

# 1 Deterritorialisation of Keralam

Economy, society and polity

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*With the head placed on the green quilt covering Sahyan  
And the feet rested on the beaches of the calm sea  
As you lay down, oh Mother, both your sides are guarded by  
Kumari and Gokarnesan*

Malayalam poem 'Mathruvandanam'

The lines of renowned Malayalam poet Vallathol Narayana Menon reproduced here represent an attempt to imagine Keralam territorially. It is not difficult to identify more such texts that endeavoured to do the same at different stages of the history of the region. The *Keralolpathy* legend perhaps is the best known among them, according to which the land known as Keralam was recovered from the seas by Lord Parasurama by throwing his axe from Gokarnam (belonging to the state of Karnataka now) to Kanyakumari (in Tamil Nadu at present). The geographical boundaries of the present Kerala State were defined in 1956, when states in India were reorganised, and united Keralam formed. The political boundaries of the state do not correspond well with the imagined Keralams or with the distribution of Malayalam-speaking people. The main disjuncture is Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu, which was part of the erstwhile Travancore, with a sizeable number of Malayalam-speaking people. It is doubtful whether political borders ever matched the imagined territory of Keralam. Yet the idea of Keralam is quite old, at least as old as the Mahabali fable. Obviously, the idea of Keralam always had an element that went beyond political boundaries.

Territory was and continues to be problematic in understanding Keralam. A view of Keralam confined to the geographical boundaries of Kerala State is grossly inadequate. Global disbursement of Keralites in the aftermath of the formation of united Keralam in 1956, especially

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since the 1970s when migration to the Middle East picked momentum, has transformed Keralam into an archetypical deterritorialised society. There is a large mass of Keralites living beyond its territory, in rest of India and abroad. Keralam is located and lives both within and outside the state. Even though migration from Kerala has of late attracted a lot of attention, underlying deterritorialisation of Keralam is not yet widely discussed or understood. This chapter attempts to fill in this void.

Globalisation is making people much more mobile than in the past across territories and nations. But disbursal of people belonging to a nation or a territory across wider geographies is not anything new. Diasporas of the past and present are not the same; they differ a lot in many ways. Compared to the past, contemporary migratory movements are much more voluntary and free at least in the formal sense. Earlier diaspora was far removed in distance and connectivity from home, whereas now because of technology, distances have narrowed and real time and simultaneous participation in life at home and host regions has become a possibility. Life for many people is becoming transnational and multi-local. Obviously, therefore, territory is losing importance in the life and times of deterritorialised societies. A deterritorialised society produces and reproduces its common culture both within and off the territory and together. Nonetheless, what is to be highlighted here is the intransigence of the polity; polity remains stubbornly territory centric even in highly deterritorialised societies. In the design and functioning of polity, those at home are privileged over those off home. What we see is 'home rule' of both home and off home!

The territory-centric nature of the polity is reflected even in the case of the making of the diaspora policy. Until recently, the diaspora policy in most cases was made and implemented by home. This is not to overlook recent efforts almost everywhere to involve diaspora in diaspora policy. But what about the larger question of the polity in general? What about the participation of people off the territory in the governance of the processes shaping the common future of deterritorialised societies? The question may sound too futuristic, but not when raised in the context of societies that are moving onto advanced stages of deterritorialisation, such as Keralam. The process of deterritorialisation is quite advanced in Keralam, not only because of the big size of the diaspora or its contribution to the economy but also because of its role in producing and reproducing the society and culture. A Keralite inside the territory cannot claim any superiority over a Keralite off the territory in building Keralam in its various dimensions. Diaspora

participation in the production of literature, music, cinema, festivals, media, charity, corruption, scams, scandals, religion, communal and community activities, politics is in no way inferior to those at home. It is also fast acquiring features such as contemporaneity and synchronicity. Still the rein of home Keralam over off Keralam continues unabated. However, in our view, change in polity cannot wait for long.

This chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, we introduce some concepts, and certain possible ways in which they are interrelated, that are useful in understanding deterritorialised societies. In the second section, we present a picture of the Kerala diaspora focusing on geography and composition. In the third section, we take up an analysis of the role of diaspora in building Keralam in terms of selected important dimensions. The fourth section is devoted to a discussion of the polity to underline the need for as well as possible modes of change.

### Concepts and connections

It is global disbursement of Keralites that prompts us to think about deterritorialisation of Keralam. Certainly, augmented flow of people across territories is one of the central reasons for the origin of the idea of deterritorialisation. But, as a perusal of the literature shows, it has wider connotations. Flows of capital, labour, technology, knowledge, and so on across boundaries challenge existing territories and push for reterritorialisation (Appadurai, 1990; Tsagarousianou, 2004). Viewed in a broad sense, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation processes are spatial manifestations of contemporary changes in the relationship between social life and its territorial moorings.<sup>1</sup>

Territory and territoriality are fundamental for any system of organisation of social relations. Globalisation is leading to major changes in territorial organisation of social life. Such reorganisation is inevitable because social relations are becoming less confined to given political boundaries. Defined generally, 'territory' refers to a portion of space that is claimed or occupied by a person or a social group or an institution (Storey, 2001; Passi, 2003). The definition of territory as a portion of space implies the existence of boundaries; a territory is a bounded space (Storey, 2001). Territoriality is the process in which individuals or groups lay claim on territory. It is a spatial strategy to affect, influence and control resources and people by controlling area (Sack, 1986: 1). Territory therefore is socially created. Territory and territoriality bring together ideas of power and space. Power is required to influence and control social relations within the territory.

