CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Exodus and migratory flows are an integral part of human history. Migration is usually considered as a male phenomenon. But now women constitute almost half of the international migrants of the world today, i.e., about 95 million (UNFPA, 2006). In the 21st century, migration is an integral part of globalization. The total number of people living outside their native land in the present century is larger than that of any other time in history. Next to China, India, the United States and Indonesia, international migrants would constitute the world’s fifth most populous country if they all live in the same place, and establish a separate, independent nation of their own. There is a decrease in the absolute number of international migrants between the periods 1975–1990 and 1990–2005 due to the drop in the number of refugees. In developing countries the immigration growth rates are decreasing, but in developed countries (excluding the former Soviet Union) growth rates continue to expand. Migration is now concentrated in relatively fewer number of countries. Around 75 percent of all international migrants live in 28 countries. One out of four migrants lives in the USA and one out of three in Europe (UNFPA, 2006). The number of international migrants has been considerably increasing in the past four decades. It was 75 million in 1960 and has grown to 175 million in 2000 (United Nations, 2006:6a). At present 191 million people live outside their native land which is about three percent of the world population.

The root cause of migration is poverty (IOM, 2005). Migrant women are really mighty and silent rivers whose remittances fill the hungry bellies, cloth the naked, serve as medicine for the sick and in short improve the standard of living of those who they have left behind.
In international migration, migrants usually follow those paths which are established by historical flows and migrant networks. The developed countries control almost all the international flows of the migrants. Family reunification causes larger emigration in industrialized countries like USA, Australia and Canada. Migrants have already formed ‘transnational communities’ in receiving countries and they act as networks and source of employment for pioneer migrants. The emigrants fill the gaps in international labour markets. So during times of boom and depression migrants are needed because during depression the natives do not fill the gaps of low paid works.

There are many factors that influence migration: like economic globalization that link the land of their origin with the country of destination; demographic trends, i.e. ageing population in developed countries; the expanding transportation facilities; the revolution in communication; the growth of transnational communities with multiple citizenship and the formation of new states due to geopolitical situation.

Human history from its very beginning has already been enriched by travel. International migration today is the result of disequilibrium in labour markets- surpluses in certain countries are withdrawn and balanced by shortages in other countries. So international migration has it’s beginning in slavery. There was massive migration during slave trade and it was replaced by indentured labour. It began from 1830 onwards and by the end of the nineteenth century the systems was abolished.

International migrants have predictable destinations. For long distance migration, one of the important influences on the choice of destination is colonial history. France and the United Kingdom initiated many migratory flows by recruiting workers from their former colonies. Between 1846 and 1890 due to rural poverty and periodic crop failure many people were forced to migrate. Mass migration reached a decisive turn between the period of 1891 and 1920. The U. S. emigration laws and the world war marked the end of the mass migration. The Second World War put a stop to mass migration by the middle of the 20th century.
After the Second World War those who were uprooted during the war had to return to their homeland. Many European governments also encouraged emigration due to loss of life in war. After the war for reconstruction and due to the boom, there was a huge demand for workers. Large scale international migration can be traced to this particular juncture in human history.

A globalized world’s existence depends mainly on international migration. Now there is a change in opinion from “migration gone bad” to “migration gone good” for women because of their contribution to adopted and home countries through their skills, labour and taxes. Large intercontinental migration began with the 16th century, but now migration grows at an unprecedented level due to globalization and its effects on economic activity. In the past women used to migrate for marriage and family reunification; now women are on the move in all parts of the world and to seek better opportunities due to the forces of globalization.

International migration is the result of: the push factors in countries of origin, the pull factors in destination countries and the network that links push and pull factors. Migrant men are usually in high demand in areas of highly skilled and better paid jobs, whereas women are restricted to traditional occupations such as domestic work and other unskilled works in service sector like waitressing. The push factors that have forced women to migrate are: family obligations, unemployment, low wages, poverty, limited social and economic opportunities and the desire to expand their horizons. The pull factors of migration are: freedom of mobility abroad, income earning opportunities, financial crisis in their own countries, employment discrimination in home country, the desire to escape from abusive marriages and patriarchal traditions and from the discrimination of certain groups of women like single mothers, unmarried women, widows or divorcees (UNFPA, 2006).

