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Title of PhD Thesis: DIGNITY AND RIGHTS: A STUDY OF THE
LIFEWORLDS OF UNDERCLASS MALAYALI WORKERS
IN THE GCC COUNTRIES

ABSTRACT

This study is an effort to discuss the rights issues involved in the expatriate workers lifeworlds, in the GCC countries in the context of academic discussions on concepts like, citizenship, contemporary forms of slavery, studies in lifeworlds etc. The study refers to various practices for ensuring rights-based migration practices and tries to test them in the GCC context. However, there are serious lapses visible in both sides of migration, the home and the host. Such lapses start from documenting the so called legally migrating persons. In many cases, it is seen that the human person is not entitled to the basic rights and freedoms, in the process. There is a question of legitimation, quite visible in this context. This is to be equated with the political invisibility of the expatriate migrant as well.

The study observed that non-hegemonic public actors like the human rights organizations are transforming the space of the nation-state. Further it is argued that “methodological nationalism” which has characterized sociological thinking is slowly giving way to a comprehensive approach. It concludes that transnational positions have emerged stronger, perforating the boundaries of disciplines as well as political

boundaries. Migrant experiences in the study suggest that exploitative conditions reduce them to mere labour cash crop. The loss and anxiety of the workers communicates a condition of statelessness, peculiar to migrant work in situations similar to bondage and distressed labour.

Workers' testimonies depict life in labour camps as 'equivalent to slavery'. Many women workers who were victims of trafficking have revealed how they were pushed into the exploitative system and were forced to work for long hours without and rest. They were, at times, sexually exploited as well.

The study suggests that states must undertake a comprehensive mapping of the migration processes with emphasis on choosing factors that promoted humane and safe means. The host countries (GCC) can see how the expatriate labour force can lead a peaceful and meaningful life with more opportunities for social life. This has two dimensions: one, on the possibilities for larger interaction among various migrant communities. And, an effort to explore more areas of communication between the local population and the migrant population. Both actions can be done by introducing the idea at the civil-social milieu with active roles assigned to the local citizens and the representatives of expatriates.

The Saudi Arabia's policy of *Nitakhaat* initiated under the grand scheme of promoting local workforce and similar attempts in other GCC countries will create long term impact on employment prospects of low-skilled workers.