Political power, particularly in modern nation-states, is organised territorially in bounded portions of space. Sovereignty of nation-states is an expression of such concentrated power over the territory.

With the emergence of nation-states political organisation of the world became nation-state centric. The whole world, except regions such as Antarctica, is divided into nation-states. The interstate system is composed of nation-states, with clearly demarcated territories bounded within rigidly defined and guarded borders. As many theorists have observed, the boundaries were not so rigid before the advent of the modern nation-states (Popescu, 2006). They interpenetrated and were much more porous. The ebbs and flows of social relations were not compressed into the 'container' of the nation-state. But the nation-states and the interstate system evolved into an arrangement that demanded confinement of social relations within the bounded territory of the nation-state. Hence, boundaries became far more rigid than in the past. Nation-states are vested with the power to monitor, ban, control and regulate flows – of goods, services, capital, labour, images, ideas and so on – across borders and to govern almost everything that happens within the national territory. It is this nation-state-centric territorial organisation of political power that is being challenged now because of the growth of flows across national boundaries. The nation-state container of social relations is spilling out and leaking all over. As we shall see subsequently, the same problem of worsening mismatch between spatial organisation of political power and the spatiality of a lot of other aspects of social relations can be conceptualised also at the sub-national/provincial level.

Although all flows are important for a discussion on deterritorialisation, the focus of this chapter is on the mobility of people. The nature of migratory flows has changed a lot in recent times, on account of globalisation and change in technology, which has a bearing on the processes of deterritorialisation. The main point we wish to highlight is the full-fledged participation of the diaspora in everyday life at home. The diaspora are not inhibited anymore by physical distance in being a part of social relations among people back home and off home. In fact, diaspora can be seen to act as a medium for many other flows such as those of goods, services, capital, ideas, knowledge and images over the political frontiers (Appadurai, 1990; Clifford, 1997). It is realistic therefore to expect that social relations of a state with a sizeable diaspora would tend to spread over boundaries and get deterritorialised.

The literature on diaspora is well informed of the changes in the nature of diasporic behaviour. The shift of focus from 'migration' to 'diaspora' in itself is an indication of the broadening concerns. Further,

there are efforts to overhaul and adapt the conceptual framework of diaspora studies to the changing nature of diasporic behaviour. Earlier attempts to define diaspora were essentially static and based on narrow typologies and checklists that highlighted features such as 'uprooting', 'displacement' and 'migrancy' (Cohen, 1997). Narratives of involuntary displacement, life as refugees, marginalisation in host countries, pains of displacement and isolation, nostalgic memories of homeland, vision of eventual return and so on dominated the literature. But besides these familiar themes, recent literature emphasises centrality of communication, connectivity, transnationality, voluntariness of migrants' decisions and temporariness of migratory movements.<sup>2</sup> In short, heterogeneity of diasporic behaviour is underlined.

In understanding diaspora, the question of how Diaspora perceive themselves is important. They should be able to collectively imagine themselves as a diaspora. Studies also highlight participation of diaspora in the making of the common culture of the larger society to which they belong. On account of wider exposure, brain gain, command over capital, access to wider networks and so on, diaspora can also be quite forward looking and influence discourses back home. The influence of diaspora media should also be mentioned here, which makes 'simultaneous existence at different places' possible. Technology and its use in diasporic media are making 'coexistence' and 'experiencing together' possible (Tsagarousianou, 2004). The temporal convergence (made possible by transnational diasporic media) brings a qualitative change in the experience of migrancy and the dynamics set in motion by it: whereas earlier forms of socio-political distancing were inextricably linked with temporal distance, making it very difficult for dispersed migrants to share experiences and form common frames of making sense of these, the sense of contemporaneity and synchronicity made possible by diasporic media in late modernity enables new ways of "co-existence and experiencing together" (Tsagarousianou, 2004). The coexistence and experiencing together happens among those who are within and away from the homeland.

What are the implications of growing disjuncture between a given territory of a people and the spatiality of their social life? Social life, as we gather from the foregoing discussion, is becoming multi-scalar. The local, regional, sub-national, national and international flows mix together in contemporary social life. The disjuncture between different aspects of social life and their scalar dynamics is critical in the case of the dichotomy between political organisation and other aspects of social life which are getting deterritorialised. It is here the need for and the possibility of alternative political arrangements emerges.

The emergence of supranational institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and various regional economic arrangements represents a kind of apportionment of sovereignty to negotiate deterritorialised flows.

