# Dreaming in English: Relevance of Public Schools in Building Migrant Capability to Access Quality Education

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**Abstract**

Interstate migration to Kerala has been largely viewed as an economic pursuit, putting undue stress on the role of remittance in reducing poverty and inequality at the origin. This remains blind to the role of institutions and environment at the origin in converting the remittances to meet the aspirations of the migrant population. Long term migration/permanent settlement of migrant families at the destination is understood in this context. The schooling choices of migrants at the destination show how remittances alone fail to meet the parents' desire for quality education at the origin. The current study looks at the cases of six Odia migrant households who navigate the schooling system of Kerala in search of quality education. It discusses how the English medium education at the public schools of Kerala has improved the capability of migrant parents in accessing quality education. The study is relevant in the wake of the increasing number of migrant children in the public schools of Kerala.

**Keywords:** Quality Education, Migrant Children, Capability, English-medium Education, Equity

## 1. Introduction

Interstate migration in India is distress-driven, with people moving out of poorer states having low wages and employment opportunities. In the home state,

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poverty and unemployment deprive the people of their capabilities. Remittances from internal migration improve livelihoods and increase investment in housing, health, and education. Though the marginal budget share of household spending on health, education, and other durables is significantly higher in remittance-receiving households compared to those that do not, the economic condition of the former is no better (Mohanty et.al.,2014; 2016). With no supportive institutions and a conducive environment (be it economic, social, or political) in these origin areas, remittances may remain short of achieving basic capabilities (substantive freedom). This may result in the migration of families to more developed states.

The institution that heavily facilitates the migration of families to the destination state is the school. The present study investigates how public schooling in Kerala constrains/enhances the capabilities of migrant children. Through the theoretical lens of the 'Capability Approach' by Amartya Sen, the study argues for English medium education in public schools to reduce the inequity in the state schooling system. The case study of six Odia parents in the Ernakulam district of Kerala reveals how English education is a cornerstone for schooling decisions among migrant parents. The study is relevant as the waning child population and increasing private school preference in Kerala increase the dependence of state schooling on migrant children. A relook at the capabilities of migrant parents may open the state's attitude toward migrant workers being mere "guests."

## 2. Interstate Migration in Kerala

The currents of international and internal migration are relevant to the developmental landscape of Kerala. The state witnessed the first bout of international migration of unskilled and semiskilled labourers to Middle Eastern countries in the 1970s. The inflow of remittances has resulted in improved investments in the standard of living, health, and education. The second spell, therefore, comprised more skilled labourers towards the Global North and Oceania regions (Parida and Raman, 2021). The heavy outflow of migrants from Kerala to other countries has created a huge gap in the labour force in the state. This has pulled in interstate labourers from the rest of the country to Kerala.

Interstate migration started as early as the 1960s, with labourers from nearby states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka pouring into the state. The heavy international migration in the later years in Kerala created a gap, which was replaced by interstate

labourers. This started from the eastern states of India, mainly Assam and Odisha (Peter et.al.,2020). Now the state houses labourers from over 25 states and 194 districts (Peter and Narendran, 2017). The replacement migration is over 3 million in Kerala, a number equivalent to those who have moved out to work in countries outside India (GOK et al., 2018). The incoming volume of interstate migrants offsets the decline in labour force due to international out-migration.

The interstate migration to Kerala is mostly distress-driven, with labourers pushed out of their homes due to extreme poverty, lack of employment opportunities, poor wages in home states, climatic changes, and communal violence. With steady employment, better wages, and a peaceful working environment, the state has proved to be a haven for the labourers. These labourers are mostly unskilled and semi-skilled and employed in diverse sectors like construction, agriculture and allied, timber and plywood, mining and quarrying, and craft industries (Peter and Narendran, 2017).

