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Socio-Cultural and Political Contexts of Kerala Migrants in the United Arab Emirates: Adaptation, Identity, and Community Life

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ABSTRACT

There are two main reasons why labour migrants remain in a host country for a long time. The first is the presence of favourable conditions for migrants in the host land, and the second is the existence of compelling circumstances in which migrants have no alternative but to stay. The socio-cultural and political circumstances of the host country are significant factors in the success of any migration. Kerala has had a long-standing connection with the GCC countries, maintaining at least 50 years of migratory relations with the UAE. Malayalees have consistently chosen the UAE as a preferred migration destination. The socio- cultural, political, and economic aspects of the UAE have influenced Malayalee migrants to reside there for extended periods. According to the Kerala Migration Survey 2023, Kerala has 2.15 million (21,54,275) migrants worldwide, of whom 38.6 per cent are in the UAE. The majority of migrants from Kerala continue to choose the UAE as their migration destination. The main objective of the present study is to examine the socio-cultural and political conditions of Kerala migrants in the UAE. The study is based on both primary and secondary data, applying qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. Primary data were collected from Malayalee migrants across the seven emirates of the UAE using surveys and interviews. Secondary data sources include journals, articles, and newspapers.

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Introduction

There are two possibilities for labor migrants to stay in host land for a long time. First being any favorable situation to migrants in host land and the second being compulsory situations in which the migrants have to stay in host land due to the absence of alternative options. The UAE is a favorite destination for migration across the world. "Dubai is like a bus, an air conditioned- bus. Get on the bus, don't bother if you get a seat or not. Then gradually you will settle down, things will move on" (Vora, 2008, p. 380). The socio-cultural and political circumstances of host land are significant aspects in the success of every migration. Kerala has been in a long term connection with GCC countries and has had at least 50 years of migratory relationship with the UAE. Malayalees have chosen the UAE as a favorite destination of migration. The socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of the UAE have influenced the Malayalee migrants to stay in the UAE. One of the respondents stated that "Al Karama" should be considered as the 15th district of Kerala. It has the largest Malayalee community in Dubai with several Malayalee restaurants and shops. All the Kerala food items are available here in Al Karama. Highly qualified and skilled labor enjoy an appropriate social status in the UAE. The surroundings of the semi-skilled and unskilled migrants are not as friendly. "Large proportions of semi-skilled and unskilled Indian laborers are suffering harsh conditions in Gulf and often they are denied even basic labor rights" (Pethiyagoda, 2017, November 21). This paper is mainly looking towards the socio-cultural and political status of Malayalee migrants in the UAE.

Socio-Cultural and Political Circumstances of Kerala Migrants in the UAE

The socio-economic, political, cultural and geographical surroundings of the UAE are entirely different from the surroundings of Kerala. The UAE is an Islamic state, and they have their own rules and regulation for the smooth functioning of the nation. The circumstances of the UAE are new experiences for Malayalee migrants. And it is difficult to live in a new circumstance entirely different from their home town experiences. But the history of Kerala Gulf migration shows that Malayalee migrants assimilated the culture of host land in a given time and made a base for Malayalees in the UAE. Two aspects are crucial in Kerala Gulf migration: first, the natives of the UAE received Malayalee migrants with all respect, and secondly, Malayalee migrants adjusted with the natives of the UAE quite well. Malayalee migrants' capabilities and dedication to work made them different from other foreign workers. So it is essential to analyze the different factors which directly connects to the Malayalee migrants' life in the UAE.

Methodology

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data, using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Primary data were collected from the seven emirates of the United Arab Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm Al Quwain. Surveys, as well as structured and unstructured interviews, were applied for data collection. The researcher collected data from 310 respondents across the UAE. Stratified sampling was applied for selecting the respondents. Journals, articles, and newspaper reports were used for collecting secondary data.

Isolation as a Foreigner in the UAE (Table 1.1)

Isolation From Others as a Foreigner	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	43	267	310
Percent of Respondents	14%	86%	100%

Kerala Gulf migration is a male-oriented process and in which male members of the family migrated to the Gulf while their family stayed in home town. Often this situation of having to stay away from family led to much mental illness like depression, anxiety, and other mental related diseases. In this context, two aspects have to be discussed about the present study. Firstly the isolation of Malayalee migrants from their family and homeland has to be discussed and secondly, their isolation in the UAE has to be examined. The nature of the job and tough circumstances of the host land will also lead to isolation from the surroundings of the host land. In the present study, 86 percent (267) of respondents replied that they don't have the feeling of isolation as a foreigner in the UAE. But 14 percent (43) respondents stated that they felt isolated as a foreigner and that meant to be alert at all times, making them realize the value of citizenship of a nation. These respondents revealed that they have to carry around their documents everywhere, to be prepared to show whenever the authority asked for it.