‘It is also possible to think of political space in functional than territorial terms wherein different regulation regimes regulate a specific field of activity across national territory’ (Popescu, 2006). For instance, it is possible to have an interstate regime to govern international movement of people. A more important dimension of a possible rearrangement of political regime is related to the role and participation of the diaspora in the political organisation of the homeland. If they are co-producers of the common culture, and if they are participating in every important event of social life, almost on a real-time basis, why should they be denied the right of political participation? Why should the home be privileged over people off home? There are different approaches for facilitating such political participation of the diaspora. Extending voting rights to the diaspora in the capacity as diaspora would amount to extending jurisdiction of sovereign power to them, with attendant rights and obligations. The literature on diaspora policy takes note of such efforts by the nation-states to extend sovereignty beyond the limits of home territory (Gamlen, 2006).

### Geography of Kerala diaspora

An important limitation of diaspora studies is poor database, which is true of most developing nations including India. It is hard to get reliable numbers, not to speak of pertinent qualitative information. Kerala is not an exception to the general rule. Nonetheless, database is relatively better in the case of Kerala, thanks to the Kerala Migration Surveys (KMS Rounds 1998, 2003, 2008, 2011 and 2014) conducted by the Centre for Development Studies (Zachariah and Irudaya Rajan, 2015). Another important source is the ‘Pravasi Malayali Census’ carried out by the Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Kerala.<sup>3</sup> However, we rely mainly on KMS for it is the only source that allows temporal comparison. The results of KMS are widely disseminated, by virtue of several reports and studies, so that a detailed discussion would be repetitive.<sup>4</sup> We would therefore confine to certain important facets that are of value to the main arguments we desire to drive home in the chapter. The main idea is to show how Keralam has grown out and spread far beyond its territorial boundaries.

It is important to note a distinction that the KMS makes between emigrants and out-migrants. Emigrants are members of households in

Kerala living outside India. Out-migrants are Kerala migrants living in other states in India. KMS gives data on emigrants, return emigrants, out-migrants and return out-migrants. The four categories taken together give a fairly comprehensive view of all the relevant flows. Needless to say that from the point of view of Kerala State, Keralites living in other parts of India should also count as diaspora. Here we would suggest a major improvement in the definition of Kerala diaspora to include Malayalam-speaking people in Kanyakumari district. They share almost all important features used in the literature to define diaspora.

Until the 1930s Kerala was a net in-migrating region. Even though there were some important streams of emigration prior to the formation of Kerala State, the number of people involved was much less compared to the contemporary flows. Until the 1970s outflow of Keralites was mainly to other states in India. It was the oil boom in the Middle East since the early 1970s that made the big difference. From then onwards until now, the number of emigrants has been growing, although the rate of growth differed between KMS Rounds.<sup>5</sup> The data presented in Table 1.1 gives the relevant aggregates. Migration to rest of India has also been quite substantial in terms of numbers, but the pattern of change over time was much more erratic than the emigration flows. What we wish to highlight is the overwhelming importance of the diaspora for Kerala society, even if we confine to the number of people involved. According to the 2014 Round, for

Table 1.1 KMS estimates on Kerala diaspora

<i>Kerala Migration Survey year</i>	1998	2008	2011	2014
Number of emigrants from Kerala	1,361,919	2,193,412	2,280,543	2,400,375
Number of return emigrants	739,245	1,157,127	1,150,347	1,252,471
Number of non-resident Keralites	2,101,164	3,350,538	3,430,889	3,652,845
Number of out-migrants from Kerala	691,695	914,387	930,724	700,342
Number of return out-migrants	958,826	686,198	510,658	389,890
Number of interstate migrants	1,650,521	1,600,585	1,441,382	1,090,232

Source: Various rounds of Kerala Migration Survey.

every 100 households in Kerala, there are around 44.6 people having direct diaspora experience (Zachariah and Irudaya Rajan, 2015). Obviously, it would be wrong to consider diaspora as a residual or marginal phenomenon. There is hardly anything more central to the Kerala economy than the diaspora. The number of people having diaspora experience is bigger than those earning a livelihood from agriculture, industry or any individual sub-sectors of the services sector.

Tables 1.2 and 1.3 give an idea of the diaspora-led deterritorialisation of Kerala. The figure is chosen to reflect relative importance of the host regions in the distribution of Kerala emigrants/migrants. As Table 1.2 shows, West Asia and the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) account for most of the emigrants. According to the latest KMS Round, 86.3 per cent of the emigrants are in the West Asian region. As a comparison with

Table 1.2 Emigrants from Kerala in different countries

<i>Countries</i>	<i>Number of emigrants from Kerala in different countries</i>	<i>Percentage of emigrants out of total emigrant population</i>
United Arab Emirates	883,313	38.7
Saudi Arabia	574,739	25.2
Oman	195,300	8.6
Kuwait	127,782	5.6
Bahrain	101,556	4.5
Qatar	148,428	6.5
Other West Asian countries	6,696	0.3
Subtotal	2,037,813	89.4
United States	68,076	3
Canada	9,486	0.4
United Kingdom	44,640	2
Other European countries	10,602	0.5
Africa	12,834	0.6
Singapore	11,160	0.5
Maldives	7,254	0.3
Malaysia	13,392	0.6
Other South East Asian countries	16,182	0.7
Australia/New Zealand	24,552	1.1
Other countries	24,552	1.1
Total	2,280,543	100

Source: Calculations based on Kerala Migration Survey Report, 2011.



