



THE OTHER SCENE: MIGRANT PHOTOGRAPHS AS SITES OF CONTESTATION

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THE SOUTH INDIAN STATE OF KERALA HAS A FIVE DECADES LONG PHENOMENON OF LARGE-SCALE MIGRATION TO THE COUNTRIES OF THE ARABIAN GULF. THIS MIGRATION, CIRCULAR IN NATURE, HAS HAD THE MOST TELLING AND HOLISTIC EFFECT ON LIFE IN KERALA. THE FIGURE OF THE MIGRANT, HOWEVER, IS LARGELY ABSENT IN THE NARRATIVES EXCEPT AS ECONOMIC AGENT.

MIGRATION AS A LIVED EXPERIENCE IS CONSIDERED IRRELEVANT TO THE PROCEEDINGS OF BOTH THE SENDING POLITIES AND THE DESTINATIONS. THE MIGRANTS HAVE, HOWEVER, LEFT A CONSIDERABLE ARCHIVE OF LIVING THE MIGRANT LIFE, ESPECIALLY IN THE FORM OF PHOTOGRAPHS. THIS TALK WILL FOREGROUND MIGRANT PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY KERALAN MIGRANTS TO THE GULF AS SITES WHERE THEY APPROPRIATED AND CONTESTED CLAIMS OF BELONGING AND CITIZENSHIP.

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