Discrimination to Malayalee Migrants as a Foreigner in the UAE (Table 1.2)

Facing Discrimination as a Foreigner	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	19	291	310
Percent of Respondents	06%	94%	100%

The discrimination and isolation in host land towards foreign laborers will negatively affect the flow of migrations and the migration process won't continue in the long term. Neha Vora (2008, p. 382) has rightly pointed out that "In fact, many people told me that it was precisely the lack of difference between India and Dubai that made it a favorable destination for migration". Now the UAE is treated as a world labor migration destination, and people from all over the world are working and living in the UAE. "Eighty-eight percent of the UAE population was born in another country, and the vast majority of migrants in the UAE are economic migrants, not refugees, says a World Economic Forum Report" (Khaleej Times, 2017, May 17). It shows that some positive elements are working in favor of labor migrants in the UAE. In the present study, 94 percent (291) of respondents do not feel any discrimination as a foreigner in the UAE. One respondent even stated that the UAE gives more importance to the ability of the individual more than his or her nationality and religion etc. At the same time, six percent (19) of respondents are feeling discriminated against as a foreigner. Mike Davis (2006, p. 65) pointed out that "the UAE is also a miniature Raj in a more important and notorious aspect. The great mass of the population are South Asian contract laborers, legally bound to a single employer and subject to totalitarian social controls".

Role of Profession in Gaining Social Status in the UAE (1.3)

Profession Plays an Important Role in Gaining Social Status in Host Land	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	124	186	310
Percent of Respondents	40%	60%	100%

The nature of the job is a critical aspect of the host land. Unskilled workers do not get consideration while skilled and semi-skilled laborers do. The nature of employment plays a vital role in the UAE. In the present study (Table 1.3), 40 percent (124) respondents stated that the nature of the profession plays an essential role in gaining any social status in the UAE. Membership in Malayalee cultural associations and office bearer posts of these associations are also based on the economic status of the migrants. But 60 percent (186) of respondents state that all are engaged in different types of jobs and all the jobs have their own importance. These respondents don't think that jobs play a significant role in the social status of migrant laborers in the UAE and membership in the cultural association is not based on employment and salary. Majority of the Malayalee migrants do not have time to spend in extra activities. So they won't attend the programs of cultural associations. The important aspect is that the most Malayalee migrants are not bothered about their social status in the UAE and they are only trying to make maximum savings. Khadria (2010, p.67) rightly observed that "life, in general, is comfortable only for professionals and white-collar workers, and they are the ones who maintain contacts with compatriots and nationals, form associations and participate in socio-cultural activities".

Advantages and Disadvantages as Malayalee in the UAE

Advantages and Disadvantages as Malayalee Migrants in the UAE (Table 1.4)

Advantage as Malayalee Migrant	Yes	No	Total	Disadvantage as Malayalee Migrant	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	167	143	310	Number of Respondents	19	291	310
Percent of	54%	46%	100%	Percent of	06%	94%	100%

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Respondents				Respondents			

In a recent study, 54 percent (167) of respondents think that Malayalee labor migrants have some advantages among the natives of the UAE. Natives consider Malayalee migrants as more effective and hardworking with the ability to fulfill tasks in a given time. But 46 percent (143) of respondents state that they don't have any advantage as Malayalee migrants. Respondents argued that they get appreciation if they work properly. From where they come does not matter at all.

Malayalees are visible in all areas of the UAE and almost all working sectors. Natives have a positive approach to Malayalee migrants and they expect good results from them. Only six percent (19) of respondents suffer disadvantages because of the Malayalee identity. They said that owners expect more perfection and are always trying to compare their work with the previous Malayalee employees. Ninety-four percent (291) of respondents did not experience any disadvantages as a Malayalee migrant laborer in the UAE. From the discussion with the UAE citizens, it is understood that they are happy with Malayalee migrant laborers and are impressed with their performance and dedication to work. But at the same the UAE citizens are bothered about the payment of Malayalee laborers. They know that Malayalees receive more remuneration than other nationalities in the same job. Malayalee migrants are always worried about the basic required facilities of the employee such as food and accommodation which turns out to be expensive for the employer and often leading to the appointment of other nationalities with low remuneration for the work.

Relationships of Malayalee Migrants in the UAE

Relation with Other Foreigners and Relation with the UAE Citizens (Table 1.5)

Relation With Other Foreign Migrants	**Friendly Relation**	**Just a Relatio n**	**Purpose Base Relatio n**	**Total**	**Relation with UAE Citizens**	**Frien dly Relati on**	**Purpose base Relatio n**	**Total**
Number of Respondents	254	20	36	310	Number of Respondents	198	112	310
Percent of Respondents	82%	06%	12%	100%	Percent of Respondents	64%	36%	100%

UAE is the land of migrants from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Nepal, the Philippine, and Thailand, etc. It is an ocean of migrants belonging to different religions, languages, and regions. So mingling with other nationals is an inevitable aspect in daily life. Often migrants are interdependent with each other for their smooth living in the UAE. They would have to share rooms, a kitchen, and even workplaces. So beyond the boundary of nationality, strong relations formulate between migrants from different nations.