A review of the global scenario highlights that few countries remain unaffected by international migration. Most of the countries are sources of international migrants. Others are net receivers and still others are transit countries through which migrants reach destination countries. Even though
international migration is considered as a male phenomenon there has been a feminization of migration for the last 40 years. By the year 2005 there were slightly more females than male migrants in all regions of the world except Africa and Asia. Among the Developed countries, North American countries have more female emigrants than male emigrants since 1930 and now the situation is same in Canada also. Since 2000, Europe and Oceania have more female emigrants than male emigrants (Stalker’s guide, 2004). For the last 40 years the number of migrant women is almost equal to the number of migrant men. And they have been motivated by the desire for family reunification. Within the developing world also female labour migrants are increasing. After 2000, 65 percent of the Filipinos migrants were women and in Srilanka female labour migrants are double in number than that of male migrants. In Indonesia 79 percent of the migrants are women. There is also a high mobility in the case of Latin American and Caribbean women. Their destinations include Europe, North America, Spain and Italy. Due to poverty, disease, land degradation and high male unemployment in Africa women migration is increasing at a faster rate than global average. Their destinations include North America and Europe. In the Arab region due to the constraints of socio-cultural norms, the female migrant’s mobility is limited. The dark side of globalization is trafficking. The opening up of international markets allow not only the flows of capital, goods and labours but organized crimes also (UNFPA, 2006).

Since international migration is considered as a male phenomenon statistics on international migration is not comprehensive and is often published without classification by sex or age (Stalker’s guide, 2004). Gender perspective on the causes and consequences of migration can expand one’s understanding of international migration as well as conscientise the people to improve the situation of migrant women. International migration can be an empowering process for women, benefitting women themselves as well as their families and communities.

Though India had trade relations with West and Middle East back to the period before Christ, international migration of workers from Kerala is a new phenomenon. The British permitted indentured migration from India to Burma,
Ceylon, Malaya, Mauritius, and Fiji in the 19th century. During that period Tamilians constituted the bulk of the migrants and most of the Keralites migrated to these countries were educated persons. The total number of international migrants from Kerala is 18.5 lakh persons in 2007. About 89 percent of the Kerala migrants have been working in Gulf countries (Economic Review, 2007: 523-524).

In Kerala women constitute only 14.4 of the total migrants in 2007 (Zacharia and Rajan, 2007a). Even then it can be considered as a female phenomenon because the male migrants consider their wives as a channel of migration for them. The trend of migration shows that it is fast increasing year by year. Kerala’s economic development depends to a greater extent on remittances from abroad. Women also play a dominant role in the development of the economy because the female migrants earn more income than male migrants and support the family more than the male migrants. Non-resident Keralite Association also play a dominant role in helping the people of their land. Each religious group helps the native country for development through construction activities, social services, benevolent activities and acts as a channel of migration. They serve as strong supporters in the construction of schools, hospitals, channels, temples, old age homes and orphanages. There is a multiplier effect in the economy through increase in income, consumption expenditure and investment expenditures. As a result of the fiscal mobilization the unemployment in Kerala has been reduced to a great extent. The lives of the people are often compared to the standard of living of Western countries. One of the reasons for the rise in the standard of education is migration. At least 12 years of schooling is needed for migration. The migrants act as an impulse to those who are left behind and they study competitively. But migration has its negative effects as well in the economy. The separation from the family, moral degradation of the children due to the absence of mother, alcoholism and other types of crimes are rampant as a result of this process.
Kerala has a long history of migration and it has its repercussions on the socio-economic development of the economy. Most of the migrants, nearly 90 percent, are men and majority of them had migrated to Gulf countries. Migration resulted in integration of the Kerala economy to the world economy. Migration has been one of the positive outcomes of Kerala model of development. As a result of demographic consequences of migration since 1950 Kerala economy has witnessed a decrease in the population growth rate. In 1981–91 one fifth of the natural increase of population was removed from the state through migration. Migration from the state includes more males and so there is a favourable sex ratio in the state (Zachariah, K.C., et. al., 2003:14-17).

