

## Global Kerala

The spices hub of the world, Kerala had attracted different nationalities into this tiny tot, ever since Vasco da Gama landed at Calicut in the year 1498.

Kerala is traditionally known for the migratory nature of its people, and global connections they gained therefrom. However, the changes that it has triggered in the State's economy since the 1970s, is significant and unique. This need to be discussed in relation to two historical phases: 1) the outmigration phase; and 2) immigration(or substitution migration) phase.

As of 2014, a total of 23.23 lakh Keralites reside outside India. The largest populations are found in UAE (883,313) and USA (680,076). As of 2011, the major concentrations of expatriate Keralites are in the following countries: UAE - 883,313, USA - 680,076 (mainly U.S. Citizens), KSA - 574,739, Oman - 195,300, Qatar - 148,427, Kuwait - 127,782, Bahrain - 101,556, UK - 44,640.

The United Arab Emirates which attracted 38.7 percent of the Kerala emigrants, forms the second home of the largest number Keralites abroad; Saudi Arabia comes next. Kuwait and Qatar are the other Gulf countries that have improved their relative share of Kerala emigrants. Among the countries outside the Gulf region, the principal ones are the USA and the United Kingdom.

Remittances to Kerala have continued to grow ever since Keralites started migrating to the Gulf region. Total remittances to Kerala during the 12-month period ending in March 1, 2014, were Rs 72,680 crores, 46 per cent higher than the 2011 figure.

Along with the increase in migration, the number of return emigrants has also increased. The number of return emigrants (REM) to Kerala in 2014 was 12.48 lakhs, which is about 52 percent of the number of emigrants.

While Kerala's out migration is essentially in relation to seeking of wage employment, the State also has its imprint in relation to the export of the best of brains, doctors and nurses who extend meritorious service in North America and Europe. Kerala's legacy is also visible in terms of some of the best models, such as Ayurveda, Health care services and wellness systems, music

and cinema, down to ethnic food items, rare sea food species, as also historically rare species and continents.

The cross national linkages of the Kerala people in terms of the commodities they produce and the services they render, make Kerala truly global.

Of course, an important question remains: Has Kerala's global connections help the State to translate them into accelerated business opportunities? Like the Chinese, no? But it has, obviously, gained a new quality and content over time.

