Chapter I
Introduction

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Introduction

1.1 Context of the study

Nations have perished, and men have lived without schools, churches, or factories, but never without marriage and family. In the complex, fast moving world of today, where the unexpected has become a part of every day life, it is a relief to realise that the family lives on to provide for our needs and comforts as it has for centuries. It is the place where we will get the satisfaction of certain basic human needs. Therefore, even with all the possible shortcomings, we prefer to be in connection with our families. And even those people whose home life has produced more misery than happiness often look forward to a happier marriage and family life for themselves and as well as for their children.

The modern family lives in a greater state of tension precisely because it is the great burden carrier of the social order. In a society of rapid social change, problems outnumber solutions, and the resulting uncertainties are absorbed by the members of society, who are for the part also members of families. Since family is the bottleneck through which all troubles pass, no other association so reflects the strains and stress of life. At the same time with an exceptional few rehears their daily frustrations within the family, and hope to get the necessary understanding and resilience. Family does not mean a few persons put together under one roof, but it implies an environment of love, belongingness, security and bliss prevailing among them. The very concept of a family means a blissful atmosphere which guaranties them marital peace, fulfilment and growth and all these should come from within. In such an atmosphere of love and consideration
every member of the family comes to acquire the right to give and take, the right to love and to be loved and to respect and to be respected. Thus, the good family is the best source for resolving frustrations and releasing tensions. This underlines the fundamental family task of maintaining the mental health of the population. Hill (1949, p.VIII) stated that, “only the family can guard the emerging personality and protect the mental health of individuals through the quality of its interpersonal relationship, the provision of reassurance and comforting, the releases and encouragement each needs to keep on striving for orderly living and fulfilment of his or her aspirations.”

Families of today are facing unprecedented and varied challenges like urbanisation, drug abuse, breaking down of marriages, changing economic and social conditions etc. which are leading families to destruction. Disorganisation of the family is one of the important challenges to be tackled. Lack of family unity due to divergent objectives, ambitions, thoughts and ideas; decrease in the family control due to competition; lack of control and unity; conflicts between parents and children due to undue expectations of authority and freedom, and all such precarious areas have become a burning challenge of modern family. On the other hand, laxity in marital bonds, availability of alternative satisfaction, misuse of economic freedom etc. really challenges the very foundation of modern family.

Marriage in Indian society is more a religious institution than a legal one. It is understood as a relatively permanent union of two people implying a number of interlocking status and roles. Family is never merely a personal matter, because society is so much affected by the quality of its families. Even the breaking up of a family is not a personal concern alone.
Statistically marriages in India has shown a much better survival rate than marriages in other countries (Bharat, 1996, p.8). However, many marriages today are like “house built upon sand”. Staying together in a house does not necessarily mean that they are happy. We must acknowledge the fact that today quite a number of marriages fail, some form an uneasy compromise and others end in divorce or in separation. The stability of marriage depends on many factors like adjustment, communication, expectation etc. Some well known counsellors like Clinebell (1970, p.38) are of the opinion that religious belief has a decisive role in minimising the possibility of dissolution of marriage. It is necessary that they have to stay together for achieving a harmonious life. Despite the fact that marriage and the family are so central to the lives of most Indians, marriage and the related concepts have remained largely unexplored.