Most of the female emigrants from Kerala are working in service sector. “Medium and low skilled labours like nurses and baby sitters are also in a great demand in the developed countries and jobs requiring such labours are being filled in by migrants from developing countries. For example, Australia is expected to face a shortfall of 31000 nurses in 2006. The United States had passed the emigration Nursing Relief Act of 1989 to respond to the nursing shortage of the late 1980s. Similarly in Europe, labour shortages are frequently reported in firms operating in the service sector and in education” (United Nations, 2004a: 114).

Kerala, the most beautiful State of India, lies in the Southern part of India. The state is famous for the modern system of health and education facilities. The most important feature of Kerala’s development experience is the growth of the service sector. As a result of education, the fertility rate has declined and there has been tremendous improvement in the health of children. During 1990s higher education among females has increased much more than among males. This was partly due to the emigration of educated males. This labour force was absorbed both in the global and local markets. The females at the age group 20-29 with tertiary education are higher than that of males in 1998. Employment opportunities in Kerala were limited due to low industrial growth and lack of proper development of agriculture. The surplus working age population is pushed up into other countries. The stagnation in Kerala during the period 1987 was over
come through human resource development and the resulting export of human resource to other countries. The migration in Kerala has started from Second World War onwards. Until 1970s people emigrated to South-East Asian countries-Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia and Singapore. Their number was only a very few and it helped the improvement of socio-economic status of that particular family. Large scale international migration started in the 1970s. Middle East countries were the main destination and other destinations were USA and the European countries.

Kerala has 12 million work forces in the age group of 15 to 59 years and around 15 percent of Kerala’s work force is working abroad. Absence of gainful employment is the reason for migration. About 22 percent of the state’s income is from foreign remittances. Kerala has been thus integrated in to the global economy. Nearly 2.73 million people of Kerala have interaction with people of other countries and their cultures. One in four households has a direct experience of international migration with one or more of its members working abroad (Human Development Report, 2005). Migrant women in Kerala constitute nearly 17 percent of the total migrants in 2003. Kerala women have now become the pioneers of human migration chain. Migration has provided large opportunities for women to improve their own living situation and their contribution to national development is enormous. When women from a given culture and economic situation migrate, their motivation to move, the migration process and the conditions in destination country are entirely different. Migration in Kerala provides women with high self-esteem and economic independence in the family and society. It is an economic lifeline for lakhs of women in Kerala and a strategy for them to offer better living conditions to their families. Women have chosen migration as the best way to overcome poverty which is the effect of globalization. The economic, social and political expectations can be met with migration. In Kerala, globalization of communication gives the chance of a life abroad to even people in remote villages. The earlier migrants pave the way for subsequent migrants with accommodation, jobs and contracts. So in Kerala “Dollar mamies” have increased (Hefty, 1977).
International migration is the result of ‘dual labour market’ in the global economy. In this, women usually occupied in 3D’s - dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs, which are hard, unpleasant and moreover they are poorly paid also. Employers appoint women in these jobs because it is easy to control them. Migration is considered as a system because it is the result of a network of so many structural and individual factors. One of the push factors that prompt migration is wage gaps between countries. Social and economic development broke so many communities and relationships that brought together families for living and earning. A striking illustration is the ‘ejido’ in Mexico. As a result of the break up of ‘ejido’ so many farmers became unemployed and for livelihood they migrated to other countries.