Table 1.3 Out-migrants from Kerala

<i>States</i>	<i>Out-migrants from Kerala</i>	<i>Percentage of out-migrants out of total out-migrant population</i>
Karnataka	268,723	24.9
Tamil Nadu	238,511	22.1
Maharashtra	178,618	16.5
New Delhi	68,903	6.4
Andhra Pradesh	45,052	4.2
Gujarat	36,042	3.3
Uttar Pradesh	9,540	0.9
Jammu and Kashmir	6,360	0.6
Madhya Pradesh	10,070	0.9
West Bengal	7,420	0.7
Bihar	2,650	0.2
Chhattisgarh	3,180	0.3
Punjab	10,601	1.0
Andaman and Nicobar	530	0.0
Rajasthan	6,360	0.6
Malayalam-speaking people in Kanyakumari district	150,000	13.9
Others	38,163	3.5
Total	1,080,723	100.0

Source: Calculations based on Kerala Migration Report, 2011.

Note: The definition of out-migrants as used in KMS does not include Malayalam-speaking population in Kanyakumari. The census does not provide the number of Malayalam-speaking people in Kanyakumari district. The data used here is taken from <http://www.spc.tn.gov.in/reports/Kanniyakumari.pdf>.

the previous rounds shows, the dominance of West Asia is declining over the years. Notably, among developed country destinations Australia, New Zealand and Canada are gaining in importance in a fairly sustained manner. The studies also note a process of transformation in the skill and educational composition of the emigrants (Zachariah and Irudaya Rajan, 2012).<sup>6</sup> The growing proportion of skilled workers and persons of higher educational attainments suggests voluntary and forward-looking nature of Kerala diaspora. The presence of professionals and entrepreneurs, who own small, medium, and large businesses abroad, is also indicative of a shift in the composition, once dominated by desperate unskilled workers, to a more diversified diaspora (see Table 1.2).

As mentioned, the global policy regime is shifting in favour of temporary movement of natural persons. Interestingly, temporariness is

the hallmark of emigration from Kerala. The probability of Kerala diaspora settling in host countries is low, mainly because of the policy of leading host countries. Countries in the Middle East are very rigid in giving citizenship to the immigrants. In Western developed nations, especially the United States and the European countries, the barriers to citizenship have been increasing over time.

The composition of emigrants is greatly influenced by the import demand on the one hand and policy on the other. The demand structure in West Asian countries is moving in favour of skilled and professional workers. In the United States and the OECD countries in general, the migration policy is heavily biased in favour of highly skilled workers, intra-corporate transferees and people with high educational attainments (Karayil, 2015). The supply-side factors also influence the diasporic behaviour. Kerala appears to have been successful in adapting to changes in the receiving regions by improving the infrastructure facilities in education, training, communication, transportation and financial services. There is also the pressure of competition from poorer regions of the world for low-end jobs. The supply price and job expectations are higher in the case of Keralites compared to the competing sending regions.

The change in the diasporic behaviour is reflected in certain other dimensions of its composition as well. As shown in Table 1.1, the proportion of Keralites working in other states to the emigrants has been on the decline. Obviously, those who move out of Kerala prefer foreign destinations. Further, among destinations abroad, as the domination of West Asia and OECD countries show, Keralites have a preference for countries with higher per capita income and development. Table 1.3 is indicative of the spread of Kerala migrants within India. The pattern appears to confirm the gravity models where distance plays a major role in determining the spread. There is an obvious concentration in the southern states neighbouring Kerala. The nerve centre of the process of concentration is Karnataka State. From 12.9 per cent in 1998 the share of Karnataka increased to 33.1 per cent in 2014 (Zachariah and Irudaya Rajan, 2015). An important reason is the Bangalore-centred IT boom. The proportions reported here on the basis of KMS do not include Kerala diaspora residing in Kanyakumari district. But their importance is conspicuous in Table 1.2.<sup>7</sup>

The argument of deterritorialisation of Keralam is further strengthened by the in-migration of workers from rest of the country, especially eastern India, to Kerala. Capital and labour are becoming more mobile across the Indian states. Kerala is attracting workers from other states mainly to meet the shortage of workers in jobs that

demand manual labour. According to an estimate in 2013, there were around 2.5 million migrant workers in the state (Narayana and Venkiteswaran, 2013).

### **Keralam made in and off Kerala**

In this section, we take some important avenues of social life to illustrate how life within and beyond the borders are closely interwoven and how people at and off home produce the common culture together and concurrently. What we see is conspicuous deterritorialisation of almost all aspects of social life of Keralam. The deterritorialisation of life in Keralam is led by the diaspora. But social sciences as practised in the region are not yet free from the nation-state-centric and 'closed' territory approach. This is reflected even in understanding a phenomenon like diaspora, which transcends territory. Whatever diaspora does is treated as an addition to what happens at home, not as a part of an analytical whole. We are caught in an accountancy syndrome. In fact, what happens inside and outside or what Keralites do within and outside the state is so intertwined that they are almost inseparable. The idea of inseparability has important analytical implications. The role of the diaspora or its impact on different avenues of social life cannot be seen as an addendum. The diaspora should be built into the framework of analysis so that structural connections are taken care of.