## 3. Schooling in Kerala

The schooling system of Kerala includes varied institutions financed and managed by public and private entities. Currently, in a total of 12959 schools, there are 4698 (36.3%) government schools, 7210 (55.6%) private aided schools and 1051 (8.1%) private unaided schools with enrolment of 1223554 (32.6%), 2181170 (58.2%), and 341923 (9.12%) respectively (Kerala Economic Review, 2023). The government and private-aided schools still cover the needs of the vast school population, followed by private unaided schools.

Though public schools still serve the lion's share of the population, there has been a visible preference for private unaided schools over the years, dating back to the 1970s. This has resulted in a decline in enrolment in public schools. The trend of declining enrolment, which has increased steeply till 2015 and later steadily, has been mainly attributed to the falling demographic dividend (James, 1995). Kerala, with a social development index matching that of developed countries since the 1970s, had the highest and earliest drop in the child population. However, the latter set of literature on the drop in school enrolment has identified the shifting preferences for private schooling in the state. The international remittances had pushed preferences for labour skills, notably English-speaking (Retnakumar and Arokiasamy, 2003; Retnakumar et al., 2006; Varghese, 2015). The Public Educa-

tion Rejuvenation Campaign in 2016 brought students back to the public schooling system, slowing down the trend (Venkiteswaran and Sivadasan, 2021). But this can also be accounted for by the schools in Kerala being increasingly filled up by migrant children. The state government still fails to acknowledge the shifting preference for private education.

The falling enrolment has posed a problem for the state schooling system. The decline in enrolment results in the closure of sections, which subsequently leads to the shutting down of schools. According to the data from Kerala Economic Review, the number of uneconomic schools increased from 964 in 1990 to 5715 in 2015 and later started dropping to 961 in 2023-24. "Schools with fewer students" (earlier termed "uneconomic schools") result in diseconomies of scale, affect the real income of protected teachers, and create problems of inequity in the schooling system (Ganga, 2022). The state government has moved on to create English-medium sections in many schools to attract back students (G.O. (Ms) 156/12/G Edn).

## 4. Situating Children of 'Guest Workers' in Kerala's Schooling Scenario

The interstate migration to Kerala is mainly male migration, which is temporary and undertaken for employment. The government, with its official terminology, makes the purpose of migration clearer while 'othering' the migrant workers. The initial term used to distinguish them was "anyasamsthaana thozhilaalikal" (translated to other state migrants). Later, this was shifted to "athithithozhilaalikal" (guest workers). This was justified to be a friendlier term with Kerala being a hospitable state endorsing "atithi devo bhava" (roughly translated to Guest is God). The migrants who moved into Kerala were termed 'guests' while international migrants from Kerala are 'pravasi malayalikal' (Malayalis who live outside Kerala) (Peter et al., 2020; Cherian et al., 2024).

However, family migration has been increasing over the years in Kerala, indicating long-term migration and permanent settlement. A great number of families in Kerala seem to engage their children in schools in Kerala and have showcased success. Around 61,000 children are estimated to attend the state's education system, with over 17000 alone in Ernakulam (Parida and Raman, 2021). Though the real numbers are still far behind the estimates, there is a growing number of migrant children in the public schools of Kerala.

The rising number of migrant children brought along with it the question of how to integrate children of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Project Roshni, through the application of code-switching with the aid of Educational Volunteers, eases the child's shift from his/her mother tongue to the medium of instruction (Malayalam). The project, which started in 2015 in four schools, has now extended to over 40 schools in the state, covering over 1500 students. The SSA has also set up 40 STCs (Student Training Centres) across the district to bridge the child to the schooling system in Kerala. The schools have effectively assisted in reducing child dropout, decreasing out-of-school children, and improving the academic achievement of migrant children.

However, the shifting preference of both elites and residual native population towards private recognised/unrecognised schools highlights the movement from mere access to quality education, marked by English education (Varghese, 2015). The education in government schools, essentially translating to instruction in Malayalam, is pictured as low-quality education by parents. This leaves behind the marginalised section of the native population and the migrants in the government schools, creating hierarchical schooling in the state. The government schools with predominantly migrant children are also termed "bhai" (translated to brother in Hindi, a pejorative label for migrants in Kerala) schools, further deepening the negative attitude towards government schools.