Malayalee migrants keep a good relationship with other foreigners in the UAE. In the present study, 82 percent (254) of respondents are maintaining an intimate connection with foreigners and six percent (20) of respondents hold just a relationship only. Twelve percent (36) of respondents keep just a need base relationship with foreigners particularly as part of their job.

Relation with the UAE citizens

Ninety percent of the UAE's population are foreigners, mainly from South Asian countries. (Vora, 2010). Foreign laborers have contact with the UAE citizens because of the "Kafala" (sponsorship) system. "Under the Kafala system, a migrant worker's immigration status is legally bound to an individual employer or sponsor (kafeel) for their contract period. The migrant worker cannot enter the country, transfer employment nor leave the country for any reason without first obtaining explicit written permission from the kafeel. The worker must be sponsored by a kafeel to enter the destination country and remains tied to this kafeel throughout their stay"(https://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/docs/132/PB2.pdf).

Only the UAE citizens can take visa for foreign workers. The UAE citizens have a good relationship with foreign laborers and vice versa. But often relationships depend on the skill, earning and qualification of migrants in host land. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers are always out of the framework. The present study shows that (Table 1.5), 64 percent (198) of respondents keep a friendly relation with locals. Respondents also mingle with other foreigners than citizens. Thirty-six percent (112) from the present study revealed that they have only a purpose-based relationship with the UAE citizens. Respondents

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think that an equal distance with locals is essential in the long term migration process.

Approaches of the UAE Citizens to Malayalee Migrants (Table 1.6)

Approaches of UAE Citizen to Migrants	Friendly Approach	Approach to Fulfill their Needs	Total
Number of Respondents	273	37	310
Percent of Respondents	88%	12%	100%

The presence of large scale international migrants in the UAE shows their hospitality and tolerance towards foreigners. Neha Vora (2010, p. 46) rightly "In Dubai, where foreigners are estimated to make up close to 90 percent of the population, the division between citizen and foreigner seems at first glance to be very rigid, defining the daily lives of the city's resident". The UAE is considered as one of the favorite destinations for labor migrants. Beyond job opportunities, other social factors like approaches of locals to foreigners may influence the acceleration of migration to the UAE. In the present study (Table 1.6), 88 percent (273) of respondents are stating that UAE citizens keep a friendly approach to Malayalee migrants. Respondents didn't feel any differences in native's approach to foreign laborers. Twelve percent (37) of respondents are stating that natives contact foreign laborers only for some definite purposes. Beyond the fulfillment of their requirements, they don't have any relationship with migrant workers, especially with semiskilled and unskilled laborers.

Obstacles to Interact with the UAE Citizens (Table 1.7)

Obstacles to Interact with the UAE Citizens	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	46	264	310
Percent of Respondents	15%	85%	100%

The migration exchanges cultural aspects from sending area to receiving area and vice versa. Language is an essential tool to communicate with each other. Hindi is one of the familiar languages in the UAE, and natives also speak Hindi. Often the language is an obstacle for migrants to interact with natives. But migrants are trying to learn Arabic as part of their existence within a short period of their migration in the UAE. The majority of Malayalee migrants are also learning Hindi after they migrated to the UAE. In the present study (table 1.7), 85 percent (264) of respondents don't have any obstacles to mingle with natives. Fifteen percent (46) of respondents have some barriers to mingle with natives. Often the language and nature of the job pose as a constant obstacle to mingle with natives.

Malayalee Migrants and the UAE Festivals

Participation in the UAE Festivals (Table 1.8)

Participation in the UAE Festivals	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	282	28	310
Percent of Respondents	91%	09%	100%

The UAE has different festivals and celebrations and it is very popular among locals and nationals. "The home to many global cities of the Middle East, there is a slew of different kinds of cultural and religious festivals in the UAE that should be witnessed while holidaying at this city of Sheikhs" (Anand, 2018, October 22). The UAE has a lot of socio-cultural, religious and commercial festivals like "UAE Awafi Festival, National Day Festival, Eid Al Fitr, Eid Al Azha, Prophet Birthday, Dubai Shopping Festival, Dubai World Cup, Dubai Marathon, and Dubai Jaz Festival, etc" (Anand 2018, October 22; Joe, 2018, April 23). All the festivals happen annually, and a significant level of participation is a unique feature of these celebrations. In the present study (4.7), 91 percent (282) of respondents actively participate in the festivals in the UAE. Participants are mostly foreigners, and there is no restriction to attend the festivals. Malayalees have a lot of festivals in Kerala regionally as well as generally. Now they actively participate in the celebrations of host land in the memory of homeland festival. But nine percent (28) of respondents do not participate in the festivals. They have the desire to celebrate, but they do not get

time after their duty and quite often the participation in these celebrations is quite expensive. Binod Khadria (2010) observed that often unskilled and semi-skilled laborers couldn't attend the festival of host land because of their nature of the job and financial status.