Let us start with the migration development nexus. One debilitating feature of the existing literature on the state's development experience is the 'closed economy' approach (Harilal and Joseph, 2003). One important reason for this is the micro-economic bias of the literature (Nayar, 1994: 3–5). The issues involved are seen mainly from the point of view of the migrant workers or their families. Therefore, questions relating to the decision to migrate, profile of the migrants, immigration rules and working conditions, income earned and saved, remittances, utilisation of remittances, return migration, rehabilitation and so on dominate the literature (Prakash, 1998; Nair, 1999; Zachariah *et al.*, 1999; Pani and Jafar, 2010). Even though these studies provide valuable insights, micro-effects cannot be easily aggregated when there is divergence between private and social benefits or costs. For instance, migration involving brain drain may be beneficial for the individuals involved but not to the economy as a whole. The scenario can be just the reverse in the case of brain gain. Another reason is the partial equilibrium framework adopted by the studies on migration. The migration-remittances phenomenon is discussed, but as something 'structurally external'. Accordingly, migration is recognised to affect

the income of the people, not so much by influencing domestic production but by way of remittances.<sup>8</sup> It is important to break the existing tradition by bringing in the question of migration and remittances to its rightful place within the structure of the regional economy. This is exactly what the studies that use the insights of the Dutch disease economics have done (Balakrishnan, 1999; Harilal and Joseph, 2003).

What the studies based on Dutch disease economics prove is the possibility of migration-remittances boom adversely impacting domestic production in goods-producing sectors. The Dutch disease syndrome is explained in terms of two symptomatic effects, namely 'resource movement' effect and the 'spending effect' (Corden and Peter, 1982; Fardmanesh, 1991). The expansion of the booming sector would draw the mobile factor out of other sectors and bid up its price (in the Kerala context, migration boom bids up wages). The resulting contraction of the non-booming tradable sectors due to heightened competition for factors of production is referred to as the 'resource movement' effect. The spending of the extra income from the export boom would tend to bid up the prices of non-tradable goods vis-à-vis tradable goods, leading to a real appreciation and erosion of competitiveness of the tradable sector. The 'spending effect' refers to the contraction of the non-booming tradable sectors on account of the real appreciation. The Dutch disease environment described here has had definite adverse effect on the goods-producing sectors of the state's economy, especially agriculture. It also explains the disproportionately higher growth of the services sector.

The Kerala economy is still under the influence of the Dutch disease. It is keeping the wages of workers doing manual labour high compared to competitors. Same is the case of the prices of non-tradable goods and services. It is clear from the high wages and the spiralling of land prices and the sustained boom of the real estate sector (Harilal and Eswaran, 2015). It is not to say the goods-producing sectors are doomed to fail in Kerala. The message is clear: only those lines of economic activities or entrepreneurs, who are immune to Dutch disease conditions, can survive and grow. The non-tradable goods and services, which are not exposed to external competition, are probable candidates of such progress. Same is the case of products, which are tradable but do not depend much on the expensive factors of production or costly non-tradable inputs. The growth of construction, real estate, tourism, financial services, information technology-based services and so on is proof for the structural bias under the influence of Dutch disease.

Our aim here is not to make an exhaustive study of the effects of the migration-remittances boom on the economy of Kerala. Instead, what we wanted and tried to show was as to how diaspora influences

domestic production in fundamental ways. Estimating what diaspora does in different walks of life is important in itself. But such partial estimates by itself will not add up to the aggregate effect. This is because diaspora is not anymore a marginal phenomenon. For instance, remittances to Kerala come to around 36 per cent of the state domestic product (Zachariah and Irudaya Rajan, 2015). In the sphere of economy we have seen how diaspora influences parameters of domestic economic activities. This is more or less true of many other aspects of life, such as literature, theatre, cinema, music, religion, caste, politics, media, education and health. The influence of diaspora in the production of literature cannot be gauged by studying diaspora literature. The diaspora influence could be seen in the creations of even people who have not had any direct diasporic experience.

In short, Keralam lives both within and outside the territorial boundaries of the state. The culture of Keralam is produced within and outside the state. Almost everything related to life of Keralites, such as birth, death, marriages, worship and education, happens at home as well as away from the home territory. More important, life at home and away influences each other intensely and almost concurrently. Here we wish to emphasise contemporaneity and synchronicity of such interactions between people at home and the diaspora. They are made possible by diasporic media that use technology to overcome time and distance and make real-time participation possible. Diaspora participates in family events and discussions using technology and frequent visits. Keralites' presence is prominent in the public sphere of Keralam, which has also transcended the conventional territorial limits. The public sphere has become transnational. The global Keralites meet on the Internet. The diaspora is very active in the discussions organised by newspapers, television channels, Internet forums, social media and so on. Distance is fast disappearing as a deterrent to participation. In Table 1.4 we present an innovative and convincing piece of evidence to prove the contemporaneity of diaspora participation in the making of social life back home. It shows the percentage of non-resident Keralites (NRKs) who participate actively in social media discussions, especially on the Facebook pages of most followed politicians from Kerala. We have considered the discussions happening on the Facebook pages of six popular (most followed) politicians in the state. We considered the discussions below their posts during the period 1 to 15 October 2015. Among the people who comment under the Facebook posts of these politicians, 48.4 per cent are NRKs.