## 5. Creating or Covering Inequities: Debates on English Education in India

The English language and its initial spread among the country's elites were part of the colonial project to build the empire. The 'babus' (educated Indian administrators or clerks during colonial times), fluent in English, created an adequate workforce necessary for the country. The nationalistic movement resisted the spread of the English language by popularising and printing local dialects and languages. The colonial resistance was reflected in the widespread use of the local language as the medium of instruction in various states across India. In the South of India, the use of the state language as a medium of instruction in schools resisted the colonial surge and imposition of Hindi (Kumar, 2017).

The dependence on English is seen as a "necessary evil" even now in postcolonial countries across the globe. A schooling system leaning towards English is seen as

a threat to the local culture and languages. The state competes against the increase in private schooling, which is largely marketed among its consumers as providing proper instruction in English. The state-run schools, with instructions in local languages, are hardly preferred by the elites. But elites picture the preference for English-medium private schools among the marginalised sections as imperialism from below (Mathew, 2018).

The state, run by the elites in the society, often gatekeeps English education in the disguise of preventing student dropout and achieving higher academic results. The abolition of English in primary schools in West Bengal in the 1980s was one such instance. This was later seen to result in lower wages among the public-school students in the cohort, while richer students in the same cohort learned in English medium schools during the period (Thakurtha, 1998; Chakraborty and Bakshi, 2016; Roy, 2004). This policy measure in West Bengal was seen as identical to an instance in pre-independent Bengal, wherein upper castes denied massification of their textbooks (Acharya,1982).

The anti-caste discourse in India identifies English as having an emancipatory potential for the people of the discriminated castes in society. English is not merely a product of aspiration in a liberalised consumer society but a means of emancipation from a tightly bound caste society. This can be understood when a small village in Uttar Pradesh has a deity for English (The Hindu, 2017). The move by the Telangana government towards English medium education across all government schools in the state has been welcomed by anti-caste scholars in the country (The Indian Express, 2022). This comes in stark response to the mother tongue instruction suggested by NEP, supported by various evidence-driven studies from across the developed countries (NEP, 2020; Makoni, 1993).

A new lens of the capability approach to address the debates will further the functioning of public schooling. The capability approach, as theorised by Amartya Sen, encourages the state to devise policies and programs that would increase the substantive freedom of the individual. The capabilities improve the functioning of the individual by giving him true agency (Sen, 1992). As a theoretical lens, the capability approach has been used to understand English education in HEIs in the global south; English education has been proven to enhance language capabilities necessary in the context of language imperialism (Mackenzie, 2021). While using the same theoretical lens in India, the emancipatory vision of English cannot be unseen. Starting with Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, the Dalit discourse has empha-

sised the necessity of expanding English education to democratize knowledge. The knowledge of English can liberate the Dalit Bahujan communities in a multi-dimensional course (Ilaiah, 2009). With the understanding of grassroots-level aspirations for economic and social mobility, the capability approach aids in reducing inequity in schooling.

## 6. Methodology

The following paper undertakes the case study method of Odia migrants in Kerala. The study is a segment of my research work conducted in the district of Ernakulam as a part of my doctoral thesis. Observations from the field are also involved to further substantiate the cases. The selection of Ernakulam is justified based on the number of interstate migrants (Graph 1) and the high preference for private schooling (Table 2). The district of Ernakulam has recorded the highest number of interstate migrants in the state. In terms of the Odia population, the district holds the highest number in the state.