Obstacles to Mix with Malayalee Migrants (Caste, Politics and Wealth) (Table 1.9)

Obstacles to Mix with Malayalee Migrants	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	19	291	310
Percent of Respondents	06%	94%	100%

Caste, politics and economic status, etc. are very visible in all societies and often act as an obstacle to mix. The UAE is also not free from this social injustice. Often association and get together programs are formulated by members of a particular caste or politics or wealth group in the host land. This type of obstacle is comparatively invisible among the Malayalee migrants in the UAE. In the present study (table 1.8), 94 percent (291) of respondents say that there are no obstacles like caste, politics and economic status while mingling amongst the Malayalee migrants in UAE. Political discussions and debates are more common in the UAE than Kerala and happen by keeping mutual respect and understanding of each other. Respondents in the present study state that they don't feel economic status as an obstacle to mingle with each other in their friendship circle which includes unskilled, semi-skilled and highly professional Malayalees from different parts of Kerala. According to Anwar Naha, the President of Kerala Muslim Cultural Center, Dubai observed that visibly there are no obstacles to mingle among the Malayalee migrants in the UAE based on caste, religion, politics and wealth. In the present study, six percent (19) of respondents state that often individual earnings become the obstacle to mingle with other Malayalee migrants. Generally, barriers are not noted to mingle among the Malayalee migrants in the UAE. But it cannot be said that there are no obstacles to mingling among the Malayalee migrants. Caste, religion, politics and wealth may influence the relationship of Malayalee labor migrants, but it is not visible.

Religious Practices and Malayalee Migrants in the UAE

Obstacles to Observe Religious Practices (Table 1.10)

Obstacles to Observe Religious Practices	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	03	307	310
Percent of Respondents	01%	99%	100%

The UAE is an Islamic state, but they accommodate other religious believers also. UAE has given permits to construct temples and churches in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. They also provide facilities to other religious believers to observe their religious practices. The UAE has a religious policy and within the policy, they consider other religious believers also. "The Middle East's first traditional Hindu stone temple to be built in Abu Dhabi will feature intricate architecture and delicate carvings that will retell the ancient stories from Indian scriptures about peace and spirituality" (Badam, 2018, February 17). In the present study, 99 percent (310) of respondents are observing their religious practices without any obstacles. Muslim respondents use the mosque to perform religious practices. Hindu respondents often worship in their rooms and visit the temple on particular days. Christian respondents go to churches in the early mornings or evenings of Sunday because Sunday is a working day in the UAE. One percent (three) of respondents face some obstacles to observe religious practices because of their working hours or the nature of their jobs.

Malayalee Migrants and the Rules and Regulations of the UAE

Rules and regulations of the UAE are entirely different from Kerala in its nature and implementation. "The core principle of the UAE law is based on Islamic Sharia and most legislations have been formulated with a mix of Islamic and European concepts of civil law. It has common roots in Egyptian Legal code established in the 19th and 20th Centuries" (Khedr and Alnuaimi, 2018, January). Alcohol is prohibited for Muslims in the UAE and non-Muslims can use alcohol with a license. Otherwise, they will have to succumb to punishments. So

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it is necessary to understand the rules and regulations of host land for a better life for the migrants.

Active Rules and Regulations in the UAE (Table 1.11)

Rules and Regulation of the UAE are Active	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	220	90	310
Percent of Respondents	71%	29%	100%

Rules and regulations in the UAE are actively strict in its implementations. The UAE government strictly observes the activities of the people to avoid troubles and problems because the UAE is the destination of foreign laborers and it accounts for 90 percent of the total population of migrants from different parts of the world. They ensure security for its people through various methods. They provide equal preference to both citizens and foreign nationals for their security. Seventy-one percent (220) of respondents in the present study is stating that the rules and regulation of the UAE are very active in its implementation. Authority updates the rules and regulations from time to time, and it informs people through newspapers and other media. If anybody violates the rule, he or she will be punished immediately in the form of penalty, imprisonment, or even termination of visa depending on the nature of the crime and the violation of the rule. But 29 percent (90) of respondents stated that rules and regulations are active, but the implementation is not that stringent.