Another important dimension of diaspora participation is related to the changes in the nature of the diaspora itself. Kerala diaspora now

AuQ 1 *Table 1.4 Social media participation*

<i>Politicians</i>	<i>Number of followers/ likes</i>	<i>Total number of people commented for the status</i>	<i>Total number of NRKs commented for the status</i>	<i>Percentage of NRKs commented for the status</i>
Oommen Chandy	838,542	990	618	62.5
Ramesh Chennithala	370,596	1,275	601	47.1
Thomas Isaac	254,691	140	91	65
Pinarayi Vijayan	170,440	1,298	623	47.9
V.T. Balram	137,945	1,410	543	38.5
M.B. Rajesh	99,183	378	181	47.9
Total	1,871,397	5,491	2,657	48.4

Source: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com).<sup>9</sup>*Table 1.5 Richest Keralites among Forbes 100 richest Indians*

<i>Serial number</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Net worth (US\$ billion)</i>
1.	M.A. Yousuff Ali	3.7
2.	Ravi Pillai	2.4
3.	Sunny Varkey	2.1
4.	Senapathy Gopalakrishnan	1.7
5.	Azad Moopen	1.5
6.	P.N.C. Menon	1.2

AuQ 2 Source: <http://www.forbes.com>.

includes workers, professionals, intellectuals, entrepreneurs and captains of big corporate companies. The emergence of diaspora capital, and external direct investment by business houses in Kerala, gives an advantage for the diaspora in the political economy of cultural production. Data presented in Table 1.5 is self-explanatory in bringing out the growth of diaspora capital. Keralites figuring among the top 100 richest Indians listed here are all NRKs. Diaspora capital has a significant presence in the relevant industries such as media, cinema and education. Earlier the diaspora used to look backward to the home for guidance, protection and all sorts of handholding. Even now the majority are in need of such support from home. But an important segment is perhaps much more forward looking than those at home, or at least imagines so, and puts forward their own vision for future

Keralam. Many of them are also ready to contribute to the cause of building a new Kerala.

### **Towards an inclusive polity**

As noted at the outset, and as our discussions in the previous sections clearly suggest, the need to reorient the polity to meet the demands of deterritorialisation of social life is not a futuristic question for Kerala, because the region is in the forefront of the global processes of deterritorialisation. In fact, what Kerala does to meet the challenge will be a useful lesson for other regions which experience or are likely to experience the same predicament of growing mismatch between territorial moorings of social life and the political regime. Polity generally is obstinate in adapting its structure to the changing times. But if proliferation and restructuring of supranational arrangements is an indication, nation-states are willy-nilly preparing to live with new multi-scalar arrangements of political power. Multilateral, plurilateral and regional agreements among countries represent such efforts to distribute sovereignty. Nation-states certainly are not going to wither so soon. Instead, they are trying to remain the centres of power by redefining their role and rearranging the interstate system. But restructuring of nation-states and the interstate system is uneven across different types of flows across national boundaries. The interstate system perhaps is most adaptable in the case of transnational operations of capital, but least accommodating with respect to the movement of labour across borders. The nation-states refuse to be disciplined by multilateral agreements on immigration policy. Incidentally, although the General Agreement on Trade in Services of the WTO addresses movement of people, its reach is limited to the temporary movement of natural persons. Policy towards emigrants or the diaspora of the sending nations also remains outside the purview of multilateral agreements or disciplining.

The nation-states are under pressure to part with sovereignty and join multinational arrangements to facilitate hyper-mobility of capital and its global accumulation. There is no such overwhelming pressure on the nation-states to facilitate immigration or emigration. But there are major gains that prompt nations to allow, promote and govern emigration. It is the objective of maximising gains that prompts formulation of diaspora policy in many countries. But extending governmentality to the diaspora is easier said than done. The diaspora engagement policies are attempts to re(produce) citizen–sovereign relationship with the non-residents. Following Foucault, Gamlen (2006)

characterises it as an ‘effort at trans-nationalising governmentality – the means by which a population is rendered governable, through the construction, machination, and normalization of a set of governmental apparatuses and knowledges’.

On the basis of a comparative study of over 70 countries, Gamlen identifies three elements of diaspora engagement policy: first, capacity-building policies aimed at discursively producing a state-centric transnational national society and developing a set of corresponding state institutions; second, extending rights to the non-residents, a role that befits a legitimate sovereign; and third, extracting obligations from the non-residents. Gamlen classifies states according to the nature of diaspora policy into three categories: exploitative states, which extract obligations without extending rights; generous states, which extend rights without extracting obligations; and engaged states, which both extract obligations and extend rights. In this scheme, as we shall argue subsequently, India would fall under the first category, that is exploitative states.