1.1.1 Successful marriage

A happy and successful marriage is not the product of the day. Happiness in marriage is the outcome of joyous blending of heart and head, that is, it needs intelligence, love and determination (D’souza, 1975, p.18). There must be an understanding of the meaning of marriage and deep desire to be loyal to each other for life. For many people marriage is the beginning of a life of growing and expanding happiness. However, a certain proportion of marriages will not be successful, they will end in divorce. There are many things that affects the future of any marriage. The personality traits of the two individuals, their family backgrounds, and the attitudes which they hold on a number of subjects are factors that affect the quality of marriage.
Marriage has been described as the most intimate, delicate and far-reaching relationship between man and woman. It affects the physical, cultural, social and psychological atmosphere of the people (Clinebell, 1970, p.38). The relationship between the partners is the key point for building up a good family and its survival and growth. In marriage two persons meet and begin to relate, which creates a new psychological entity to their relationship. This entity includes what each brought to the relationship – the needs, problems, personality patterns and resources, expectations and hopes etc. The close relationship between husbands and wives are the cornerstones of interpersonal behaviour, which not only provide the social context in which individual lives develop, but also influence the well-being of these individuals (Jones and Perlman, 1991, p.28). Marriage is a mutual, exclusive, life long, one flesh union between a husband and wife. It is the ultimate human connection in which two people commit themselves fully to each other in a life long journey of deep sharing, mutual respect and growing intimacy. However, marriage is potentially the most totally intimate of human relationships, it is both the most difficult relationship, on the one hand, and the most rewarding, on the other. It is the place where most adults have the opportunity to lessen their loneliness, satisfy their heart hungers, and participate in the wonderfully creative process of self-other fulfilment. Marital partners become the key resource persons for supplying the basic food of the spirit of life together. Each spouse has considerable power to nourish or to starve the other’s personality. The nature and quality of husband – wife relationship will also make a tremendous influence on the children (Dominion, 1986, p.46).

1.1.2 Marital adjustment

Adjustment in marriage is a significant phenomenon. The relationship a man has with a women in marriage is perhaps the highest form of relationship,
because it involves physical, emotional, spiritual and social aspects of life. Marital adjustment is an adjustment of two personalities, which had different socio-cultural backgrounds. Marital adjustment is complex than it may appear. Two persons entering marriage must adjust to each other’s sensory, motor, emotional and intellectual capacities. On the personality level they must adjust together to their total environment, including such matters as a new household, children, provision and preparation of food, relatives, friends, relations and work (Fonseca, 1966, p.200). The success of marital life much depends upon the success in marital adjustment by the husband and wife. Marital maladjustment results in conflicts and tensions and many a time divorce.

1.1.3 Early years of marriage

The early years of marriage is the formative years of marriage in which they are forming a new relationship (Pothen, 1996, p.93). The process of pair adjustment is in the forefront during the early years of every marriage. According to Dominion (1991, p.105) the first phase of marriage is significant in three ways. They are the important years of adjustment, and they are loaded with difficulties. Second, it has been found that they are very important in laying the foundation of the welfare of the relationship. Thirdly, it has been found that between thirty percent and forty percent of all marital breakdown occurs in these first five years. So they are important and they should be supported. Lasswell (1985, p.80) reports that half of all serious marital problems develop in the first two years of marriage.

The report of the study conducted by Quinn and Odell (1998), on the predictors of marital adjustment during the first two years, also reveals that marital
difficulties for many couples occur early in marriage. Approximately 21% of marriages end within the first two years and 40% end by fourth year.

Landis (1954, p.151) also supported the importance of the early years of marriage. He says that, “although most adjustment are made during the early period, some adjustment will be called for throughout the life of the couple. As they grow older they will encounter new situations which needs new adjustments. When children born, when they mature and leave home, when grand parents move in to live with family, new adjustment is needed between couples. However, these new adjustments are relatively easy if the couples has been able to make satisfactory adjustments in other areas with in the first years of marriage.

According to Clinebell (1970, p.15) there are mainly three periods when the search for intimacy is most likely to be active and urgent. The first occurs during the engagement period when the couple is getting acquainted on a deeper level and is experimenting with patterns of closeness and distances. The second is the period of major learning following the honeymoon and usually for the first five years. This is the time of the meshing of two divergent personalities and sets of needs, which were brought to the marriage, and acquiring the new roles of marital partners. The third period occurs during the middle years when the exodus of children confronts the couple with their own relationship, in the context of their feelings about ageing.