Discrimination While Implementing Justice Between Citizens and Foreigners (Table 1.12)

Equal Justice for all Beyond Foreigner and Citizen	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	279	31	310
Percent of Respondents	90%	10%	100%

The UAE is trying to implement justice to all its people without discrimination between foreigners and citizens. But often in the case of foreign semi-skilled and unskilled migrant laborers, lots of criticism has arisen. "Article 25 of the UAE constitution assures that all are equal before the implementation of the law and there will be no discrimination between citizens of the union based on race, religious belief, nationality or social status" (Khedr and Alnuaimi, 2018, January). The majority of the foreign workers in the UAE are unskilled or semi-skilled. Migrants' governance is maintaining through Kafala system in the UAE and it gives more power to employers on employee. But often the Kafala system leads to exploitation by employers because of the full control over the employees. An employee cannot move to another job or leave the country without the written consent of the employer (Sponsor). Mainly unskilled and semi-skilled laborers are victims of the Kafala system. But the UAE is trying to provide better legal services to foreign laborers. The UAE has passed a new law in favor of domestic workers. Previously they were excluded from the protection offered under the UAE labor law. The new rule ensures domestic workers clarity regarding duty time, salary, holidays and annual leave with payment (Human Rights Watch, 2017, June 7). In the present study, 90 percent (279) of respondents are stating that government authority is stringent in implementing rules without the biases of foreigners and locals. These respondents stated that the majority of the foreign laborers work in the UAE without any fear because of the strict implementation of rules and regulations. But 10 percent (31) of respondents are stating that the implementation of rules and regulations is different for locals and foreigners. Often priority goes to the locals. So labor migrants are exploited under the Kafala system. The UAE has a national labor law, but often unskilled and semi-skilled laborers do not get the benefit of the law, at least in the regularity of their payment.

Awareness About Legal Punishments in the UAE (1.13)

Awareness About the Punishment of the UAE	Yes	No	Total

Number of Respondents	301	09	310
Percent of Respondents	97%	03%	100%

The UAE is taking strong procedures to stop crimes and violation of rules. They are trying to bring awareness among the natives and foreigners about the punishment for violation of rules and committing crimes. Article 28 of the UAE constitution explains "Penalty is personal, an accused person is presumed innocent until his conviction is proved before a court of law wherein the necessary guarantees of the right of the self-defense are secured. The law shall describe the cases in which the presence of a counsel for a defense shall be assigned and physical and moral abuse of an accused person is banned" (Khedr and Alnuaimi, 2018, January). The UAE has formulated a clear framework for the implementation of rules, regulations, and consequent punishments. More than government advertisement, cultural organizations among the foreign laborers are the ones creating awareness among their people about the laws and punishments of the UAE. Malayalam newspapers, channels, and radio are very powerful among the Malayalee community in the UAE. These media bring awareness among the Malayalee migrants about the existing rules and regulations, fine and punishment, new rules, etc. daily. In the present study (Table 1.13), 97 percent of respondents are aware of the punishment in the country for violation of rules. Respondents stated that it is difficult to live in the UAE without knowing the rules and penalties. So foreigners need to be bothered and aware of the rules. Punishments are based on the degree of violation of rules. Penalty, imprisonment, deportation and capital punishment etc. are few existing punishments in the UAE. They update rules and regulations from time to time. Three percent (nine) of the respondents in the present study are not that much aware of the punishment for the violation of rules. These respondents are mostly new migrants in the UAE and are trying to learn about the existing rules and punishments. A respondent stated that he has been working as a driver since 2010, and drivers should be updated about the traffic rules of the UAE from time to time as the penalty for traffic violations is very high. The driver has to pay the fines from his own hands, and it will also be marked negatively in his license. New drivers often paying more than 50 percent of their salary as fine because of the traffic violation. Authorities are trying to create awareness regarding this.

Malayalee Migrants are More Obedient in Host Countries than Home Town (Table 1.14)

Malayalees are more Obedient in Host Land than Home Town	**Yes**	**No**	**Total**
Number of Respondents	254	56	310
Percent of Respondents	82%	18%	100%

Migrants must be aware of all the punishments for the violation of rules in host land. A migrant can't leave the UAE without getting punished upon violating rules. All crimes will be recorded in their ID and it will show during the visa renewal process or while leaving the country. Migrants know very well that it is essential to obey the rules of host land and that otherwise, the consequences will be very high. In the present study (Table 1.14) 82 percent (254) of respondents state that Malayalee migrants are more obedient in the UAE than Kerala. Often the feeling of foreign nation and awareness of punishments compel Malayalee migrants to obey the rules of the country. Compared to the implementation of rules and regulations in the UAE, Kerala is less strict and a lot of indirect options exist to avoid punishment such as political recommendation, spoliation of evidence and bribery etc. If any case is registered against anyone at all, it takes years to reach court and hear the final verdict. "According to National Judicial Grid, a total of 22.9 lakh cases are pending in lower courts which are ten years or older in which 5.97 lakhs cases are civil and 16.92 lakh cases are criminal in nature" (Times of India, 2018, September 18). Eighteen percent (56) of respondents stated that this is a false allegation against Malayalee migrants that they obey rules in host land and violate those of homeland. These respondents added that Kerala also strictly implements rules and regulations. Often some intervention does happen by politicians or influential people. It is nothing new and similar things happen in the UAE also. Bribery and recommendation to avoid cases are happening in the UAE too but not that much. Malayalee migrants are very obedient to host land's rules and regulations than the home country. This is so because they would not be able to continue in the host land without obeying their rules and regulations. Another factor is that punishment is very strong and the fine is 100 percent or 200 percent more in the UAE than in Kerala which the semi-skilled and unskilled migrants are