But before analysing the Indian diaspora policy it is important to note a critical limitation that diaspora policies share almost everywhere. Diaspora engagement policies transnationalise citizenship by extending rights and obligation to the emigrants. But the existing policies do little to democratise the relationship between the home state and the diaspora. Rights and obligations are decided at home and implemented from home without genuine democratic participation of the diaspora. It is difficult to suggest an optimal solution to the problem of representation. It is something that should evolve in response to the reality of deterritorialisation and transnationalisation. What is important is democratic representation of diaspora as diaspora. Diaspora has unique identity and unique problems to be represented in decision-making bodies. But it is not a question of their problems alone. More important is their voice as co-producers of the common culture. As we have argued at length in the previous sections, diaspora has a role and a stake, which is no way inferior to the resident citizens in the making of the common culture. In short, transnationalisation of citizenship will have to be accompanied by transnationalisation of democratic participation. An important condition even to begin experimenting new mechanisms of democratic participation is to get out of the territorial mindset. The power of the state is exercised through a multitude of institutions and instruments. Diaspora participation can be initiated in many such avenues. In order to ensure participation at the aggregate level, diaspora representation can be initiated in the existing legislative bodies. Further, it will not be unrealistic to experiment with



decision-making bodies with participation that transcend the national boundaries. They may be more ceremonial in the beginning, but smart anticipation of what is going to come. Decision-making bodies that transcend national borders are required to represent the evolving mix of resident and non-resident citizens of nations which are increasingly getting deterritorialised.

In the threefold classification of states based on the nature of diaspora engagement policies, India cannot but fit into the category of exploitative states. India is the biggest remittances receiving country in the world. It is difficult to overemphasise the value of remittances, especially for a country like India suffering from scarcity of foreign exchange. Remittances are not only one of the biggest but also the most reliable source of foreign currency. Yet the policies to support the diaspora do not match the support extended to other sources of foreign exchange earnings such as exports of goods and services, foreign direct investment and foreign institutional investment (Harilal, 2006). The entire gamut of economic policies, fiscal, monetary, trade and so on of the country is designed to boost the investor confidence. In contrast, government of India does not even have reliable information on the diaspora, at the level of individuals or as aggregate groups. Absence of information is not an accident. It is a conscious choice of the state to be indifferent and unaccountable. There are similar situations reported from elsewhere in the world where illegal migration happens with connivance of both the sending and receiving nations. Migrants, not accounted and not protected, are a source of cheap labour that can be denied even the minimum benefits statutorily due to the workers. Home country is assured of the remittances flow because migrant workers cannot hold their petty savings for long in the host country.

The Indian state is referred to as exploitative not only for not helping the migrant workers in protecting their rights in the host countries but also for perpetrating an environment of poor law enforcement that works to the disadvantage and exploitation of the migrants. Migrant workers are subjected to widespread cheating by recruitment agencies, various other intermediaries, employers in the host country and so on. There are also more organised and legalised cheating such as exorbitant rates charged by airlines operating between India and main receiving countries. Here, we are not ignoring the new policy initiatives such as the convening of diaspora meetings, distribution of awards for the non-resident Indians, overseas visa and provision for foreign currency denominated deposits in banks. But these are generally oriented towards the creamy layer of the diaspora, whom the

government thinks should be incentivised to bring in capital, entrepreneurship and knowledge. Remittances of workers by all means are much more valuable but automatically flowing without any special effort from the government.

Diaspora policy of India has a federal fiscal dimension to it. The state governments are not direct beneficiaries of the foreign exchange advantage of remittances. Nor are they in a position to earn any income in the form of taxes or other charges out of migration or remittances. But the cost of emigration, in terms of expenditure on education, health, infrastructure, rehabilitation of returnees, old age care of returnees and so on, is borne mainly by the state governments. Migration of healthy, educated skilled workers from Kerala cannot be separated from the region's history of public action and public investment in related areas, the cost of which was borne at the provincial level. Expenditure is made at the regional scale, while the benefits get spilled over to the national scale.

Despite the constraint of the fiscal space, the state government in Kerala had initiated certain pioneering diaspora policy initiatives. It is the first state in the country to start an independent department for diaspora welfare: Department of Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA) in 1996. A separate agency for the implementation of NORKA programmes, NORKA-ROOTS was established in 2002. The department of NORKA has some interesting welfare programmes such as Karunyam for the repatriation of the mortal remains of NRKs who expire in host countries/regions, Pravasi Welfare Fund for distributing assistance of various types to the registered members and Santhwana for giving distress relief. In a way these are efforts to establish some rights for the NRKs, which the state government wishes to, guarantees and thereby earns legitimacy and power. Besides, the state government puts in some effort to develop a state-centred diaspora identity among the NRKs. These include promotion of Malayalam language and culture, cultural exchange programmes, schemes for promoting NRK participation in local/regional development, convening of NRK meets and recognition and promotion of NRK associations in host countries/regions. The department is also involved in the supply of some specialised services such as authentication of certificates, pre-departure orientation programme, manpower placement and recruitment, data collection and research and helping to trace missing NRKs.