Graph 1: Share of interstate migrants in different districts of Kerala

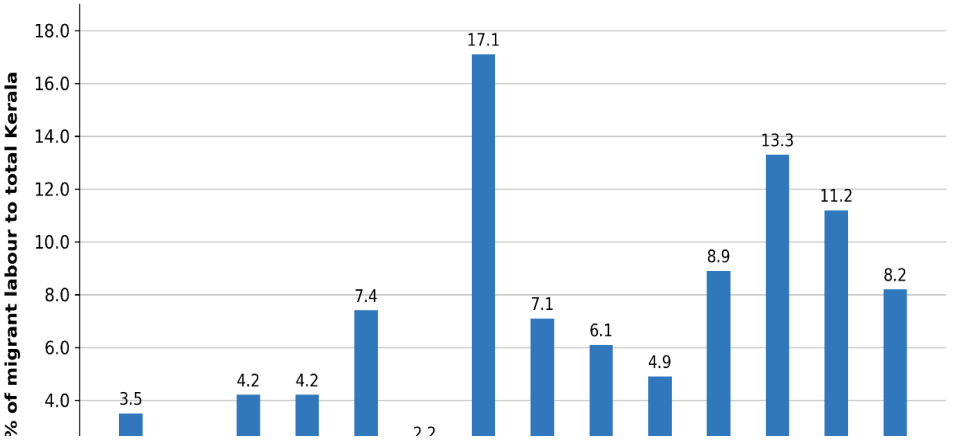



Table 2: Percentage of schools and enrolment based on management in Ernakulam (2021)

| Management | Govt | Govt Aided | PUR | PUU |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Schools | 28.7 | 38.9 | 28.8 | 3.5 |
| Enrolment | 16.4 | 41 | 41.5 | 1.1 |

Source: UDISE; PUR: Private Unaided Recognised, PUU: Private Unaided Unrecognised

The state of Odisha is predominantly rural in nature, with most of the population dependent on agriculture and allied activities. The state has lately advanced in industrial and mineral expansion. According to Census 2011, Odisha has one of the highest concentrations of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) population and one of the lowest HDI rankings in the country, but has started picking up in terms of reducing multidimensional poverty. Odisha is one of the Indian states with high reliance on domestic remittance indicating reliance of livelihood on migration. Though the traditional migratory routes of Odisha are towards the textile hubs of Surat or industrial regions of Mumbai, Kerala has emerged as a sought-after destination in the recent decades. This migration is primarily from the coastal districts, a region far more developed to the rest of the state. This particular migration corridor has been termed aspirational in recent literature (Rajan & Datta, 2025).

## 7. Description of Cases

The following cases include Odia families who currently reside in Ernakulam, Kerala. Changed names are provided to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The children of these migrants have been enrolled in schools in Kerala from 1st standard.

### 7.1. Case 1

Preetha (aged 45) was seated amidst a bunch of women, all from the Baleswar district of Odisha. They had all come to attend the five-day Dussehra celebration conducted by Vishwakarma Cultural Association in Panampilly Nagar, Ernakulam. Many of those who have come for the program have settled in Ernakulam for at least 30 years or more. Like Preetha, many Odia families have settled in and around Kathrikadav, with their husbands doing gardening work. Her elder son is currently enrolled in an airport management degree, and her younger daughter studies in the same school as her brother used to. The younger girl, in 8th grade, studies in an English-medium government school. The school is 5 km away and is accessed by a school bus. The school bus costs 1250 rupees per month. The family also spends an additional 800 rupees monthly for private tutoring.

### 7.2. Case 2

Bikas (aged 38) works in a hollow brick factory in Chembarakky. His wife (aged 36) and his son (aged 11) live with him in a cramped room provided by the owner inside the hollow brick factory. Their bedding, clothes, and cooking stove are neatly packed on one side of the room. Bikas worked for a meagre 30 rupees per day on agricultural lands in his hometown. He moved to Kerala to work in the construction sector of Amrita hospitals for 60 rupees back in 2004. After the birth of his son, he shifted his family to Chembarakky, where he and his wife currently work in a hollow brick factory. Having travelled to various places like Mumbai, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh, he finds Kerala more suitable to work in with decent and regular wages. Both Bikas and his wife earn 4000 rupees each, every week, with a 6-day work week. With a stable job, the family can sustain their life in Kerala. The boy studies in a nearby government school with Malayalam medium instruction.