Under entirely different circumstances people migrate in the expectation to be better off in the future. In migration the migrants follow individual approach i.e., “human capital” approach i.e., each individual is a product of a series of investments i.e., investments on education, skills, health etc. So they are looking for the best place to use them. On the other side migration is the result of a group or a family choice. Here the head of the family educate the migrant. In return she has to send money home. This household theory of migration is known as “New Economics of Migration” (Stalker’s Guide, 2004). The transnational communities help through ‘home town associations’ to carry out large scale development programmes.

Now women constitute half of the emigrants. They mostly work in domestic services, entertainment, nursing and teaching. Migration leads to fractured household relationship in the homeland. Migration causes brain drain, the loss of valuable people in homeland. Migrants’ remittances have a multiplier effect in the economy of the mother country.

Globalization can reduce emigration if they make investment in developing countries and create employment. Foreign direct investment through transnational companies can reduce migration by creating employment. They can help to promote economic growth by transferring capital, technology, training local people and creating export sales.
Globalization encourages more people to undertake dangerous journeys and make people more mobile. International migrants are the shock absorbers of the world economy, by filling jobs both at the bottom and top levels during boom and depression. They fill both the professional skill jobs and 3 D jobs- dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs. Immigrants fill the gaps and the natives can go to work as high powered executives. While immigrants work as nannies, mothers can work as high powered executives. All the emigrant countries become richer because of emigrant workers and through their contribution, gross domestic product has increased successfully. When the arrival of immigrants increased, all the governments closed the door for immigration. So now the immigration is illegal, migrants’ add smugglers. Migration is a form of trade in which, there will be some gain for all parties. The sending countries have some reduction in unemployment and population growth as a result of migration. In the receiving countries, their population growth has increased and there is economic growth as a result of migration.

Capitalist development generates two distinct types of jobs. Jobs that are secure, permanent, high skilled and well paid and the second types of jobs are temporary, hard, and unpleasant tasks that demand more effort to do and which are poorly paid. The latter types are called 3 Ds. Most of the local workers avoid 3D jobs. Large number of women from Kerala is working abroad in these second types of jobs. In Kerala, emigration leads to remittances that cause socio-economic changes and these changes lead to migration. The women in Kerala far exceed men in education at the graduate and postgraduate levels, but they are far behind men in professional/technical education except teaching where the ratio is in favor of women and also in nursing profession. But the work participation rate of women in Kerala is very low. In Kerala the unemployment rate is very high. One of the reasons for the increase in unemployment rate is the influx of large number of females into the labour market. The unemployment rate among females in Kerala is very high, (41.2 percent in 2003). Taking the unmarried women alone their unemployment rate is nearly 60 percent (Zachariah and Rajan, 2005: 22).
Each woman has to face three problems in destination countries: as a woman, migrant and in dangerous occupations. There are so many factors that influence the migration of women. The individual factors that influence female migration are age, birth, order, race / ethnicity, urban / rural origin, marital status, reproductive status, role in the family, position in the family, educational status, occupational skills, training, labour force experience and class position. Family factors influencing migration are size, age, sex composition, life-cycle stage, structure, status of parents and class standing; societal factors include community norms and cultural factors about migration decision (Grieco and Boyd 2003:3). Socio-cultural factors in migration are the thirst for independence, the desire to break traditional organizational set up and conflicts among family members and isolation.

As a result of migration of the female members of the family, the family members get support for repaying loans that is floated for migration, sending remittances for day-to-day expenses, educating children and construction of new houses. Female emigrant’s adjustment in the receiving country depends on their command of foreign language and availability of an employment with sufficient income, participation in civil and political life and the chance of family reunification. Is migration a cost to the receiving country? Family unification leads the immigrants to form their own new society. Migrants have more children than natives. It leads to additional costs of education, additional health service facilities and additional cost to look after old parents. Migration enhances power and autonomy of the migrant woman. Migration is a gain to the host country. It can get fiscal revenue by taxation from the workers, and getting skilled workers leads to increase in production and multiplier effect in the economy and fills the dual labour markets. There are gains for migrant country by reducing excess supply of labours, inflow of remittances and foreign exchange; technology transfer, investments in ventures by Diasporas, increasing trade between countries; stimulus to domestic education of children and getting experienced and well trained persons when they return. The remittances of the expatriates also flow through legal channels and illegal channels. The remittances through illegal channel dried since 1991 because of the liberalization of exchange rate. Remittances increased in absolute terms during the entire period 1972-73 to 1999-2001, but accelerated after the exchange rate liberalization.
Statement of the problem:

