

A STUDY ON THE REHABILITATION PROBLEMS OF RETURN MIGRANTS FROM SAUDI ARABIA – THE REPATRIATES OF NITAQAT LAW

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Abstract: The Nitaqat Law adversely hit the life of the people who are employed in the red zone, illegal residents, and unauthorized entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia. As the emigrant lost their job, many families lost the source of income for subsistence, children's education, and other economic requirements especially in the northern districts of Kerala. Return Migration made a negative economic and social impact on almost all migrant families in Kozhikode. The paper analyses the consequences of Saudization and its impact on the life of the people in Kozhikode. It also suggests their financial and occupational reintegration.

1. INTRODUCTION

The oil price increase in 1973 gave rise to a massive investment program by the oil-producing Arab countries which made the Gulf countries extremely wealthy. Thus they permitted the immigration of workers from other countries. This process resulted in a massive emigration of skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled labor from India to Gulf countries. In India, the southern state of Kerala received much attention because of the large number of emigrants especially in the northern regions like Malappuram, Kasargod, and Kozhikode. Unfortunately in 2011, The Ministry of Labor of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has announced the Nitaqat ('Ranges' in Arabic) aims to increase job opportunities for its citizens in the private sector. The Nitaqat law makes it mandatory for Saudi Companies to reserve 10 percent of jobs for Saudi nationals.

This study is meant to assess the contributions of Gulf migrants to the home society, the problems faced by return migrants in their readaptation to the local labor force, and to identify the role of government in the rehabilitation of returnees. The report is chaptered into six: (1) Introduction (2) Gulf Region the Paradise for NRK's- A Turnaround Story of Nitaqat (3) NRKS role and importance to Kerala's Economic Development (4) Role of Government on backward migrants (5) Return migration under Nitaqat- An Evaluation

(6) Conclusion. The universe for the study included the entire return migrant from Saudi Arabia to Kozhikode, the Northern District of Kerala, because of Nitaqat law. The source of primary data was from the 300 respondents from Kozhikode and the secondary data were gathered from reports of head and regional offices of Norkka.

Findings of the study:

The major findings of the theoretical and empirical analysis of data are presented in tune with the objectives of the study. Overseas Emigrants have made a great contribution in changing the image of North Kerala especially Kozhikode.

NRK's Contribution towards the Economic Development of the Home Society- Comparison based on the Economic status Before Emigration, During the Stay Abroad and After Return.

- Most of the emigrants had been able to increase their income substantially during their stay abroad, often double or triple what they had been earned before migration. Again their income level came down after the return. A wider variation in income is prevalent before after and during emigration.
- The living expenses, while abroad were much lower than their salary and income. But after return, the living expenses are much higher than the income earned from their job engagements in the homeland.
- The majority of return emigrants were sent home around 80 per cent of their salary as monthly remittance, and nothing is retained as savings. They spend the entire income to build up their economic and social wellbeing.
- There has been a notable improvement in the economic position of the emigrants during their stay abroad. This is reflected in the lifestyle and economic prosperity of emigrants, their families, and society.

The Problems Faced by Return Migrants in their Readaptation to the Local Labour Force.

- Few of the return migrants have re emigrated to different other countries and many others have expressed a desire to re-emigrate to another country of destination.
- Cent percent return emigrants of Kozhikode are facing a financial crisis after the return. The most affected area after their return was the management of their household expenses secondly their job itself. Another significantly affected area

mentioned by them was repayment of loan installments, education expenses of children, and the medical expenses accordingly.

- The great majority was dissatisfied with their present job in the home country after return and only one percent reacted as they are satisfied with their current job positions. Inadequate salary is a major reason which makes them dissatisfied followed by job availability and low job and social status.
- Among the unemployed returnees, 46% had tried for a job but did not get any job 38% did not try for a job as they are at the retirement age and many are with physical diseases and the rest of the 16% Tried but did not get any job of their liking. Lack of local contacts, health problems, social status, and old age were the major reasons for their unemployment.

Conclusions of the Study

As many other countries are tightening their labor laws, our semi-skilled and unskilled workforce have to return someday or the other. Based on the theoretical and empirical evaluation of the rehabilitation problems of return migrants along with the observations, the researcher arrives at the following conclusions.

- Reasons to migrate were mostly economic like - high wage differentials, unemployment rates, and lack of career opportunities in the home country.
- It seems to be challenging for returnees to get financial assistance from the Government because of the high collateral requirements and the complicated application procedure in the commercial bank.
- The less educated emigrants were not been able to convert their hard-earned savings into productive investments. There arises the need for a responsible regulatory environment to channelize the Diasporas' investment to income-generating avenues.

Suggestions and Recommendations based on the Study

Based on the above findings of the Report, the following suggestions and recommendations are put forth. As the emigrants have contributed a lot to the economic and social development of the state their wellbeing is a societal issue, they deserve the formulation of novel policies aiming at addressing the difficulties in the return population.

- To reintegrate returnees encourage returnees to collectively engage in starting new ventures with technical and financial assistance from the Governmental organizations

and NGOs. Also, reduce the delay informalities and procedures in granting subsidized finance. It is desirable to start ventures in food processing hi-tech agro farming.

- Invite those successful entrepreneurs (NRK) who are willing to invest in their homeland. There should be a mechanism to recognize such persons with adequate awards and appreciation.
- While initiating projects with remittance of the emigrants there should be reservations in placement for them or their family members. Capital will flow from NRKs
- It is desirable to give priority to the returnees in the working projects of the government like Rebuild Kerala or any such ventures coming in the future.
- Give an opportunity to Start businesses in industrial parks or Special Economic Zones and make them operational with the assistance of business incubators and startups.
- These days the foreign countries are opting for migrants with technical skills to suit the industry demands; it should be better to spend more on upgrading the youth through vocational training where backward migration is more from unskilled and semi-skilled categories.
- Along with pre-departure counseling on the living and working conditions abroad, there should be programs to aware them of the need for savings, the different investment avenues to invest in, different pension schemes, etc.
- Make it compulsory for the emigrants to contribute a fixed amount to any pension scheme and educate them with the financial management techniques.
- The welfare of these returnees can be encouraged through association organizations and unions.
- If the announced schemes of the Government for the rehabilitation of returnees are properly implemented returnees can do wonders with the skills and work culture they had acquired through overseas experiences.