### 7.3. Case 3

Mamatha and her family have stayed in Puliyanam for the past five years. She works as a house helper in a nearby rich household and earns 9000 rupees monthly, while her husband, who works in a biscuit factory, earns around 14000 rupees every month. Mamatha found a nice house on rent because her owner found her to be a very faithful Christian. She says that Kerala does not discriminate against

Christians, "In Odisha, people will not sit with us in the public transports. If they touch us, they will go on to take a bath. If we use their tube well, they go on to wash it. We do not even get our caste certificates back home because the offices are filled with upper-caste Hindu officers." She continues to stay in Kerala for the opportunities available here. Mamatha is a mother to a nine-year-old son who is studying in 3rd standard. The kid has been enrolled in a government-aided school with English medium instruction.

## 7.4. Case 4

Subashish and his family stay at Kathrikadav, which is in the heart of Ernakulam. The lane houses both migrant families and Malayalees. The family stays in a relatively better-off house (with two rooms) compared to the ghettoised houses usually rented out to migrants. He works in construction and earns around 900 rupees for a day's work (unstable work with an average of 3-4 working days) while his wife is a house help who earns 1000 daily. The house's expense comes close to 600 rupees daily. But the couple has been adamant about putting all three kids in a private school nearby with English as the medium of instruction. With the rising migrant labour supply, Subashish expresses his doubts regarding his stay in Kerala.

## 7.5. Case 5

Smrutiranjan (42) is a manager in the plywood industry in Kandanthara and owns a separate plywood business. The wages alone stand at 50,000 rupees monthly. After studying till 7th standard, Smrutiranjan helped his father run his grocery shop in Odisha. Later, he fought with his parents and ran away from home with his friends. He initially went to work in Gujarat, like most of his villagers in Barampur. Later, he came to Kerala. During his initial days, he remembers just a few plywood industries near Mudickal, Periyar and Pulluvazhi. He says, "Now there are over 5000 plywood industries in and around Perumbavoor. I have been in the plywood industry all these years. I have worked my way up from being a worker to a supervisor and finally a manager. Initially, there was a lot of suspicion, but now I am treated equally in this society." Smrutiranjan married a Malayali woman and is a father to two boys. The younger kid studies in 7th grade in a private school with the CBSE syllabus. The eldest son has completed his schooling and has obtained admission to a nearby engineering college.

### 7.6. Case 6

Manoj had come to Palakkad in 2005 to work as a daily wage labourer in a school for some weeks. He found the schools in Kerala to be quite good and brought his family to Kerala within months. He did a variety of jobs and has finally settled on being a pastor. He is a father of three children; two kids have completed the schooling system, while the youngest is enrolled in LKG. The elder ones have completed their entire schooling in a government-aided school with an English medium. Though the family was staying in Perumbavoor during the time, the kids were enrolled in hostels. The position of a brother/pastor has earned him some influence over other Odia families. He says, "I have good connections with over 40 families spread around Perumbavoor. They all attend the same church. I keep telling them to continue their stay here. It is much better than Odisha."

## 8. Dreaming in English: Migrant Parents on Schooling in Kerala

"Good education equates to English education," voices the Odia women who have clad themselves in shimmering sarees at Panampilly Nagar, Ernakulam. I was interviewing Preetha, and I overheard their teenage kids sharing secrets among themselves in Malayalam. This is amidst the crowd of people speaking in Odiya while the priests (who have come from Odisha to Kerala for the occasion) chant prayers through the microphone. These kids can easily switch between Hindi, Malayalam, and Odiya. Both Odiya and Malayalam have been acquired through socialisation with their family, community, school, and larger society. The kids spoke to me in Malayalam while their mothers spoke in Hindi. These women are not quite exposed to the Malayali community as their children and husbands. Hindi acts as a link language, with Keralites and migrants from other states.