But a review of the activities of the department suggests that they are best seen as statement of intention than really effective state intervention. This is obvious from the trivial allocation of plan funds to the department on the one hand and the poor track record of

Table 1.6 NORKA in state plan

Year	State plan	NORKA plan (crores)			
		Allocation (crores)		Expenditure (crores)	
		Allocation	Percentage to total plan	Expenditure	Percentage to allocation
2002–3	4,026	1.0	0.02	0.27	27.99
2003–4	4,350	0.9	0.02	1.96	217.41
2004–5	4,800	2.5	0.05	1.46	58.60
2005–6	5,370	2.5	0.05	0.46	18.43
2006–7	6,681	2.5	0.04	1.29	51.73
2007–8	6,950	1.7	0.02	0.90	52.26
2008–9	7,701	3.8	0.05	5.76	151.64
2009–10	8,660	4.0	0.05	3.08	77.12
2010–11	10,000	6.0	0.06	3.14	52.81
2011–12		11.5		5.71	49.63

Source: Kerala State Planning Board: Plan Documents.

implementation on the other (see Table 1.6). For instance, the total allocation of plan funds to the department of NORKA during the tenth Five-Year Plan (2002–7) was just 9.35 crore rupees and the amount spent was 5.49 crores (58.67 per cent). Incidentally, the total size of the tenth plan of the state was 25,227 crore rupees. The 11th plan (2008–12) makes some improvement but does not change the picture. Our observation about the NORKA programmes will get more support when the plan allocation is compared with the requirements represented by the number of NRKs or the diaspora contribution to the state income reported earlier. In fact, the department activities appear too little even when they are compared with other collective initiatives. For instance, take the case of facilitating diaspora participation in the production of common culture. Cultural events sponsored by the NRKs in host countries/regions far outweigh the state-sponsored ones. This is true of so many other channels of interaction.

If the diaspora engagement policy is exploitative in content, its explanation lies mainly in the political exclusion of the diaspora, which, as we argued in the chapter, is a major mismatch with the picture of inclusion of the diaspora in every other spheres of social life. The polity is not representing the non-resident citizens. They do not have a place or voice in the decision-making process. The divide we see is likely to widen in the future as the citizens become more mobile

and the nation or sub-national cultures get more deterritorialised. The sovereign power that the state commands over the non-resident citizens cannot be sustained for long if obligations of the diaspora are not matched with the rights they are given. No other right probably is more important than the right of democratic participation in making and running governments. The non-resident citizens should be given appropriate representation in decision-making forums. Contextually, the Indian Constitution has provision for nominated non-voting representation of Anglo-Indians in the Parliament and the state legislatures. As an interim solution, such a system of representation may be introduced by amending the constitution. A more appropriate solution would be creation of constituencies beyond the national/state boundaries.<sup>10</sup> The same solution may not be acceptable for the diaspora who are not Indian citizens. Alternative methods of inclusion such as India International Parliament and Kerala International Parliament will have to be designed including persons of Indian/Kerala origin nominated through a well-laid-out and transparent method of nomination. In its meetings it will deliberate on a 'World India list' (World Kerala list) of subjects and advise the government. But opening of space for diaspora participation need not be limited to the higher scales. It can take place at different scales and in a multiplicity of institutions.

## Notes

- 1 <http://knowledge.sagepub.com/view/geography/n277.xml>.
- 2 The General Agreement on Trade in Services, especially its provisions related to movement of natural persons (Mode 4), is a clear reflection of the emerging trends in labour flows across countries. Mode 4 refers to temporary movement of people as service providers.
- 3 Pravasi census was conducted by Economic and Statistics department of Kerala. It took place during the Sixth Economic Survey of Kerala in 2013 with a separate schedule.
- 4 Kerala Migration Survey has been extensively used by researchers. The major studies are Zachariah and Irudaya Rajan (2010, 2011, 2012, 2015), John (2012) and Zachariah *et al.* (2000).
- 5 According to KMS Rounds, the emigrants per 100 households have shown an increasing trend. It was 21.4 and 29 in 1998 and 2008, respectively. In 2011 it showed a slight increase to 29.3 per 100 households.
- 6 Pravasi Malayali Census, 2013, also supports the argument regarding the composition of migrants. According to it, out of 1,426,853 people, 7,524 were doctors, 90,898 were nurses, 53,876 were engineers, 10,011 were bank employees, 31,834 were IT professionals, 11,760 were teachers and 20,867 were managers.
- 7 During the state reorganisation, around 30 per cent of the people in Kanyakumari district were Malayalam-speaking. No recent estimates are available. Even if we take the proportion as 25 per cent, the number of

- Malayalam-speaking people will be around 500,000 now. They will have to be counted as Kerala diaspora.
- 8 Suppose migration and remittances are having a favourable impact on domestic production. If so, the income effect of migration will certainly be higher than that of remittances. Conversely, if the impact on domestic production is adverse, the net addition could be lower than that of the remittances.
  - 9 This data was taken from the Facebook pages/accounts of the politicians from 1 to 15 October 2015.
  - 10 There are 11 constituencies for French residents overseas, each electing one representative to the national assembly. They were created in 2010 redistricting of French legislative constituencies, the aim of which was to enable French citizens overseas to be represented as such, rather than vote in a constituency on French territory, as was the case previously.

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