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unable to pay with their limited salary. So they try their best to avoid the situation of violation of rules. "Article 27 of the UAE constitution explains that the law will define all the crimes and punishment, and no penalty will be declared for any crime or act before the appropriate law has been promulgated" (Khedr and Alnuaimi, 2018 January). The Law is trying to give justice to victims in all possible manners without the discrimination of locals and foreigners.

Cultural Associations and Malayalee migrants in the UAE

Several Malayalee cultural associations work across the UAE. They are not only focused on reproducing the cultural activities of the homeland but also try to interfere with the problems of Malayalee migrants. "The UAE has a system of registering the social organization of the expatriate community and, within the guidelines laid down by the UAE government, such association can functionfreely"(http://www.indembassyuae.gov.in/eoi.php?id=UAE). The registered association extends support to required Malayalee migrants in the UAE. Indian Embassy noted that "there are six registered associations in Abu Dhabi namely Indian Social and Cultural Center, Abu Dhabi Malayalee Samajam, Kerala Social Center, Indian Islamic Center, Indian Social Center and Indian Ladies Association" (Ibid). Other smaller cultural associations are working with the affiliation of a registered association. They are organizing different cultural programs by bringing eminent artists from Kerala. It creates a significant relationship among the Malayalee migrants in host land and it helps them to recall their hometown memories and reduce the tension of the hectic work. NORKA Roots has circulated the list of recognized Malayalee associations abroad, and it includes 49 registered associations in different countries (Government of Kerala, 2018). Among the 49 recognized Malayalee Associations, 44 associations are in six GCC countries and makeup 90 percent of the total recognized Malayalee associations (ibid). Fifteen recognized Malayalee associations are working across the UAE and these Malayalee associations are visible and active in all seven emirates of the country. Indian Association Sharjah, Kerala Muslim Cultural Centre, Kerala Social center and Indian Islamic Center, etc. are prominent recognized Malayalee associations in the UAE. These associations provide economic support to the required section of the people in both Kerala and UAE. Associations try to interfere with the issues of Malayalee migrants, and they try to bring the attention of authorities to issues faced by Malayalee migrants in the UAE. They have massive scale participation of Malayalee migrants, and 34 percent of theses recognized Malayalee associations work in the UAE (ibid).

Membership in Malayalee Cultural Association in the UAE (1.15)

Membership in any Cultural Associations in the UAE	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	133	177	310
Percent of Respondents	43%	57%	100%

In the present study (Table 1.15), 43 percent (4.15) of respondents are members of different Malayalee associations. According to them, Malayalee associations are very active in the UAE and the office bearers of the association have contacts with local authorities. It helps to solve different problems related to work and travel documents. Malayalee associations provide various services to Malayalee migrants and other nationals free of cost or with minimum charges. Members have to pay a fixed amount to the association every month and the amount depends on the ability of the member. The amount received is used for the social and economic welfare of members in host land and if required, for people in homeland. Associations are trying to solve the problems of Malayalees in host land within their limits. Fifty-seven percent (177) of respondents in the present study are not members of any Malayalee associations. There is a criticism that a majority of the associations work as affiliated agents of political parties in their home town and they work with a clear vision to develop their political agenda among the Malayalee migrants in the UAE. Often association collects money from Malayalee migrants as social philanthropy by contributing to the development of home town. But it reaches home town as political philanthropy and political parties use most of it for their vote banking politics.

Respondents in the present study added that politics are visible in the activities of Malayalee associations in both homeland and host land. The office-bearers of the association will be highly politically connected people. Respondents noted that according to the nature of the job of the semi-skilled and unskilled laborers, they do not have enough time to spend in association works. So they keep away from these types of activities, but they have

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the membership with fixed monthly payments to the association. Often the political element of home town influences the activities of associations in host land. Similarly, they have a high influence in the UAE.