With the parents working as daily wage labourers, English, which is not commonly used in day-to-day conversations, can be acquired only through schooling. "We are from Odisha and learning in Malayalam is not useful for us," Preetha continues. "This school has been chosen as the rest of the community sends their kids to the same schools. It is the nearest one with quality education." Preetha reinforces her daughter's studies further by paying for private tuition. The Odia migrants whom I had interviewed from Kadavanthara access either government or government-aided schools with English-medium instruction. Preetha's dreams of her kids securing good jobs are assured by youth like Avinash from their community, who currently

works with Indigo's airport staff in Bangalore. Avinash had also done his education in the same schools and assured me of the good quality of the school.

English is closely connected to employment opportunities; there is a desire for intergenerational upward mobility. Unable to have acquired necessary skills during their education, these parents stress on how good quality education would provide their kids with permanent jobs away from the dust and dirt. Subashish responds, "Both Malayalam and Odiya are useless. With English, the future is more secure. A good education ensures a good job. With English, my kids can even work abroad." At every turn in Kochi, one finds English coaching doubled with IELTS/TOEFL training (British Council records the city of Ernakulam with the highest number of outbound international students to UK Higher Education Institutions (British Council, 2023). International migration in Kerala and subsequent economic mobility is reflected in Subashish's decision to send all three of his kids to a private school with English medium instruction. He finds the English instruction in private schools above that of public schools, even in Kerala. He says, "In Kerala, it is a win-win situation; we get higher wages and better education for our children. With more migrants coming in, the chances of getting stable jobs have become uncertain. But my wife and I will ensure we complete our children's education before leaving for Odisha."

This possibility of a better livelihood for the next generation is tied closely to the respective opportunities in the place. Mamatha hardly visits her home in Odisha. She says, "I do not want my kid to lose his school days. Moreover, there is nothing left back home. I miss my family a lot. But I want to build a brighter future for my son." Mamatha was a studious student and had to stop her studies after her father's death. But she tries to pick up English from the Malayali household where she works. She continues, "They speak very good English. I want my son to speak like that. The current school is not that good. They are English medium, but they do not teach well." Her dreams are tied more to those of the Malayali community, and she aspires to be like them. Though the current government school provides English medium education, she still feels that the quality of instruction is not on par with that of the private schools. She feels deprived in terms of her 'capability to access quality education.' She continues, "A private school with good quality English instruction is still a distant dream for us. It is still very hard to meet the ends. My husband works even on Sundays to cover our household expenses."

Manoj describes the sorry situation in his village, "Our market is 8 km away. We

do not have a decent road, no hospital nearby, and no other necessities. Both my wife and I have completed our +2 education. We would have worked in fields and survived in Odisha had it not been for my children. They need to grow up better." Manoj was attracted by the schools in Kerala rather than the wages. He recounts the education of his elder kids, "I had put both in separate hostels so that there would be no discontinuities in their education even if we were to go back to Odisha." Even Manoj finds private education to be better in quality, but has settled for government schools in his limited income bracket. But the capability to access English medium education through public schools has enhanced his aspirations regarding his children's future. Manoj and his family actively discussed with me regarding the children's employment and educational opportunities.

Mamatha and Manoj still feel unequal in the destination community. English education for the migrants is not just a ticket from the caste discrimination back home but also the othering they feel in Kerala. Most of the migrant parents in Kerala feel that an education in Malayalam is redundant or temporary as they do not feel a belonging or cannot visualise themselves settling here permanently. The migrants believe that an education in Malayalam would give them no leeway for mobility in Kerala. Her desire to access private schooling can be read in this context as the stratification in schooling reflects that of the society. Mamatha says, "After all, we are Hindikaar (Hindi-speaking people). The nearby houses are very rich. I do not send him there to play with their children. They might treat us differently. If my son wants to play, I send him to his schoolmate's houses. They are Malayalees, but they are like us."