Before marriage and during the honeymoon period there is a tendency to emphasis the similarities rather than differences. After the honeymoon and are launched upon the life as a couple, true personality traits and value system
become more apparent. Gradually, the two will recognise that they are not in such close agreement on everything. This realisation is the normal part of marriage and occurs quite universally in a greater or lesser degree. They have to work out adjustment in these areas. During this time needed the emotional availability, capacity to feel, be affectionate or understanding. For it, they have to stay together and keep a close relationship. According to Bier (1965, p.50), “when a man and woman are paired in marriage, they in effect establish a new social unit or organisation. To maintain that organisation, obviously, they must stay together.” However, the labour migration and extended absence of the spouses for occupational reason are seen more and more in the modern times.

1.1.4 The labour migration

In Kerala, especially in central Travancore, there are a large number of couples who are separated and staying away from home for a livelihood, for long time. Since the job opportunities in both public and private sector are very limited in Kerala, every year the number of educated unemployed increase at an alarming rate. These unemployed people migrated from villages and town to cities and to other states. Some of them also migrated to foreign countries, particularly to middle-east, seeking job and prosperity in life. After the World War II and with the Indian Independence in 1947, migration becomes a way of life to many of the educated youths of the state. In the earlier times it was mainly with in the country, but in recent times migration to countries outside India has grown rapidly. One study shows that nearly 1.36 million Keralites now live outside India (Zachriah et al., 2000). The Economic Review, 1998 of the State Planing Board of Kerala gives the number of emigrants at about 1.6 million.
Kerala is one of the states in India facing the problem of unemployment very seriously. As the state is economically and industrially backward, a large number of the educated youth find it difficult to get placement in some jobs. At the same time the cost of living in the state is relatively high. All these factors bring in considerable pressure on the unemployed youth of the state to migrate to other places in search of job opportunities.

Workers going abroad are mainly men. Openings for women seem to be few and far below comparing to men. Some categories of workers with salaries above a prescribed minimum are entitled to take their families. However, all those who are entitled to take their families with them do not do so. This is largely because of the lack of educational facilities or high living expense. They wish to save much money since the jobs there are regarded as purely temporary.

One village study of migration from Kerala (Mathew and Nair, 1978) confirm that very few women have migrated outside the country. Kerala Migration Study (Zachariah et al., 2000) supports the general understanding of the predominance of males in all the migration streams. The emigrants from Kerala comprised only 9.3 per cent of females (about 127 thousand) and balance, 1235 thousand were males.

The migrated workers going outside the country are mainly men and they were usually quite young in age. The above village study showed that 79% of the workers were below 35 years in age. The long-term absence of the male member, especially in the formative period of their marriage, will make great impact on the spouses and their family life.
1.1.4.1 Consequences of migration

Migration has both direct and indirect impact on the population. The direct effects become visible immediately and are mostly structural in nature. The Kerala Migration Studies (Zachariah et al., 2000) gives some of the major consequences of migration. The migration has decreased the growth of population. The study also brought out the fact that rapid growth in remittance- in cash and in kind- received by the household of migrants. Another positive result is the improvement of quality of housing and household amenities. Education is another sphere where migration has exercised tremendous influence. A large number of emigrant households used a significant part of the remittance to education of their children. The migration has considerably eased the unemployment problem in the state. As a result of migration the number of unemployed has declined by 32 percent, which also reduce the proportion of poverty (Zachariah et al., 2000).

There are some negative impact of migration on the family and society. The prevalence of very small families in the state is partly a consequence of migration. Single member households increased by 33 percent and two member households by 42 percent as a result of migration. The loneliness experiencing elderly people due to the migration is a major problem in Kerala. For about 18 percent of the elderly, loneliness is a reality in their lives (Zachariah et al., 2000).

Apart from these consequences there is another group, who are deeply affected by migration. They are the women in Kerala whose husbands are emigrants. Migration had a very significant effect on the married women living away from their husbands. As much a million women (1 out of 8) in Kerala are
living away from their husbands due to migration of their husbands (Zacharaih et al., 2000).