Malayalee Migrants and Media in the UAE

Media have a vital role to play among the migrants in host land and often media help them to recreate the space of home town in host land. "Media play an important role in the reconstruction of cultural identities of Diaspora and helps negotiate a borderline existence between the home country and the host country" (Jacob and Venkataraghavan, 2018, p. 1). Malayalam media are very active and influential among the Malayalee migrants across the UAE. Several Malayalam newspapers, television and radio channels are working across the UAE. Malayalam media have become successful in the endeavor of influencing the Malayalee community in the UAE. Media have helped them to update the moments of both homelands and host land from time to time. Malayalam newspapers are the largest circulating newspapers in the regional language of a foreign country in the UAE. Four Malayalam newspapers namely "Gulf Madhyamam, Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi and Siraj' have their own editions in the UAE. Apart from these, other Malayalam newspapers also circulate in the UAE. All Malayalam channels are telecasted in the UAE with a special Gulf edition news bulletin. Malayalam channels show different programs for Malayalee migrants in the UAE. "Asianet, Media one, Kairali, Jaihind, Reporter, Surya TV, Jeevan, and Flowers", etc. are important Malayalam channels telecasting in the UAE. Radio programs are very influential among the Malayalee migrants in the UAE. There are a number of Malayalam radio channels working across the UAE namely "Asianet radio AM 657; Voice of Kerala AM 1152; Radio Asia AM 1269, Hit FM 96.7, Super FM 94.7 and Gold FM 101.3, etc" (Saeed, 2012, July 12). The whole media has certain restrictions and regulations to work in the UAE. But Malayalee media are trying to work effectively as a bridge between home town and host land within their limitations. Different programs in media connecting home and host land gives relaxation to Malayalee migrants in the UAE. Malayalam media also creates awareness of the new rules, regulations and traffic issues etc. among the Malayalee migrants in the UAE.

Various Media Using by Respondents in the UAE (Table 1.16)

Media	News Paper only	TVChannel only	Radio only	Both Newspaper & TV	Newspaper,TV&Radio	Other sources	Total
Number of Respondents	49	99	94	21	26	21	310
Percent of Respondents	16%	32%	30%	07%	08%	07%	100%

The present study (table 1.16) shows that newspapers, television and radio channels are influential media among the Malayalee migrants in the UAE. Sixteen percent (49) of respondents in the present study uses newspaper (e-paper and hard copy) only to know the news and updates in the UAE. These respondents argued that reading newspapers are an entirely different experience compared to listening and watching the news. The newspaper was the only media to know the news of the home town in the last decades of the 20th century. But the advancement of television and radio channels reduced the number of newspaper readers among the Malayalee migrants in the UAE. Thirty-two percent (99) of respondents watch television channels to know the news of both homeland and host land. Thirty percent (94) of respondents listen to radio channels to update their day to day information about the UAE and Kerala. Both television and radio channels give equal priority to news and entertainment programs. So more Malayalee migrants are attracted to television and radio channels. When compared to the percent of respondents watching television and listening to radio channels, the percent of the newspaper readers is less. In the present study, a respondent revealed that Malayalee migrants in the UAE do not get time to read newspapers in the morning and they find time to read and listen only after their duty and most probably that will be late night. Seven percent (21) of respondents use both television and newspaper to know the news.

Eight percent (26) of respondents use newspapers, television and radio channels to know the news and enjoy the entertainment programs. Malayalam media, especially television and radio channels telecast variety entertainment programs for Malayalee migrants, and often Malayalam media get a higher rating from the Middle East than Kerala and other parts of the world. Seven percent (21) of respondents in this study depends

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on other sources like social media for news and entertainment. Often the cultural entertainment programs have a good response from Malayalee migrants in the UAE. Malayalam media are trying to reduce the cultural distance between the home town and host land. Yu shi (2005) has pointed out that migrants are forming communities in host land to remember the departed memories and media practices will help communities and recall the memories of home town.

Malayalee Migrants and Social Media in the UAE

The first decade of the 21st century witnessed the revolution of social media across the world. This revolution was benefitted the most by the labor migrants from different parts of the world. Social media has reduced the distance between home town and host land and the cost of the communications also. Social media helped to create a significant level of network among the migrants in host land which was not very easy previously. Dekker and Enberson (2012, p. 2) observed that the "Communications methods contributed by social media transformed the migration networks and thus mobilized migration through four unique functions. Firstly it strengthened strong ties with family, relatives, and friends; secondly created ties with an individual that can help in the process of migration and integration; thirdly it created a network of possible ties, and fourthly it created an insider knowledge on the process of migration".

Social media helped to find out better opportunities in host land, and a lot of WhatsApp and Facebook groups are working for it. It helped to make a community feeling among the migrants in host land. "Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, Instagram, Twitter, Gmail", etc. are the leading social media in the 21st century. Facebook and WhatsApp are the most popular social media among the Malayalee migrants in the UAE. One of the reasons behind this popularity is that Facebook and WhatsApp apps are users friendly and anyone can use it without a complicated process. Migrants can use social media to keep relation with the people they have met offline, and it further helps to find a new network in the strangest destination (McGregor and Siegel, 2013).