Smrutiranjan, with a Malayali wife, gets along well in Kerala. His appearance and Malayali accent did not fit well with the stereotypical and prejudiced picture of an interstate migrant. Smrutiranjan, even with a successful business, says, "It is easy to earn money. But the value one gets with good quality education is different. All other skills can be earned over time." He regrets not having completed his education. He finds education to be more about attaining social acceptance in Kerala, "I was always treated with suspicion in the beginning. I had to be economically successful to outgrow that." He offered to take me through the various stages of

processing in his plywood unit, and the use of certain chemicals for glueing the plywood instantly teared me up. Smrutiranjan jokingly said to me, "See, this is why I want my kids to learn well… I was not able to study properly. My life underwent many of these difficulties. But I do not want my kids to go through the same thing." He does not want to settle in Odisha. "There is no possibility of doing a successful business there. Here I can do a lot of work to earn money. I have also studied there. The state of schools is very bad back home."

With a high income, Smrutiranjan's choice of private school is influenced by his wife. "My wife studied in a private school. She worked as a nurse and now assists me in my business. Both of us believe that a private school, wherever it is, has a better chance at giving quality education." This preference for private school is not merely a middle-class aspiration, but reflects a deeper attitude towards the government's failure to provide quality education. Even though many of the parents hold their home state government accountable for their miserable condition at the origin, leaving behind their homes, and migrating, they do not completely dismiss off the relevance of government in their day-to-day sustenance, specifically when it comes to education. But these parents remain sceptical of their bargaining power within the governmental system, either in Odisha or Kerala. They also seem to weigh in favourably towards the government in Kerala when the schools improve their capability to access English medium education. But many of these parents find the quality of instruction of English in private schools far better, even be it in Kerala.

When the parents are unable to meet their expectations in government schools in Kerala, their next best option is the counterpart in Odisha. Bikas expresses his frustration with his child not being taught well, "The school is in Malayalam medium. My kid is in 4$^{th}$ standard and hardly knows the alphabet in English. I am let down by the quality of the school. Now I send him to school just so that he does

not inhale in the dust from the hollow bricks factory. I am going to admit him in Odisha this December." Bikas hopes that education in Odisha will at least make his child proficient in Odiya so that he can work in companies in Bhubaneswar or Cuttack. He plans to come back and continue working in Kerala, while he plans to leave his family behind.

Though the migrants aspire for English education, they try to build their proficiency in the Odia language. Many of these parents are totally unsure about their stay in Kerala. A cultural association of Odia migrants around Kadavanthara has set up weekly classes on Saturdays for primary children to learn the Odiya language. Community members have volunteered to teach kids the alphabet and words in Odiya. One of the founders of the association says, "Malayalam is not our language. We will not always be staying here. We teach them the language just in case the families must go back."

## 9. Conclusion

Migration to Kerala has provided the above respondents with the opportunity to obtain higher wages, a stable work environment, and a regular job. These have enhanced the migrants' capability to experience economic freedom, egalitarian treatment in the destination, and freedom to practice their faith. The enhanced capabilities have improved their capacity to aspire (Nathan, 2005). The English section in the public schools has enabled migrant parents' 'capability to access quality education.' For the migrant parents, economic success is based on the quality of language skills, especially English.

Instruction in Malayalam would diminish their child's future possibilities in the labour market, both in their home state, other states in India, or even abroad. As a migrant, instruction in Malayalam would keep their skills lower than the natives who pursue English education in private schools; thereby, it only becomes a capability deprivation for the migrant (Case 2). Mere provisioning of English medium is counterproductive as migrants consider that poor instruction of English stratifies them from the private school-accessing, richer population. Migration has also enabled the capability set of some migrants to access good-quality English education in private schools; they find the English instruction in government schools poor compared to the private schools. This reflects the failure of the government system of schooling in providing good-quality instruction in the English medium. In cases

where the parents are unable to access English-medium education, they soon expect to move to Odisha to access Odiya-medium education. It thereby becomes imperative on the part of the government to provide good-quality English instruction in public schools to build the capabilities of migrants to access quality education and thereby create a more equitable society.

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