1.1.4.2 Impact of migration on marriage

Having one spouse working in foreign country does not mean a contented life. Suppressed sobs and plaintive murmurs linger behind the façade of the jumbo stereo sets, luxurious togs and exotic perfumes that make up world of these women. According to the Kerala Migration Study (Zacharaih et al., 2000) these women were hardly equipped to cope with the situation.

There is growing evidence to suggest that women in the migrant households face many tensions, pressures, conflicts and anxieties. These pressure are of different kinds and intensities, some of them depending on the age and relationship of the women to the migrant worker.

In the Kerala Migration Studies (Zachariah et al., 2000), among the respondents of 891 women 43% reported loneliness. The other problems reported were added responsibilities (23.3%), debt (10.6%) and low financial gains (12.9%). For women below 30 years loneliness topped the list. Women above 40 also named loneliness as the biggest bugbear. The same Study, which also formulated a general profile of the expatriate population, observed that 12.6% (1 million) of the married women in Kerala were living away from their husbands. The worst sufferers are the new brides. Very often the migrant workers gets married during the brief vacation of a month or two and leaves behind the wife to the care of his relatives. The above study also reported that in the case of about 2.4 percent of Gulf wives, their husbands had left for Gulf within days after marriage;
almost a-third left within three months from marriage. Apart from loneliness and long separation, her problem is of leaving in strange, unfamiliar and often hostile environment, with virtually no one to communicate with.

A prolonged separation in the early period of marriage do seriously curtail the marital life of young couple. One young described her social problem “Kenny and I were only married for seven months before he was sent out of the country. He has been away for what seems like a lifetime, and I feel as though I were a widow or something. Although I never accepted a date with another fellow, I’ll admit it has often been temptation. I think it would be easier if we had a child; then I would have some tie with him and something to keep me occupied. As it is, I can scarcely remember my husband, what he looks like or how he acts. I am in a world of no man’s land - half married, half not married” (Landis, 1954, p.151). Even though it is a report from fifties, it is still relevant. There are some studies conducted about the effect of work related long term travels of the male corporate managers and military officials. The report of Renshaw (1976) shows that these extensive absence of partners negatively contribute to the fulfilling of some aspect of family roles such as companionship with spouse and children and participating in household responsibilities.

There are also problems of sexual adjustments and extra marital relationships among such wives (Zachariah et al., 2000). ‘The Hindu’ reports that at the family court in Trivandrum, adultery related cases filed by gulf based Malayalies are reportedly on the rise (The Hindu, 2000-7-16).
Other adverse consequences arising from the husband’s migration are anxiety, problems with in-laws and misunderstanding with the husbands abroad (Zachariah et al., 2000). Some other studies show that the couples who are experiencing the prolonged absence of their spouses, especially in the early years, have many emotional and adjustment problems (Pearlman, 1970 and Macintosh, 1968) and psychosomatic problems (Kaila, 1996). However, no study has been found examining their marital quality of this particular group, which the researcher feel is essential for strengthening their marriage.

1.2 Need and significance of the study

During his pastoral ministry the researcher has seen very many couples, who are experiencing extended absence of their spouses, with problems in their marriage and family. Once they get into the deep ocean of troubles, they find it very difficult to get out of it even if they wish. This will affect not only the person but also the whole family and society in which he/she belongs. Even though the society has been aware of the problems of the extended absence of the spouses not much has been done to care for them. There are a few studies on the problems of the job-oriented migration on family and marriage. However, a study of its impact on marital quality of this particular group could not be found in the Indian context. Therefore a study is planned to understand these aspects which are essential for planning further service and research.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The problem under study is the marital quality of the women spouses of men who live outside the country from the early months of marriage for
occupational reasons. The study is entitled as “MARITAL QUALITY OF WOMEN SPOUSES OF MEN WORKING ABROAD: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING”.

