per cent of the respondents reported that the role of the agent was very positive in the entire process of emigration. Only those emigrants who did not get the promised job, salary, working conditions and assured security and freedom had a negative perception of the agent's role.

#### THROUGH RELATIVES/FRIENDS

The third channel of migration to Gulf countries is through relatives/friends who emigrated for the Gulf country earlier. Mostly, the employees of a company who come to know about any vacancy in their company inform their family members or relatives about the vacant position. Since the employee has already worked in the company and might have become a trusted person of the employer, he may recommend his relative for the vacant position. For both the employer and the employee this is a win-win situation, as neither the employer nor the employee would have to pay unnecessarily exorbitant commission to the agents. This is how a person already in employment can help in getting his relative employed in the same company. Such emigrations give rise to chain migration. However, none of the emigrants of the present sample of emigrants came to the Gulf country through their relative or friend.

#### EMIGRANTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING GULF EMIGRATION PROCESS

In the present study respondents were asked to give their suggestions for the improvement of the process of emigration of Indian workers for the West Asian countries. The objective of this query is to get an insight into the areas where these emigrants faced problems in their own perspective.

This may be useful in addressing the problem areas and also in devising remedial measures to make emigration process hassle free. Below we outline the suggestions given by 600 study emigrants:

18.6 per cent of the emigrants suggested simplifying the process to get passport, visa and emigration clearance because most of the semi-skilled and unskilled labour emigrants were less educated and felt uncomfortable completing the paperwork required. Though they opined that the process has been simplified in the last few years, but it was felt by the emigrants that there was still scope to minimize paperwork and time in obtaining passport and visa of the host country. Since most of the emigrants had schooling up to primary level, with a few not more than secondary level, it was not possible for them to complete the required formalities without external help. About 16 per cent of the emigrants suggested that the Indian government should provide assistance in obtaining passports and Indian embassies/consulates in the host countries should assist the potential emigrants to get their visa early. The general feeling of the emigrants about Indian embassy/consulate is that their staff is not cooperative. Other suggestions given by the prospective emigrants included: the government should appoint authorized recruitment agents and notify them to the public. The authorized agents should work under the control of the government so that they do not charge very high fees from their clients. Such arrangements would stop the agents from exploiting their client. The prospective emigrant would also be confident that they get whatever is promised before emigration. Also, these government-approved agents would not send any illegal migrant to any foreign country. It is also felt by the emigrants that they should be able to send money to their left-behind family at the origin through a legal channel, like banks, at a reasonable commission. If an effective and safe channel is available to remit the money to their family, the emigrants will not send money through their friends/relatives returning to India or by any other illegal channel of sending the money.

About 16 per cent of the emigrants suggested that prior to migrating to the Gulf country the state government should arrange some orientation programme for the prospective emigrants to apprise them about the people and their culture and should warn them not to indulge in any subversive activity which may bring bad name to them and their country. In such training programmes it would be better if a few returned migrants from the Gulf country may also be invited so that the prospective emigrants may interact with them to clarify their doubts and get their personal advice particularly on "DOs & DON'Ts". Almost all the respondents suggested that the Indian government must control the agents to avoid exploitation of emigrant workers.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study has clearly brought out that the outcome of emigration to the Gulf country in case of majority of emigrants has been positive in terms of improving the socioeconomic conditions of the left-behind families at the origin of the emigrants. Thus, in a labour surplus country like India, as a policy, migration of labour force may be encouraged. It may, however, be understood that though remittances give economic relief to the left-behind families of the emigrants, and is also a source of foreign exchange required to ease out balance of payment situation of the country, labour export cannot be a substitute to sound policies of the government for economic development which may ensure creation of more job opportunities in the country. The government of labour-exporting country should ensure that migrants do not pay unscrupulous agents at the origin and give protection to the workers. Based on the observations made in the present study, we list below some specific recommendations for the security and safety of the emigrants:

1. Prior to signing the contract, emigrants should get them registered at the Indian Embassy or nearby Consulate and get the contract examined and endorsed. This may protect them from exploitation, if any, and also, help them in the event of evacuation, if any catastrophic conditions develop in the host country and deportation becomes absolutely necessary; for the protection of Indian workers, the Indian embassy may charge some registration fee.
2. Labour-exporting state governments need to register all the local agents at district and taluka levels and issue licence to them to do business. Without valid licence no one should be allowed to do business. This may stop exploitation of prospective emigrants by agents from charging hefty commission and sending them through illegal channels. Also, in case of any fraud, the emigrants can approach the concerned government to settle their grievances.
3. For the welfare of Indian migrant workers, the India Embassy/Consulate in the host country should make it mandatory to take health insurance policy of reasonable amount covering major sickness/disability/death during employment either by the employer or by self before joining the work.
4. Indian embassies should generate extra funds to meet the expenses for legal protection of the Indian workers if they are convicted by fraudulent charges by their employer or, in the case of death of the worker, to send his body to his native place.

5. Finally, in areas of heavy concentration of Indian migrants, the Indian embassy may arrange opening of an Indian bank so that the Indian workers could remit money to their left-behind families through official channel which may be cheaper and the safest mode of remittance. This recommendation is based on the success of many countries in increasing the flow of remittances through banking channels after opening of banks in the rural and remote areas of sending country and also making the Indian bank available in the host country (Gaur 2002).

**Acknowledgement** The author is grateful to the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, for the financial grant received for the present research. The present chapter is a part of the final project report.

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