Membership in social media groups (Table 1.17)

Membership in Social Media Group (Facebook, Whatsaap)	**Yes**	**No**	**Total**
Number of Respondents	245	65	310
Percent of Respondents	79%	21%	100%

An important aspect behind large scale migrants using social media is that it connects the families and friends under a common platform by avoiding the obstacle of distance. Another thing is that social media reduced the distance between the home town and host land at a larger scale and made life more alive. The migrants who didn't have any technical skills also are very familiar with the usage of social media among the Malayalee migrants in the UAE. The present study (table 1.17) shows that 79 percent (245) of respondents are active members of different social media platforms mainly Facebook and WhatsApp. The social media groups are mostly based on family circle, friends circle, community circle, political circle, job circle, charitable circle, and sports circle in both host land and homeland. Migrants update their day to day activities through social media groups especially news regarding job vacancies and new job opportunities. Often it is also found that the over usage of social media lead to a lot of socio- economic and family problems. Twenty-one percent (65) of respondents of the present study are not that active in social media groups. They know the social media groups, but their nature of jobs and personal interests keep them away from the social media group. A respondent revealed that now social media is wasting a lot of free time and bring troubles to others than good intentions. The basic intention behind social media is to strengthen the tie among the people, but unfortunately often it leads to breaking the relationship of people. Even so, social media has influenced on Malayalee migrants at large scale in the UAE. It made a lot of positive aspects among the migrants, and often social media groups of migrants contribute as part of social philanthropy to required sections of the society in both homelands and host land. The majority of Malayalee migrants in the UAE are single migrants staying away from their families. So the advancement of social media helps them to connect regularly with family and friends. The low cost of the internet also increases the users of social media in the UAE.

Most importantly, social media made Malayalee migrants' life more live to their families. Migrants can communicate with each other if they require any help and they can also help other migrants through social media contacts. In the last decades of the 20th century, communication was very expensive and often communication of migrants limited to family only. But

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the advancement of social media made a new step in the lives of the migrants. However, the over usage of social media is creating a lot of psychological and economic troubles among migrants. Authorities, media, and Malayalee cultural associations are warning migrants from time to time about the fake activities of social media.

Welfare Activities in Host land

Participation of Welfare Activities in the UAE (Table 1.18)

Participation in Welfare Activities in the UAE	Yes	No	Total
Number of Respondents	127	183	310
Percent of Respondents	41%	59%	100%

UAE is the center of the labor migrants from across the world. The laborers are different from person to person in terms of qualification, job, and earnings. Migrants face many problems like struggling to find out jobs, migrants in jail without proper documentation and migrants are cheated by agencies or companies, suffering accidents without financial assistance from companies, etc. The migrants come from different parts of the world. But they are ready to help others by keeping away the differences of religion, nationality, and race, etc. But often forgery is noted in the name of welfare activities in the UAE. In the present study (1.18), 41 percent (127) of respondents are participating in the welfare activities in the UAE. They participate through the different Malayalee associations working across the UAE. Mainly they supply the foods in labor camps during necessary times and provide emergency assistance to required migrants especially in the incidence of death. To send the dead body from the UAE to the homeland has a lot of legal procedures. Often it is the Malayalee social workers who are actively involved in finishing procedures and sending the body to home town. In the present study 59 percent (183) of respondents are not directly part of the welfare activities in the UAE. They do provide financial assistance to conduct these welfare activities but the nature of their job and lack of time remains as obstacles to participating in the welfare activities. The welfare activities of the Malayalee community has been appreciated by the UAE authority. Because often the welfare activities reduce the duties of authorities. The welfare activities of the Malayalee migrants are one of the important aspects behind a large number of Malayalee migrants in the UAE as it mobilizes new migrants to the UAE without the risk of migration at low cost.

Conclusion

Socio-cultural and political surroundings of the UAE is entirely different from that of Kerala. So to adjust in the new environment is a difficult task for new migrants in the UAE. Often the Malayalee migration networks in the UAE helps migrants to mix with host land. The majority of respondents did not face any serious isolation and discrimination as foreign laborers in the UAE. Migrant's profession plays a major role in their status in the UAE. Malayalee migrants have been visible in the UAE since the origin of migration to the UAE from different parts of the world. Being a Malayalee migrant in the UAE has both merits and demerits. Malayalee migrants have a good relationship with natives and other nationals and natives do consider Malayalee laborers with respect except in a few cases. A large portion of respondents did not feel any obstacles to mingle with native people in the UAE. Respondents are participating in the cultural and commercial festivals of the UAE, and it makes Malayalee migrants closer to host land. There are no obstacles like religion, caste, and region to mingle within the Malayalee community. But often the nature of the job creates limitations to mingle with other Malayalee and non-Malayalee migrants. Non-Muslims Malayalee migrants have the option to perform their religious practices within the terms and conditions. Rules and regulations of the UAE are stringent and active in its implementations. But often lack of attention from authority leads to the exploitation of foreign laborers, especially domestic and unskilled workers. It is noted that Malayalee migrants obey the rules and regulations of the UAE better than that of Kerala. They are aware of the punishment and consequences of violation of rules in the UAE very well

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