In Kerala the total number of international emigrants in 2003 was 18.4 lakh. The number of non-resident Keralites has been 27.3 lakh in 2003. The emigration rate is 26.7 per 100 household. Females constitute, 16.8 percent of total emigrants in 2003. There is a variation in proportion of female emigrants belonging to different religious groups. Highest proportion of female emigrants belongs to Christianity (Zacharia and Rajan, 2007a). There is no single study on international migration of women from Kerala. While passing through the earlier studies, the information was collected from the households and not from the migrants. The Center for Development Studies (Thiruvanandapuram, India) has conducted a survey relating to the trend and pattern of women migration, education, caste and religion as part of its general study. No detailed study has been conducted about female emigrants from the Kerala state of India. Women emigrants, especially single women emigrants are increasing. Though most of the male emigrants belong to Muslim community, 50 percent of the women emigrants belong to Christian community and the highest proportion of women emigrants are from Kottayam district (Zachariah K.C, et. al., 2003:309-327). Even though there is economic gain as a result of migration, the difficulties faced by women are numerous. A separate study about emigrant women will reveal the push and pull factors, the determinants, and the costs and benefits of international migration. In this context a study on “An Economic Analysis of International Migration of Women: A Case Study of Kottayam District in Kerala (India)” is of great relevance today.
Objectives of the study:

- To analyze the trends and patterns of female international migration from Kottayam district of Kerala State for the period 1960 to 2006 based on the sample data.
- To examine the push and pull factors behind migration decision of sample women emigrants.
- To assess the labour market experience of sample emigrant women of Kottayam district with regard to employment, wages and working conditions.
- To measure the economic and non-economic gains and losses from international migration of women.
- To study the status of women within the household and the children in the family.
- To study the impact of international migration of women on the local economy (Kottayam district of Kerala) particularly with reference to the status of women.

Hypotheses:

- Lack of employment opportunities in the home country with high salary is the main determinant of women’s international migration.
- Men follow women in international migration.
- Women earn more than men in foreign countries.
- The earnings of women emigrants of American countries are relatively higher than the earnings of women emigrants of European countries, Gulf countries and others.
- Benefits from international migration of women are greater than the costs of migration.
Structure of the thesis:

Chapter I, the introductory chapter, presents the statement of the problem, objectives and hypotheses of the study and chapterization. Chapter II reviews the various works related to international migration of women and also discusses the theoretical framework of this study. Chapter III presents the methodology followed in this study and also defines the important concepts used by this study. Chapter IV presents the macro level scenario of international migration with special reference to women. Chapter V deals with the trends and pattern of female emigration of Kottayam district and also makes a comparative study of male and female emigrants. Further this chapter focuses on the determinants of women’s international migration in the study region. Chapter VI examines the costs and returns of female emigration. Economic and non-economic costs and returns of female emigration are analyzed in this chapter. This chapter also deals with the working condition of female emigrants in terms of the nature of employment, earnings, hours of work, and problems at worksite. Chapter VII deals with the status of the women and children in emigrant families. Chapter VIII presents an analysis of impact of international migration of women on local economy (Kottayam district). Chapter IX gives a few case studies of emigrant women from different countries. Chapter X presents the major findings, suggestions and conclusions of the study.
REFERENCES


Stalker’s Guide to International Migration (2004) pstalker.sagepub.co.uk