1.4 Operational definitions of the terms

**Occupational separation:** - In this study the term “occupational separation” refers to the situation where the husband is abroad, separated from the family for a period of ten months or more for the purpose of business, job or related matters. ‘Extended absence’ has been used synonymously with occupational separation in this study.

**Marital Quality:** - It is the quality of marriage which includes the understanding, rejection, satisfaction, affection, despair, decision making, discontent, dissolution, potential, dominance, self-disclosure, trust and role-functioning as assessed by Marital quality scale (Shah, 1995)

**Early years of marriage:** - Here the term “early years of marriage” is used for referring to the first five years of marriage.

**Spouses:** - “Spouses” here is limited to partners in the arranged marriage

1.5 Inclusion criteria

1) Woman married between 1 to 5 years and below 35 years of age.
2) Who have stayed with partners for not more than three months immediately after marriage.
3) Staying with parents or in-laws.
4) Whose spouse visits not more than once a year.
5) Whose spouse's last visit was at least three months before the study

1.6 Objectives

1) To study the impact of occupational separation of men on the marital quality of women spouses in the early years of marriage.
2) To study the effect of social support, spirituality, employment status, co-residence and duration of pre-separation stay on the marital quality of the study group.
3) To analyse the marital quality of the study group with respect to certain selected socio-demographic variables.
4) To suggest the specific counselling goals for those women with low marital quality among the study group.

1.7 Hypotheses

1) There will be no significant difference between the marital quality of the women in the study group and the control group.
2) There will be no significant difference between the marital quality of the women in the study group with high social support and those with low social support.
3) There will be no significant difference between the marital quality of the women in the study group with high spirituality and those with low spirituality.
4) There will be no significant difference between the marital quality of the women in the study group who are employed and those who are not employed.

5) There will be no significant difference between the marital quality of the women in the study group staying with in-laws and those staying with own parents.

6) There will be no significant relationship between the marital quality of the women in the study group and duration of pre-separation stay.

1.8 Scope and limitation

This study is expected to throw light on the impact of occupational separation of the couples on the marital quality of women spouses. The advantages of examining the marital quality of women spouses of men working abroad are many. Firstly, being an exploratory study it is expected to reveal many interesting findings and thereby increase the knowledge base regarding the marital quality of the women spouses of men working abroad. It is also hoped that, the findings of the study will help the counsellors and social workers to create awareness among themselves about their own roles in providing help to such people. Lastly, the findings of the study may give directions for further research in this area.

The impact of occupational separation of the couples on marriage and family are several, but the researcher did concentrate only on the area of their marital quality. The study is limited to the first five years of marriage and the study group constitutes women who are experiencing the extended absence of their spouses. The study is limited to evaluate the marital quality of the women spouses of men working abroad. If the same of their husbands also were studied,
more reliable results could have been obtained. The tools for assessing marital quality and social support were translated from English to Malayalam. After the translation the tools were not standardised. It would have more reliable if the translated tools were standardised. The size of the sample studied was 200 and also it was taken from only one district of Kerala. A large sample selected from all districts of the state could have given scope for wider generalisation to the findings.

1.9 Methodology in brief

The study is conducted on a sample of 200 women who are experiencing long term absence of their husbands due to occupational reasons. A group of 200 women who are staying with their husbands are taken as control group. The samples were taken from Pathanamthitta district of Kerala state. Tools used for the study are: (a) General data sheet, (b) Marital Quality Scale, (c) Materialism-Spiritualism Scale, and (d) Perceived Social Support Scale. The data collected are analysed using ‘t’ test, analysis of variance, least significant difference test and coefficient of correlation. The results obtained are interpreted accordingly.

1.10 Chapterisation

The first chapter deals with the introduction of the study. The second chapter gives an account of the available literature on the variables included in the study. The third chapter is the methodology adopted for the study. The fourth chapter presented the analysis and interpretations of the data. The fifth chapter includes the summery and conclusions.